Fire Safety Policy

September 2026

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Please note that a record of the changes made to the original issue of this document can be found at Schedule 1 after any Appendices to the Policy/Procedure.

Version Number:	**Publication Date:**	**Nature of, and Reason for, Change(s)**
1	February 2020	Original
2	September 2024	Reviewed and updated
3	September 2026	Reviewed and updated

1. General

Howgill Family Centre is a responsible employer that takes its fire safety duties seriously. For that reason, this policy has been formulated to help the Centre comply with its legal obligations to staff and visitors
The Centre is committed to taking all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, visitors and other persons who may be affected by its activities.

This policy addresses our lawful obligation that requires the Centre to:

1 Develop a policy to minimise the risks associated with fire
2 Reduce the risk of an outbreak of fire
3 Reduce the risk of the spread of fire
4 Provide a means of escape
5 Demonstrate preventative action
6 Maintain documentation and records in respect of fire safety management

This fire safety policy also forms part of the Centre's general health and safety policy.

2. The Responsible Person

The Centre has appointed a 'responsible person' who is charged with the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the staff and any person who may legally come onto Howgill Family Centre property and of anyone not on the premises but who may be affected.

The position appointed as the responsible 'person' is: The Chair of the Trustees

The responsible person must ensure that competent persons carry out Fire Safety Risk Assessments (see section 9, below). The responsibility for health and safety matters relating to staff and visitors is generally delegated by the Chair of the Trustees. A Fire Marshall is appointed (currently the Caretaker) to co-ordinate the action of Fire Wardens.

3. Fire Wardens

The Centre's Fire Wardens are designated staff members.

The marshals:

1 Make contact with the Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service
2 Assist in evacuations
3 Provide essential information to the Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

4. Competent Persons

The Centre will appoint competent persons to carry out the following duties:

1 Carry out risk assessments

2 Advise Fire Marshals
3 Assist with fire drills

A competent person will only be regarded as competent if they have the appropriate level of training, experience, and knowledge. Training and supervision will be provided for nominated competent persons.

5. Documentation & Records

The Centre documents and keeps records to prove that it has acted responsibly. The following records will be kept in good order, up to date and available for scrutiny at any time in the fire safety file at each of the premises, unless otherwise stated:

1 The fire safety policy

2 Fire evacuation procedures

3 Copies of all risk assessments

4 Records of all fire training

5 A record of all fire drills (at least four per year across the whole organisation) listing attendees, evacuation times and any comments.

6 Records of weekly tests of fire alarms

7 Record of annual inspection and testing of all firefighting equipment

8 Records of periodic tests of emergency lighting

9 Records of all scheduled and unscheduled maintenance of fire detection and alarm systems

10 Records of inspection, risk assessment and maintenance of workplace and electrical equipment, Storage of hazardous substances and other hazards identified with fire safety

11 Records of any unwanted alarm activations and action taken

6. Duties of the Staff
('Staff' includes all employees, volunteers and user groups of the Centre)

All staff have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not place themselves or others at risk of harm. They are also expected to co-operate fully in complying with any procedures that the Centre may introduce as a measure to protect the safety and well-being of all staff and visitors.

7. Communication

The Centre will ensure that any person it employs (directly or indirectly) is provided with all information related to fire safety and consult with our employees on all matters of fire safety policy and arrangements. The Centre will keep staff informed of any changes that are made to the fire safety procedures and fire risk assessment. A fire safety briefing will form part of the induction training for new members of staff. The Centre will also ensure that all visitors to the premises are briefed in the evacuation procedures and not left alone unless they are aware of, and familiar with, all available escape routes. Where an outside body is holding a meeting in Howgill premises, the leader of that meeting will be responsible for taking a register of all attendees and bringing it with them when evacuating the premises, so that a check can be made at the assembly point and all persons accounted for.

8. Procedures

The Centre has introduced the following procedures in order to maintain high standards of fire safety:

1 The fire evacuation procedures will be practised at least four times annually across the organisation.

2 All staff will be given training, including a fire safety briefing as part of the induction process, and will receive refresher training as appropriate. Further training would be required if there were any change that may affect fire safety. All training will be provided during normal working hours as far as reasonably possible.

3 It is Centre policy that fire marshals will be trained in the use of fire extinguishers.

4 All escape routes will be established, kept in good working order and free from obstruction and combustible materials at all times.

5 Firefighting equipment will be provided. In general, this means fire extinguishers, but additional provision of fire blankets or hoses may be made where deemed appropriate by the findings of a risk assessment.

6 All fire related equipment will be regularly serviced and maintained by a competent person or contractor. If any member of the Centre notices defective or missing equipment, they must report it to a competent person.

7 All available technological solutions to fire prevention will be examined by the Centre and innovative practices and equipment will be adopted as appropriate – advice on available equipment and solutions will be sought at regular intervals from a competent person or contractor.

8 All available fire detection and alarm systems will be provided. The type and extent of the alarm system provided will be based on the findings of the relevant risk assessment. Alarm systems will be tested regularly. Staff, visitors and users will be told when a test is scheduled.

9 Emergency lighting will be provided for escape routes where applicable. The need for and the extent of the system will be determined by the findings of the relevant risk assessment.

10 The risk of fire spread will be controlled by the provision of fire resisting construction, and or fire/smoke resisting doors. These provisions will be kept in good order as part of our regular maintenance schedule. All staff are required to ensure that any fire door provided remains closed at all times.

11 All other safety alarms provided will be checked regularly to ensure correct operation, where necessary e.g. emergency lighting, fire doors etc.

12 Appropriate signs and notices will be displayed, giving clear instructions to staff and others in the event of a fire. In addition, signs will be provided to indicate the position of fire extinguishers, fire alarm call points and, to indicate the emergency exit routes.

13 In the normal course of their work, housekeeping and maintenance staff will make it their business to ensure that residents, students, staff, visitors and other users of the Centre buildings keep exits and lobbies clear of debris, furniture etc, that fire doors are not propped open, fire extinguishers have not been removed from their brackets and fire signs and notices have not been removed.

14 This policy will be included as part of the terms and conditions of employment. Failure to co-operate may be treated as a disciplinary matter.

9. Risk Assessments

Following the training of the competent persons, those persons shall make, record, review and where applicable, revise Fire Safety Risk Assessments at regular intervals in accordance with The Order. They should also be carried out if there had been any significant change in the physical layout of a building or staircase or a change in use.

The Fire Safety Risk Assessments must take into consideration everyone who may come onto the premises, whether they are employees, visitors or members of the public. Particular attention will be paid to people who may have a disability or anyone with special needs.

The Management Team have a duty to identify all hazardous substances and other potential or actual hazards and to make this information available to those who carry out the risk assessments.

A ‘five step’ approach will be taken as follows:

Step 1
Identify potential fire hazards in the workplace.

Step 2
Decide who might be in danger, in the event of a fire, in the workplace or while trying to escape from it and note their location.

Step 3
Evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether the existing fire precautions are adequate or whether more should be done to get rid of the hazard or to control the risks (e.g. by improving the fire precautions).

Step 4
Record findings and details of the action taken as a result.

Step 5
Keep the assessment under review and revise it when necessary.

The policy statement will be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. The Board of Trustees endorses this policy and is fully committed to its implementation.