

# Chipping Norton Dementia Active Centre

## Fire Evacuation and Fire Safety Procedure

Combined version: this Chipping Norton-specific procedure has been prepared using the current Chipping Norton Fire Risk Assessment and strengthened with the generic fire safety, prevention, training, dementia-support, and risk-assessment content from the general fire emergency procedure. Site-specific Chipping Norton arrangements have been retained, including the first-floor location, three fire exits, one lift, evacuation chair, main car park assembly point, PEEP requirements, and possible stay put/refuge arrangements subject to formal approval through the fire risk assessment.

<b>Centre</b>	Chipping Norton Dementia Active Centre
<b>Floor level</b>	First floor dementia centre
<b>Layout</b>	First-floor centre with toilets, quiet rooms, offices, side rooms, activity areas, storage areas, and other member areas as applicable
<b>Fire exits</b>	Three fire exits from the first floor
<b>Lift</b>	One lift is present. The lift must not be used during fire evacuation unless it is confirmed as a certified/designated evacuation lift in the fire risk assessment.
<b>Accessibility</b>	Evacuation chair available. Wheelchair users and people with limited mobility must be supported in line with their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, staff training, moving and handling guidance, and current risk assessment.
<b>Assembly point</b>	Main car park
<b>Fire alarm arrangements</b>	Fire alarm arrangements must be confirmed. Staff must know how to raise the alarm and the alarm must be audible and recognisable throughout the centre. Fire alarm testing must be recorded where an alarm system is fitted.
<b>Members supported</b>	People living with dementia, including wheelchair users and people who may need reassurance, direction, supervision, physical assistance, evacuation chair support, or support to manage confusion, distress, wandering, or reluctance to leave.
<b>Evacuation strategy</b>	Immediate evacuation using the nearest safe exit wherever possible. Possible stay put/refuge arrangements for wheelchair users must only be used if formally approved through the fire risk assessment and must not mean leaving anyone alone.

**This procedure should be checked against the current fire risk assessment for the premises and reviewed regularly by the Responsible Person, Fire Warden, or competent fire risk assessor.**

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all members, staff, volunteers, visitors, and contractors can be moved to a place of safety quickly, calmly, and safely in the event of a fire alarm, suspected fire, smoke, or instruction to evacuate.

The procedure also provides a planned response so that everyone understands their responsibilities, the building can be evacuated safely, and people are moved to a place where they are not in danger.

Because members are living with dementia, staff must assume that people may not understand danger, may not respond to alarms or instructions, may become distressed, may try to remain inside or return inside, or may need repeated reassurance and physical guidance. The key responsibility of everyone in the team is to ensure members do not panic, feel safe, and are helped to leave in a calm and controlled manner.

### 2. General Principles

1. Raise the alarm immediately if it is not already sounding or if fire, smoke, a burning smell, or another serious fire risk is discovered.
2. Call 999 and request the Fire and Rescue Service.
3. Begin evacuation immediately using the nearest safe exit wherever possible, unless the current fire risk assessment gives a different approved strategy for a specific area or person.
4. Do not use the lift during fire evacuation unless it is confirmed as a certified/designated evacuation lift in the fire risk assessment.
5. Use the evacuation chair only where needed, safe, and operated by trained staff.

6. Use approved PEEP, refuge, or stay put arrangements only where they have been formally confirmed in the fire risk assessment.
7. Move members calmly and directly to the main car park assembly point.
8. Do not allow anyone to re-enter the building until the Fire and Rescue Service or authorised responsible person confirms it is safe.

### **3. Fire Warden / Person in Charge Responsibilities**

The Fire Warden or Person in Charge is responsible for managing the response to a fire or suspected fire. All staff and volunteers must follow their instructions.

- Take control of the evacuation.
- Collect the attendance register, visitor book, staff rota, and emergency contact information if safe to do so.
- Confirm which of the three exits are safe to use.
- Direct staff to support members to the safest available exit.
- Ensure wheelchair users and people needing assistance are supported according to their PEEP.
- Ensure the evacuation chair is used only by trained staff and only where required.
- Confirm whether any person is missing, trapped, awaiting evacuation, in a refuge, or subject to a stay put arrangement.
- Liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service on arrival and give clear information about anyone remaining in the building.

No one should attempt to tackle a fire unless they are trained, it is safe to do so, they have a safe exit behind them, and evacuation is not delayed. Staff and volunteers must never put themselves or members at risk.

### **4. Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities**

- Stop activities immediately when evacuation is required.
- Stay calm and speak clearly.
- Guide members to the nearest safe exit unless directed otherwise by the Fire Warden or Person in Charge.
- Support wheelchair users and people with limited mobility in line with their PEEP.
- Check toilets, quiet rooms, offices, side rooms, activity areas, storage areas, and nearby member areas only if safe to do so.
- Close doors behind them where possible to slow the spread of smoke and fire.
- Report immediately if a member refuses to move, becomes distressed, cannot be evacuated safely, is missing, or may be in a refuge or stay put area.
- Do not spend time collecting personal belongings, coats, bags, or paperwork unless this is safe and does not delay evacuation.

### **5. Raising the Alarm and Fire Detection**

The current fire risk assessment states that fire alarm arrangements must be confirmed. Staff must know how to raise the alarm, and the alarm must be audible and recognisable throughout the centre. Fire alarm testing must be recorded where an alarm system is fitted.

Until all alarm details are confirmed locally, staff must follow the agreed site procedure for raising the alarm, alert the Fire Warden or Person in Charge immediately, and call 999 or make sure another named staff member does so.

- Any person discovering fire, smoke, a burning smell, or another serious fire risk must raise the alarm immediately.
- Staff must respond immediately when the alarm or evacuation instruction is given.
- Members who do not respond to alarms must be supported directly by staff.
- Alarm arrangements and staff response should be tested during drills.

### **6. Procedure if Fire Is Discovered**

9. Raise the alarm immediately using the agreed site alarm procedure.
10. Shout for help if needed and alert the Fire Warden or Person in Charge.
11. Call 999, or make sure another named staff member does so.
12. Leave the area immediately if there is danger.

13. Close the door behind you if safe to do so.
14. Begin evacuation if safe.
15. Do not attempt to fight the fire unless trained, safe to do so, and evacuation is not delayed.

## **7. Procedure on Hearing the Fire Alarm or Evacuation Instruction**

16. Stop activities immediately.
17. Reassure members using calm, simple instructions.
18. Begin evacuation using the nearest safe exit.
19. Support wheelchair users and people with limited mobility according to their PEEP.
20. Use the evacuation chair where required and only with trained staff.
21. Check nearby rooms if safe.
22. Close doors behind staff where possible.
23. Proceed to the main car park assembly point.
24. Complete the roll call.
25. Report missing persons, refuge occupants, stay put arrangements, or anyone awaiting evacuation immediately.

## **8. Evacuation Routes and Means of Escape**

There are three fire exits from the first floor. Staff should use the nearest safe exit unless directed otherwise by the Fire Warden or Person in Charge, or unless the route is blocked by smoke, fire, or obstruction.

- All three exits must be kept clear.
- Escape routes must be checked daily.
- Fire doors must not be wedged open.
- Staff must know all three exit routes.
- Staff must know which route is safest for wheelchair users.
- The evacuation chair must be accessible at all times.
- Members must be guided to the main car park assembly point.
- Staff must never lead members through smoke or toward visible fire.

## **9. Wheelchair Users, Evacuation Chair and PEEPs**

Wheelchair users are a significant consideration because the centre is on the first floor. Any member who may not be able to leave the building safely without support must have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, or PEEP.

- The person's mobility needs.
- Whether they use a wheelchair, walking aid, or need physical support.
- Which fire exit is safest for them to use.
- Whether they can transfer from their wheelchair or use stairs with support.
- Whether the evacuation chair is required.
- Whether one or two staff members are needed.
- How staff should communicate with them during evacuation.
- Any dementia-related needs, including confusion, distress, refusal to leave, or risk of wandering.
- Any moving and handling requirements.
- Any equipment needed to support evacuation.

The evacuation chair must be maintained, accessible, and checked regularly. Staff must be trained and competent to use it, and there must be enough trained staff on duty to evacuate wheelchair users safely.

### **Evacuation Chair Use**

26. Move the person to the agreed transfer point or refuge area if safe.
27. Reassure the person using calm, simple language.
28. Apply brakes to the wheelchair before transfer.
29. Transfer the person using approved moving and handling techniques.
30. Secure the person in the evacuation chair using the fitted straps.
31. Two trained staff should operate the chair unless the equipment instructions and risk assessment allow otherwise.
32. Evacuate by the agreed stair route.

33. Move the person to the main car park assembly point.
34. Do not return the evacuation chair upstairs during the incident unless instructed by the Fire and Rescue Service or Fire Warden and it is safe.

## 10. Possible Stay Put or Refuge Arrangement

A stay put or refuge arrangement for wheelchair users or people who cannot immediately use the stairs must only be used if the building has a suitable protected refuge area and this is formally approved through the fire risk assessment.

It must not simply mean leaving someone alone on the first floor. No member should be left alone unless the fire risk assessment specifically allows a safe, supervised refuge process.

- A designated protected refuge area.
- Fire-resisting construction confirmed by the fire risk assessment.
- Communication between the refuge and the Fire Warden or Person in Charge.
- Staff training.
- A clear trigger for when evacuation chair use begins.
- A backup plan if the refuge becomes unsafe.

The Fire and Rescue Service must be told immediately if anyone remains in the building or refuge area, including the person's name, exact location, mobility needs, whether they are in a wheelchair, whether an evacuation chair is available, whether staff are with them, and the safest known access route.

## 11. Supporting Members with Dementia

Staff should use calm, simple instructions and avoid lengthy explanations during evacuation. Staff should not rely on members understanding alarms, signs, or written instructions.

- Approach from the front where possible.
- Use the person's name.
- Speak slowly and calmly.
- Give one instruction at a time.
- Avoid saying "fire" repeatedly if this increases distress.
- Use familiar staff to guide anxious members where possible.
- Offer an arm or gentle direction where this is part of the member's care plan.
- Keep members moving steadily toward the exit.
- Avoid confrontation if a member refuses; request support immediately.

### Suggested phrases

- Come with me.
- We are going outside.
- You are safe.
- This way, please.
- Everyone is meeting outside.
- I will stay with you.

## 12. Main Car Park Assembly Point

The assembly point is the main car park. At the assembly point, staff must keep members safe, supervised, and reassured until further instruction is given.

- Keep all members together.
- Move members away from traffic routes, emergency vehicles, and building entrances.
- Use staff to form a clear boundary around the group where possible.
- Complete a roll call.
- Keep members warm and reassured.
- Do not allow members to smoke, wander, or return to the building.
- Wait for further instruction from the Fire Warden, Person in Charge, or Fire and Rescue Service.

## 13. Roll Call

The Fire Warden, Person in Charge, or nominated Assembly Point Lead must check:

- Members present.
- Staff present.
- Volunteers present.
- Visitors present.
- Contractors present.
- Any person known to be in a refuge or awaiting evacuation.
- Any person missing.

Missing persons must be reported immediately to the Fire and Rescue Service. Staff must not re-enter the building to search unless instructed by the Fire and Rescue Service.

## 14. Fire Prevention and Daily Checks

The Fire Warden or nominated staff member should make sure:

- All three fire exits are clear.
- Escape routes are unobstructed.
- Fire doors close properly and are not wedged open.
- The evacuation chair is present, accessible, and maintained.
- Emergency lighting is working where applicable.
- Fire alarm arrangements and tests are recorded where applicable.
- Fire alarm call points or alarm controls are accessible where fitted.
- Signage is visible and not blocked.
- Combustible items are kept away from heaters, sockets, and kitchen or refreshment equipment.
- Electrical equipment appears safe.
- Attendance records and visitor records are accurate.
- Staff know which members may need support to evacuate.

## 15. Fire Risk Assessment

The following risk assessment table combines generic fire safety controls with the Chipping Norton fire risk assessment. It should be checked, signed, and kept under review by the Responsible Person or a competent fire risk assessor.

Hazard	Prevention and controls	Needs action / Yes-No / Notes
Sources of potential ignition: electrical equipment, kitchen or refreshment equipment, heaters or heating systems, extension leads, overloaded sockets, chargers, portable electrical items, faulty lighting or appliances, TV monitors, sound system, and office electrical equipment.	Electrical equipment should be visually checked before use and PAT tested where applicable. Fixed equipment should be serviced in line with manufacturer guidance. Staff must report burning smells, damaged leads, overloaded sockets, faulty appliances, or equipment that becomes hot. Fire alarm arrangements must be confirmed and alarm testing recorded where applicable.	
Sources of combustible fuel: paper, files, books, activity materials, craft supplies, furniture, soft furnishings, curtains, cushions, waste bins, cleaning materials, coats, bags, mobility equipment, stored items, and flammable substances.	Keep combustible materials to a minimum. Do not allow paper, rubbish, packaging, coats, bags, or activity materials to build up. Bins should be emptied at the end of sessions. Cleaning materials and any flammable substances must be stored safely and controlled by risk assessment.	
Oxygen sources and airflow allowing smoke or fire to spread.	Open doors and windows and general airflow can help smoke or fire spread. Doors should be closed behind staff where possible to slow the spread of smoke and fire, but evacuation must never be delayed to close doors.	
Members may not understand alarms or instructions.	Members living with dementia are at increased risk because dementia may affect their ability to understand danger, respond to alarms, follow instructions, or evacuate independently. Staff must provide calm, direct, dementia-specific support and one instruction at a time.	High priority: staff training in dementia-specific evacuation.

Wheelchair users and people with reduced mobility need to evacuate from the first floor.	Each wheelchair user and any member needing assistance must have a PEEP. The evacuation chair must be maintained, accessible, and checked regularly. Enough trained staff must be on duty to evacuate wheelchair users safely. Moving and handling requirements must be followed.	High priority: complete PEEPs and record evacuation chair training.
Lift may be used incorrectly during fire evacuation.	The lift must not be used during fire evacuation unless it is a certified/designated evacuation lift and this is confirmed in the fire risk assessment. Staff must use agreed evacuation chair, stair, PEEP, or approved refuge arrangements instead.	High priority: add signage and staff reminders. Confirm whether lift is evacuation-rated.
Stay put or refuge arrangement may be unsafe if not assessed.	A stay put or refuge arrangement must only be used if the building has a suitable protected refuge area and this is formally approved through the fire risk assessment. No member should be left alone unless the fire risk assessment specifically allows a safe, supervised refuge process. Fire and Rescue Service must be told immediately if anyone remains in the building or a refuge area.	High priority: confirm refuge suitability through competent assessment.
Exit route blocked, fire doors wedged open, or evacuation chair route obstructed.	All three exits and escape routes must be kept clear. Fire doors must not be wedged open. The evacuation chair must be accessible at all times. Escape routes must be checked daily. If one route is blocked by smoke, fire, or obstruction, staff must use another safe route.	Medium priority: daily exit and route checks.
Alarm systems, emergency lighting, signage, or fire equipment not functioning or not understood.	Alarm arrangements, emergency lighting, signage, and fire equipment must be checked and maintained. Signs should be visible and not blocked. Staff should not rely on members reading signs. Fire extinguishers may only be used by trained staff if the fire is small, a safe exit is behind them, evacuation is not delayed, and no one is put at risk.	
Staff, volunteers, or visitors do not understand their role during evacuation.	The Fire Warden or Person in Charge takes control. Staff and volunteers must receive site-specific fire training covering the three exits, lift-not-to-be-used rule, evacuation chair arrangements, PEEPs, alarm arrangements, main car park assembly point, roll call, calling 999, dementia-specific support, and what to do if an exit is blocked.	
Response to suspicion of fire is delayed or unclear.	Always investigate a smell of burning if safe to do so. Any person discovering fire, smoke, or a serious risk must raise the alarm immediately, alert the Fire Warden or Person in Charge, call 999 or make sure this is done, close doors behind them if safe, and begin evacuation if safe.	
Members become anxious, confused, distressed, reluctant to leave, slow to move, wander, or try to return inside.	Staff must appear calm, approach from the front where possible, use the person's name, give one instruction at a time, avoid repeated use of the word fire if it increases distress, and use familiar staff where possible. Staff at the assembly point must keep members together and prevent anyone returning inside.	
Roll call inaccurate or register/visitor book not available.	Attendance register and visitor record must be kept up to date. If safe to do so, the register, visitor book, staff rota, and emergency contact information should be taken to the assembly point. Missing persons must be reported immediately to the Fire and Rescue Service.	Medium priority: ensure register and visitor book are taken out.
Miscommunication between the centre, evacuation routes, assembly point, refuge area, and Fire Warden.	Communication arrangements must be clear and tested during drills. The Fire Warden must be told immediately if anyone is missing, trapped, waiting in a refuge area, using a stay put arrangement, distressed, or unable to evacuate safely.	

## 16. Training Requirements

All staff must receive site-specific fire training covering:

- This fire evacuation procedure.
- The location of all three exits.
- Fire alarm arrangements and how to raise the alarm.
- Fire doors and the need to keep escape routes clear.
- The instruction not to use the lift unless it is formally confirmed as an evacuation lift.
- The main car park assembly point.
- Dementia-specific evacuation support.
- PEEPs for members who need assistance.
- Evacuation chair use, where relevant.
- Moving and handling during emergency evacuation.
- What to do if a member refuses to leave.

- What to do if an exit is blocked.
- Roll call and reporting missing persons.
- Calling 999 and liaising with the Fire and Rescue Service.

Evacuation chair training should be refreshed regularly and whenever new staff are expected to use the chair.

## 17. Fire Drills

Fire drills should be carried out regularly and recorded. Drills should test:

- Each of the three exits.
- Different times of day.
- Wheelchair evacuation arrangements.
- Use of the evacuation chair where appropriate.
- Use of stay put or refuge arrangements where approved.
- Communication between the centre, assembly point, refuge area, and Fire Warden.
- Roll call accuracy.
- Staff understanding of their roles.

Drills involving members with dementia should be handled sensitively, but staff must still be able to demonstrate that the evacuation arrangements are safe and realistic in practice.

## 18. Review Record and Actions

This procedure and fire risk assessment should be reviewed at least annually; after any fire, evacuation, false alarm, drill or near miss; when the layout changes; when members' mobility or support needs change; when staffing levels change; when fire exits, alarms, extinguishers, ramps, lifts or assembly points change; or after advice from the Fire and Rescue Service or a competent fire safety adviser.

Andrew Gill 18/05/2026

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