

SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

ISARR INCIDENT MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY

Swansea University was established in **1920**, and is currently celebrating its centenary. A World class research University in the top quartile of UK Universities, it provides an outstanding undergraduate and postgraduate education and overall experience for **25,000** students over two main campuses (Singleton Park and Bay Campus), some 5 miles apart. Its academic success is mirrored by its sporting and cultural success and it is proud of its community and commercial links both locally and globally. With a large student population from **142** separate countries supported by **4000** staff it is essentially a small town with all the complexities that this brings for security and incident management.

THE CHALLENGE

Responding to the Security/Incident Management needs of such a large, disparate organisation required an Incident Management System that is discrete, responsive and agile.

AN OUTDATED REPORTING SYSTEM



The University's Security/First Response Team had an in-house reporting system that had outlived its operational usability. It had been designed around a database that lacked functionality and flexibility, as well as the ability to direct information in a timely manner to where it was most needed. Access to this system had grown exponentially across the University with an apparently unrestricted user base. As a result, the system had slowed down significantly due to the numbers of users with access; with too many people having the database open at once.

It lacked flexibility around recording of incidents and had no evidential methodology attached to the construction of reports. The most significant issue was that anyone on the database could see all information. There were issues with **confidentiality and GDPR compliance**. Finally, it had limited functionality for producing management information or escalating incidents to the appropriate level and could not be used to manage major incidents, specifically, raising the response level from the "Bronze" (Immediate Response Team) to the broader "Silver" (Incident Management Team) and meeting their remit to keep the University's "Gold" (Senior Management Team) informed regardless of time or location.

OLD SYSTEM

- Lacked functionality and flexibility
- Unable to share information in a timely manner
- Slow
- Lacked flexibility around recording incidents
- No evidential methodology
- Difficult to produce management information/escalate incidents
- Significant privacy and security issues

In addition, the First Responder Team required an ability to **produce credible first evidence** for disciplinary procedures, coroners court, court of law or police and HSE investigations. Together with the ability to produce timely, accurate and meaningful management information. A vital requirement was to restrict access to those who require information to assist a response or facilitate longer term action, with the ability to escalate the original report without the originator seeing additional confidential information. In other words the ability to target information. Finally, a coherent record of incidents was needed that could be interrogated for training or lessons identified - this aspect is essential for the continual improvement required by a professional Emergency Response structure.

THE SOLUTION

Moving forward, it was clear any new system must be easy to operate during a high tension, complex situation with a user friendly front end that enabled speed and accuracy of input. It had to be intuitive for users, reducing any training burden. A lesson that had previously been learnt from the complex, bespoke Business Continuity Management System used by the University. In simple terms it should; maximise the use of dropdown fields; provide for the use of templates and prompts that standardise inputs; increase search functionality and improve report content and construction that in turn facilitates uniformity of entries to achieve a good evidential standard.

Following extensive “due diligence” of the Incident Management System Market and a competitive tender process (as required by the Official Journal of European Union) ISARR was selected by Swansea University as the method of recording all First Responder incidents that range from security incidents and first aid issues to wellbeing and mental health issues, including suicide intervention.

It is also used for Major Incident Management raising the response required for a major incident to the on-call Incident Management Team. Critically, it enables the sharing of discrete information to support organisations, such as the HR department or Student Services. Mark James (one the campus security supervisors) said of ISARR: ***“It has been an outstanding success on a number of levels. I cannot believe we ever operated without it. We now have the level of information security that we require, fully compliant with DPA / GDPR and the reporting system is now structured ensuring the capture of the required information for each type of incident”.***

In addition Ceri Rowe the University’s Security Services Manager added: ***“The evidential standards have improved significantly through use of the system, with a guided process for completing reports. I also found the provision of a management information module essential for both tactical and strategic planning.”***

Ultimately, in a resource and financially challenged environment, such as Higher Education, the accessibility of information can now assist in providing a true reflection of the security services department workload and therefore planning for demand and tailoring the service accordingly. This evidence **supported the requirement for a call-off contract** that was recently let, to help manage increased periods of demand, thus enabling a flexible, tailored response to short, sharp increase in demand for the Security/First Responder Teams.

RESULTS

ISARR has given University’s departments and the Senior Management Team a true appreciation of the risk, threats and demand contingent with running what is in essence small towns with significant student numbers accommodated on each campus. Thus reflecting the diverse issues of a multicultural population that require a timely multi-department / multi-agency response. As a result, its use has expanded across the University and it has been taken up as the go to system for several departments and demand for the information product is rising.

MAJOR INCIDENT MANAGEMENT



Significantly, it facilitates a cradle to grave view of incident management. This was clearly evident during a recent **major incident - a large fire in the College of Engineering**. The system allowed duality of reporting – recording the immediate response to the incident whilst providing off-site briefings in a timely manner to the on-call Silver Incident Management Team. The event had a significant secondary dynamic in that the building at the source of the fire was due to be used at 6am the next morning for the “clearing process”, the system of selecting students in the UK who have not made the grade for their original University choice. This process is binary with 80% activity taking place on one day and worth is £34M to the University. In other words failure on the day would see potential additional students would go elsewhere - there is no “second bite at the cherry”.

The failure of this critical event would have a significant impact on the University’s financial viability long term. ISARR not only allowed the initial incident to be managed, but facilitated the timely briefing of the senior response team. Most significantly, it also allowed the Business Continuity Team to manage the wider impact of the event, resolving very quickly the “Clearing Process” issue. Despite the significance of the fire, the response across the University was exceptional – I doubt this could have been managed this effectively without ISARR. Over the coming days it also aided reputational integrity providing **unequivocal evidence in response to a rogue reporter’s uniformed, inaccurate online story.**

CONCLUSION

The introduction of the ISARR Incident Management System to Swansea University has proven to be cost effective, operationally capable and extremely flexible. It takes pressure off the response team with ease of input and provides a clear coherent report and metrics for after event follow-up action. Most importantly, the reports meet first evidence standards for a UK court of Law or enquiry. It is flexible with the ability to be tailored for bespoke needs and local protocols. Importantly, it has the ability to provide unequivocal evidence for senior management regarding the current response capability to meet change in demand or environmental circumstance. This is important as the threats and issues facing Higher Education are extremely dynamic.



The flexibility and ability to bespoke many features of the system through working with the ISARR team has meant that it is a living system that has grown with use, providing additional functionality that can only be achieved through user experience and feedback. I can't overstate how refreshing this is – in real terms ISARR is an "off-the-shelf" product that can also be easily tailored to your bespoke needs. A real winner in my book!

- Ceri Rowe, Swansea University, Security Services Manager



Ceri (Swansea University Security Services Manager) and a VIP visitor receiving honorary doctorate from Swansea University, during which ISARR was extensively used by the First Response Team and VIP's support team.

ABOUT ISARR

ISARR is a bespoke risk, resilience and security management solution that supports organisations in protecting their people, assets and reputation. The system is highly configurable and personalised to your organisation and operational requirements, and has the flexibility to adapt to your needs over time. The ISARR platform consists of a number of modules that are interconnected, so you get more out of each component when they work together, but they can also be used individually. For more information visit www.isarr.com.

