Emergency Action Cards

For education, childcare and children's social care settings

These action cards provide quick-reference information to support settings during emergencies and disruptive incidents.

They are designed to complement, not replace, your emergency and business-continuity plans. You should adapt the actions to your local circumstances and arrangements.

Before an incident

- Adapt the cards to your setting and local arrangements.
- Add the name of the senior responsible owner and the location of your emergency plan.
- Make sure staff know how to access the cards and use them offline, making printed copies available, where appropriate.
- Test the cards as part of exercises and plan reviews.

During an incident

- Protect life and account for everyone.
- Follow your emergency plan and official advice.
- Maintain safeguarding, supervision and essential care.
- Record important decisions.
- Make communications accessible and use language that people understand.

Important!

- **Always call 999 if there is an immediate danger to life.**
- **Follow the emergency services' advice, if it differs from these cards.**

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Building failure or collapse

Structural damage, partial collapse or falling materials may present an immediate risk.

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Name of senior responsible owner	Location of setting-specific plan

Building failure can disrupt normal operations and access to the site, so avoid affected areas until they are confirmed safe.

Immediate actions

- Evacuate, if life or safety is at risk.
- Move to a safe assembly point and account for everyone.
- Maintain safeguarding and welfare arrangements.
- Prioritise vulnerable, SEND and medically reliant learners.
- Secure the site and inform parents and carers.
- Record key decisions.

Checklist

- ❑ Evacuation completed
- ❑ Emergency services contacted
- ❑ Everyone accounted for
- ❑ First aid and medical support available
- ❑ Essential medication available
- ❑ Safeguarding arrangements in place
- ❑ Parent and carers informed
- ❑ Alternative accommodation identified
- ❑ Site secured

Getting help

- **Immediate danger, serious injury or someone unaccounted for:** call 999.
- **Unable to maintain safe supervision or essential care:** seek support from your local authority, trust or proprietor.
- **Notify DfE** where appropriate.

Closing safely

- Do not re-enter damaged buildings unless authorised.
- Communicate closure arrangements.
- Ensure learners who are vulnerable, have SEND, or need medical support receive the assistance they need to stay safe.
- Put in place remote education.
- Record key decisions.
- Secure and cordon off affected areas.
- Activate business-continuity arrangements.

Reopening and recovery

- Reopen only when buildings have been declared safe.
- Follow professional advice.
- Confirm utilities, safeguarding arrangements.
- Consider temporary accommodation, if needed.
- Review lessons learnt and update plans.

Connectivity loss

Loss of internet, telephone or digital services, including wi-fi, mobile, VoIP, email and cloud systems. Digital services may fail even when internet access still works.

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Name of senior responsible owner

Location of setting-specific plan

Connectivity loss can disrupt safeguarding arrangements, emergency communications and safe operation. Activate offline or alternative arrangements early and ensure help can still be summoned.

Immediate actions

- Identify affected services and test available alternatives.
- Confirm how you will call 999.
- Account for everyone, using paper registers where needed.
- Move essential processes to working alternatives or offline arrangements.
- Nominate a communications lead.
- Share working contact routes with staff, parents and carers, plus relevant agencies, and monitor.
- Make essential records securely accessible offline: registers, emergency contacts, and medical, SEND and safeguarding information.

Checklist

- ❑ Affected services identified
- ❑ Route to call 999 confirmed
- ❑ Everyone accounted for
- ❑ Essential records accessible
- ❑ Safeguarding information accessible
- ❑ Referral routes confirmed
- ❑ Back-up communications available and tested

Getting help

- **Services unavailable:** contact IT support and service providers using a working alternative route.
- **Unable to maintain safeguarding or safe operation:** seek support from your local authority, trust or proprietor.

Do not

- Do not assume messages will arrive or back-ups using the same affected services will work.
- Do not use unapproved personal accounts, devices or storage.
- Do not leave sensitive records unattended or accessible to unauthorised people.
- Do not reconnect systems if you suspect there has been a cyber incident.

Operating offline

- Use working alternative routes for priority messages and confirm they have been received.
- Maintain manual records and logs.
- Store records securely.
- Use offline resources, where needed.

Restoration and recovery

- Confirm services are stable and safe before resuming normal use.
- Check delayed messages and outstanding referrals.
- Upload and reconcile manual records, checking for any omissions or duplicates.
- Dispose of temporary records securely, following local policy.

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Cyber attack

Locked accounts, ransomware messages, unusual emails or unexplained system failures could indicate a cyber attack.

Name of senior responsible owner	Location of setting-specific plan

Cyber incidents can happen with little warning. Early action, specialist support and clear communications can help reduce disruption and support recovery.

Immediate actions

- Follow your cyber response plan: https://cyber-security-hub.education.gov.uk/create-your-cyber-response-plan.
- If you don't have one, use the Department for Education's processes for cyber incidents: https://cyber-security-hub.education.gov.uk/processes-for-cyber-incidents
- Plan communications.

Checklist

- ❑ Response plan activated
- ❑ IT support contacted
- ❑ Specialist advice followed
- ❑ Communications issued

If you are experiencing an incident, access guidance: https://cyber-security-hub.education.gov.uk/

Getting help

- **Cyber incident suspected:** contact your IT team or IT provider.
- **Safeguarding concerns:** follow safeguarding procedures.
- **Personal data at risk:** contact your data protection lead.
- **Unable to operate safely:** seek support from your trust, local authority or proprietor.

Technical guidance

- **Business email compromise playbook:** https://cyber-security-hub.education.gov.uk/business-email-compromise-playbook
- **Ransomware playbook:** https://cyber-security-hub.education.gov.uk/ransomware-playbook
- **Extortion via AI playbook:** https://cyber-security-hub.education.gov.uk/extortion-via-ai-playbook

Recovery actions

- Restore system and services.
- Verify integrity.
- Review access controls.
- Reintroduce services safely.
- Monitor for further issues.
- Communicate updates.
- Review lessons learnt and update plans.

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Environmental hazards

Smoke from wildfires, major pollution, chemical releases or signs of contamination could indicate an environmental hazard. Not all contamination can be seen, smelled or felt.

Name of senior responsible owner	Location of setting-specific plan

Environmental hazards can affect health, attendance, travel and the safe operation of the setting. Consider whether routines need to be adapted or movement restricted, or the setting should be closed, if risks cannot be managed safely.

Immediate actions

- Move people away from the hazard.
- Follow official alerts and emergency advice.
- Turn off ventilation, if advised.
- Account for everyone.
- Support medical needs.
- Prevent access to affected areas.
- Prepare to shelter or evacuate.
- Maintain safeguarding.
- Record key decisions.

Checklist

- ❑ Everyone accounted for
- ❑ Windows and doors secured
- ❑ Official advice monitored
- ❑ Safeguarding maintained
- ❑ Medical needs supported

Getting help

- **Immediate danger or serious symptoms:** call 999 and follow the emergency services' advice.
- **Safe operation cannot continue:** seek support from your local authority, trust or proprietor through agreed emergency arrangements.

Do not

- Do not enter affected areas.
- Do not travel unless safe.
- Do not open windows or ventilation unless advised.
- Do not handle unknown substances.
- Do not share unverified information.

Closing safely

- Communicate closure arrangements.
- Supervise learners until they have been collected or alternative arrangements are in place.
- Ensure learners who are vulnerable, have SEND, or need medical support receive the assistance they need to stay safe.
- Put in place remote education.
- Record decisions.
- Secure the site.
- Avoid hazardous routes.

Reopening and recovery

- Reopen when safe.
- Follow official advice.
- Communicate reopening arrangements.
- Review lessons learnt.

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Extreme weather

Heatwaves, severe cold, snow, ice, flooding, heavy rainfall or strong winds may require operational adjustments.

Name of senior responsible owner	Location of setting-specific plan

Weather warnings, transport disruption, utility outages or deteriorating site conditions may indicate an extreme weather event. Extreme weather can disrupt attendance, staffing, site safety and normal operations.

Immediate actions

- Check weather warnings and local advice.
- Monitor indoor temperatures.
- Check for site hazards.
- Keep learners and staff safe.
- Monitor staffing and travel impacts.
- Update staff, parents and carers, and learners.
- Record key decisions.
- Activate continuity plans, if needed.

Checklist

- ❑ Weather warnings checked
- ❑ Local risks assessed
- ❑ Buildings and grounds checked
- ❑ Parents and carers informed
- ❑ Staffing levels reviewed
- ❑ Travel disruption assessed
- ❑ Remote education considered
- ❑ Mitigations in place

Getting help

- **Immediate danger:** call 999.
- **Buildings, access or staffing are unsafe, or closure is being considered:** seek support from your local authority, trust or proprietor through agreed arrangements.
- **Utilities disrupted:** contact the relevant utility provider.

Do not

- Do not close before considering mitigations.
- Do not ignore official weather warnings or local advice.
- Do not allow access to unsafe areas.
- Do not undertake unnecessary travel.
- Do not share unverified information.

Closing safely

- Communicate closure arrangements.
- Supervise learners until collected.
- Ensure learners who are vulnerable, have SEND, or need medical support receive the assistance they need to stay safe.
- Put in place remote education.
- Record key decisions.
- Secure the site.

Reopening and recovery

- Reopen when safe to do so.
- Communicate reopening arrangements.
- Review lessons learnt and update plans.

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Infectious disease

Illness outbreaks affecting children, young people, learners or staff may be indicated by increased absence, confirmed cases or public health advice.

Name of senior responsible owner	Location of setting-specific plan

Infectious disease can disrupt attendance, staffing, safeguarding and the continuity of education. Early action helps reduce spread and maintain safe provision.

Immediate actions

- Follow public health advice.
- Read the UK Health Security Agency's guidance, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities/a-to-z-of-infectious-diseases-in-children-and-young-peoples-settings
- Update staff, parents and carers, and learners.
- Assess staffing and attendance impacts.
- Maintain safeguarding.

Checklist

- ❑ Public health guidance followed
- ❑ Infection controls in place
- ❑ Sufficient staffing
- ❑ Safeguarding maintained
- ❑ Vulnerable learners supported
- ❑ Education maintained
- ❑ Communications issued

- Support vaccination sessions, if required.
- Notify your local authority or Department for Education contact ahead of severe disruption.

Getting help

- **Medical emergency**: call 999.
- **Outbreak advice needed:** contact your local health protection team: https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team
- **Severe disruption or potential closure:** seek support from your local authority, trust or proprietor.

Do

- Follow UK Health Security Agency advice.
- Support clinically vulnerable learners and staff.
- Review special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support needs.

Do not

- Do not close unless advised by public health authorities.
- Do not overlook safeguarding.
- Do not ignore rising absence.
- Do not share unverified information.

Closing safely

- Communicate closure arrangements.
- Ensure learners who are vulnerable, have SEND, or need medical support receive the assistance they need to stay safe.
- Put in place remote education.
- Record key decisions.
- Secure the site.

Reopening and recovery

- Reopen in line with public health advice.
- Communicate reopening arrangements.
- Review lessons learnt and update plans.

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National power outage

A widespread or rolling loss of electricity supply may be indicated by loss of lighting, heating or cooling, IT systems, communications, transport disruption or emergency alerts.

Name of senior responsible owner	Location of setting-specific plan

Power loss can affect safety, supervision, safeguarding, water supply, catering and education provision. Early action helps maintain safe operations and critical services.

Immediate actions

If your setting is open:

- Keep learners safe, warm and hydrated.
- Prioritise learners who are vulnerable, have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or rely on medical support.
- Fill potable water supplies.
- Record key decisions.
- Support independent travel, where appropriate.
- Monitor welfare and official updates.
- Maintain hygiene and use fresh food first.

Checklist

- ❑ Drinking water available
- ❑ Food available
- ❑ Heating and warmth available
- ❑ Essential medication available
- ❑ Safeguarding arrangements maintained
- ❑ Building security maintained

Getting help

- **Immediate danger or medical emergency:** call 999.
- **Power lost:** contact your network operator, if possible.
- **Essential care, water or supervision unavailable:** seek support from your local authority, trust or proprietor

Do not

- Do not close until all learners are collected and safe.
- Do not use greywater for drinking or food preparation.
- Do not rely on electronic systems.
- Do not assume messages have been received.
- Do not use unsafe heating, cooling, lighting or cooking equipment.

Closing safely

- Communicate closure arrangements.
- Supervise learners until they have been collected or alternative arrangements are in place.
- Ensure learners who are vulnerable, have SEND, or need medical support receive the assistance they need to stay safe.
- Record key decisions.
- Secure the site and monitor official updates.
- Prepare for wider community use, if requested.

Reopening and recovery

- Reopen in line with official advice.
- Prioritise vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers.
- Implement site adaptations as needed.
- Put in place remote education, where possible.
- Review lessons learnt and update plans.

Physical threat

Intruders, threatening behaviour, suspicious alerts, suspicious drone activity, hoax threats or emergency services advice may indicate a physical threat.

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Name of senior responsible owner	Location of setting-specific plan

Follow existing plans, emergency services advice and recovery arrangements. This card is intended as a prompt and does not replace local procedures.

Immediate actions

- Prioritise safety and welfare.
- Follow your plans and emergency services advice.
- Treat all threats as credible unless told otherwise by Police.
- Communicate clearly and support vulnerable individuals.
- Activate continuity arrangements.
- Refer to: **ProtectUK:** www.protectuk.police.uk/, **Counter Terrorism Policing**: www.counterterrorism.police.uk and **Run Hide Tell:** www.counterterrorism.police.uk/runhidetell/

Checklist

- ❑ Local plan accessed
- ❑ Risk assessment considered
- ❑ Senior leadership informed
- ❑ Emergency services contacted (if required)
- ❑ Safeguarding considered
- ❑ Communications lead identified
- ❑ Decisions recorded
- ❑ Responsible body informed

Getting help

- **Immediate danger or threat to life:** call 999.
- **Safeguarding or security concerns:** follow local procedures.
- **Unable to operate safely:** contact your trust, local authority or proprietor.
- **Specialist support required:** follow emergency services advice.

People, communications and recovery

- Provide wellbeing and trauma-informed support.
- Communicate with staff, learners, parents/carers.
- Follow local HR, health and safety and bereavement procedures.
- Maintain records and decision logs.

Reopening and recovery

- Reopen only when it is safe to do so.
- Follow professional and local advice.
- Communicate any changes to arrangements.
- Use alternative accommodation or staffing arrangements where needed.
- Review lessons learned and update plans.

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Water shortage

Low water pressure, official notifications, loss of drinking water or sanitation, or drought conditions may indicate a water shortage.

Name of senior responsible owner	Location of setting-specific plan

Water shortages can affect drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, catering arrangements and the safe operation of the setting. Early action helps maintain safe provision and critical services.

Immediate actions

- Confirm disruption duration and sources of support.
- Assess impacts on water, sanitation and catering.
- Prioritise vulnerable learners and maintain safeguarding.
- Update staff, parents and carers and learners.
- Keep provider contacts up to date.
- Monitor supplier updates and local advice.

Checklist

- ❑ Water provider contacted
- ❑ Drinking water available
- ❑ Toilets operational
- ❑ Handwashing facilities available
- ❑ Catering arrangements in place
- ❑ Safeguarding maintained
- ❑ Parents and carers informed
- ❑ Continuity plans activated
- ❑ Remote education considered
- ❑ Site safe to remain open or reopen

Getting help

- **Immediate danger or medical emergency:** call 999.
- **Water supply lost or potentially unsafe:** contact your water provider.
- **Essential water or sanitation unavailable:** seek support from your local authority, trust or proprietor.

Do not

- Do not close before considering mitigations.
- Do not assume bottled water will arrive immediately.
- Do not use non-potable water for drinking or food preparation
- Do not delay continuity plans.

Closing safely

- Communicate closure arrangements.
- Supervise learners until they have been collected or alternative arrangements are in place.
- Ensure learners who are vulnerable, have SEND, or need medical support receive the assistance they need to stay safe.
- Put in place remote education.
- Record key decisions.
- Secure the site.

Reopening and recovery

- Consider whether practical mitigations can allow your setting to remain open safely.
- Follow water company and authority advice.
- Update staff, parents and carers, and learners.
- Review lessons learnt and update plans.
- Check eligibility for water compensation.