

# Fire Safety Policy

Chester House and its properties are managed by the Guy Chester Centre. The Guy Chester Centre is the trading name of the Trustees of the North Bank Estate.

## 1. PURPOSE OF POLICY

- 1.1. In accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, the Fire Safety Act 2021 and relevant provisions of the Housing Act 2004, this document serves as the Guy Chester Centre's Fire Safety Policy and Emergency Plan. It is intended to inform all residents at Chester House and users of the buildings and grounds throughout the Guy Chester Centre (GCC), of the fire safety procedures implemented by GCC, their individual responsibilities in the event the fire alarm sounds, or a fire is discovered, and how these align with local building regulations and fire codes.

## 2. FIRE SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1. The Centre Director is appointed as a 'Responsible Person' by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP), acting on behalf of the Methodist Church for Great Britain. The Responsible Person has overall legal responsibility for fire safety in the premises, including conducting fire risk assessments, implementing and maintaining appropriate fire safety measures, ensuring equipment is in working order, and providing information, instruction, and training to staff on fire safety procedures and emergency plans. While they may delegate specific tasks to others, the Responsible Persons remain ultimately accountable for fire safety compliance.
- 2.2. GCC must provide fire safety information as soon as reasonably practicable upon arrival and annually thereafter, to all its tenants and residents, including but not limited to: emergency evacuation procedures, information regarding fire doors and instructions on how to report a fire.
- 2.3. GCC recognises the importance of protecting people and property from the risk of fire and providing the necessary fire protection and firefighting equipment.
- 2.4. All users of GCC premises including, but not limited to, staff, volunteers, residents, contractors, guests, tenants, and members of the public, are to adhere to this policy.
- 2.5. It is the responsibility of the Responsible Person, to ensure that all users are aware of this policy and their responsibilities within it.
- 2.6. Non-compliance with this Fire Safety Policy may result in disciplinary action, which may include:

**For residents:** Disciplinary action as outlined in the *Resident Disciplinary Policy*.

**For staff:** Disciplinary action in accordance with GCC employment policies.

**For the public:** Being asked to leave the premises and/or being permanently excluded from the premises and/or site.

**In all cases:** Potential referral to the appropriate authorities.

## 3. CONTINGENCY PLANNING



- 3.1. If a fire at GCC is deemed a major incident by the Centre Director, GCC's *Major Incident Policy* would be applied.

#### **4. FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS**

- 4.1. GCC conducts fire risk assessments of its buildings, grounds, and activities annually or if there are any significant changes to the buildings, grounds, or activities during that time.
- 4.2. The completed risk assessments are kept in the Fire Safety Folder in the main office at Chester House and a copy is saved electronically.

#### **5. FIRE TRAINING**

- 5.1. All users of the buildings will be made aware of this Fire Safety Policy, their responsibilities and what to do in the event of a fire alarm either verbally or by the fire information displayed around the buildings.
- 5.2. Designated GCC staff and volunteers will receive fire marshal training from an external agency. Training on GCC's fire alarm system and procedures will be provided by the Responsible Person.

#### **6. FIRE SAFETY PROCEDURES**

##### **6.1. ENTERING AND LEAVING THE PREMISES**

- 6.1.1. All staff must sign in and out in the Chester House main office (main office) upon their arrival to work and when they leave.
- 6.1.2. Residents are not required to notify the main office of their entering or leaving the premises.
- 6.1.3. Resident's visitors are not required to notify the main office of their entering or leaving the premises and are the responsibility of the resident they are visiting.
- 6.1.4. All visitors and contractors must sign in and out at the main office.
- 6.1.5. The main office notification requirement does not apply to individuals entering or leaving the following locations, which are separate from the Chester House accommodation: Chester House tenants (Preschool, Article Ltd.), private lettings.
- 6.1.6. Members of the public that use the North Bank grounds do so at their own risk and do not need to notify anyone.

##### **6.2. IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE ALARM**

- 6.2.1. In the event of an alarm at Chester House, the on-duty Fire Marshal will:
- Collect the fire panel keys, radios, and resident list from the main office. If during normal working hours, they will also collect the staff and visitor lists.
  - Proceed to the main fire panel to determine the location and nature of the alarm.
  - Assess the situation and decide whether to investigate the affected area first or immediately call the emergency services.
  - If smoke or flames are visible, immediately call the emergency services.



- 6.2.2. If available, the Deputy Fire Marshal (a trained employee) will join the Fire Marshal at the main panel. The Deputy will collect a radio, resident list, and gate padlock keys from the master key bundle. During normal working hours, the Deputy will also collect staff and visitor lists. The Deputy Marshal will then proceed to the designated assembly point, where they will ensure all employees and visitors are accounted for (during normal working hours only).
- 6.2.3. All trained Fire Marshals have their own fire marshal hi-visibility vest that must be worn during a fire alarm event.
- 6.2.4. Using the radios, the Fire Marshal will stay in constant communication with the Deputy Fire Marshal. If the Fire Marshal decides to investigate the alarm, they must inform the Deputy Fire Marshal of the location they are heading to and their intended route.
- 6.2.5. If the alarm is false, the Fire Marshal will reset the system and inform the Deputy Fire Marshal to give the 'all clear'. Once the Deputy Fire Marshal is satisfied that all persons have evacuated, the 'all clear' will be given.
- 6.2.6. If the alarm is real, the Fire Marshal will contact the emergency services and inform the Deputy Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal will then go directly to the front of the building and wait for the emergency services by the second entrance. The Deputy Fire Marshal will move all evacuees to the other side of the building depending on the location of the fire until further instructions are given by the emergency services. The Deputy Fire Marshal may be required to lead all persons away from the building using one of the gated exit points on the site.
- 6.2.7. In the event of severe weather, and with the approval of the emergency services, the Deputy Fire Marshal can move the evacuees into a safe part of the building once the location of the alarm is known. No one is allowed to go to any other part of the building without the permission of the emergency services.
- 6.2.8. Once the emergency services have been called no-one must re-enter the building until told to do so by the emergency services.
- 6.2.9. If no Deputy Fire Marshal is available, the Fire Marshal will conduct an investigation and, if deemed necessary, contact the appropriate emergency services. They will then go to the assembly point and move all evacuees to the appropriate area, or give the 'all clear.' After that the Fire Marshal must go to the front of the building to await the emergency services (if called). If possible, and if no Deputy Fire Marshall is available, the Fire Marshal will designate an appropriate individual to support them with the evacuation.
- 6.2.10. A fire alarm procedure document is provided to all Fire Marshals to use as a quick and easy guide. This document is also available in the main office, by the fire panel and in the public area of the website.

### **6.3. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF RESIDENTS, TENANTS AND THEIR GUESTS**

- 6.3.1. Chester House does not require residents to sign in or out. In the event of a fire alarm, staff will not conduct a check to confirm all residents have evacuated.
- 6.3.2. Each resident at Chester House is responsible for understanding the fire safety procedures and evacuating promptly using the nearest fire exit when the alarm sounds. Upon arrival, (and annually thereafter for returning residents) residents will be shown the fire exit route and designated assembly point.



- 6.3.3. There are Fire Action Notices throughout the building and in every bedroom at Chester House to inform residents of how to act in the event of the fire alarm sounding. The fire safety information in the Residents' Area of the website can be accessed by all residents and is updated regularly.
- 6.3.4. Residents are responsible for ensuring that their visitors evacuate in the event of a fire alarm.
- 6.3.5. Residents must immediately report any fire safety concerns they have to the Responsible Person or to the accommodation team; including but not limited to: damaged fire doors, obstructed exits, or malfunctioning fire safety equipment.
- 6.3.6. Residents and tenants must not prop open any fire doors. Fire doors must be kept shut when not in use.
- 6.3.7. Residents at Chester House or their guests should not tamper with self-closing devices on fire doors.
- 6.3.8. Residents at Chester House who endanger the buildings or individuals at Guy Chester Centre, including those who fail to evacuate during an alarm, may face warnings or eviction, depending on the severity of their actions.

#### **6.4. VISITORS AND CONTRACTORS**

- 6.4.1. All visitors and contractors (for GCC) must sign in and out at the main office.
- 6.4.2. Visitors and contractors that are not accompanied by someone from GCC during the whole of their time on site will be informed of the emergency evacuation procedures and shown the assembly point.
- 6.4.3. The sign in sheet will be used to ensure that all visitors and contractors have safely evacuated in the event of a fire alarm.

#### **6.5. EVACUATION SUPPORT AND REFUGE POINTS**

- 6.5.1. In the event of a fire alarm at Chester House, any persons who are unable to evacuate directly to the assembly point must go immediately to the nearest refuge point.
- 6.5.2. Any individual that cannot evacuate without support will have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). A designated Competent Person from the accommodation team will create this with the resident based on a questionnaire assessment.
- 6.5.3. The PEEP will give details of an individual's barriers to easily exit from the building and the actions or equipment required to aid their exit. The plans will be shared with all staff and kept in the Fire Safety Folder. Details of any residents who have a PEEP in place will be shared via the handover document.
- 6.5.4. If the PEEP shows that support to evacuate is required, then designated assistance will be given. The details of which will be written on the PEEP form.
- 6.5.5. The accessibility lift that operates from the first floor to the ground floor must not be used in the event of a fire.

#### **6.6. KITCHEN AND CATERING STAFF**



- 6.6.1. The kitchen is managed and run by an external agency. The external agency is responsible for the fire safety training of all contracted staff. GCC is responsible for ensuring that adequate fire detection and prevention equipment are in place and regularly checked by a qualified engineer.
- 6.6.2. In the event of a fire alarm at Chester House, the kitchen extractor system will stop operating and the gas safety valve will be automatically activated.
- 6.6.3. In the event of a fire alarm at Chester House, all staff from the kitchen must evacuate immediately to the assembly point via the internal stairs.
- 6.6.4. In the event of a fire alarm and the fire is in the kitchen, the kitchen staff must immediately evacuate using the safest route. Only if trained and it is safe to do so, kitchen staff can attempt to extinguish any gas burners or open flames, however they must prioritise personal safety and leave the kitchen if the fire cannot be quickly controlled.
- 6.6.5. If there are residents in the dining room at the time of the alarm, the kitchen staff should assist in the evacuation by marshalling those residents to the assembly point.
- 6.6.6. The kitchen management is responsible for ensuring that all their staff and guests have evacuated safely and for informing the Deputy Fire Marshal if this is not the case.

#### **6.7. CHESTER HOUSE TENANTS' STAFF AND VISITORS**

- 6.7.1. Besides student residences, Chester House rents ground floor space to the '345 Preschool' (northeast wing) and an independent business, 'Article Ltd.' (northwest corner), each accessible via separate entrances.
- 6.7.2. In the event of a fire alarm all persons in the areas occupied by 345 Preschool and Article Ltd. must immediately evacuate to the agreed assembly point.
- 6.7.3. For Article Ltd., which has its own entrance, the assembly point is at the front of the building near the entrance.
- 6.7.4. For 345 Preschool, which also has its own entrance, the main assembly point is the outside area within their rented space. If they are unable to evacuate this way, a secondary exit can be used that provides a route to the main assembly point of Chester House. This secondary exit automatically unlocks when the fire alarm sounds.
- 6.7.5. The Fire Marshal will need to give both tenants the '*all clear*' when it is appropriate to do so.
- 6.7.6. Both organisation's staff are responsible for ensuring that all staff and visitors are aware of what to do in the event of a fire alarm. They are also responsible for ensuring that all persons have evacuated safely and for informing the Deputy Fire Marshal if this is not the case.

#### **6.8. NORTH BANK ESTATE AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

- 6.8.1. The North Bank Estate is a private estate. The extensive grounds and woodland of the North Bank Estate are surrounded mainly by private houses. The boundaries are as follows: a section of Page's Lane and Colney Hatch Lane to the north and east, the rear of Whitehall Lodge to the west, the rear of Kings Avenue to the southwest, and the back of Queens Avenue and Woodbery Crescent to the south and southeast.



Members of the public are permitted to use the grounds of the estate at the discretion of GCC and other estate users. Access to the grounds is controlled by locked gates.

- 6.8.2. GCC recognises the dangers of arson and accidental fires (such as those caused by discarded cigarettes). To address these risks, regular perimeter checks are conducted to maintain a secure environment.
- 6.8.3. Emergency vehicle access to the grounds is possible at two points. The first is on Meadow Drive allowing access to the southeast corner. The second point is off Pages Lane into the Muswell Hill Methodist Church's car park. This gives access to the north of the grounds.

## **6.9. ESTATE USERS**

- 6.9.1. GCC has three estate users that could, in the event of a fire, impact on the safety and welfare of GCC property and individuals.
- 6.9.2. The Meadow and Paddock, part of MHA, are situated at the very south of the estate away from any GCC buildings. While GCC does have joint responsibility for the access road to this area, Meadow Drive, these buildings do not pose a major risk to GCC.
- 6.9.3. The Muswell Hill Tennis Club is located just inside the south end of the GCC grounds. The club consists of one small club house and four tennis courts. The tennis club is away from GCC buildings and does not pose a major fire risk.
- 6.9.4. The Muswell Hill Methodist Church (MHMC) is situated to the west of GCC and is on the perimeter of the GCC grounds. There is a moderate risk to GCC due to the close proximity of the MHMC building to GCC buildings.
- 6.9.5. Where needed, GCC will offer support and advice to the estate users to ensure that the entire estate is kept as safe as possible. Any joint working practices between the GCC and other estate users will be noted in this policy.

## **6.10. STAFF AND RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

- 6.10.1. GCC has several staff and tenant occupied flats: two one-bedroom bungalows situated in the Chester House Quad area, two flats above the garages opposite the rear entrance to the Chester House Hub, four flats in the Stables on the north side of the Estate (accessed via Pages Lane) and six flats in the Hazlehurst building (accessed via Colney Hatch Lane). All these flats are external to the main GCC building.
- 6.10.2. Each flat has an independent smoke alarm that is mains operated. Each alarm is tested before the beginning of a new tenancy. No smoking is allowed in any of the flats.
- 6.10.3. Annual checks are carried out of all flat entrance doors.

## **6.11. HOT WORKS**

- 6.11.1. Contractors will be required to provide a Method of Work statement for any hot works and, if satisfactory, will receive permission from the Responsible Person.
- 6.11.2. Hot works carried out by the GCC maintenance team will be risk assessed and permission granted by the Responsible Person.



## **7. HEIGHT OF LARGEST BUILDING**

- 7.1. GCC's largest building, Chester House contains 157 bedrooms and one fully accessible bedroom. All rooms are situated across four floors including the ground floor. The height of the building, measured from the upper floor surface of the top storey to the ground floor level on the lowest side of the building is approximately 10 metres. This measurement excludes anything above the upper floor surface of the top storey i.e. loft space and roof.

## **8. FIRE ALARM TESTS, DRILLS AND FIRE SAFETY CHECKS**

- 8.1. The building has a fully functional Fire Alarm System. Smoke/heat detectors and call points are fitted throughout the building and are maintained under contract with fire safety company, Scutum. All bedrooms have a remote indicator on the outside of the room to clearly show if the detector in the room has been activated.
- 8.2. The fire alarm at Chester House is zoned with each detector and call point programmed into a zone. A list of the zones is kept by the fire alarm panel along with building plans marked with the zones. The panel is set up with a zone location description for each zone that is in use.
- 8.3. Each component of the fire alarm system at Chester House is tested quarterly by an approved contractor. The contractor conducts a systematic test of all system components annually.
- 8.4. Every Wednesday at 2:15pm, Chester House staff test a different fire call point to ensure it functions properly and the alarm is audible throughout the building. Results are logged in the Fire Safety Folder, and any necessary repairs are immediately reported.
- 8.5. Controlled fire drills are carried out at Chester House when required, for training purposes or if there has not been a fire alarm event in four months. When organising a controlled fire drill, the time of the day to carry it out will be considered, e.g. daytime or evening, to ensure that all users of the building are able to experience a fire alarm event. Staff will be informed of the date of the drill. All building users are expected to treat it seriously and follow the procedures as set out in the Fire Action Notices. Some drills may be used to test staff and residents' knowledge of their alternative fire exits. Each drill will be logged with any issues that arise noted.
- 8.6. For unscheduled fire alarm activations, the cause and actions taken must be recorded in the log.
- 8.7. All staff at Chester House are responsible for visually inspecting each area they enter for fire hazards, such as items blocking fire exits or corridors, or combustible materials near heat sources (e.g., paper or fabric on or near electrical devices). The facilities and maintenance teams primarily conduct these daily visual checks as part of their routine duties. Any hazards or required remedial actions are reported to the relevant persons.
- 8.8. The accommodation team performs a thorough Fire Safety Check every Monday, completing the Fire Safety Checklist located in the Fire Safety Folder.

## **9. FIRE PROTECTION, FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT AND THE FIRE ALARM**

- 9.1. Fire-resistant doors, designed to withstand fire for 30 minutes and equipped with intumescent strips to prevent the spread of fire and smoke, are installed on all bedrooms, key areas, and corridors throughout Chester House.
- 9.2. Fire doors must always remain closed when not in use and all have door closers to ensure this happens.





- 9.3. Quarterly checks of all communal fire doors (i.e. once every three months) are carried out by a Competent Person or Responsible Person at Chester House. Communal doors include doors to stairways and lobbies, cross corridor doors which subdivide corridors, doors to storage and electrical equipment cupboards and doors to riser shafts within which various services run. Doors must be effectively self-closing (or, in the case of cupboard and riser doors, are kept locked shut). Self-closing doors should fully close into their frames when the doors are opened at any angle and released.
- 9.4. Annual checks of all flat entrance doors are performed by the Responsible Person.
- 9.5. Fire Extinguishers are provided throughout the Chester House building and are maintained annually by an authorised engineer. All firefighting equipment has signage detailing its use.
- 9.6. Emergency lighting is installed throughout all GCC buildings.
- 9.7. A short test of all emergency lighting is carried out every month by a Competent Person. A full 3-hour test is carried out annually by an authorised engineer/approved contractor. Key switches or distribution board breakers are used to switch the emergency lights on.
- 9.8. Any issues with an emergency light are recorded on the test sheet. All remedial work is carried out by the in-house maintenance team or an approved contractor.

## 10. KEY ESCAPE ROUTES

- 10.1. The escape routes from the ground floor are:
- Follow corridor to reception and use fire exit to Quad.
  - Follow corridor to nearest staircase and go up one level to fire exit to Quad.
- 10.2. The escape routes from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and NBC floors are:
- Down nearest staircase to fire exit to Quad.
  - Down alternative to fire exit to Quad.
- 10.3. The escape routes from the Hub are:
- Follow corridor to main reception and use fire exit to Quad.
  - Exit using Games Room patio doors to courtyard, go up steps to path and walk to Quad.
- 10.4. The escape routes from the Kitchen are:
- Exit through main dining room, downstairs to main reception and use fire exit to Quad.
  - Down Kitchen staircase to the front of the building.

## 11. THE FIRE MARSHALS

- 11.1. The Fire Marshal is the employee on duty who has received fire warden training.
- 11.2. The Deputy Fire Marshal is the soonest trained employee to respond at the time of the alarm.

## 12. POWER ISOLATION IN ALL PREMISES

- 12.1. For Chester House, including the bungalows and garage flats, the gas intake location is under the kitchen stairs. The electrical intake location is in the boiler house.





- 12.2. The electrical intake location for the Stables flats is in the under stairs cupboard in the entrance hall. The gas is located on the exterior wall on each side of the building for the individual flats.
- 12.3. For the Hazlehyrst flats the mains electricity is located in the cupboards inside the entrance to flats 1, 3, 5 and 6. The gas is located on the exterior wall on each side of the building for the individual flats.

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