



# Crisis management during a global pandemic

Country  
UK

Number of locations  
Multiple colleges

Number of employees  
4,300

Services included

- > Assessment of capability
- > Crisis management support and mentoring
- > Crisis communications planning
- > Leadership development
- > Change management
- > Development of enduring Crisis management response capability (a Crisis Management Plan – CMP)

## Client

Durham University

## Challenge

Durham University reviewed their response plan and concluded that it was unsuited to dealing with an enduring crisis of the COVID-19 scale and complexity. The institution tasked Berwicks with helping them prepare for the enduring global crisis whilst also being able to deal with “standard” major incidents. The university was not configured in structures or organisation to adapt rapidly and flexibly to the evolving crisis. Imperative was protection of staff and students, duty of care to the local community and continuity of education. This entailed significant change management with crisis as a catalyst and backdrop.

## Approach

Berwicks deployed crisis management, leadership and communications experts to work alongside the university senior management and review the institution’s plans and procedures. The university was already reasonably prepared and adaptive within its own core area and ahead of most of its peers. We started by embedding into existing procedures being overseen by a Crisis Planning Group to gain a deeper understanding of the people, planning and processes. A detailed analysis of existing documentation for managing incidents and crises was conducted.

By looking at the university’s existing emergency management capability and its readiness to respond effectively to multiple, complex risks; we could determine how best to implement a rolling period of change management to meet the nature of the crisis and ensure they developed an urgent crisis management Initial Operating Capability. Feedback was provided directly to the CEO’s Advisory Group. Leadership advice and mentoring was provided to individuals. Media scanning identified potential crisis points. Crisis communications support and advice was provided. Further leadership training options were developed to address. For the longer term, a comprehensive and stress tested Crisis Management Plan will be the end state.

## Results

Berwicks enduring support to the institute will persist to get an initial operating capability fully functioning and to eventually deliver a full operating capability for crisis management. Our consultants have extensive experience of applying leadership experience to develop effective crisis and emergency management structures whilst remaining alive to organisational cultural sensitivities.

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