

Safeguarding Adults Review

7 Minute Learning Summary



Fire Safety National Picture

Older adults (65+) with care and support needs, particularly those who already exhibit self-neglecting behaviours or have reduced ability to meet their care needs due to frailty and immobility are more likely to die in fires.

Over the five years to 2020, 70% of all fatal dwelling fires happened in a living room, followed by the bedroom (though in some of these incidents the living room was being used as a bedroom). The predominant source of ignition at fatal fires is smoking related (32% of all fatal fires), with a further 14% involving matches and candles. Heating and cooking equipment accounted for less than 10% each as the source of ignition for fires where there were fire related fatalities (including in dwelling fires).

In the year ending March 2022 there were 272 fire related fatalities (an increase of 15%). As a consequence of numerous SARs into fire deaths nationally and national fire incident reports, the main contributory factors of a fire fatality have identified as:

- how able the person was to respond to the fire (i.e. were they mobile; were they awake; were they impaired by drugs or alcohol);
- how early the fire is discovered, how quickly fire service is called and the arrival time/response of the fire service;
- the materials involved in the fire (smoking, non-retardant bedding and pressure relieving mattresses, clothing or hoist materials, emollient creams all increase risk);
- the size and construction of the room/building;
- the proximity of the victim to the fire.

In late 2022 in the West of Berkshire there were 2 serious fire incidents involving people with care and support needs.

- Incident 1, a 66 woman suffered life changing injuries in a fire at her sheltered accommodation. She was known to Community Mental Health Services. Smoking and emollient creams were factors. A review found good multi-agency safeguarding practice, including appropriate equipment in situ, fire retardant sprays, consistent advice had been provided regarding risk of smoking and regular assessments of her capacity had been completed.
- Incident 2, an elderly adult with care and support needs died in a fire at her home. The cause of death is understood to be smoke inhalation and carbon monoxide when a towel ignited on a gas heater. Prior to her death she was supported by family and paid carers (employed via direct payments). She had several visits a day and a privately arranged pendant alarm through which she could contact her family. In 2021 carers were advised to place the pendant out of her reach overnight. In 2022 the Care agency completed a risk assessment and Adult Social Care reviewed her care, both considered fire safety, but neither referred for a Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service safe and well visit as one was completed in 2020.

Additional Information

The West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board has a webpage dedicated to fire risk awareness and can be found here: [Fire risk awareness | West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board \(sabberkshirewest.co.uk\)](https://www.sabberkshirewest.co.uk)

Thankyou for taking the time to read this practice note. If you would like to provide any feedback or have any questions regarding the Board please contact:

Lynne.Mason@Reading.gov.uk

7-minute Learning Summary

Safeguarding Adults Review Fire Safety

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 are 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.

The 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

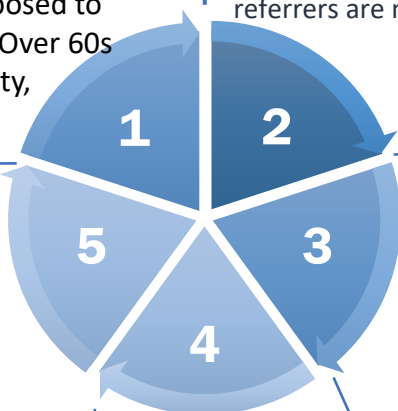
To find out more about the training and whether it is suitable for you and/ or your organisation, email the RBFRS Prevention Team at prevention@rbfrs.co.uk Or alternatively you can log onto a training session using the following link to one of their training courses, [Home | Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service \(rbfrs.co.uk\)](http://Home | Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (rbfrs.co.uk))

Multi Agency Risk Management Framework (MARM)

purpose is to support the individual and staff to reach agreement and adopt strategies around risk decision and the management of those risks where they are manageable. Concerns maybe around:

- Where a support plan will not meet identified risks.
- Where risks have been identified in giving an individual a direct payment to manage themselves including safeguarding concerns.
- Where an individual is putting themselves or others at significant risk by refusing services.
- All options have been explored and the level of risk is still high.
- Disagreement between services / agencies on managing the level of risk.
- Any Local Authority worker can present a case to the MARM where there is a complex or challenging risk issue and where guidance and decision making are needed.
- The person does not have to be in receipt of Adult Social Care support, the reason for the presentation to panel might be due to the individual refusing support, despite having care and support needs.

Referrals to MARM cannot be made outside of the host local authorities, if agencies are concerned about risks to individuals these concerns should be raised via the Care Management and Safeguarding Referral Routes. If referrers are not informed or not satisfied with the response to the concerns raised this should be escalated to the manager of the host Local Authorities Safeguarding Adults Team.



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 visit the [website](#). Whilst consent is preferred for making a safe and well check referral, 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.

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 Management 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 \(sabberkshirewest.co.uk\)](#), a tool to support with the fire risks associated with hoarding