



Centric

Community Projects

Welcome Information for Organisations

Centric Community Projects

Centric Community Projects value our connections and relationship with every charity and organisation that we work with. This document is designed to give information to groups that are considering requesting use for a property managed by Centric Community Projects and as a handy guide for those who are in the early stages of using a property that they have been allocated.

If you have any questions about anything in this guide, or how Centric Community Projects operates, please get in touch:

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info@centricprojects.org

 centric_community_projects

 @Centric_Project

 Centric Community Projects

 @charitycentricfamily

Centric Community Projects is a charity that works with commercial property owners and property agents to offer free space for charities, non-profit organisations and small businesses. We do this through our established relationships with some of the UK's largest property owners. They realise that, through Centric, they benefit from lower security costs, a lower risk of dilapidation and vandalism, and often lower insurance premiums. In exchange, the space they provide allows us to work with charities to achieve their charitable visions and aims without the high costs attached to renting commercial property.

What Does 'Free Space' Really Mean?

The offer of free space includes the normal rent and business rates and, in most cases, utilities as well. In the majority of our cases, charities will not have to pay any money to Centric throughout the entirety of their occupation.

On some occasions, after a prolonged period of time, some of the property owners request a small contribution towards utility bills. This is unusual and we will give you adequate notice if we ever expect this to happen.

There are a number of small costs which we do expect occupants to cover whilst they are using our properties. These are typically in the interest of health and safety, and we have laid these out in further detail below.

What is This Guide For?

This guide is designed to answer any questions you may have if you are considering applying to use a Centric property or if you are just about to move into one. It covers a variety of topics, like how to get in touch with Centric, your responsibilities for building safety, and other expectations that Centric has.

We are always looking to update and improve this guide for future partnerships, so if you feel this guide can be improved in any way or that it is missing information, please get in touch with us.

Contacting Centric

During the period of occupation, we will liaise with any relevant parties such as property owners or managing agents on your behalf, as we act as your landlord for the duration of your License. You should not make contact with these parties directly. Our contact details are available on the front page of this booklet.

Centric Contacting You

If you move into a Centric property, we will ask for at least two people from your organisation that we can keep in contact with. It is very important that we always have up-to-date contact information for your organisation. If any of your contact details change, you should let us know as soon as possible. If the details on your License differ to those on the Charity Commission/Companies House, your License will not be valid and you could risk losing access to your space.

If we contact you requesting information or documentation regarding your usage of the property, you must comply with this. Any failure to do so will have consequences for your occupancy.

Fire Safety

While occupying a property, you are legally defined as 'responsible persons' and have a duty to protect the building and ensure its safety and the safety of those within it. This means that whilst you are using one of our properties, there are a number of responsibilities that you should be aware of. There is more information about this [here](https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities)
<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities>

Upon occupying your space, you will be asked to complete a Fire Risk Assessment. As part of this, you will need to consider the needs of vulnerable people, for example the elderly and those with disabilities and make the appropriate arrangements for those people to evacuate the building safely. It may be that a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, or PEEP, is needed in the case of someone needing assistance in order to evacuate. For more information on this, see [this page](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-means-of-escape-for-disabled-people>

Maintenance and Testing

You must carry out checks once a week to make sure that:

- All fire alarm systems are working.
- Emergency lighting is working.
- All escape routes are clear and the floor is even and will not prevent escape.
- All fire escapes can be opened easily.
- Automatic fire doors close correctly.
- Fire exit signs are in the right place.

You must also record any faults in systems and equipment.

Evidence of the above weekly checks needs to be kept visible to our building management team who will check periodically to ensure that the above actions are all being adhered to. Any life threatening issues are to be communicated to Centric Community Projects within 24 hours to enable a swift resolution.

Fire Extinguishers

UK fire safety legislation states that you must provide “appropriate fire-fighting equipment”, and all our properties require fire extinguishers to be present and regularly serviced. This may mean that you will be required to purchase fire extinguishers and arrange for them to be wall-mounted in relevant areas. Sometimes, buildings may already have fire extinguishers present. In these cases, you will be required to organise and pay for these fire extinguishers to be serviced. After their installation or first service, fire extinguishers must be serviced annually.

Your fire extinguishers must:

- Be the right type for what you use the space for and the location they are in.
- Be maintained in good working order.
- Undergo an annual maintenance test.
- Be maintained by a ‘competent’ person.

Fire extinguishers which have been purchased from a shop or online retailer cannot be used until they have been commissioned. They will not be immediately ready for use because they could be damaged, discharged or have lost pressure during delivery. Before use, they must be commissioned on-site by a competent person.

Below is a table designed to give an understanding of the different types of fire and which extinguishers can and cannot be used to fight them. Please read this thoroughly and consider printing it and posting it up in your space. A larger photo of this table for printing is available [here](#).

<http://surreyfire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/which-type-of-fire-extinguisher-2-1024x541.png>

Type Extinguisher	Fire						Comments
	CLASS A Combustible materials (e.g. paper & wood)	CLASS B Flammable liquids (e.g. paint & petrol)	CLASS C Flammable gases (e.g. butane and methane)	CLASS D Flammable metals (e.g. lithium & potassium)	Electrical Electrical equipment (e.g. computers & generators)	CLASS F Deep fat fryers (e.g. chip pans)	
Water	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	Do not use on liquid or electric fires
Foam	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	Not suited to domestic use
Dry Powder	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	Can be used safely up to 1000 volts
CO2	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	Safe on both high and low voltage
Wet Chemical	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	Use on extremely high temperatures

When you have installed fire extinguishers, you also have a responsibility to train staff or volunteers on how to use them. Your entire team should know what to do in the event of a fire and new employees & volunteers must be shown what to do whilst occupying the space.

UK fire safety legislation requires the following with regards to fire safety training:

- Refresher training should be delivered regularly – typically this is needed annually.
- Fire safety training updates are needed if there are any changes, such as building alterations.
- You must carry out regular fire drills.

Fire Marshals

For every organisation in every property, there needs to be an elected Fire Marshal and Deputy. We require every organisation to let us know who will be responsible for these roles and alongside our Licenses, [this](#) document is sent out to be signed. Please do take a look, as this contains plenty of helpful information about the role responsibilities.

<http://centricprojects.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Fire-Marshals-and-Fire-Safety.pdf>

The Fire Marshal is responsible for ensuring that everyone is safely out of the property in the event of a fire. The Fire Marshal must also communicate to the Fire Brigade if there is anyone remaining in the property after evacuation.

A Fire Marshal has a number of other responsibilities, including carrying out role calls and reporting to the fire services / building manager in the event of a fire or fire drill. They will be responsible for ensuring the compliance of volunteers, staff and clients and ensuring all new staff are trained on fire procedures.

To do their job efficiently, a Fire Marshal must know of everyone who is in the building visiting their organisation. To facilitate this, you are required to use of a sign-in sheet to record everyone entering and exiting the property. If the Fire Marshal is not present, the responsibility falls on the Fire Deputy.

There is a good resource for Fire Marshals [here](#).

https://www.ncctrainingresources.co.uk/downloads/Fire_Warden_Sample.pdf

We recommend that your Fire Marshals are trained by fire safety professionals.

Fire Risk Assessments

Occupants must regularly carry out fire risk assessments of the property they are using. For shared properties or spaces, communication with other occupants will be needed in order to complete a communal fire risk assessment. A separate fire risk assessment for privately used areas must also be completed. Fire risk assessments should be completed annually, a hard copy should be kept and copies must be sent to Centric Community Projects when requested.

For advice on completing a fire risk assessment, please click [here](#) or enter the below URL into your browser.

http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/8214/5529/1749/Offices_and_shops.compressed.pdf.

The penalty for not having an appropriate Fire Risk Assessment and suitable fire safety precautions can be prosecution with severe fines and if extreme negligence is proven, prison terms.

Fire Drills

Centric Community Projects or the managing agent for a property may occasionally carry out a fire drill on the property that you are in. You should familiarise yourself with the location of the fire assembly point and inform all volunteers and staff of its location. It is also a good idea to print off information about your fire assembly point location and post it visibly around the space you are occupying. In some instances, it may also be applicable to display this information in communal areas.

In the event of a fire:

- Immediately make your way to the nearest fire exit. Do not stop to collect bags and do not under any circumstances stop to make yourself a drink or bring a drink with you when exiting the building. When the fire alarm sounds, there is a good chance that you will not know where a fire is in the building. Seconds that pass when you're getting your bag/coat/drink etc. may be the difference between exiting the building safely or becoming trapped inside.
- When waiting outside for the building to be checked and declared safe, do not under any circumstances move away from the fire assembly point. If your location is unknown, you will be searched for within the building and in a real fire, this could cause loss of life.
- If you are in charge of a group during a fire alarm, you are responsible for the safety of everyone in that group. It is your duty to ensure everyone under your supervision is accounted for at the fire assembly point and to also make sure that they do not move away from the fire assembly point.

All members of staff and volunteers should be briefed and trained with this information.

General Fire Safety

At all times, you have a responsibility to maintain the safety of the buildings you are using. Fire doors should **never** be propped open, fire exits should **never** be blocked and fire safety equipment should never be misused. Vision panels in doors should never be blocked. If you come across any dangerous practices, you should remedy them if it is safe to do so and report them to Centric Community Projects.

If you fail to comply with any of the fire safety requirements above, we will issue your organisation with a warning. Continued failures to comply will have consequences for your occupancy.

You must maintain a sign in sheet of those who are inside the property at any one time. Please ensure everyone accessing the premises signs in and out, as this will be used as a roll call if you ever need to evacuate.

To access a short guide from the Government on making a premises safe from fire, click [here](#) or enter the below URL into your browser.

http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/1214/0507/8204/EntryLevelGuideAshortguidetomakingyourpremisesafefromfire_id1500384.pdf

Building Safety and Conditions

As with fire safety, occupants of buildings have a duty to ensure that the property they are using is safe. You may wish to complete a risk assessment, to identify;

- Which hazards are present
- Groups or individuals who may be at risk
- Practises already in place to mitigate potential risks
- Any additional actions needed to minimise potential hazards

A risk assessment would help you to identify hazards that could cause injury or illness. For more information on this, or to download a template for a risk assessment, click [here](#). <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm>

Maintenance, Safety, and Security

It is the responsibility of occupants to ensure that properties are kept in a clean and hygienic condition.

As occupants, you are responsible for the security of the property. The property should never be left unsecured under any circumstances. You should alert Centric immediately to any serious security concerns within our properties, e.g. broken windows, doors that do not lock, etc.

Any serious maintenance concerns that could cause injury, illness or further damage to the property should be reported immediately to Centric Community Projects. Examples of these would include, but are not limited to, leaking pipes, exposed wires, or structural problems.

PAT Testing

To ensure the safety of our properties, Centric Community Projects requires all electronic devices used in the properties to be PAT tested. This must be carried out by a trained individual with the relevant equipment and we recommend that occupants

hire an external organisation to do this. **Occupants are required to pay for their own PAT testing.** More information about PAT testing can be found [here](#).

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm>

Renovations or changes to the property

Renovation or refurbishment should not be carried out on Centric properties without first gaining permission.

Whilst we have been lucky enough in the past to manage properties for up to four years, we advise there is the potential for a short vacation notice period. Any costs that are incurred when renovating or improving a property will not be reimbursed and will not affect the notice period on any tenancies.

It is for this reason that we advise against making costly changes to the space you are allocated.

Liability Insurance

If your occupation of a property requires members of the public to enter, **you will need to organise and pay for your own public liability insurance.** You can find out more about Public Liability insurance [here](#).

<https://www.aviva.co.uk/business/liability-insurance/public-liability-insurance.html>

If you are an employer, you may need to consider if you need employers' liability insurance. This protects employees if they are injured as a result of an accident at work or if they become ill as a result of their work. If the employer is responsible and compensation has to be paid, employers' liability insurance aims to provide funds to meet the liability. It can also cover the legal costs in dealing with a claim. For more information, click [here](#).

<https://www.informdirect.co.uk/business-management/employers-liability-insurance-does-my-company-need-it/>

Utilities

In the majority of our properties, occupants will not be required to pay fair-use essential utility fees, which will include gas, electricity, and water. **If a telephone or broadband connection is required, you will be responsible for organising and paying for this.**

Occasionally, when an organisation has occupied a property for a long period of time, we may ask for a contribution towards the cost of utilities.

During your occupation of a property, if you receive any post or correspondence regarding rent, utility bills, or other information relating to the property, please forward these to Centric Community Projects as soon as possible.

Meter Readings

Occasionally, we may request that occupants send a meter reading to us. We recommend that a meter reading is taken when a property is first occupied and that this information is recorded for future reference.

Other Costs

As all of our properties and situations are unique, there may be other costs attached to your use of the building, such as the cost of getting additional keys cut, or the postage cost of sending us any documents. Where possible, we will communicate any costs we expect you to incur before you move into a property, but there may be situations where costs are incurred unexpectedly. In these scenarios, we will communicate these costs as soon as we are aware they will arise.

Property Viewings

During your occupation of a property, agents or property owners may still organise for viewings to take place, which could result in the sale or paid letting of the property. At this point appropriate notice would be served. As best we can, we will give you notice of when these viewings are going to take place.

Centric Community Projects will also organise our own visits to ensure our properties are being kept in a safe and clean state, and that space is being used in accordance with the aims and objectives included in your questionnaire. Occupants must comply with these visits/viewings.

Leaving the Property / Going on Holiday

If you are not available to access the property you're occupying for an extended period, you will need to notify us, nominate a responsible individual to monitor the security of the property and provide their contact details to us. If we serve notice during this period, your nominated individual will be required to take over your responsibility for clearing out and vacating the property.

Vacation and Eviction

When a property owner requests vacant possession of their property (i.e. for it to be empty) we will serve your notice. We have two tiers of notice: soft and hard. Soft notice is given as soon as we know that a property may be becoming unavailable soon; it is not a legal notice. Hard notice is given as soon as we have a confirmed vacation date.

Centric Community Projects reserves the right to serve the notice defined in your License at any point, for reasons **including, but not limited to** the following:

- You are using our space inappropriately
- You are making insufficient use of the space
- You are not complying to requests from us
- You are not complying with fire safety measures or health and safety audits
- You are keeping the property in an unsatisfactory condition
- You are not responding to emails or phone calls from us in a timely manner
- We become aware of any verifiable formal safeguarding complaints connected to your organisation

Evidence Photos

In order for Centric to provide space, we are required to prove that properties are occupied and in use. To do this, we will ask occupants to send us photos of the space that they are using. This is a vital part of occupation and you must respond to these requests as soon as possible.

The photos we receive may be published on our social media accounts - please let us know if this is something you are not comfortable with.

Upon occupying a property, we will send you posters and signs that highlight your partnership with Centric Community Projects. Occupants should display these signs as soon as possible and send us evidence that this has been done.

Change in Usage of a Property

If your organisation wishes to significantly change the way the space is being used (e.g. from storage to office use, or from retail use to storage use), permission must be sought and granted from Centric in order for this to occur.

Reapplying for Space Following Long Term Occupation

If you occupy our space for a longer period (e.g. over a year), we may ask you to reapply for the space. This would include completing a questionnaire that reflects your organisation's most recent work. Depending on our review of the questionnaire and how well we feel that you are using the space, we may either continue your occupation, or allocate the space to another organisation who have a greater need for free workspace.

Working With Centric

At Centric, we are keen to foster a friendly working relationship with the organisations using our space. We often post news stories on our website about the charities and organisations that we are in partnership with, highlighting the great work they are doing. You can find some of these [here](#).

<http://centricprojects.org/news>

We may contact you to gather information for any stories or interest pieces we are putting together. Similarly, if you are doing anything that you would like us to post about on social media, please get in touch.

We're also really keen to attend any events that you are putting on, if able. If you are planning to have an opening event for your space, or are putting on any events throughout the year, please let us know and we will do our best to attend!

We look forward to your cooperation and to working with you.