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BUILDING SAFETY GUIDE

BENCHILL COURT

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Wythenshawe
Community Housing Group

KEEPING SAFE AT HOME

Keeping safe in our homes is important to all of us. This leaflet is for everyone over the age of 16 who lives in your building, and outlines:

- What Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) is doing to keep you safe
- What you can do to keep yourself and your neighbours safe
- How you can be involved in building safety decisions
- How to keep your household safety information up to date
- How to let us know when something's not right.

Whether you've already let our Neighbourhoods team know that you may need help in case of a fire, have joined us on one of our regular 'Walkabouts' or already make sure you keep fire exits clear, we'd like to thank you for helping to keep homes safe.

Please keep this booklet safe so you know what to do in an emergency and who to contact when you need advice, support, or to report an issue.



Victoria Finn
Building Safety Manager



Robert MacDougall
Head of Assets and Building Safety

If you need this translated or in a more accessible format, email inclusionanddiversity@wchg.org.uk or call 0300 111 0000.

ABOUT BENCHILL COURT

Benchill Court is a high-rise, purpose-built block of apartments that was built in 1962. It has 12 floors connected to one staircase.

The main staircase, and doors leading to it from the walkway, are made from materials that are able to resist fire. It is important to keep the staircase, walkways and all communal areas clear of obstacles so that residents and the Fire Service can use them easily and safely.

The walls and doors that divide the apartments from the common areas are constructed from fire retardant materials that will prevent flames and smoke from spreading in either direction. It is important your apartment front door and the common doors throughout the building are regularly inspected and never propped open.

The apartments are fitted with fire and smoke detectors and a sprinkler system which is monitored via a panel in the foyer area and is linked to a remote alarm monitoring centre.

All these features mean your building is designed to contain a fire in the area where it starts (e.g. in an apartment or common area) and stop it spreading to surrounding areas (e.g. common area or an apartment). Benchill Court is designed as a 'Stay Put' block. This means if there is a fire elsewhere in the building, you should be able to stay safe in your apartment unless you are asked to evacuate by the Fire Service.



EVERYONE HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER SAFE

TO KEEP YOU SAFE, WE WILL ENSURE:

- Your home and block are safe for you to live in and meet correct regulations, including a smoke alarm in every property
- Fire doors are properly maintained to meet legal standards
- You have well lit escape routes at all times
- Systems and processes are in place to ensure anyone working in your block is competent to do so
- We communicate with other organisations such as the Fire Service to keep you safe
- Maintain and monitor the CCTV system and invest in upgrades where required to improve building security
- Upgrade security measures to communal areas, including improvements to scooter room doors
- Install additional protection to emergency door release systems to prevent tampering and improve safety
- Provide digital messaging screens within lift lobbies to improve communication with residents about building safety and important updates.

YOU CAN HELP BY MAKING SURE YOU:

- Keep an eye on your cooking at all times
- Check your smoke alarms are working once a week by pressing the button to ensure it sounds
- Are available for the annual check of heating and smoke alarms
- Use the fixed heating system fitted in your home. If this isn't possible, only use a convector heater in your hallway
- Ensure chargers and cables are the model meant for the device, and from reputable sources i.e. CE marked
- Switch off and unplug all electrical appliances overnight (apart from those that should be left on, like a fridge)
- Keep exits from your home clear so that people can escape if there is a fire
- Keep door and window keys accessible. If you need keys to unlock your front door keep them in the same safe place so you can grab them easily in an emergency
- Always close doors at night, particularly the kitchen and lounge
- Keep lighters and matches out of sight and reach of children.



IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT YOU:

- **DO NOT** tamper with any entry door or wedge them open, this includes the internal doors in your home
- **DO NOT** block bin chutes or use them to dispose of lighted materials
- **NEVER** light BBQs on balconies, communal areas or landings
- **DO NOT** smoke in any communal area in your building including internal stairwells and corridors, and bin chute rooms. Smoking triggers the fire alarm and alerts the Fire Service, leading to unnecessary cost.
- **DO NOT** use a radiant heater, especially one with a flame (gas or paraffin) or a radiant element (electric bar) as these are prohibited in your building
- **DO NOT** use a chip pan - we will provide an air fryer in exchange free of charge
- **DO NOT** overload electrics - one plug for one socket
- **DO NOT** use damaged or frayed electrical cords
- **DO NOT** leave burning candles unattended and ensure they are extinguished when you leave the room.

Please report any issues or concerns to Wythenshawe Community Housing Group, particularly around fire safety.

IF WE ALL PLAY OUR PART, TOGETHER WE WILL KEEP YOUR HOME AND EACH OTHER SAFE



Benchill Court has been built in such a way to protect the people in it from fire. It is important to remember if a fire starts in your home that you have a plan to evacuate and stay safe.

IF A FIRE BREAKS OUT IN YOUR FLAT:

- Leave the flat as quickly as possible
- **DO NOT** try to remove any possessions or personal items from your flat
- Close your flat door securely behind you
- Tell your immediate neighbours
- Raise the alarm and call 999 as soon as you can
- Evacuate the building using the **stairs** and **NOT** the lift
- Go to the fire assembly point outside the building.



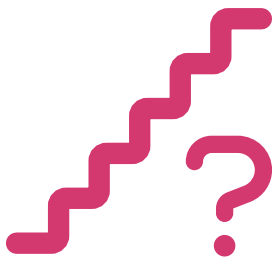
IF A FIRE BREAKS OUT ELSEWHERE IN THE BUILDING:

- If you consider it safe to do so you can stay in your flat
- Keep your flat door closed securely
- Close all internal doors and remain in a room with a window
- Gather towels and sheets for use if smoke enters your flat door. If it does, dampen the towels/sheets and place them around the bottom of the door to prevent smoke entering
- The fire alarm will only sound if the Fire Service wish to evacuate the block. When this occurs, alarms will activate throughout the block, and you should immediately exit the building via the stairs
- If you think it is unsafe to stay in your flat, your flat is threatened by fire and smoke, or you are told to leave your flat by the Fire Service, evacuate the building using the **stairs** and **NOT** the lift
- **DO NOT** return to your flat until you have been told it is safe to do so.

WHAT IF I CAN'T MANAGE THE STAIRS?

If a fire is in your flat and you can't use the stairs, you should alert your neighbours immediately. Go to another flat and close the door until the Fire Service advises you otherwise.

If you're unable to do this, make your way to the nearest staircase and await advice from the Fire Service. If you have a mobile phone, inform the Fire Service or Wythenshawe Community Housing Group of your location.



CALLING THE FIRE SERVICE

The Fire Service must be called to all fires, and you must do this as soon as possible.

1. Dial 999 from any telephone
2. Ask for the Fire Service and if requested give the telephone number you are calling from
3. When connected to the Fire Service, tell them clearly where the fire is. You are at:

BENCHILL COURT, BENCHILL COURT ROAD, WYTHENSHAW, M22 4GJ.

Do not hang up until the Fire Service has correctly repeated the address back to you. The Fire Service cannot help if they do not have the correct details.



KEEPING YOU SAFE

The walls, doors and floors of this building are designed to resist fire and stop the spread of smoke.

Fire doors must be closed when they are not in use.

Outside of the building, the area has been designed so emergency vehicles can get as near as possible to the building. These areas must be clear at all times.

Fire door
keep closed

PLANNING

Take time to think about how you would exit the building and where the doors to the stairways are.

It's important escape routes are kept clear at all times.

Think about the corridors you use and what they would be like filled with smoke. Even external corridors can become filled with black smoke.

If you would not be able to use the stairs during an evacuation, e.g. mobility problem or visual impairment, please get in touch with our Neighbourhoods team on 0300 111 0000.



COMMUNAL AREAS, LANDINGS, LOBBIES AND STORAGE AREAS

To keep safe, all communal areas, landings, lobbies and storage areas must be free of obstructions, including door mats, furniture, rubbish bins, books, pushchairs and bicycles. Items found in communal areas will be removed immediately and stored for three weeks after which they will be disposed of if they are unclaimed.

Combustible items cannot be stored inside or outside in any communal area within the block. If combustible items are found in communal areas, they will be removed without warning and disposed of immediately.

If you see something that is not working as it should, please report this by contacting your Building Safety Officer or call us on 0300 111 0000.



CHUTES AND RUBBISH

DO NOT dispose of batteries or vapes in your rubbish. Please ensure your rubbish bags **DO NOT** block the chutes and that smoking materials are fully extinguished.

DO NOT smoke in bin chute rooms. Smoking triggers the fire alarm and alerts the Fire Service, leading to unnecessary cost.



ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

Take extra care when using electrical items in your home, such as hair straighteners, mobile heaters and electric blankets.

Extension leads should be fully unwound and plugged directly into a socket. **DO NOT** overload sockets as this can be dangerous.

All electrical and white goods such as fridge freezers, washing machines and dryers need to be safe for use.

The Government issues information on products that have been recalled by the manufacturer because they could cause a fire.

Visit www.gov.uk/product-safety-alerts-reports-recalls



SCOOTERS

Please let us know if you have a scooter, e-scooter or mobility scooter.

All scooters should be stored in the designated area and never in communal areas or landings.

The scooters should be charged between 8am and 8pm and never overnight.

Scooters must **NOT** be taken into lifts.

Scooters should have an annual service and adequate insurance.

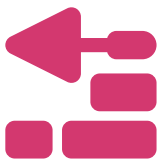


ALTERATIONS TO YOUR FLAT

You must ask us for permission before making alterations to your flat or any doors or door furniture. This includes having broadband installed to your home.

The flats are designed with fire protection features and these should **NOT** be tampered with or removed.

If you wish to discuss alterations to your flat, you can contact us on 0300 111 0000 or email customerenquiries@wchg.org.uk



IMPORTANT!

You should familiarise yourself with the important plans and notices in the lobby area of your building. Any important fire safety information will be updated here along with any notices from the Fire Service.



RESIDENTIAL PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANs (RPEEPs)

If you would need help to evacuate in the event of a fire, you must tell us. This could be because of a disability, reduced mobility, or a temporary difficulty with mobility. We will arrange a visit for you to have a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA). Following this, a Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (RPEEP) may be created for you.



CHECK AND MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Tom Porter, our Building Safety Officer, checks your building each week.

All essential fire fighting equipment, including communal fire doors, door release mechanisms, fire alarms, sprinklers in service areas, fire fighting lifts and riser mains, are checked monthly.

Our Heating and Electrical team inspect the front entrance fire doors annually.



ANNUAL FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

We work closely with our Fire Risk Assessors who undertake annual risk assessments and recommend remedial action to keep the blocks in a safe condition.



GREATER MANCHESTER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

We work actively with Greater Manchester Fire Service to reduce incidents in your block. We share information about this on notice boards.



REPORTING AN ISSUE

If you need to report a fire safety issue, you can:

- use the 'High rise safety concern' form on the [Contact us page](#) of our website
- call our Customer Hub contact centre on 0300 111 0000
- contact our Building Safety team directly, details below. Their information can also be found in the lobby area of your building.

If you'd prefer to stay anonymous, please select that option if completing the form, or tell us if calling.



Building Safety Manager
Victoria Finn
07525 905 048



Building Safety Officer
Tom Porter
07525 905 042



Building Compliance Support Officer
Vicky Hartill
07410 944 436

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAFETY OF YOUR BLOCK?



BUILDING SAFETY TEAM

The Building Safety team are here to ensure activities that take place in your building are carried out in such a way as to not compromise it and your safety. They are also here to ensure your voice is heard for anything related to fire safety in your building.



COMPLIANCE

Deliver regular and statutory servicing and maintenance of key facilities in the building such as lifts, electrics, fire safety equipment, hot water and other systems.



NEIGHBOURHOODS

Manage all aspects of tenancy and estate management issues, anti-social behaviour and allocations.



REPAIRS

Maintain your home to a good condition. When repairs are reported they will arrange for them to be completed by the correct technician.



CLEANING

Ensure the building is maintained to a good standard, keeping communal areas clear and clean.



INVESTMENT

Deliver major improvement projects, including kitchen and bathroom replacements, lift upgrades, rewiring, fire door renewals, sprinkler installations and cladding replacements, as they become due.



CUSTOMER FEEDBACK TEAM

If you are not happy with the service from one of the above teams you can contact the Customer Feedback team who will look into what has happened.

CALL US ON 0300 111 0000

GET INVOLVED

HIGH RISE LIVING FORUM

Our High Rise Living Forum is made up of residents like you who meet every three months to discuss building safety and other subjects affecting residents. The Forum is part of our commitment to ensuring you have an opportunity to influence building safety decisions. You are very welcome to join the group, please call 0300 111 0000 or email getinvolved@wchg.org.uk to find out more.

WALKABOUTS

Each month your Neighbourhood Officer will visit your building to check for any building safety issues in communal areas, and listen to any concerns or issues you may have. Join them on the:

Fourth Tuesday of the month at 10am.

Please meet in the building lobby.

Your Neighbourhood Officer for Benchill Court is
Karen Heslop



IN THE FUTURE

Please let us know if you have any suggestions for changes to this guidebook.

Is there more information you would like? Can we make it easier for you to get involved in building safety decisions?

We review this guidance every year and we'd like to hear your views.

As well as inviting your general feedback, there will also be times when we'll ask for your opinions about decisions we need to make that impact you. To do this we may send you a letter, email or survey to complete, or invite you to a meeting. You will usually have 3 weeks to respond to the consultation, sometimes longer.

We will always feedback the outcomes of these consultations to you, usually on our website and noticeboards in your building - keep a look out.

You can find a full copy of our Resident Involvement Strategy on the [Get involved page](#) of our website www.wchg.org.uk



KEEPING **EVERYONE** SAFE

Would you or anyone in your household need help to evacuate your building in an emergency?

For example if you have any mobility issues or a visual impairment? Please let us know by calling 0300 111 0000. It may be necessary for a Neighbourhood Officer to visit you in your home, and for a further visit from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.



Is your information up to date?

It is important we have up-to-date information for who lives in our buildings in case of an emergency. This means you need to update your resident information if someone moves in or out, or if you or any members of your household have any medical conditions.

Call us on 0300 111 0000 or scan the QR code to update your information now.



You may need to download a free QR Scanner using your App Store on older phones/tablets.

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