
Fire Safety Policy

Municipal and Carter Owen Almshouse

Bree Norton-Smith - 20 March 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Fire Safety Policy is to protect **residents, staff, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and visitors** by ensuring the charity's almshouse premises are safe, compliant, and prepared for emergencies.

This policy applies to all almshouse properties owned or managed by the Charity and supports compliance with UK fire safety legislation, including:

- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**
- **Fire Safety Act 2021** and **Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022**
- **Building Safety Act 2022**, Section 156 (information duties)
- **New Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans) (England) Regulations 2025**, enforceable from **6 April 2026**, requiring PEEPs and evacuation planning for vulnerable residents in certain residential buildings.

The policy also aligns with **The Almshouse Association Standards of Almshouse Management (2025)**.

2. Principles

The Charity is committed to:

1. **Protecting life first**, then property and continuity of services.
2. Maintaining the almshouses as **safe, well-managed homes in line with regulatory expectations**.
3. Ensuring all fire safety measures are planned, implemented, and reviewed by **competent persons**.
4. Supporting vulnerable residents by providing **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)** where required.
5. Ensuring clear communication of procedures to residents, staff, trustees, and contractors.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Trustees (The Responsible Person - Carol Evans)

Trustees hold overall responsibility for fire safety compliance, including:

- Ensuring a legally compliant fire safety framework is in place.
- Providing adequate resources for fire safety training, equipment, and maintenance.
- Approving fire safety policies and receiving regular reports.

3.2 Warden - Pat Anderson / Clerk - Bree Norton-Smith

A “competent person,” as defined in GOV.UK guidance

Responsible for day-to-day implementation:

- Keeping fire safety systems operational and arranging servicing by competent contractors.
- Maintaining fire safety records, logs, and compliance certificates.
- Supporting resident engagement, including identifying residents needing PEEPs.

3.3 External Contractors

Must be demonstrably competent and responsible for:

- Testing, inspecting, and maintaining alarms, emergency lighting, extinguishers, and other installations.

3.4 Residents

Residents are expected to:

- Follow fire safety guidance in their Resident Handbook.
- Avoid creating fire hazards (e.g., unsafe electrical use, obstruction of routes).
- Inform staff if they may require support in an evacuation (mobility, sensory, or cognitive needs).

4. Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)

The Charity will ensure:

- A **suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessment** is undertaken and reviewed regularly.
- Recommendations are acted upon promptly, following best practice set out by the NFCC/HSE and British Standards.
- Additional **Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments (PCFRAs)** are conducted for vulnerable residents where necessary under 2026 regulations. When a resident is no longer able to evacuate safely and independently (not including brief periods of illness or injury) then they no longer qualify as a beneficiary of the charity and discussions will take place about more suitable accommodations.

5. Fire Safety Arrangements

5.1 Fire Detection, Alarm, and Emergency Response

The almshouses will maintain:

- Compliant **fire detection and alarm systems** tested and serviced regularly by competent professionals.
- Clear procedures for raising alarms and calling emergency services.

5.2 Firefighting Equipment

- Extinguishers will be installed in communal facilities **where justified by the FRA** (such as Communal Kitchen, Laundry Room, Office)
- In line with specialist advice, extinguishers will **not** normally be installed on escape routes used solely by residents, who may not have training.

5.3 Means of Escape

- Escape routes will be kept clear, illuminated, and appropriately signed.
- Doors required for egress must remain functional, unlocked where necessary, and unobstructed.

6. Evacuation Planning & PEEPs

6.1 Standard Evacuation Procedures

The Charity will maintain written procedures covering:

- Actions on discovering a fire
- Evacuation routes and assembly points
- Procedures for night-time or reduced-staff scenarios
- Practice drills at appropriate intervals

6.2 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

Under the Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans (England) Regulations 2025 April 2026):

- The Charity must identify residents who may require assistance due to mobility, sensory, or cognitive needs.
- A **PEEP** must be created for each such resident, in consultation with them.
- Plans must be kept up to date and accessible to emergency responders.

7. Training and Instruction

The Charity will ensure:

- Staff and wardens receive appropriate **fire safety and awareness training**.
- Residents receive clear written and verbal information on alarm signals, escape routes, and fire precautions.
- Contractors and visitors are made aware of emergency procedures.

8. Record Keeping

Records maintained will include:

- Fire risk assessments and reviews
- System maintenance certificates
- Alarm test logs
- Evacuation drill records
- PEEPs and PCFRAs for relevant residents
- Staff/warden fire safety training logs

These records form part of the Charity's governance and may be reviewed by the Fire & Rescue Service or insurers.

9. Roles and Responsibilities During Fire Alarms

The following roles apply **whenever a fire alarm sounds**, whether during normal hours, out of hours, or during incidents requiring evacuation. These responsibilities reflect the expectations on dutyholders and competent persons under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and associated guidance.

9.1 Trustees (Responsible Person - Carol Evans)

Although trustees are not expected to attend an incident, their responsibilities include ensuring:

- Clear alarm and evacuation procedures exist and are understood by staff and residents.
- A management structure is in place to oversee fire safety and ensure staff fulfil their duties during alarms.
- Staff and wardens are trained and competent in responding to alarms.

9.2 Warden (Lead On-Site Role - Pat Anderson)

During any fire alarm activation, the Scheme Manager or warden acts as the **lead coordinator**, responsible for:

Immediate Actions

- Attending the panel or alarm point as soon as safely possible.
- Confirming whether the alarm is due to a fire or false activation (only if safe to investigate).
- Calling emergency services if there is any sign of fire or doubt about the cause, consistent with fire safety guidance.

Evacuation Support

- Assisting residents to evacuate (**only if it is safe to do so**) prioritising those with known mobility, sensory or cognitive needs and following each resident's PEEP.
 - This is required under the Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans) Regulations 2025, which mandate evacuation planning for vulnerable residents.
- Ensuring escape routes remain clear and directing residents to the designated assembly point.

Communication

- Providing essential information to attending Fire & Rescue Service crews, including:
 - Known location of incident
 - Details of vulnerable residents
 - Updates from PEEPs or Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments (PCFRAs), as required under the 2026 regulations.

9.3 On-Site Support Staff (Trustees, Clerk)

If present, support staff assist the Scheme Manager through:

- Door-to-door welfare checks if safe to do so.
- Helping evacuate vulnerable residents in accordance with their PEEPs.
- Guiding residents towards escape routes and assembly points.
- Preventing re-entry to buildings until authorised by the Fire & Rescue Service.

9.4 Residents

Residents should:

- **Evacuate Immediately** when the alarm sounds, using the nearest safe exit, as directed in their resident handbook.
- Proceed calmly to the assembly point (**Carpark by Garages**) and remain there until told otherwise.
- Notify staff as early as possible if you believe they will need help evacuating in future, prompting review or creation of a PEEP.
- Follow all instructions given by staff or wardens.

Residents **must not** use fire extinguishers unless they are trained to do so—a policy supported by sector guidance advising extinguishers should not be placed for untrained residents.

9.5 Contractors and Visitors

- Must follow all instructions given by staff or wardens during an alarm.
- Contractors should stop work immediately and make safe any equipment where possible before evacuating.
- Contractors and visitors must report to staff at the assembly point so they can be accounted for.

This aligns with charity policy guidance requiring contractors to comply with safety procedures.

9.6 Out-of-Hours Procedure

Where no staff are present onsite:

- Residents must evacuate immediately.
- The community alarm/monitoring service must contact the on-call warden or Scheme Manager.
- The on-call responsible person must attend where required and liaise with emergency services. This approach aligns with established fire safety management policies for charitable residential settings.

10. IN THE EVENT YOU DISCOVER A FIRE (Resident/Staff/Visitor, All Persons)

- **RAISE THE ALARM** (shout Fire to alert other residents or use or press the alarm).
- **Leave Immediately** do not attempt to take belongings or fight the fire
- **Close Doors** behind you to contain Fire and Smoke

- **Check Doors** (before opening doors, check if it is warm with the back of your hand, if it is warm do not open it.
- **Stay Low** If there is smoke crawl along the floor
- Call **999** or use **Careline** to contact Emergency Services when it is safe to do so.

10. Monitoring, Review & Continuous Improvement

The policy will be:

- Reviewed at least **every 2 years**, or earlier if legislation changes or incidents occur.
- Updated in line with evolving legislation
- Monitored through regular checks, audits, and trustee reporting.

This policy has been approved for issue by the board of trustees of Municipal and Owen Carter Almshouse.

Signature:

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Name:

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Date:

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