



March 2025

BUILDING SAFETY AT BENCHILL COURT

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.



Karen Heslop

Neighbourhood Officer for Benchill Court



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



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 - WCHG will provide an electric deep fat 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.



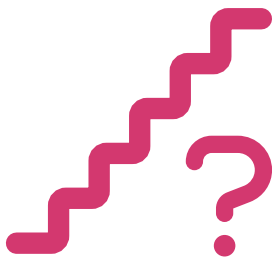
IF A FIRE BREAKS OUT ELSEWHERE IN THE BUILDING:

- 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 WCHG of your location. You can inform WCHG via the concierge service or by calling Assure24 on 0161 946 9501.



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 in communal areas within the building. 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

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. We share this information on our website under [“Our Services > Building and Fire Safety”](#).



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.

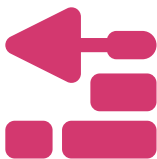


ALTERATIONS TO YOUR FLAT

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.



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.



WALKABOUTS

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

Join your Neighbourhood Officer on the:

Fourth Tuesday of the month at 10am.

Please meet in the building lobby.



Karen Heslop
Neighbourhood Officer for
Benchill Court



WHO IS 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.

ASSURE24



Monitor CCTV, door entry, fire, sprinkler and lift alarms so that there is always 24 hour support in the event of an emergency situation. Contact Assure24 by calling 0161 946 9501.

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.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

PERSONAL RESCUE EMERGENCY PLAN (PREP)

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



NOTICEBOARDS

There are important plans and notices in the lobby area you should familiarise yourself with. Any important fire safety information will be updated here along with any notices from the Fire Service.



ANONYMOUS REPORTING

You can report fire safety issues anonymously by completing the form at the bottom of the [“Our Services > High Rise Safety”](#) page on our website. Alternatively you can phone the numbers provided in this leaflet and ask to remain anonymous.



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



HIGH RISE LIVING FORUM

The 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 to find out more.



LISTENING TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Feedback from residents helps us to understand your concerns and gives us a chance to make things right. Below are some examples of feedback we've heard from customers in the last year and the changes we've made to put things right.

If there's something you'd like to discuss, we want to hear from you. Email us at complaints&praise@wchg.org.uk.



YOU SAID

-  We weren't answering calls quickly enough during some very cold weather.
-  You've been waiting longer than usual for your calls to be answered by our Customer Hub.
-  Sometimes you had little or no information about lift maintenance or during breakdowns.
-  You don't always get the information you need, when you need it and operational communication can sometimes be poor.

WE DID

-  We have set up a group to look at our plans during extreme weather.
-  A call back service is now available to help reduce your waiting time after an increase in calls.
-  We can now send text messages to your mobile about any scheduled maintenance or lift breakdowns.
-  We're producing a new communication strategy and will give regular progress updates on its delivery to our CXC. They will make sure we deliver real improvements.

YOU SAID

-  Some residents at several high-rise blocks said that repairs did not always resolve a leak long term.
-  Residents raised concerns about the poor condition of walkway surfaces to deck access walk-up flats.
-  Residents at some blocks complained of leaks and water staining to their ceilings.
-  Lifts only providing access to alternate floors is inconvenient, especially when one lift is broken or undergoing maintenance.

WE DID

-  Roofing renewal works were brought forward and have now been completed.
-  The renewal of walkway surfaces was added to a programme of upgrades and the work was completed.
-  We identified some internal waste pipes are degrading and at the end of their life. We brought forward the programme of renewals and have since completed the work.
-  We worked with residents to upgrade the specifications and make investments to improve the lift service, ensuring it serves both floors. This work is due to complete 2024-25.

GET INVOLVED

HIGH RISE LIVING FORUM

Join our High Rise Living Forum. Residents meet with officers once every three months and we'd be delighted if you wanted to find out more. Email getinvolved@wchg.org.uk

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.

In addition to 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 our website on the [“About Us > Our Policies and Strategies”](#) page.

CONTACT THE BUILDING SAFETY TEAM

Contact details for your Building Safety Manager and Building Safety Officer can be found in the lobby area of your building for reporting fire safety issues.



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



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 an Officer to visit you in your home, and for a further visit from Greater Manchester Fire & 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 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.

Second Edition: March 2025