

There was an incident recently of a fire in a sheltered housing setting in the West of Berkshire, which resulted in serious injuries to the occupant. All appropriate fire safety equipment was in place and yet the individual has still come to significant harm. In response to this incident, it was felt it was a suitable opportunity, for the partnership, to ask those working and volunteering in Adult Health and Social Care, to spend some time thinking about our roles in regards to fire safety and prevention.

As people working and volunteering in Adult Health and Social Care, you work with some of the most vulnerable people in our community and for whom the risks and consequences around fire can be more serious. You are the eyes and ears on the ground and as such, it's important you consider fire safety as an integral part of your role.

Please spend some time reading the information below and consider what changes can be made in your practice to support fire safety and prevention.

Fire Risk with the use of Emollients

Emollients are moisturising treatments applied directly to the skin to soothe and hydrate it. They cover the skin with a protective film to trap in moisture. Emollients are not flammable in themselves; however, a fire risk occurs when they absorb into fabrics and then exposed to naked flames, or heat sources, resulting in a fire that burns quickly and intensely, which can cause serious injury and even death. This flammability increases each time the fabric is contaminated with an emollient. Repeated washing of clothing, bandages, and bedding at any temperature, does not remove the fire risk. Both paraffin and non-paraffin emollients can act as an accelerant, when absorbed into clothing and exposed to naked flames or other heat sources. Over 60s who smoke and have reduced mobility, are those most at risk.

Fire Risks Associated with Types of Health Equipment

In addition to the fire risk associated with emollients, there have been several fire related incidents nationally, involving health associated equipment such as Oxygen cylinders, air flow pressure relieving mattresses and incontinence pads and these incidents have led to serious injuries and fatalities. [Health Equipment and Fire Risk Report](#) published by the London Fire Brigade provides useful advice.

Risk Assessment Tools

- [Fire Risk Assessment Tip Sheet](#), a Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Tool, is a useful to check you have considered all relevant factors in identifying fire risk.
- [Homes Multi-Disciplinary Hoarding Risk Assessment](#), a tool to support with the fire risks associated with hoarding.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service - Safe and Well Check

You can refer a vulnerable person for a safe and well check that will be completed by a representative from the Fire and Rescue Service. Their home will be assessed for fire risk, with a view to fitting free smoke detector alarms if required. The Fire and Rescue Service will also discuss home escape plans and provide advice to lower fire risk. To refer for a safe and well check please use the following online form: [Agency Referral Form](#)

Whilst consent is preferred for making a safe and well check referrals, where there is risk of harm to the individual or others the referral **must** be made without consent. This is on the basis of public or vital interests. Please ignore the fact that the current referral suggests consent *must* be obtained (RBFRS are resolving this issue). If you need to tick the consent box to submit the form, do so and include in the comments the rationale for not having consent and how public or vital interests threshold is met.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service - Adults at Risk Programme (ARP)

A free training package is on offer and is designed to highlight the fire risks to those working with vulnerable people. Learning objectives include understanding:

- The increased risk of fire to vulnerable adults living in their own homes
- Who is more at risk
- The protection measures and additional equipment that is available
- When and how to make a referral to the Fire Services

To find out more about the training and whether it is suitable for you and/ or your organisation, email the RBFRS emailing our Prevention Team at prevention@rbfrs.co.uk.

Or alternatively you can onto a training session using the following link to one of their training courses, [visit their Eventbrite page](#) to find a time and date that is suitable for you.

Thankyou for taking the time to read Learning Brief. If you would like to provide any feedback or have any questions regarding the Board please contact: Lynne.Mason@Reading.gov.uk