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**Introduction**

As the managers of the Birchmeadow Centre, the Birchmeadow Centre Management Committee (hereinafter BCMC) has a general responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (and subsequent amendments and related legislation) to take all reasonable measures to ensure the health and safety of its employees and of all visitors to and users of the Centre.

Likewise, under the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, BCMC has an equivalent responsibility to ensure that all due measures are in place to protect occupants of the building in the event of a fire or other emergency.

General guidance on the extent and discharge of these responsibilities can be found online at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/managing/index.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/fire.htm>

To assist BCMC to discharge these responsibilities, in January 2016 Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services were commissioned to undertake Strategic Health and Safety Review and Fire Safety Risk Assessments. Copies of theseare attached as Annexes 1 and 3 respectively.

By way of background information, the resulting Birchmeadow H&SRA and FRA Action Plans detailing the actions required to comply with the findings of these Risk Assessments are also attached as Annexes 2 and 4. A further review was undertaken in August 2018 and this is attached as Annexe 11. Further reviews should be undertaken annually and this respect, it is suggested that this Risk Assessment format, attached as Annexe 10, should be the format for these Assessments. See also Section 8.0 - Risk Assessments on page 14.

This Manual and the accompanying Annexes have therefore been prepared to assist BCMC and its employees to discharge their duties in accordance with the principles laid down in the above legislation and having due regard to the findings of the January 2016 Reviews and Risk Assessments. It will be updated from time to time as required and all such updates will be recorded in the Revisions section.

**1.0 Overall Health and Safety Policy**

1.1 Having less than 5 employees, BCMC is not required to have a formal written Health and Safety Policy. Nevertheless, in recognition of its overall H&S obligations, BCMC has drafted the following policy statement as confirmation of its understanding of its overall obligations:

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| **Health and Safety Policy Statement** (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974)  This is the Health and Safety Policy Statement of the Birchmeadow Centre Management Committee. Our statement of general policy is:   * To provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities; * To consult with our employees on matters affecting their health and safety; * To provide and maintain safe plant and equipment;      * To ensure safe handling and use of substances; * To provide appropriate information advice and instruction to employees and centre users; * To ensure all employees are competent to do their tasks, and, where appropriate, to provide them with adequate guidance and instructions/training; * To prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health * To maintain safe and healthy working conditions; and * To review and revise this policy as necessary at regular intervals. |

**2.0 General Fire Safety**

**2.1 Fire Alarm System**

2.1.1 The Centre is protected by a building-wide fire alarm system linked to heat and smoke detectors with accompanying break-glass call points. The location of the fire panel and the break-glass call points are shown on the Fire Safety Plans attached as Annexe 5.

2.1.2 This system requires regular checking and testing to ensure that it is functioning satisfactorily. The checking and monitoring instructions are contained in the Operational and Maintenance Manual for the Fire Alarm System ref J9477 dated 4 April 2012 kept in the filing cabinet in the front entrance hall adjoining the door to the Pritchard Room. The fire panel key required to undertake these test is located in the APD security system control box to the left of the disabled toilet door in the entrance lobby.

2.1.3 The results of these regular checks/tests must be recorded in the Fire Safety and Maintenance Log Book also kept in the above filing cabinet.

2.1.4 The means of escape from the building are indicated by “running man” signs, supplemented by emergency lighting. These also need to be regularly tested to ensure that they are functioning correctly using (where appropriate) the test key also located in the above APD security system control.

2.1.5 The results of the “running man” signs and emergency lighting checks should also be recorded in the Fire Safety and Maintenance Log Book. Templates for the various Log Book pages are attached as Annexe 6, and these should be downloaded and printed whenever required. Make sure you only print the page you need.

2.1.6 Any defects in these systems should be reported to Broseley Town Council who is responsible for their proper functioning.

**2.2 Fire Safety Policy and Emergency Plan**

2.2.1 The Fire Safety Policy and Emergency Plan attached as Annexe 7 has been prepared to assist BCMC and its employees in the discharge of their responsibilities in the event of a fire or other emergency requiring the safe evacuation etc of all occupants of the Centre. The further specific Fire Safety Instructions for training purposes (attached as Annexe 8) were issued to all members and employees in October 2016.

**2.3 Fire Extinguishers**

2.3.1 The locations of the fire extinguishers are shown on the Fire Safety Plans. Broseley Town Council is responsible for their annual maintenance and BCMC for the monthly condition inspections. These inspections must be recorded in the Fire Safety and Maintenance Log Book referred to in para 2.1.4 above, using the forms for this purpose included in Annexe 6.

**2.4 Means of Escape**

2.4.1 Regular inspections of the final (ie leading to the open air) escape doors should be undertaken on a regular basis (ideally daily) to ensure that they function properly and the results recorded in the Fire Safety and Maintenance Log Book.

2.4.2 Similar regular inspections should also be taken of the escape routes in the building (ie the corridors and stairs leading from its rooms to the final escape doors) to ensure that they bare free from obstruction etc and the results recorded in the Fire Safety and Maintenance Log Book

2.4.3 Needless to say, any required remedial action resulting from the above tests and inspections must be initiated as soon as possible.

**3.0 Lone Working Policy**

3.1 It is normal practice for one or other of its employees, or other contractors or volunteers, to be working alone at the Birchmeadow Centre. For this reason this policy relies on the good sense, awareness and cooperation of all such persons to ensure compliance. It is therefore the responsibility of the individual concerned to ensure that they are not putting themselves at unnecessary risk as a result of the activities they undertake while working alone in the building.

3.2 Accordingly all persons working in the building on their own undertake to comply with the following provisions:

1. Do not undertake any activities or use any equipment unless you are satisfied that you can undertake it by yourself without unnecessary risk to your own safety and welfare. In particular, do not work at height, or enter any normally inaccessible parts of the building (eg the roof space above The Studio) or those requiring the use of the Zarges extending ladder normally stored on the stage etc).

2. Do not attempt to lift or move any equipment that you cannot readily move on your own (see also the Manual Handling Policy Guidance).

3. Always make sure that you have an adequately charged mobile phone with you at all times.

4. For your own personal safety, make sure all external doors are secured so as to prevent entry from the outside without the use of a key whenever you do not require to use such doors yourself. If someone with legitimate business in the building could unwittingly cause an accident by entering the space where you are working (e.g. opening a door where there is a ladder at the other side) please place a warning sign in the lobby.

5. Ensure that you familiarise yourself with the fire safety measures in the building (fire alarm call points, emergency escape routes, fire extinguisher positions) before undertaking any works.

6. Ensure that you know the location of the First Aid boxes (in the entrance lobby to the right of the door to the Pritchard Room and in the right-hand area of the kitchen to the left of the wall-mounted water heater).

7. Avoid exposure to any hazardous substances to which over-exposure could lead to incapacitation. Only use any mains voltage electrical equipment strictly in accordance with its instructions and do not use any such equipment if you are concerned about its electrical safety.

8. Advise a third party that you will be working at Birchmeadow on your own, so that they can raise the alarm if they believe that you may be in difficulty.

9. Consider your suitability for lone working if you believe you may have a medical condition likely to incapacitate you or which could require you to seek assistance as a matter of urgency.

3.3 In connection with the above policy, if you have any concerns regarding your ability to work alone at Birchmeadow in conditions of reasonable health and safety, or you believe there might be any conditions in the building which could compromise safe working, you should contact the appropriate BCMC Trustee or Officer in the first instance. At the time of writing (July 2019) this is Simon Milan on 07876 350595 / simon.milan@me.com.

**4.0 Working at Height Policy and Guidance**

BCMC is committed to keeping its employees and hirers healthy and providing a place which, as far as is reasonably practicable, safe to work in. This working at height policy supports and extends the BCMC's overarching Health and Safety Policy and provides guidance for working at height.

Where working at height cannot be avoided, suitable equipment must be used and anyone working on the equipment must ensure that they have the appropriate competency on how to set it up and use it. It is the user’s responsibility to consider the risks associated with work at height and not to undertake tasks that they believe they do not have the competence or equipment to undertake safely.

**Assessing the risks of working at height**

The specific risks posed by working at height must be assessed and appropriate measures put in place to ensure that:

* + All work at height is properly planned and appropriately supervised.
  + Those working at height are competent and have familiarised themselves with the necessary instructions on the use of the equipment concerned and are aware of this policy.
  + The place where work at height is done is safe.
  + The appropriate equipment for the work to be undertaken is used and is maintained and inspected regularly.

Any preparation work should always be done at ground level and not on the ladder in question.

**Inspections of equipment**

All access equipment should be inspected and tested on a regular basis and records kept. The inspections should be carried out:

* By a designated competent person.
* At the place where work is to be carried out before it is carried out.
* Following completion of the work in question.

**Use of ladders & stepladders/scaffold towers**

Select the most suitable equipment for the task to be undertaken. Remember that a normal ladder is primarily a means of access and is not designed or intended to be used as a working platform. In this respect:

* Never overreach when using a ladder or a stepladder.
* Longer ladders should always be footed when in use.

Use of the longer ladders (eg those used to reach high levels on the stage and in the main hall) and any scaffold towers should never be done by an individual working on his/her own. At least two people must always be present on such occasions.

Check the ladder before use, in particular:

a) Check stiles for damage

b) Check the feet to see if any are missing or damaged causing the ladder to slip.

c) Check rungs for damage

d) Check locking mechanisms

e) Check stepladder platform for damage

f) Check treads for damage or contamination which could cause slipping

g) With regard to scaffold towers, check that they are assembled correctly and that all stabilising supports are in place before using.

NB Please note the instructions for the safe use of the Zarges extending ladder attached to this ladder and accompanying information in the holder on the stage wall. These instructions require all users of the ladder to sign that they have read and understood them and are attached as Annexe 9. Accordingly, all users of this ladder do so at their own risk.

Finally….. for further guidance, see also the HSE’s publication “Using Ladders Safely” at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/using-ladders-safely.htm>

**5.0 Manual Handling**

This basic guidance is intended to help members of BCMC and its employees to avoid injury (particularly to the back and upper limbs) when moving any items of furniture or other equipment in the Centre.

The following is an extract from the HSE’s “Guidance Notes on Manual Handling at Work: A Brief Guide”. The complete document is available as a download from the HSE’s website at ([www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.htm))

If you believe that any moving/lifting operations are beyond your capacity, always seek assistance and do not attempt to carry out such operations on your own. Likewise, please bring the attention of a member of BCMC if you consider that any specialist moving equipment is required.

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**6. First Aid**

6.1 First aid boxes are located in:

* The kitchen
* The entrance lobby by the door to the Pritchard Room.

6.2 Because members of BCMC and its part-time staff/employees are generally only present at events organised by BCMC at which bar services are available, it is only at such events that a nominated first aider is likely to be present. At the time of writing (July 2019) this is Paul Childs.

6.3 In 2017 a defibrillator was installed on the outside wall of the Centre facing on to Birchmeadow Road. The instructions for its use are printed on its container. Please remember to call the emergency services for attempting to use the defibrillator.

6.4 The locations of the first aid boxes and the defibrillator and reference to the absence of a trained first aider are included to in Centre’s online booking information.

**7.0 COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health)**

7.1 Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH, 2002 and its subsequent amendments), employers are required to either prevent, reduce or at the very least, control exposure to hazardous substances in order to prevent ill-health to their workers.

7.2 The management of the Birchmeadow Centre does not require the use or storage of hazardous materials other than those commonly associated with the cleaning of, and/or undertaking of minor maintenance works to, domestic premises.

7.3 Accordingly it is the policy of BCMC that all such materials should be stored in the padlocked caretaker’s cupboard in the lobby to the ladies’ toilet. A COSHH Safety Poster is displayed in this cupboard to assist in the proper use, handling and storage of these materials. All users are required to familiarise themselves with the manufacturer’s instructions for such use, handling and storage.

**8.0 Risk Assessments**

8.1 As an integral part of managing the health and safety of its business, BCMC is required to take reasonable steps to control the risks in its workplace, through the use of risk assessments.

8.2 Such assessments need to be carried out in relation to specific actions/events/circumstances and periodically in order to provide a continuing assessment of the general health and fire safety of the building and its fittings and installations. In this latter respect the Strategic Health and Safety Review and Fire Safety Risk Assessments attached as Annexes 1 and 3 need to be reviewed and updated annually.

8.3 Although BCMC has less than 5 employees and is therefore not required to record its risk assessments in writing, the Risk Assessment template attached as Annexe 10 is included in this Manual to assist in carrying out future risk assessments.

8.4 It is recommended that copies of such assessments be added at Annexe 11 from time to time, to track the actions that need to be taken.

**9.0 Revisions**

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| **Date** | **Content** |
|  |  |
| 23 Sept 2019 | General updating following publication of August 2018 draft on the BCMC website |
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