



Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

Home Safety Strategy

2015 – 2018

Introduction

Since 1999, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has proactively promoted Community Fire Safety by conducting Home Fire Safety Checks. These visits offered the free provision and installation of smoke detectors and included valuable fire safety education for all people living within the Merseyside area.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 created a statutory duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities to continue to promote fire safety, placing the prevention of fires at the heart of their activity. The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 which provided strategic direction to Fire and Rescue Authorities, stated that “Fire and Rescue Authorities must work with communities to identify and protect them from risk and to prevent incidents from occurring”.

The financial challenges currently faced by Fire and Rescue Sector across the United Kingdom have required us to refocus our preventative services to adopt a more targeted approach, working with our partner agencies to implement data sharing protocols that allow us to deploy our resources more effectively by identifying vulnerable people within our communities.

Whilst every fatality and serious fire has its own tragic circumstances, through closer working with our partner agencies and other key stakeholders to identify those most at risk, and through sharing of this information, appropriate interventions can be offered to vulnerable people at the earliest opportunity with the aim of preventing future fatal fires.

Our Home Safety Strategy for 2015-18 and beyond takes into consideration the reduction in the number of fire appliances and operational staff available, the reduction in the number of advocates as a result of the support services review and the mitigation of those reductions included in the new work routines for operational personnel introduced in 2014. It also sets out our commitment to continuously strive to reduce the number of people who are killed or seriously injured due to accidental dwelling fires in Merseyside and ensure that each and every visit to a home counts.

Overview

In the last 10 years there have been 79 fire fatalities across Merseyside, 10 of these in the last reporting period (1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015). The data that is collected from these incidents allows us to identify common factors and use this information to influence the direction of our strategy and the manner in which we deliver our frontline preventative services. Further detailed analysis can be found in the following link.

http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/pages/reports/MFRS-DYING_FOR_DATA/MFRS-DYING_FOR_DATA.html

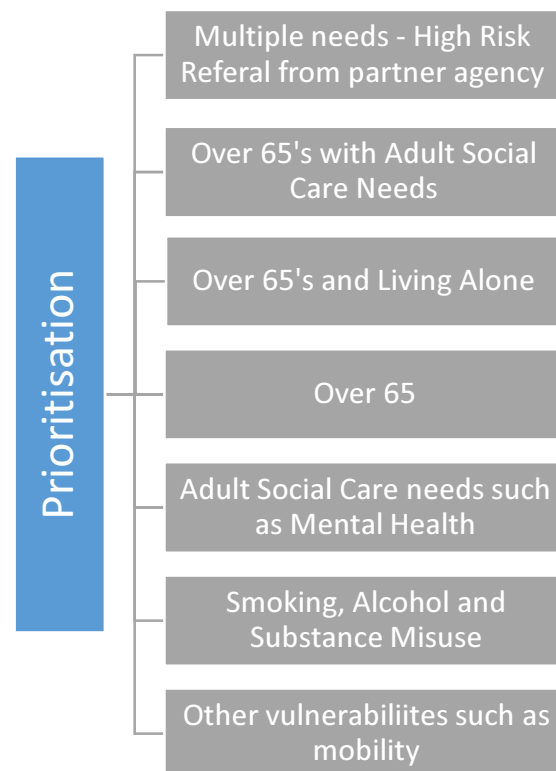
This data, combined with the research work that has been undertaken with Liverpool John Moore's University and the numerous data sharing protocols that have been agreed and implemented with partner agencies - the most significant of which is the introduction of NHS over 65's Data – has allowed us to create a Vulnerable Persons Index that targets people who possess some, or all of the following contributory factors that may make them more at risk of having a fire in the home:

- Over 65 Years Old
- Adult Social Care Needs
- Lone Occupant of the Property
- Mental Health Issues
- Smoking
- Drug/Alcohol Misuse

We also recognise that Merseyside has a number of challenges in regards to deprivation and other socio-economic factors, as result of which there is an increased risk of an accidental dwelling fire within affected areas.

This process will enable us to ensure that our operational crews, prevention teams, volunteers and partners are targeting the most at risk people in our communities and offering a quality Home Fire Safety Check that identifies hazards within the home and responding by implementing the appropriate interventions available.

The diagram signifies the future risk management hierarchy for Prevention Activity

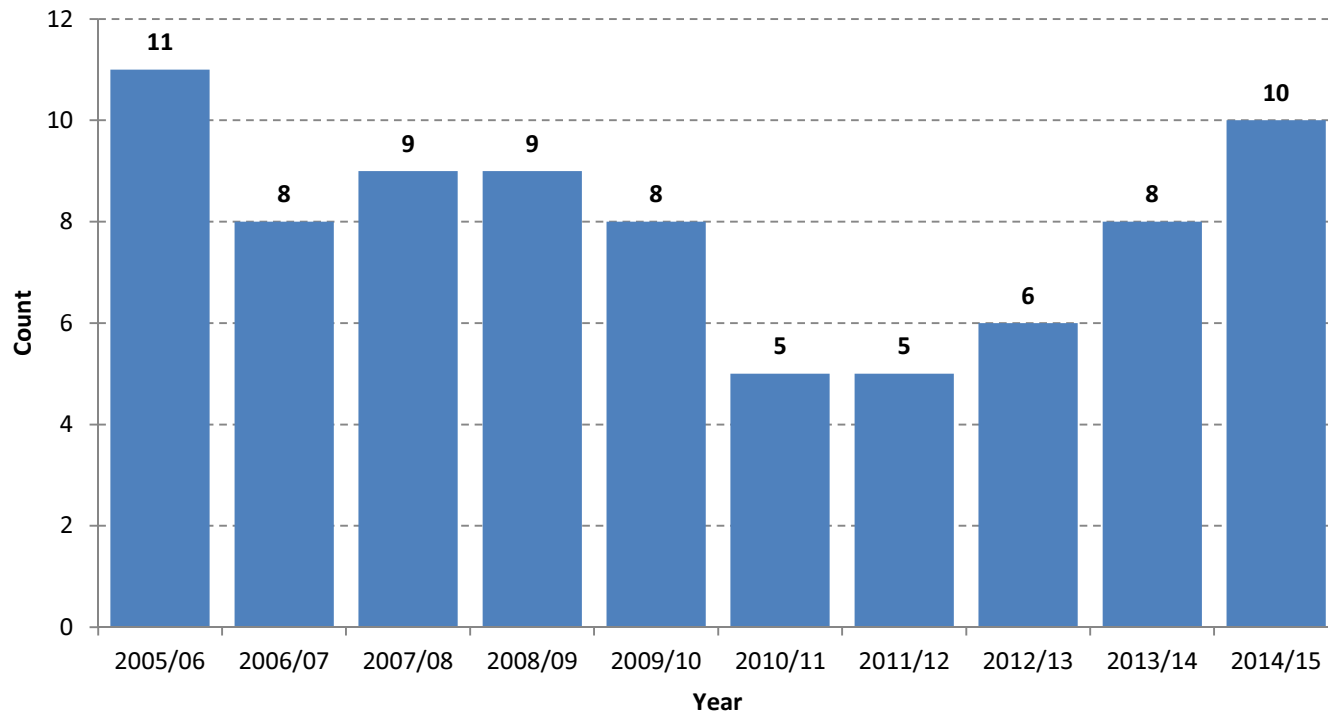


The Status Reports we use at present to provide lists of home to visit adequately reflect these priorities in Liverpool & Wirral within those key groups. We are revisiting all data sets particularly the Districts of Knowsley, Sefton & St Helens to ensure they are fit for purpose as part of this intelligence led approach. Goldmine is the Customer Relationship Management Software in which Status Reports are produced for targeting purposes.

PRIORITY ONE: TARGETED APPROACH TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE

During 2007-2011, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service delivered in excess of 100,000 Home Fire Safety Check visits per year, which peaked in volume during 2010 and saw over 47,000 hours of community prevention activity, supported by over 5,000 high risk interventions conducted by Community Prevention Advocates. Despite the initial high volume of home safety interventions made, the subsequent reductions since then illustrates a slight increase in the number of fatalities since 2010-2011. This last year 2014-15 has seen 10 fatalities, the first time we have returned to double figures in a decade.

Chart 1: Fatalities in Accidental Dwelling Fires over the past 10 Years (2005/6-2014/15)



Statistics inform us that over two-thirds of fire related deaths occurred in accidental dwelling fires and more than half of the victims were aged 65 years old or over¹. It is predicted over the next 20 years the number of people in England aged 65 - 84 will increase by more than a third, and the number aged over 85 will more than double (Kings Fund / LGA report 2014).

As such, this Home Safety Strategy identifies ways to work more efficiently through the use of intelligence led targeting – we have also examined emerging challenges posed by the implementation of the Care Act 2014 and changes to Adult Social Care that may place even more vulnerable people into the community. In terms of managing risk to any emerging threats, we will closely monitor progress against the strategy and continue to test, learn and evaluate this new approach.

How are we doing it?

In November 2010, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, in partnership with John Moore's University, developed and evolved our customer insight project to enable us to identify and target vulnerable people, rather than areas, which subsequently allowed us to deploy our resources in a more efficient and intelligence led manner. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has created a Vulnerable Person's Index through the implementation of data sharing protocols with external partner agencies leading us to identify people who may be at a higher risk of injury or death as a result of accidental dwelling fires in Merseyside.

During 2015-2018, Operational Crews will be delivering home fire safety checks in their respective areas to people by:

- Utilising data to identify people who are **over 65 years old** and have never been visited previously;
- Introducing a sustainable revisit strategy for people who are aged **over 65 years old, with Adult Social Care Needs and Living Alone**;
- Examining the feasibility of introducing a weighting system based on age and vulnerability;
- Utilising data sharing protocols to identify people who are known to other agencies and have never been previously visited by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.
- Encouraging those over 65's to request an HFSC through targeted promotion.
- Ensure that engagement with older people is an integral element of the process of evaluating the impact of the strategy.

¹ Fire Statistics Great Britain: April 2013 – March 2014, Department for Communities and Local Government.

What are our desired outcomes?

By developing our Home Safety Strategy to ensure that risk is targeted and supporting our staff to engage with the most vulnerable in our communities, we aim to achieve:

- A reduction in fatalities and serious injury from accidental fires in the home;
- A reduction in accidental dwelling fires in Merseyside through Home Fire Safety visits and fire safety education; and
- Ensuring that properties visited by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority have working smoke alarms installed.

PRIORITY TWO: ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS TO INFLUENCE DATA SHARING

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service receives partner agency referrals for potentially vulnerable people who are identified during the routine delivery of their specific services. Through analysis of our most recent fires we also understand that those living alone, aged over 65 and with adult social care needs are most at risk and will require priority interventions. We believe that by sharing data we are helping to protect vulnerable people, therefore reducing the risk of accidental dwelling fires, related injuries and fatalities.

How are we doing it?

Strategic engagement with Local Authority Safeguarding leads and Government Agencies (such as Department of Work and Pensions and Health providers) will enable Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to access the key primary data sets that will influence our person centric approach to identification of the most vulnerable people in Merseyside. During this year (2015), Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will engage with partner agencies to:

- Develop our Vulnerable Persons Teams in areas such as dementia, ageing safely and mental health – in order to focus on key specialist areas.
- Embed a Fire and Rescue Staff member into each Local Authority Area Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub to support information sharing and referral pathway for those at risk or harm.
- Improving incoming data sharing agreements on smoking, alcohol and other behaviour related issues via the Directors of Public Health within the Local Authority.

What are our desired outcomes?

By developing our Home Safety Strategy to ensure strategic engagement with our key partners, we aim to:

- Ensure the most vulnerable people are identified and receive the relevant interventions through robust data sharing protocols and direct referrals from our partner agencies;
- Through targeted interventions, ensure that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority deploys its resources in the most effective and economical manner; and

- Ensure that data is shared safely and appropriately to support our strategy.

PRIORITY THREE: ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS TO INFLUENCE DIRECT REFERRAL PATHWAYS

Data sharing protocols provide us with an overarching view of the high risk and vulnerable people living across Merseyside, however even with the use of strict criteria around targeting, the resources available to us can often dictate when these people will receive a visit. We know the most effective way for us to identify high risk people and in turn be able to provide an appropriate intervention at the earliest opportunity, is through our partner agencies and other professionals who are working in the heart of our communities using a direct referral pathway to our Vulnerable Adults Teams in each of the Districts.

How are we doing it?

Engagement with our partners at a strategic level will allow us to raise awareness and where appropriate deliver effective training to the relevant partner agency staff which will:

- Assist our partner agencies to identify risks in respect of fire safety and understand the referral pathway process;
- Empower our partners to be able to deliver relevant preventative interventions on our behalf; and
- Promote collaborative working to undertake joint visits to ensure all relevant key agencies gain access to high risk and vulnerable people.
- Support Directors of Public Health to ensure smoking and alcohol referral pathways are reciprocal and MFRS can support relevant behavioural change programmes.
- Work with those responsible for commissioning of carers are made aware of “fire risk” and staff are appropriately trained.
- Develop strategic alliances with partners such as British Red Cross, Age Concern and others to ensure referrals are received directly into the Fire Service Direct contact centre for processing and prioritisation.

What are our desired outcomes?

- Ensure the most high risk and vulnerable in our communities are identified and receive effective interventions to reduce any risks at the earliest opportunity;
- Ensure that our strategic alliances with partner agencies remain relevant and fit for purpose; and
- Recognise the potential impacts of the Care Act 2014 and other emerging legislation associated with an ageing population and people living independently in the community.

PRIORITY FOUR: HOME SAFETY DELIVERY

In July 2012, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, with reducing resources, recognised that its revisit strategy was not sustainable in the medium to long term and as such the universal provision of free smoke alarms across Merseyside would no longer be achievable and the future installation of free smoke alarms would only be considered for people identified as high risk/vulnerable or properties that are recorded as never having received a Home Fire Safety Check visit.

The development of our data sharing protocols and Vulnerable Persons Index has enabled us to refine our targeted approach and ensure the most effective use of our resources to deliver prevention activities across Merseyside.

Also of particular importance is the robustness of our safeguarding arrangements; safeguarding is the golden thread that runs through all our work with the community and our partners. We are currently reviewing our safeguarding policy and working with key partners such as Merseyside Police and Local Authorities that will see us embedded into each Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

How are we doing it?

To this end, our approach during 2015-18 will focus on operational crews targeting over 35,000 homes per annum delivering preventative services to properties that are included on the Vulnerable Persons Index and are specific to that station area. These properties will have never previously been visited by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and will be overlaid with shared partner agency data, including over 65's and people with known vulnerabilities.

Referrals that are not considered as high risk initially and have not been sent direct to the relevant Vulnerable Adults Team, will receive a telephone risk assessment from an advisor in Fire Service Direct. Dependent upon the outcome of this assessment, an appointment will either be made for one of the Fire Support Network Welfare Officers to conduct a Home Fire Safety Check or if

there are significant concerns, redirected to our Vulnerable Adults Team (and/or) the relevant District Advocate to conduct a 'high risk' intervention.

For over a decade, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has a long established relationship with our charitable service delivery partner Fire Support Network, this has enabled us to maximise additional resources through the use of their staff and volunteers. Our new working arrangements are to ensure that over 8000 homes will be reached this way.

We will also continue to engage with key stakeholders to further develop the 'home fire safety check' into a 'safe and well' visit. This concept is still embryonic, however our view is clear, the Fire and Rescue Service remains an active and engaged partner and can assist commissioners in improving health outcomes in areas such as slips, trips and falls, winter warmth, carbon monoxide, crime prevention and supporting those who are socially isolated.

People who are considered to be at a 'low risk' of fire in the home will be presented with the option of a non-profit cost recovery service that offers the provision and installation of smoke detectors in their home.

What are our desired outcomes?

By developing our Home Safety Strategy to deliver quality prevention interventions to the communities in Merseyside, we aim to:

- Ensure a targeted approach is implemented for the most efficient delivery of the Vulnerable Persons Index by Operational Crews, this will include the re-introduction of local level weekend prevention campaigns;
- Ensure processes are in place for the robust management of partner agency referrals.
- Have a dedicated Vulnerable Adults Team that understands the key challenges in ageing, dementia and mental health and can provide support and advice to local teams when required to do so.
- Ensure that smoke alarm ownership and fire safety advice education remains high in the communities of Merseyside.
- Ensure that focus will be given that recognises and responds to changes in operational response.
- Ensure that a quality service for the provision and installation of smoke alarms is available by providing staff training in line with their continued professional development; and
- Support the collaborative work with the Department of Communities and Local Government through Fire Kills and with the Chief Fire Officers Association to ensure all appropriate campaigns are built into the service delivery of prevention activities in Merseyside.

PRIORITY FIVE: INFLUENCE THE USE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will continue to work with private and public partner agencies to explore the use of assistive, adaptive and rehabilitative devices for people who have mobility or cognitive issues to ensure that vulnerable people in Merseyside are able to live independently and safe from the risk of fire in the home through the use of assistive technology.

How are we doing it?

Recognising the Chief Fire Officers Association strategy², Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority will, through research and development, identify assistive technology solutions that will reduce the risk of fire in high risk and vulnerable people's homes such as the case study overleaf:

Case Study

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority identified a vulnerable person with alcohol issues who had a history of starting accidental fires in the home and not responding to the actuation of smoke detectors. Through a partnership approach with FireAngel (Sprue Aegis) and Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, a solution was identified whereby a Wi-Safe Low Frequency Sounder was installed in the property. The Low Frequency Sounder has been specifically designed to provide additional protection to a standard smoke alarm in the event of a fire. It is more likely to wake up high risk individuals such as children, those with mild to moderate hearing loss, older people and people under the influence of alcohol than a regular smoke alarm according to research undertaken³.

² Chief Fire Officers Association, Home Safety Strategy 2013-2016

³ Bruck, D. & Thomas, I. (2007) Waking effectiveness of alarms (audio, visual and tactile)

Additionally, due to the potential risk of fire spreading to the neighbours properties (terraced housing with common roof void), neighbours either side of the property agreed to have wi-safe alarms fitted that were linked to the vulnerable persons – therefore receiving an early warning should a fire start in the property. This case study demonstrates how the combination of a partnership and community approach and the use of assistive technology can contribute to reducing the risk and increasing the safety of vulnerable people in their own homes.

With the emergence of Wi-Safe technology, we intend to work with our partner agencies – in particular Registered Providers - to identify interventions that will provide advanced linked warnings of fire and potentially Carbon Monoxide. Statistics from 2013 - 2014⁴ indicate that nationally 52% of accidental dwelling fires were started in the kitchen and therefore in addition to the provision and installation of smoke detectors, the Home Safety Strategy for 2015-2016 will consider solutions such as interlinked heat detectors for people considered to be at risk from such incidents (i.e. such as Dementia and Alzheimer's sufferers).

What are our desired outcomes?

- To continue to innovate to allow high risk and vulnerable people to live safely and independently in their homes through the development and installation of assisted technology;
- To work with partners in respect of research and development to identify home safety interventions to reduce the risk of fire in high risk and vulnerable people's homes;
- To educate Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Authority personnel on the interventions available for home safety.

⁴ Fire Statistics Great Britain: April 2013 – March 2014, Department for Communities and Local Government.

PRIORITY SIX: ENGAGING WITH THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has recognised and will respond to the Government's introduction of legislation (from October 2015) that will require additional engagement with the private rented sector to ensure compliance in respect of smoke and carbon monoxide ownership.

How are we doing it?

To support landlords in the private rented sector to make the transition to compliance, we will engage with the strategic leads within each Local Authority to identify and target high risk and vulnerable tenants in order to deliver the one-off funding grant provided by Government to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to provide, where applicable, free smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

What are our desired outcomes?

- To raise compliance standards with regards to smoke and carbon monoxide alarms ownership;
- Engage with landlords to assist in the identification of vulnerable tenants and work with them to deliver appropriate interventions; and
- Improve safety standards within private rented properties and ensure tenants understand and are able to react to the associated risks of fire in the home.

NEXT STEPS:

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to continuing to deliver a quality preventative service to vulnerable people and the wider communities within Merseyside. As an organisation we have responded and adapted to change over the last ten years.

However to remain effective and relevant, we will proactively look how we can shape our delivery model for the future years. In order for this to be successful, we need to ensure that we approach any transformation at pace and overcome any barriers faced.

Community Fire Prevention will develop the following approach to ensure that the best outcomes for the communities within Merseyside are met:

- **Understanding our communities** through the development of Customer Insight and targeting people appropriately using a partnership approach in its truest form; the revised Home Safety Strategy will feature in the next IRMP consultation forums.
- **Defining clear outcomes** for Community Prevention Teams to ensure that appropriate interventions are delivered to those people identified as vulnerable to fire in the home;
- **Evaluating and Quality Assuring** our service delivery to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of a continually changing landscape of the communities within Merseyside;
- **Transforming and Implementing** successful practices rapidly whilst adhering to internal policies and procedures;
- **Innovating Delivery** by sharing strategies with local partners, councillors and other key stakeholder to identify gaps and common outcomes.

In conclusion, we remain committed to our Mission of Safer, Stronger Communities; Safe Effective Firefighters and that the communities within Merseyside receive the highest quality service and advice from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives identify a number of enabling principles and methodologies in the delivery of the Home Safety Strategy 2015 – 17 in addition to those targets set within the Integrated Risk Management Plan and Service Delivery Plan.

- Provide leadership, support and guidance for all Operational and District Prevention staff seeking maximum engagement and the delivery of qualitative services.
- Plan, develop, monitor and review a wide range of prevention strategies to reduce the levels of risk from fire.
- Engage with a wide range of fire service and non-fire service partners to actively promote the concept of enhanced safety from fire, and to encourage cooperation and partnership working on shared ambitions across Merseyside.

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Objective Owner</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Review Period</u>
Targeted approach to vulnerable people	GM Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Safety Strategy 2015/17 communicated to internal / external stakeholders that ensures purpose and approach fully understood. 	On-going
Engaging Stakeholders to influence Data Sharing	Director of Strategy & Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an enabling platform for all relevant data to be shared to ensure our understanding of who and where those identified as most vulnerable are residing. 	On-going
Engaging Stakeholders to influence direct referral pathways	GM Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will ensure partners are fully engaged and supportive of MFRS approach to delivering the best outcomes for citizens. 	On-going
Home Safety Delivery	GM Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all activity from operational crews, advocates and partners aligns to the Home Safety Strategy and any emerging challenges. 	On-going

Influence the use of Assistive Technology to support Vulnerable Individuals	GM Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will examine what technology both current and emerging that provides us with options to ensure we can support partners in making people safer in the home. 	On-going
Engaging with the Private Rented Sector	GM Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the change in legislation allows us to access those who are most vulnerable and the societal changes in this growing area. 	On-going