



EPRR Policy No 04 – Exercises

A Statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

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Purpose

The Trust supports the principle of well trained and exercised staff. In order to ensure that staff feel confident within their role of response and recovery procedures, as well as maintaining an ability to manage business as usual, the Trust will participate in a number of exercises throughout the year. However, as with any other activity, exercises need to have an accountable and auditable outcome. Otherwise there is no value in undertaking them.

South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust has a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) as a Category 1 Responder, to ensure that the Trust provides an appropriate response to all mandatory exercises. Where a mandatory requirement exists, the Trust will ascertain which resources are able to attend to participate in the exercise. Attendance will be dependent on several factors, as reviewed in the policy.

Where there is no mandatory requirement for the Trust to participate in the exercise, the Trust must establish what benefits would be achieved from attending and participating. If there is little or no added value in attending the exercise, the Trust will inform the exercise organisers of the decision not to attend.

This policy will provide guidance to the Trust on exercise participation in order to ensure that SCAS is better prepared to respond to incidents.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff working across all directorates within the organisation.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure that South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust has a consistent and effective approach to participating in training exercises.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Outline the Trust's statutory duties for undertaking exercise activities
- Outline the reason for undertaking an exercise
- Explain the different types of exercise format
- Outline examples of when SCAS will attend exercises
- Outline what other departments may be required to support the exercise
- Address non-attendance at exercises
- Outline post-exercise procedures
- Explain the terms Lessons Identified & Shared Learning
- Outline the requirement and content of a Post-exercise report

Definitions

An exercise is a simulation of an emergency situation. As a Category One responder, the Trust has a statutory duty placed upon it by the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) to

undertake exercising and training of staff as part of our emergency planning arrangements.

In addition to this, the NHS England Core Standards for EPRR also state that

“NHS Organisations and providers of NHS funded care must:

- i. Have suitable, proportionate and up to date plans
- ii. Exercise these plans through:
 - a) A communications exercise every 6 months
 - b) A desktop exercise once a year
 - c) A major live exercise every 3 years
- iii. Have appropriately trained, competent staff”

Roles and Responsibilities

Trust EPRR Delivery Board

The Trust EPRR Delivery Board will receive assurance that the Trust has undertaken a sufficient number and type of exercises to comply with legislation and guidance. They will receive:

- A quarterly update of exercises that the Trust has undertaken
- A quarterly briefing of what exercises the Trust are planning to participate in
- An annual appraisal of lessons identified as a result of any exercise and an accompanying action plan to address any actions identified

Accountable Emergency Officer

The Accountable Emergency Officer has overall responsibility for ensuring the Trust has an effective exercise framework and for meeting all statutory requirements contained within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The Trust must also adhere to the guidance contained within the EPRR Framework and Core Standards issued by NHS England.

Head of Resilience and Specialist Operations

The Head of Resilience and Specialist Operations will:

- Ensure that an annual report is produced detailing the Trust’s participation in exercises
- Ensure that the Trust is represented within the Training, Exercising and Organisational Learning Groups within both Local Resilience Forums (Thames Valley and Hampshire & the Isle of Wight)
- Allocate a Resilience and Specialist Operations Manager to lead on the Exercising workstream. They will provide advice and act as the single point of contact for external agencies wishing to undertake any exercises in conjunction with SCAS.
- Ensure that the Trust participates in exercises at the appropriate level
- Ensure that any lessons identified from exercises are recorded and acted upon appropriately

Managers and Supervisors

Managers and Supervisors across all directorates within the Trust will:

- Work alongside the Resilience & Specialist Operations Department to deliver training exercises specific to their area of work
- Ensure any exercises undertaken are logged with the Resilience & Specialist Operations Department for inclusion in the annual exercise report
- Ensure that the Trust is appropriately represented at exercises and that activities undertaken are in-keeping with current operational policies and procedures
- Produce a risk assessment for each live exercise
- Produce a post-exercise report for each exercise undertaken detailing the learning objectives and whether these were met or not
- Report any lessons identified from exercises undertaken to the Resilience & Specialist Operations Department so they can be logged and an action plan can be agreed
- Ensure that the Trust remains able to provide business as usual

All staff

All staff within the Trust will:

- Adhere to the Trust's current operational policies and procedures when undertaking any exercise activity.
- Wear the appropriate PPE for the activity being undertaken
- Report any near-miss and/or adverse incidents
- Participate in post-exercise procedures; including provision of feedback and contributing to any debrief/s held

Commanders

Staff who are required to undertake a command role during an incident or event have the responsibility for undertaking relevant exercises and training to maintain their competencies. They should maintain a portfolio which outlines their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as a Commander. This portfolio should evidence any competencies achieved from live incidents or events as well as any exercises they have undertaken.

Function and Types of Exercises

Exercises have 3 main purposes:

1. To validate plans
2. To develop staff competencies and give them practice in carrying out their role within the plans
3. To test the plan and associated procedures

A number of exercise types and formats exist. Generally they will fall in to one of the following four categories:

Communications (Commex)

Used to test communications and cascade chains. Normally utilised to test a specific part of a plan.

Table top (TTX)

Used to look at a developing theoretical scenario. This is a low cost way of testing a plan and allows for pauses/advances in time. Also allows for input from external agencies to be incorporated.

Command Post (CPX)

Used to specifically test those undertaking a command role and/or to give the individual some experience of performing their designated role during an incident.

Live (LIVEX)

Used to replicate a live incident. Normally run in 'real-time' and tends to be more expensive than a table top exercise because it involves real use of equipment and resources.

Exercise Attendance

The Trust is invited to participate in several exercises throughout the year. It is necessary to establish how the Trust would benefit from attending and participating in any exercise. As a guide, exercises should be considered if they meet the following criteria:

- Exercise outcomes match the aims, objectives and core values of the Trust
- There is a mandatory requirement for that specific exercise to be held
- To test a specific plan/policy/procedure/asset
- To compliment a training campaign for new equipment and/or procedures
- Where the scenario includes a threat or hazard featured within the local Community or Trust risk register
- The key elements of the exercise have not been previously exercised within the last 5 years
- The exercise has been convened in response to a lesson identified elsewhere or by an external agency
- The exercise has been convened in response to an incident that has occurred elsewhere

This list is not exhaustive. Attendance will depend on several variables, including current Operational demand, financial constraints and the availability of the resources and personnel required. The impact of each suggested exercise should be evaluated to see what resources can be used appropriately.

Participation in any exercise should not impact on the Trust's ability to provide core services. The Trust has a duty to provide business as usual for our service users, regardless of exercise participation.

Exercise Support

Resilience & Specialist Operations Department

The Trust has a team of six Tactical Advisors who are experienced in planning for incidents that are considered to be outside of the ordinary (ie. High threat incidents such as firearms and CBRN, incidents involving hazardous materials, major incidents etc.) They work closely with partner agencies on a daily basis and therefore have a good knowledge of their capabilities. Plans for proposed exercises should be discussed with a member of the team to ensure that the Trust's response is appropriate, realistic and in-keeping with current operational guidance.

Specialist assets

Specialist assets (vehicles, staff & equipment) provide the Trust with the capability to respond to specific types of incidents. Some of the vehicles, staff and equipment which fall into this category are considered to be National Assets. This means that they can be used anywhere within the country at any given time if they are required as part of the response to an incident. It is imperative that the location of these resources is known by the Resilience & Specialist Operations Department. They must also be kept in a constant state of readiness so that they can be deployed at short notice if required. It should also be noted that specialist teams such as HART, AIT and SORT are subject to separate budgets and management.

The use of specialist assets or teams is not normally recommended for training exercises, unless one of the exercise objectives is to test that specific asset or item of equipment. The use of any specialist assets must be authorised by the Resilience & Specialist Operations Department.

Private Providers

The Trust has contracts with several external companies who provide ambulance services on behalf of SCAS – these are collectively known as Private Providers. Private Providers provide a range of services such as:

- Patient transport services
- Non-emergency/routine transfers
- 999 frontline/emergency
- Enhanced/critical care providers such as HEMS.

Private Providers can be invited to join SCAS in attending training exercises, however it should be noted that these companies are also subject to separate budgets and management that are independent from the Trust.

Operational Support Desk

All Trust vehicles being utilised for a training exercise must be booked via the Operational Support Desk and agreed in advance. This team oversees vehicle allocations and maintains a list of serviceable/non-serviceable vehicles across the Trust. They can also facilitate vehicle movements between Trust sites. A Vehicle Request Form should be completed and submitted detailing your vehicle requirements.

Scheduling

Scheduling should be notified of which staff are attending a training exercise (where applicable.) This is so that attendance can be recorded on the individual scheduling

record for each staff member. If staff are claiming overtime to attend an exercise, this must be agreed in advance by the budget holder for the relevant area.

CCC

There have been previous incidents where members of the public have seen a training exercise being undertaken and mistaken it for a real incident. This resulted in confusion and unnecessary dispatch/use of resources. If a planned exercise is likely to attract attention or cause concern to the general public, both Trust control rooms should be made aware in an effort to avoid confusion. You will be asked to provide the following information:

- Exact location
- Type of activity being undertaken
- What time the exercise is expected to start & finish
- Single point of contact (SPOC) – this should be a nominated person that CCC can contact if they need to seek urgent clarification about the exercise

Media

The Trust's Media and Communications Team are keen to have an oversight of any exercise activity. The information and accompanying photos provided may be used as content within shared, published documents to promote activities undertaken by the Trust.

Airwave Tactical Advisors

The Trust has a small number of Airwave Tactical Advisors available. They can offer advice on matters concerning the Airwave communications equipment that is currently in use across the Trust. An Airwave Tactical Advisor should be contacted for exercises involving a large number of resources, where extra demand will be placed upon the current communications network.

Exercise Non-Attendance

Examples of when it may not be possible to attend an exercise are as follows:

- Proposed exercise scenario or objectives are incompatible with the Trust's aims, objectives and/or core values
- Proposed exercise scenario is not in-keeping with the key risks highlighted on the local risk register (held by the Local Resilience Forum)
- Proposed exercise scenario is not in-keeping with risks listed on the Trust's risk register (held by the Risk department)
- The Trust is currently operating at a declared REAP level of REAP 4
- The resources required are unavailable (note that this applies to staff, vehicles and specialist assets)
- Lack of available funding
- Declaration of a Major or Critical Incident within the SCAS operational area
- Provision of Mutual Aid to a bordering ambulance service
- When the Trust's Move to Critical Plan has been invoked

- When the date of the exercise conflicts with another key exercise or event already being held (check calendars held by the Resilience & Specialist Operations Department)

It may be necessary for the Trust to withdraw some or all of its resources participating in an exercise at short notice – for example in the case of a major incident being declared.

Any incidents of non-attendance at an exercise will be recorded by the Resilience & Specialist Operations Manager responsible for overseeing the exercising workstream.

The decision to not attend an exercise will be communicated to the exercise organiser in writing, detailing the fact of non-attendance and the reasoning behind this decision. If the exercise organiser objects, they may appeal in writing to the Head of Resilience & Specialist Operations, offering their reasons and potential benefits to the Trust of attending. The Head of Resilience & Specialist Operations will then undertake a review of the exercise objectives, taking in to account any strategic implications for the non-attendance.

Post-exercise Procedures

Once the exercise has concluded, vehicles should be returned to their location as previously agreed with the Operational Support Desk. Staff should ensure that vehicles are fully re-kitted and left in a clean and serviceable order.

Consider staff welfare. It is possible for some training exercises to have just as much of a detrimental psychological effect on staff as a real incident. Managers should check staff welfare has been addressed immediately after an exercise has occurred. If additional support is required, this can be obtained via the normal means:

- TRiM Practitioners
- Occupational Health
- Health & Wellbeing Team
- Optum/Employee Assistance Scheme

All participants should be invited to participate in the evaluation of the exercise. The exercise organiser should hold either a formal debrief with documented minutes or issue individual questionnaires. It is not normally necessary to do both. It is good practice for any debrief to be chaired by some body independent who was not directly involved in the exercise.

Evaluation should focus on asking participants the following questions:

- Describe what role you undertook at the exercise?
- What training did you receive to assist you in this role?
- What do you think went well?
- What do you think didn't go so well?
- What (if anything) can be learned from this exercise?
- Any other comments or feedback regarding the exercise?

From the feedback provided, a list of common themes should be recorded.

Whilst it is important to recognise what did not go well at an exercise, this should not be the sole focus of any debrief discussions. It is also important to highlight any areas of good practice. There may be valid reasons why something did or didn't happen as expected, or the outcome may have been impacted by the actions of an external agency. Finally, it is important to take note of any lessons that have been identified.

More information regarding After Action Reviews can be found within the Trust's Incident Response Plan.

Details of all post-exercise activities undertaken should be included in the post-exercise report.

Lessons Identified & Shared Learning

Each exercise should be debriefed, either in a multi-agency forum, or by the Trust in an effort to identify key learning. Where key learning is identified, an action plan will be put in place to address the issue and to track any progress made.

The Resilience & Specialist Operations Department will keep a list of all lessons identified and what actions have been taken to address the issue. The Trust promotes a culture of continuous improvement and it is therefore important that lessons identified become organisational lessons learned by positive change being implemented.

Opportunities to undertake shared learning should always be documented and positively embraced. Lessons identified will be uploaded to the Joint Operational Learning System (JOL) and shared nationally in-keeping with the JESIP Doctrine. Shared Learning.

Post-Exercise Report

When the Trust has participated in an exercise, a post-exercise report should be compiled to document all aspects of the exercise and the Trust's involvement. This should contain information under the following suggested headings:

- Executive Summary
- Exercise Preparation Activity
- Aim & Objectives
- Exercise Format
- Programme of Events
- List of participants/Resources utilised
- Scenario
- Exercise Outcome (which objectives were met/not met and why)
- Exercise Evaluation
- Opportunities for Shared Learning
- Lessons Identified
- Recommendations/Action Plan
- Summary
- Photos

Once the report has been completed, it should be distributed to all exercise participants to comment on accuracy and any necessary amendments made. Once

finalised, this should then be submitted to the Trust’s Resilience & Specialist Operations Department.

Post-exercise reports should be completed by the manager responsible for planning the exercise on behalf of SCAS.

Post-exercise reports will contribute to the final annual report on the Trust’s exercise activity throughout the financial year.

Abbreviations

An explanation of all abbreviations can be found in Appendix 3 – Glossary.

Equality and Diversity

An equality and diversity impact assessment has been carried out on this policy – see Appendix 1 & 2.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored in the following way:

Standard /process / issue	Monitoring and audit Method	By	Committee	Frequency
The number of exercises attended by the Trust and if there is evidence of effective learning.	Annual exercise report including lessons identified and action plan.	RSO Team	Not Applicable	At least annually

Consultation and Review

A consultation exercise on the procedure will be carried out with the stakeholders listed below.

This procedure will be reviewed bi-annually.

Stakeholder or Group Title	Consultation Period (From-to)	Comments received (Yes/No)
All Managers and Staff		

Implementation (including raising awareness)

The implementation of this policy will be communicated to managers and staff within the Trust via the weekly newsletter 'Staff Matters.'

References

- Civil Contingencies Act (2004)
- NHS England Emergency Preparedness Response and Recovery Framework (2015)
- NHS England Core Standards for Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles – JESIP Doctrine

Associated documentation

- SCAS Command Policy
- SCAS Incident Response Plan
- SCAS Resource and Escalation Plan (REAP)

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment Form Section One – Screening

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy and is available on request to the public and internally via our [Staff Intranet](#).

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment Form Section Two – Full Assessment

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy and is available on request to the public and internally via our [Staff Intranet](#).

Appendix 3: Ratification Checklist

A Ratification Checklist for this policy is available on request.