

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY		
DATE:	18 OCTOBER 2018	REPORT NO:	CFO/063/18
PRESENTING OFFICER:	AM KEEN		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	AM KEEN	REPORT AUTHOR:	GM THOMAS
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	DEB APPLETON, JOHN FIELDING, KEVIN JOHNSON		
TITLE OF REPORT:	2017/18 FATAL FIRES REPORT/ TEN YEAR FATAL FIRES REPORT		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	FATALITY REPORT 2017/18
	APPENDIX B:	TEN YEAR FATAL FIRES REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an insight in relation to the fatal fires which have occurred in Merseyside over the last year 2017/18, and the trends established in relation to fatal fires which have occurred over the previous 10 years.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the attached reports

Introduction and Background

3. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has produced reports analysing fatal fire incidents for several years. Each year, two reports are produced;
 - Fatal Fire Review
 - 10 Year Fatal Fire Review.
4. The full reports are attached as appendices to this covering report. Below is a summary of both reviews:

In summary (2017/18) findings:

- During 2017/18, there were 4 fatalities as a result of accidental dwelling fires, 3 fewer than in 2016/17, when 7 took place.
- The 4 deaths that took place during 2017/18, is the lowest count recorded. The previous low was for the years 2010/11 and 2011/12, where 5 fatalities took place in each year.

- Concerning accidental dwelling fire fatalities, by district there were: 3 in Liverpool and 1 in Wirral. Knowsley, Sefton and St Helens did not have any fire fatalities.
- Of the 4 victims, 3 lived alone and 1 was staying with relatives. The 3 victims who lived alone, were alone at the time of the incident.
- Concerning the ages of the victims, the ages varied between 31 and 87. In previous years, individuals above the age of 65 tended to be most prominent, though this is different for 2017/18 as the age ranges are more varied.
- Concerning gender; 2 victims were female and 2 were male. In terms of racial profile, all 4 were White British.
- Based on the National Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 3 of the 4 fatalities were located in areas that were within the 50% most deprived Super Output Areas in England.
- Of the 4 incidents where fatalities occurred; 3 were linked to smoking materials and 1 was related to the careless use of a heating appliance.
- Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service had been in contact with occupants in 1 of the 4 dwellings concerned, resulting in 1 completed HFSC.
- Concerning Smoke Alarms; within 2 dwellings a smoke alarm was in situ and actuated, in 1 incident a smoke alarm was in place but inoperable due to missing a fuse and finally, 1 property had no smoke alarms installed.

In summary (10years) findings:

- Between 2008/09 and 2017/18 there were a total of 78¹ fire deaths as a result of accidental dwelling fires; these deaths are attributed to 73 fire incidents.
- Between 2008/09 and 2010/11, the trend for fire deaths was falling, with (at the time) lows of 5 deaths during both 2010/11 and 2011/12. However from 2012/13 the count of fatalities increased year on year leading to a 10 year high of 16 during 2015/16.
- Since 2015/16 fire deaths have dropped with 7 during 2016/17 and a new low of 4 during 2017/18.
- When analysed by district, Wirral had the greatest overall number of fire deaths with 29, closely followed by Liverpool with 23. When aggregated to incidents per 100,000 population, Wirral has the greatest number of deaths with 0.91 deaths per 100,000 population, while Liverpool's ratio is much lower, with 0.49 per 100,000 population.

¹ Please note: due diligence should be applied when drawing conclusions from such a small data set. It is entirely possible that increases in fatalities over the past five years could be coincidental, but conversely could also be part of a larger issue.

- The risk of death in accidental dwelling fires increases with age, with the 45-49 and particularly the 75 and above age groups being at greatest risk.
- Concerning the demographic of fire fatalities, there is a bias towards male victims with 45 fatalities. Female victims accounted for 33 accidental dwelling fire fatalities.
- Concerning racial profile, the vast majority of victims were White British – accounting for 73 victims or 93.6% overall.
- In 49 out of 78 fire fatalities, the deceased was the sole occupier. Taking all living circumstances into account, 55 victims were alone at the time of the fire that claimed their lives.

Incident Summary

- Concerning Deprivation and the use of Community and Local Government's (CLG) Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015, the general trend is that fatalities tend to occur more often in deprived areas, with fewer fire deaths occurring in areas with less deprivation. When the average age of victims is added to the equation it has been found that victims die younger in deprived areas with victims being older in less deprived areas.
- When deprivation and alcohol consumption are analysed, data identifies that in both the most deprived and least deprived deciles alcohol plays an important role. Within the most deprived decile, 7 of 12 incidents involved alcohol consumption and within the least deprived decile, 3 of 5 incidents involved alcohol.
- Concerning Smoke Alarm actuation, in 41 incidents a smoke alarm was fitted and actuated. There were 6 incidents where smoke alarms were fitted and did not actuate. On 13 occurrences a smoke alarm was not fitted and a further 5 incidents where the fitted smoke alarm was inoperable (i.e. no batteries). There were 7 occurrences where it was unknown whether the smoke alarm actuated and 1 incident where the level of damage done to the property was so great it was unknown whether a smoke alarm had been fitted.
- 46 Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) were completed with victims prior to the incidents which claimed their lives. 27 did not have an HFSC.
- When analysing Ignition Sources it has been found that of the 73 fatal incidents, 36 were as a result of *Smokers Materials*. Since 2009/10, where 7 deaths were the result of Smokers materials, there was a gradual reduction with only 1 death attributable to this ignition source during both 2011/12 and 2012/13. However since 2013/14, deaths as a result of Smokers Materials have increased leading to a high of 8 during 2015/16. During both 2016/17 and 2017/18 fatal fire incidents as a result of Smokers Materials fell back to 3.

- When analysing the room of origin of the fire and the ignition source, it has been found that *Smokers Materials* were responsible for the majority of fire fatalities in both the *Living Room* and the *Bedroom*. When *Smokers Materials* are combined with Alcohol, 16 of the 36 incidents were the result of this combination.
- The elderly are more likely to be involved in a fire where the *Careless Use of Heating Appliance* has taken place.
- When analysing incidents by month the greatest number of deaths occurred during the autumn / winter months; particularly between November and March. The month of April also tends to have high counts of fire deaths.
- Concerning fire deaths and day of week, deaths are most likely to occur on Fridays and Mondays.
- Peaks in incidents where a fatality occurs are between 07:00 to 08:59 and 02:00 to 03:59, with a secondary peak between 15:00 – 15:59.

Equality and Diversity Implications

5. The Authority's approach to reducing fires and fatalities in the home draws heavily on the analysis of historical incidents and the study of local demographics. It has been apparent for some years that older people are more at risk of dying in a fire and prevention activity is focused on this group of people.

Staff Implications

6. There are no staff implications resulting from this report.

Legal Implications

7. The Authority has a duty under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, s.6 to provide safety advice to the public and these reports are used to assist officers in determining strategies for future prevention work.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

8. There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

9. The Home Safety Strategy and other associated Prevention strategies and partnership activities are designed to mitigate risk in relation to the occurrence of fires in the home and resulting injuries and fatalities.

10. These reports provide evidence that enables officers to develop and enhance strategies designed to keep our communities safer.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ADF	Accidental dwelling fire
HFSC	Home Fire Safety Check
CLG	Communities and Local Government
IMD	Index of multiple deprivation