

# THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL PROMOTES BUSINESS CONTINUITY TO LOCAL BUSINESSES AND OTHER GROUPS

## Summary

The City of Edinburgh Council responded to the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) duty to promote business continuity within the wider community by establishing the Edinburgh Resilience Forum. This workstream has since developed through working in partnership with like-minded organisations, to deliver high quality, meaningful, cost efficient events.

## Background

The Council began its business continuity management programme in earnest in 2006. The main task was to develop a Corporate Business Continuity Plan, which was completed in June 2008. As part of the Council's wider BCM remit, there was also a need as a local authority to promote business continuity in the wider community. The response to this duty was to establish the Edinburgh Resilience Forum (ERF) in 2006.

## Approach and Outcomes

The main mechanism for promoting business continuity is the ERF. The aim of the Forum is to

bring together representatives from Edinburgh's largest commercial organisations and public sector organisations to discuss community resilience issues.

The first Forum, held in 2006, comprised presentations and breakout sessions on relevant topics. A total of 20 organisations attended. Participant evaluation indicated a need for practical solutions to contingency planning issues. As a result, it was agreed that free events would be held for Edinburgh businesses, including retailers, with ideas for future events to be taken from evaluations.

From 2006 to 2007 the conference-style format continued. In 2008 there was an opportunity to work with a consultancy on a city-wide initiative 'Exercise Edinburgh Resilient City' under the ERF umbrella, supported by the financial and banking sector. Held in June 2008, this brought together 120 participants from 25 businesses on eight sites across Edinburgh to consider a business continuity scenario.

The establishment of a steering committee, needed to plan the event, was a turning point for the Forum as it demonstrated the benefit of better representing the needs of members. The Steering Group continues to steer the work of the ERF and inform events by representing the training needs of members. It expanded in 2009 to more accurately reflect the economic diversity of the city, and the Forum itself, which now has over 100 member organisations, including the emergency and health, banking and finance, creative industries, education, ICT, tourism, voluntary and other sectors.

The Council has a number of initiatives that support and supplement the work of the ERF:

- The Council is about to launch a group on the business networking website LinkedIn to promote events and Forum membership and to provide members with an opportunity to discuss good practice and network online.



- Business continuity is promoted through the Council's website. This includes general information and templates and examples to assist with planning.
- The Council Business Continuity Officer (CBCO) regularly receives queries from local organisations seeking advice and these are accommodated whenever possible, supported by the other post dedicated to corporate BC (half time).
- Presentations and lectures to businesses and umbrella organisations are delivered on request as resources allow.
- Ad hoc events to city organisations are organised as required, for example, a Stakeholder Event on Pandemic Influenza concerned with issues related to the seasonal influx of tourists and students to the city was held in July 2009.

In addition, the Council works with the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, sitting on its Business Protection Policy Group. The Council's CBCO chairs the Group's Business Continuity Subgroup which, in turn, promotes business continuity to Chamber members.

#### **Resources and Issues**

ERF events and membership have always been free, with all event costs met by the Council through its emergency planning or business continuity budgets (until 2008, there was not a dedicated business continuity budget).

During the development of the Council's BCM programme the format of the ERF was reviewed as it was expressed by both the organisers and delegates that a fresh approach was required. It was also decided to consider other funding options.

The Council had always worked closely with Lothian and Borders Police and the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and it was agreed to work in partnership to deliver an annual ERF week of events. The programme included Police national security initiatives (Argus, Griffin, etc.) and a Council community resilience conference. Each partner brought different resources to the table in the form of time, money, skills and contacts. For

example, the Council offered in-house design and event management skills and the Police and Chamber offered key contacts to obtain free venues as well as a small cash budget to cover catering. Each of the partners spent less on the delivery of the joint week of events than the cost of delivering their events separately.

As a result, in February 2009, the First Annual Community Resilience Week of Events was held for businesses and other entities in Edinburgh. The venue was provided by one of the Forum members and the event was virtually cost neutral for the Council.

Recently the Second Annual Week of Events was held. The response was excellent and there are plans to continue this with a third annual event.

Future events are likely to include a series of breakfast meetings aimed at how Small and Medium Enterprises can increase their resilience and a scheme whereby smaller organisations gain experience and capacity by being buddied with larger organisations.

#### **Benefits**

The main benefits to members are free, inclusive events that address a stated need, informed by the ERF steering group, the opportunity to learn about relevant issues of concern, share good practice in the area of business continuity and network. The Council benefits by discharging its CCA duty in an effective and efficient manner whilst incurring little cost. The partners benefit from greater mutual understanding through cross-agency working, as well as a coherent message to event delegates.

#### **Author**

Mary-Ellen Lang  
Council Business Continuity Officer  
The City of Edinburgh Council  
[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/businesscontinuity](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/businesscontinuity)

#### **Media Enquiries**

Stewart Argo  
Media Manager  
The City of Edinburgh Council  
+44 (0) 131 529 4386