



# General Emergency Evacuation Plan (GEEP) PPA

## Standard emergency evacuation plan for visitors who require assistance to evacuate

*A form for Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans is available at PPA and should be sought by anyone who needs specific focused assistance during evacuation or escape.*

### Introduction

The following guidance identifies the options to support emergency exit of occasional visitors at PPA. Ideally, anyone needing support during an evacuation should contact us before coming on site so that arrangements can be put in place. However this does not always happen, and in such circumstances you can use the following information to assist.

Important: Please note that this guidance is only suitable for visitors who are on site for a limited period of time. For example a visitor going to an event, training course or show. Regular visitors with disabilities, or students and staff with disabilities must contact the PPA Welfare Manager or Safeguarding Leads to agree a personal evacuation plan.

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### How to use this document

The disabled evacuation matrix on the final page considers most disability types and gives suggestions for how to provide appropriate support in an evacuation. On arrival, use the matrix to discuss the options with the disabled visitor and agree on which option they would like to follow. Turn to the relevant section below and carry out any necessary actions before they leave the reception.

For example – If the visitor says that they would like to be shown the fire exit routes, contact a colleague and ask them to come to reception to provide a short tour. Make sure that this takes place straight away, as soon as the visitor leaves the reception.

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### Assisted/facilitated escape options

This section explains each option shown in the matrix on the final page. In order to use the matrix, look at the escape option suggested for each disability type. The corresponding name in this section gives additional information on each type of escape and describes what you need to do next.

### Use of Platform Lift

A platform lift is located on the first floor of PPA's Cathedral Hill campus, which leads to the reception area, where escape can then be achieved.

Staff/buddies must be trained beforehand on the use of the platform lift. Disabled visitors should check in advance that there will be a trained person available to assist them in the event of an

emergency. Consideration also needs to be given to getting the disabled persons wheelchair out of the building in an emergency and to whether staff can easily move the person from their wheelchair into the platform lift.

### **Meet assistance at a refuge**

Some disabled people will require assisted escape. In these cases it will be necessary to have a pre-arranged meeting place. If the disabled person is likely to move around the building, a means of communication will be necessary between the escape volunteer and the disabled person. They can then arrange to meet at a particular refuge point during the escape. The generic refuge point is the bottom of the platform lift if the disabled person is downstairs, and the top of the platform lift if the disabled person is upstairs.

People should never be left in a refuge point to wait for the Fire and Rescue Service. The refuge can be used as a safe resting place as well as a place to wait in a phased evacuation while the go-ahead for a full escape is established.

If there is more than one disabled person upstairs, one should wait at the door of the platform lift, while the other(s) wait(s) behind. The escape buddy will assist the first person into the lift, then return for the other(s).

*Action: Discuss with the disabled person immediately on arrival where in the building they will be located throughout their visit. Organise a means of communication and an escape buddy. This buddy must go immediately to the agreed refuge point on hearing the alarm to assist the disabled person in their escape.*

*At no time should a visitor be left in the refuge point for the fire service to rescue them.*

### **Make own way down stairs slowly**

Some people with restricted mobility may be able to make their own way down the stairs. It may be necessary to ensure that there are suitable handrails and step edge markings present. The preferred solution is where the escape plan enables disabled people to leave the building by their own efforts. This reduces the chance of confusion and the chance of the plan breaking down. Disabled people who choose this independent method of escape are likely to move slowly down the stairs and it may be better for them to wait for the main flow of people to leave the building. This reinforces the importance of building occupiers keeping self-closing fire doors shut and observing good housekeeping practices when occupying buildings.

*Action: Find out where the visitor will be located whilst they are on site. Now tell them where the nearest fire exit route is, preferably avoiding the busiest routes if this is possible. They may want to combine this with meeting a buddy at a refuge point. In an evacuation, the incident controllers will note the visitor's location and inform the Fire Brigade.*

### **Move down stairs on bottom after main flow**

While some people will prefer to take responsibility for their own escape by walking down the stairs, others may prefer to make their own way out by shuffling down the stairs on their bottom. Again, it will be best for this group of people to wait until after the main flow of people has evacuated. Wherever possible, they should be monitored to ensure that there is no problem with their progress.

*Action: Find out where the visitor will be located whilst they are on site. Now tell them where the nearest fire exit route is, avoiding the busiest routes if this is possible. Please also contact a staff member who will be working with or near the visitor and ask them to perform the 'buddy' role outlined in this document. The visitor and buddy should meet at an agreed refuge point (see above) before evacuating. In an evacuation, the incident controllers will note the visitor's location and inform the Fire Brigade.*

### **Move down stairs using handrails**

Some people will be able to make their own escape but will require a handrail to support them to get out of the building. This will be to either the right or left of the stairs. Some will not be able to use the right and others the left. Once you have established that they require a handrail, check each staircase in the building proposed for their use to ensure that a suitable handrail is provided.

*Action: Find out where the visitor will be located whilst they are on site and describe the nearest fire exit routes. The main stairway has a handrail on both sides at PPA. This should be used.*

### **Assistance from one to two people**

Some people will require a buddy to assist them out of the building. Some will be happy to organise this themselves on a casual basis. If this is the case, a check should be made to ensure that the disabled person will always be in a group of their peers or regular staff who are able to provide this. If not, then it may be necessary to establish a formal procedure for times when they are likely to be alone. In these cases, it may be suitable for them to use the standard procedures set up in that building for visitors.

*Action: Follow the instructions for the 'buddy' section below. Make sure that the buddy / buddies have met the visitor before they leave reception, and that a refuge meeting point has been decided on.*

### **Step edge markings**

Some people will be more confident about making their own way out of the building if there is sufficient contrast on the nosing on the stairs. If a person requests this option, the stairs should be checked to see if the step edges are highlighted. If they are not, the person may require a buddy to help them out of the building. It may also be appropriate to allocate a working area close to where there are suitable step edge markings. It would be advisable to provide contrasting nosing on all stairs in order to reduce the need for assistance.

*Action: Discuss the exit routes with the visitor. If this is not sufficient, consider nominating a buddy to help the visitor negotiate the stairs and follow the relevant instructions from the 'buddy' section below.*

### **Assistance for the person and their dog**

Where a person uses a guide dog, they may prefer the dog to assist them out of the building. The escape routes should be pointed out to them. Others will prefer to take the responsibility away from the dog for means of escape and request a human assistant. In these cases, a buddy should be allocated to the person. It may also be necessary to provide a person to look after the dog. Again, this may be provided in an informal or formal manner.

*Action: Contact a colleague and ask them to conduct a tour of the building. If necessary, get help from the person running the event that the visitor is attending. Alternatively, follow the advice from the 'buddy' section.*

### **Need doors to be opened**

Some people may have difficulty negotiating self-closing fire-resisting doors. It should be ensured, therefore, that all such doors and their self-closing devices comply with the recommendations of the appropriate British Standard regarding opening and closing forces. However, some people may still require assistance to open the doors, for example those with upper limb impairments. Again, this can be a formal or informal arrangement. Where a person may be alone in a building that has doors that may be difficult for them to open, it may be necessary to provide a more formal level of assistance. Managers should ensure that a fire door self-closing device is not set at too strong a pressure and they may need to adjust it, but it must also be remembered that such doors are designed to hold back smoke and fire to protect all the people in a building and facilitate their escape.

*Action: Nominate a 'buddy' to open fire doors and follow the relevant section of this document.*

### **Large print information**

Some people will need fire evacuation information provided in large print. This can be obtained through a number of organisations that provide accessible information services. Alternatively, it is possible to produce large print information in-house. Ask the person what size of print is suitable for them.

*Action: Show the visitor the large print version of information provided here.*

### **Identification of escape routes**

Visitors to the building may need reception staff to show them the escape routes when they arrive at the building. This task should be allocated to the most suitable person for each building or department.

*Action: Contact a colleague and ask them to conduct a tour of the building. If necessary, get help from the person running the event that the visitor is attending. Make sure that this takes place straight away.*

### **Deaf text messaging system**

The deaf text messaging system is the easiest way for a hearing impaired person to be informed that the fire alarm has been activated. There should be a system of deaf text messaging in place, by which the deaf person can text a number which will then sign them up to receive messages warning them of a fire alarm. When the fire alarm is activated, they will then receive a text message within 30 seconds telling them that the fire alarm has been activated and to leave the building by the nearest exit.

*Action: Provide the visitor with the information necessary to sign up for the service.*

### **Buddy system**

A buddy system is another system which can be used for alerting a hearing impaired or deaf person to the operation of the fire alarm. This should not be done on an informal basis in case everyone assumes that someone else has given the warning. It is vital that the person acting as a buddy will be with the person at all times.

*Action: Contact the person running the event that the disabled visitor is attending. Ask them to nominate a buddy and come down to reception to meet the visitor. The buddy must be someone who will be in the same place as the visitor during the event. In many cases, this may therefore mean that the most appropriate buddy will be a person assisting or attending the event.*

*If the fire alarm sounds, the buddy will go to the visitor. They will then exit the building with the visitor – travelling by the nearest safe exit route.*

| Type of Escape                                | Electric Wheelchair user | Wheel chair user | Mobility Impaired Person | Asthma & other breathing / health issues | Visually Impaired Person | Hearing Impaired Person | Dyslexic / orientation disorders | Learning difficulty / autism | Mental Health Problems | Dexterity problems |
|---|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Evac chair                                    | *                        | *                | *                        | *  |                          |                         |                                  |                              |                        |                    |
| Meet assistance at refuge                     |                          | *                | *                        |  | *                        |                         |                                  |                              | *                      |                    |
| Make own way down stairs slowly               |                          |                  |                          | *  | *                        | *                       | *                                | *                            | *                      |                    |
| Move down stairs on bottom after main flow    | *                        | *                | *                        | *  |                          |                         |                                  |                              |                        |                    |
| Can get down stairs using handrails           |                          |                  |                          | *  | *                        | *                       | *                                | *                            | *                      | *                  |
| Needs assistance to walk down stairs 1 person | *                        | *                | *                        | *  | *                        |                         |                                  | *                            | *                      | *                  |
| Needs assistance to walk down stairs 2 people | *                        | *                | *                        | *  | *                        |                         |                                  | *                            |                        |                    |
| Needs step edge markings                      |                          |                  | *                        |  | *                        |                         | *                                |                              | *                      |                    |
| Needs assistance for person and dog           |                          |                  |                          | *  | *                        |                         |                                  |                              |                        |                    |
| Needs doors opening                           |                          |                  |                          |  |                          |                         |                                  |                              |                        | *                  |
| Large print information                       |                          |                  |                          |  | *                        |                         | *                                | *                            |                        |                    |
| ID of escape route by reception / security    |                          |                  |                          |  | *                        | *                       | *                                | *                            | *                      |                    |
| Buddy system                                  |                          |                  |                          |  | *                        | *                       | *                                |                              |                        |                    |
| Deaf text messaging system                    |                          |                  |                          |  |                          | *                       |                                  |                              |                        |                    |