



Fire Safety Project

Executive Summary

The South Ayrshire Fire Safety Project was developed due to a rise in the number of injuries caused by fires within the home. It was recognised that people who are vulnerable to fire may already be receiving care in the community or social care and as such a joined up approach could be taken to prevent home fires.

A problem solving approach was adopted and the Fire Safety Project was created to provide a coordinated response to positively benefit both services and individuals. By services engaging collaboratively through the sharing of resources (time and knowledge), a strong partnership approach and by building on already established relationships, the lives of service users and others who reside in close proximity were made safer.

Through the development of guidance notes and briefing sessions, partners became aware of the risks to look out for during home visits and were encouraged to send referrals to Strathclyde Fire and Rescue (SFR) to allow them to become aware of any issues within vulnerable people's homes and to carry out a home fire safety visit and provide fire safety equipment if required. The project was successful and an 11% reduction in dwelling fires was seen between 1 April and 30 November 2011.

The project won the Personal Safety Award at the Safer Communities Awards 2012.

Project Background and Aims

In South Ayrshire, there was a 54% increase in deaths and casualties (from 2009/10 to 2010/2011) due to fire within the home. The Scotland Together¹ report identified that those most vulnerable to the risk of harm from fire are those with alcohol/drug dependency, mental health issues, those who have a 'chaotic' lifestyle, older people and those who live alone.

The Healthy Subgroup of the South Ayrshire Community Safety Partnership acknowledged that despite established processes, the risk of fire can still remain due to possible cost restrictions and inability or failure to take adequate fire precautions. As such, the Fire Safety Project was developed to provide a coordinated response to positively benefit both services and individuals.

The project was an extension to the already successful 'Home Fire Safety' check programme which is carried out by Strathclyde Fire and Rescue (SFR) in any residential home through South Ayrshire. The existing home fire safety checks include a range of support aimed at decreasing the risk of fire, however, it was noted that these visits were utilised predominately by the 'worried well', and a need was identified to additionally target resources to those who are most at risk to fire in the home. The high risk groups identified in the report can frequently smoke and the accumulation of these factors dramatically increases the risk of fatal fires. The Fire Safety Project added a positive extra dimension to the crucial service provided by SFR by giving access to the homes of the more vulnerable members of the community, through the partnership working of a number of organisations and the production of referrals.

¹ CFOA, Scotland Together – A Study Examining Fire Deaths and Injuries in Scotland, Published 2009 - <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/11992>

The overall aim of the Fire Safety Project was to minimise the risk of fatal fire and injury for the most vulnerable people in South Ayrshire through the provision of fire safety equipment. The outcome targets set for the project were:

- An increase in the number of home safety visits carried out by SFR;
- An increased awareness of fire safety within the homes of vulnerable people;
- A reduction in the level of risk within the homes of vulnerable people;
- Prevention of household fires; and
- Prevention of fire deaths and casualties.

Activities

The purpose of the project was to minimise the risk of fatal fire and injury for the most vulnerable people in South Ayrshire through early identification to allow effective provision of support. A key element of the project was to ensure early referrals from relevant services. As such, guidance notes were developed in conjunction with SFR. These notes provided information on several factors including reasons which may put a person at risk of a fire and should result in a referral to SFR e.g. drug and alcohol misuse, smoking, sensory or physical impairment, known or suspected mental health problems. Advice was also given on what to look for during inspections of a person's home and how this should be fed back to the fire service. In addition, four briefing sessions were held to provide staff with the confidence to recognise potential hazardous risk factors within homes. The strong partnership approach allowed the facilitation of joint home fire safety visits (where necessary) to ensure appropriate engagement whilst building a trusting relationship with the high risk group.

The provision of the home fire safety visits allowed for the detection of potential fire risks and where appropriate low cost additional safety equipment were provided e.g. fire retardant bedding, fire retardant matting, surge protected extension cables and timer switches. The provision of these safety devices can be life-saving and can dramatically reduce the level of fire damage, ultimately demonstrating positive cost benefits to communities and services alike.

The project was advertised internally through council services, and externally to partner agencies including Strathclyde Police, NHS, Scottish Ambulance Service, and voluntary organisations including South Ayrshire Care and Repair, and Blue Triangle.

Impact

Statistics from SFR show that the number of accidental dwelling fires between 1 April and 30 November 2011 fell by 11%. There has been a reduction in the level of risk within the homes of vulnerable people as a result of the home fire safety audit and the introduction of additional safety equipment (if required). The audit process increased the awareness of fire safety within the homes of vulnerable people and therefore contributed to the prevention of household fires, fire deaths and casualties.

An instrumental factor in determining the effective implementation of the project throughout South Ayrshire was the submission of referrals from partner agencies. 53 referrals were received which allowed SFR to access the homes of those who are 'harder to reach' through collaborative working and, shared knowledge and skills between services. Out of the 53 referrals, all received a home fire safety visit, with additional safety equipment provided to eleven high risk individuals.

The ability to carry out joint visits widened the potential of the project. As a result of these referrals and subsequent home safety visits, the level of risk was reduced, as determined by the home safety fire visit risk rating form. By working in partnership with local agencies, services and housing providers the health, wellbeing and safety of the people in the South

Ayrshire community has been improved. Furthermore, the benefits were also seen by the overall community in terms of lives saved whilst working towards creating safe communities to live, work and visit.

In order to meet the outcome of 'an increased awareness of fire safety within the homes of vulnerable people' it was important that staff also had a knowledge of the risks within the home and as such a guidance note was developed which provided comprehensive information on the key elements as to why someone should be referred onto the project. This was also further enhanced by briefing sessions for front line staff which has provided staff with the confidence to recognise the potential hazardous risk factors within the home. Over a period of three months, 68 front line staff attended the briefing sessions facilitated by staff from SFR.

The financial impact of the project is also evident and demonstrates preventative spend. The economic cost of a fire in a dwelling, where no injuries occur, is estimated to be £8,507. There were 83 incidents in South Ayrshire during the period 2009-2010, therefore, without taking into consideration injuries or deaths this gives an estimated cost of £706,081. The cost of the additional safety measures provided during the project was £1645. Therefore, the potential savings from preventing fires in the eleven households where these were fitted is £18,095. The estimated costs² associated with fires and associated injuries are included in the table below.

Accidental Fire	Estimated Cost
with no injuries	£8,507
with precautionary check up required	£9,081
with smoke inhalation/fumes injuries	£44,019
with burn injuries	£174,354
with fatality	£1,546,688

Monitoring and Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation process was developed based on a risk assessment and risk scoring carried out as part of the home safety fire audit. The data collected included the number of referrals received, referral sources, equipment issued, risk rating score and the number of staff who attended briefing sessions. A more comprehensive evaluation process has been agreed and will include information from the risk rating form, service user comments and agency experience of the project. This evaluation will take place in July 2012. This process will be developed in conjunction with SFR and South Ayrshire Council's Information and Research Analyst and will use lessons learnt through the evaluation workshop within the Evaluation Framework developed as part of the Safer Communities Programme.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

When the project was initially launched, the number of referrals being passed onto SFR was very low, despite the project being well received from partners and the referral form and guidance note being distributed widely among partner agencies. It was acknowledged that front line staff needed a more comprehensive insight into the project in addition to the guidance note provided, therefore to supplement this, a programme of briefing sessions, facilitated by staff from SFR, Community Safety (South Ayrshire Council) and Health Promotion (NHS Ayrshire & Arran) were carried out for front line staff in relevant

² Communities and Local Government, Fire and Rescue Service Partnership Working Toolkit for Local Area Agreements: Annex 3, February 2008 - <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/workingtoolkit?view=Standard>

services/agencies. These briefing sessions helped to increase referrals to the projects through a more comprehensive insight into the program.

Resources

Funding: £1645.70 funding provided by South Ayrshire Community Safety Partnership.
Partners: South Ayrshire Council, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue, Strathclyde Police, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Scottish Ambulance Service, South Ayrshire Care and Repair, Blue Triangle.

Outcomes

National 9 – We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
11 – We have strong resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
Local Safe and Supported section of South Ayrshire Councils SOA.
Reflects focus outlines in Scotland Together.
Community Safety Partnership Strategic Priorities

Practice Note Information

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SCSN Topic Areas: Safety of Vulnerable Groups, Personal Safety, Home Safety, Partnership Working
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