



BRIEFING

PREVENTING FIRE DEATHS

1 Background

'Increased Awareness around referrals to the Fire Service' were recommendations in a number of recent SARs, including Adult N from NSAB and Adult 'Alan' from SSAB. Tyne and Wear has also seen a spike in fire deaths in 2022/23, many with similar contributing factors. The majority of people who die or are seriously injured in domestic fires have common vulnerabilities and are known to public service agencies. Some of the most vulnerable people in our society are still dying from fires in places where they should be safe.

2 Emollients and paraffin-based creams, smoking & mobility.

Emollients and paraffin-based creams are used to treat dry skin conditions and some people are often in bed or sit down for lengthy periods due to illness or reduced mobility. Certain creams can be highly flammable (e.g. those that are paraffin-based) and pose a significant risk in the event of a fire. The fire risk posed by the use of such emollient creams is significantly increased when the user is smoking. The person's bedding and clothing can also become impregnated with cream, increasing flammability and the risk to the person, their family and visiting partners.

3 How can we prevent fire deaths and injury?

- Take fire risk seriously
- Spot the signs
- Take Responsibility/Take Action
- Refer adults and families at risk of fire to TWFRS, with their consent.

4 Consider a referral for anyone who meets any of the risks below?

- Those applying emollients to a large area of their body for medical purposes
- Smoking, and smoking where they sleep
- Immobility or restricted mobility
- Those receiving care especially with a care plan in place
- Hoarding
- Burn marks, evidence of previous fires or near-misses
- History of falls
- Long term health problems such as Parkinson's disease, heart disease, stroke, or is a home oxygen user
- Sensory impairment e.g. sight or hearing loss

5 Consequences for victims, families, organisations and the community can be devastating and include:

- Loss of life
- Loss of home, property and possessions
- They could suffer life changing injuries such as burns
- Reputational damage to the organisation
- Trauma to the families, community and staff following a preventable fire.

6 What is your role?

- Recognise the fire hazards and signs of previous fires
- Take immediate action if possible to reduce/remove risk
- Record and report your concerns to line managers
- Contact the fire service for a Safe and Well visit via:
www.twfire.gov.uk/hsc



7 What is a Safe and Well visit?

- We will visit the person in their home and give advice on: PREVENTION / DETECTION / ESCAPE
- Visits are free of charge and can include the fitting of smoke alarms
- Specialist alarms for the sensory impaired are also available
- Fire retardant bedding, throws and mats available to those most suitable
- We can also provide presentations on home fire safety to community groups, or workplace training events free of charge. PandE@twfire.gov.uk