

There was an incident 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 regard 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. There is more information on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Website: [Emollient Creams | Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

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.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service - Safe and Well Check

You can refer an individual for a Safe and Well Visit, a representative from RBFRS will make contact to arrange to attend the address. The address will be assessed for fire risk, with a view to fitting adequate amounts of free smoke alarms where required. RBFRS will also work with the individual or family to create a personalised escape plan and provide further advice to lower any risk of fire. To make a referral for a Safe and Well Visit, please use the following online form: [Agency Referral Form](#).

Whilst best practice is to gain the individual's consent to make a Safe and Well referral, a referral may also be accepted where no consent can be gained e.g. in cases where the individual lacks mental capacity, or where the professional referring is sharing information due to a public interest risk or a best interest decision on their behalf. In these circumstances, we will contact the person making the referral to discuss the best way forward. In some situations, we may request that you accompany us on a joint visit.

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

The At Risk Programme (ARP) is free fire safety training for professionals involved in supporting and caring for vulnerable adults and children in the community. It gives an overview of the types of fire risk, what to look out for and the minimum recommendations for the protection of residents, and staff working with them, in their homes.

Learning objectives include understanding:

- The increased risk of fire to vulnerable residents living in the community
- How to identify who is more at risk
- The protection measures and additional equipment that is available
- When to make a referral to the Fire Service
- How to make a referral to the Fire Service

Booking Link – rbfrs.co.uk/your-safety/arp

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