

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans Review

Making it easier for people who can't easily evacuate our campuses in an emergency

Background:

For most people, getting out of the building when there is emergency is relatively straightforward. That said, emergency evacuation isn't easy for everyone; for example for people who aren't able to use the stairs easily, find opening doors difficult, or aren't able to hear an alarm.

As well as a duty to ensure that everyone can access its campuses the University is also required to ensure that in an emergency everyone is able to leave the building safely and in good time.

For these people it is really important to put in place the right personal emergency evacuation plan and ensure we have the right assistance in place should we need to help them leave the building.

Previously the University had a small number of incidents, all of which were successfully resolved, but that nonetheless highlighted we had more to do to improve how we managed personal emergency evacuation plans.

Activity:

Sustainable Futures was approached by Student and Academic Services to support the improvement, and resulting from a period of scoping the Dean of FECCI, Dr Sandra Cairncross, agreed to be the senior lead or sponsor for this activity.

A planning meeting with high level representatives from across the University, resulted in a piece of work planned consisting of two parallel linked working groups each approaching improving the personal emergency evacuation plan process on a different level, to

- a) help people firstly **get in place a personal emergency evacuation plan** and secondly to
- b) ensure we had the **right resources in place** should an personal emergency evacuation plan need to be **enacted**.

Both work streams met in a series of parallel workshops that included staff from across the University, as well as student representatives, to understand the issues with our current ways of working, explore future solutions, and scenario test these.

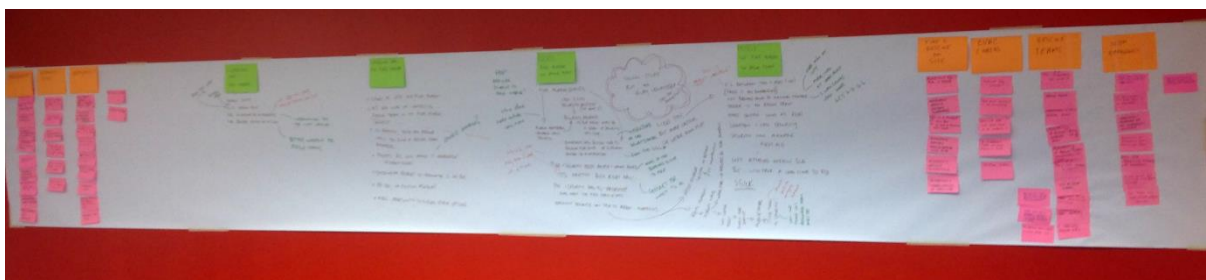


Image: Brainstorming exploring options for using a personal emergency evacuation plan at key times

In practice after the initial workshops members of each working group took on board significant further exploratory work around the options identified. This included to-be process mapping, communication planning and design, and process prototyping. This activity was fed back to Dr Cairncross, resulting in a report detailing the outcome of the two work streams which was successfully put to the University Leadership Team for approval.

Outcomes:

The University now has an improved and more comprehensive response to our legislative requirements around personal emergency evacuation plans, and can be confident that it is currently doing all it can to meet the needs of people unable to evacuate easily in an emergency.

Getting a plan in place

In practice for most staff less is required of them; academic disability contacts are no longer routinely required to be involved in the production of personal emergency evacuation plans, and we no longer need to maintain a large number of volunteer staff trained in emergency evacuation procedures.

For people requiring a personal emergency evacuation plan they should still be contacted by the relevant person as before.

The process for getting a personal emergency evacuation plan should be more straightforward, and should require fewer referrals; with the information flowing more clearly and quickly to the people who need to know.

At time of writing the teams are planning for communication out to their various stakeholders, informing them of the new processes.

Looking to collaboration moving forward, staff involved in the workshops feedback that they have a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, the work their colleagues undertake.

The difference involving Sustainable Futures made:

The discussions around personal emergency evacuation plans had been ongoing for some time. Sustainable Futures supported the institution to grasp the issue, ensuring that each stakeholder group was involved, as evidenced by outcomes sharing responsibilities across different areas.

Without the involvement of Sustainable Futures proactively influencing this activity it is likely that either the organisation would have been carrying significant unmitigated risk in relation to personal emergency evacuation plans, or that a solution would be perceived to have been “strong armed” in place.

However, the work did take longer than was originally proposed from initiation to completion. For subsequent events of this type it would be worth considering whether a rapid improvement event approach would make a better use of staff time, and result in a speedier implementation.

In addition to this being clearer around where recommendations are taken would assist in a more propitious timescale.

That said, the outputs of the PEEP workshop are a successful and significant step forward for the University on this difficult and important issue.

“It was helpful to have input from team in scoping problem, approach and managing the process.”

Enacting a plan

In the case of an evacuation, these instances are now going to be managed by Property & Facilities’ Security Team.

Securing a relatively small annual budget increase allows the Security team to increase the number of staffing on duty at any one time to a level that means we can know that we are able to offer the best level of response that we can, along with the redeployment of existing security vehicles, offer a fully co-ordinated response, at any time of day, any day of the year.

The addition of additional security resources has additional benefits, affording the opportunity for the security team to build better relationships across the campuses, and increase visibility of the staff.