



## SCSN Briefing Paper No 02 – Home Safety

### 1 Topics

- Unintentional Injury
- Fire Safety
- Home Security

### 2 Executive Summary

Unintentional injury is currently the principal cause of death for boys aged between one and fourteen years and the second highest cause of death for girls of the same age. In Scotland in 2009 the most common causes of accidental injuries in children were falls, exposure to inanimate mechanical forces, accidental exposure to other unspecified factors, poisoning and road traffic accidents. Data is similar for adults. Males aged between 15 and 64 years of age are more likely than women to be admitted to hospital as a result of accidental injury, the exception being women in the 65-74 and 75+ age group who are more likely to be admitted to hospital as a result of injury from a fall.

Within areas of deprivation the statistics differ. Children in the most deprived areas are twice as likely to die and more than one and a half times more likely to be admitted to hospital than those from the least deprived areas. The trend is similar in adult injuries with adults in the most deprived areas being almost twice as likely to die or be admitted to hospital than those from the least deprived areas.

Similarly, areas of deprivation experience more accidental dwelling fires, secondary fires and fire related deaths. Overall, while the levels of fire deaths and accidental fires are decreasing, Scotland reports almost double the rate of fire deaths per head of population than the rest of the UK. Rates of secondary and accidental fires are between 30% and 35% higher than the rest of the UK. Data for 2009/10 shows that there were 13,974 primary fires and 22,960 secondary fires. This highlights a decrease in secondary fires from the previous year and an increase of 6% in primary fires. The number of people killed in 2009/10 was 59, a decrease of 5 from the 2008/9 figures and the lowest reported figures in eleven years. The main causes of fire-related death for the year 2008/9 was being overcome by smoke and fire with those aged 30-59 and 60+ accounting for the most fatalities.

Although the number of secondary fires has been decreasing year on year, the high number remains a cause for concern as they pose a risk to life. Recent data shows that many of these types of fires are avoidable as the majority were started deliberately (the majority relate to setting alight refuse, derelict vehicles and wheelie bins) and are classed as serious acts of anti-social behaviour and criminality. This downward trend in secondary fires coincides with a general reduction in other areas of vandalism and anti-social behaviour which has been accredited to increased partnership working.

A recent literature review concluded that multiple factors play a role in influencing the risk associated with fire. This included housing conditions, family structure, the environment in which the house is located, poverty, unemployment, education and behavioural factors such as smoking and drinking alcohol. The Scotland Together report examined the 131 accidental dwelling fires over a three year period and identified that the largest single cause of fire was smoker's materials, closely followed

by cooking appliances. Although the extent to which alcohol was involved is unclear, it was identified as a factor in 81 cases.

Estimates derived from the 2009/10 SCJS suggest that around 945,000 crimes were committed against individuals and private households in Scotland between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010. The estimate suggests that around one in five adults, 19.3%, had been the victim of at least one household or personal crime. According to the survey 72% of crimes experienced in 2009/10 were against property. Property vandalism accounted for 32% of all crimes recorded. The remaining 28% of crimes were committed against individuals with 24% involving petty assaults, 2% involving serious assaults and the remaining 2% involving robbery.

### **3 Key Statistics**

- In Scotland in 2008 there were 1,283 deaths and 60,000 emergency hospital admissions as a result of unintentional injury. 23 of these deaths and 8,504 emergency hospital admissions were for children under the age of 15 years.
- This accounts for 1 in 43 of all deaths and 16% of the total emergency hospital admissions.
- Unintentional injury is the principal cause of death for boys aged between 1 and 14 years and the second highest cause of death for girls.
- Approximately 1 million GP visits per annum and 0.5 million outpatient A&E attendances for unintentional injuries.
- Males aged between 15-64 years are more likely than women to be admitted to hospital as a result of accidental injury.
- Rates of secondary and accidental fires are between 30% and 35% higher than the rest of the UK.
- Figures for 2010 show that there were 13,974 primary fires and 22,960 secondary fires in Scotland.
- The number of people killed in fires for 2009/10 was 59, a decrease of 5 from 2008/09.
- 1,195 (2008/9) people were reported to have been injured in fires, with 85% of injuries occurring in dwelling fires.
- In 2008/9 there were 4,572 deliberate primary fires which represents 35% of all primary fires. This resulted in 8 fatalities and 317 injuries.
- 31% of fire related deaths, 50% of accidental dwelling fires and 46% of secondary fires occurred in the 15% most deprived areas.

### **4 Discussion Questions**

- What are the challenges for home safety in the next 5-10 years?
- Are there any examples of effective projects or initiatives that we should be promoting the roll out of?
- As regards preventative spending – what should our three priorities be, and who do we need to work in partnership/collaboratively with to achieve these?

Briefing Paper produced by:  
Scottish Community Safety Network  
November 2011  
Version 1