

LIVING SAFELY



Essex County
Fire & Rescue Service



Fire Safety For Foster Families



WITH YOU FOR LIFE

Partnership for Safety

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is working in partnership with fostering teams to provide Home Fire Safety Awareness guidance for foster families and Social Care Workers who carry out annual household reviews.



National Community Fire Safety Centre



Essex County Fire & Rescue Service

The Fire Service is continuously striving to make the communities we serve safer. Our homes are generally the place we feel the safest; unfortunately homes are also the place where the overwhelming majority of fire deaths and injuries occur.



Every year firefighters witness, on far too many occasions, members of our communities who have suffered severe personal trauma and damage to their personal possessions; on many occasions these incidents are preventable.

If a fire does occur within the home survival will greatly depend on how people react and the preventative measures already in place.

This booklet will provide practical advice and guidance on fire safety in the home, action points to make the home a safer place and advice on how to react should the unthinkable happen.

If you have any further concerns, or need advice, contact your local Fire Safety Office or Fire Station.

David Hadjicostas MBE

Station Officer

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

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Pages 4 and 5

The aims, objectives and expected outcomes of this initiative, along with information about training, home fire safety visits, and the provision of smoke alarms.

Advice and information

Pages 6 to 12

Detailed advice to help you understand fire risks in the home and actions you can take to reduce them

Annual Household Review Pro-forma

Pages 13 to 15

Self-explanatory checklists to assist with the completion of your fire safety household review.

Fire Safety for Foster Families

Aims

- To educate foster families and children and young people in public care in Fire Safety. It is also hoped that if, and when, children are able to return to their birth families, that a positive Fire Safety culture has been achieved.
- To achieve a good and consistent level of Fire Safety in foster homes.
- To produce guidance for Social Care Workers to carry out Annual Household Reviews and new applications, in the form of a proforma, which is a living document.

Objectives

- To train and educate Social Care Workers in fire safety awareness in order to complete Annual Household Reviews.
- To make foster families aware of fire safety in the home.
- To produce a risk based pro-forma with guidance and explanations for Social Workers and foster families.

Outcomes

To achieve the following:

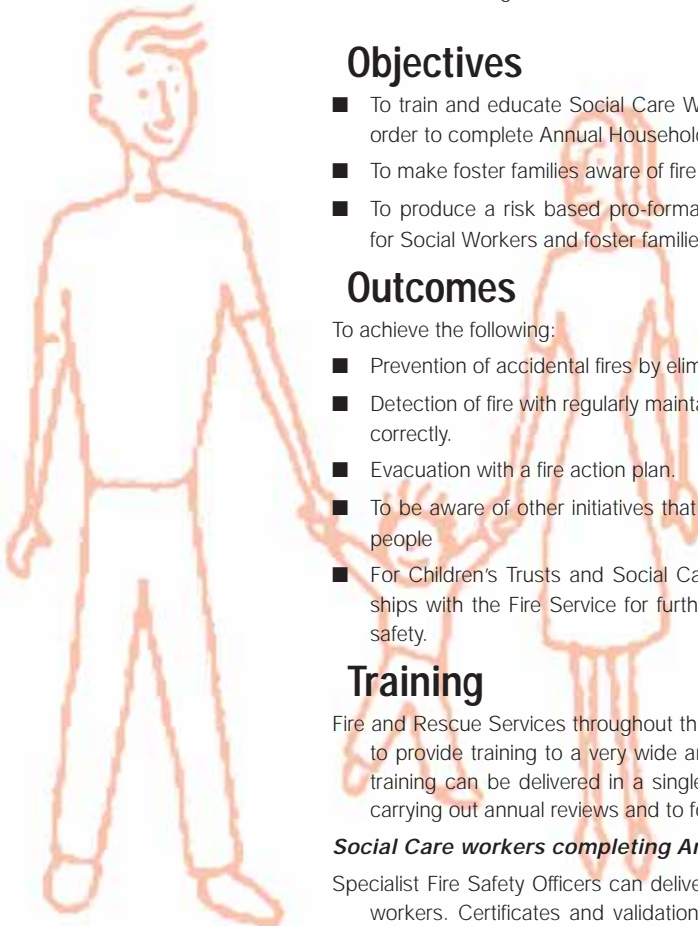
- Prevention of accidental fires by eliminating risks in the home.
- Detection of fire with regularly maintained smoke alarms that are fitted correctly.
- Evacuation with a fire action plan.
- To be aware of other initiatives that are aimed at children and young people
- For Children's Trusts and Social Care Departments to form partnerships with the Fire Service for further help and advice in community safety.

Training

Fire and Rescue Services throughout the UK are well used and equipped to provide training to a very wide and diverse audience. This type of training can be delivered in a single session to Social Care workers carrying out annual reviews and to foster families:

Social Care workers completing Annual Household Reviews

Specialist Fire Safety Officers can deliver specific training for Social Care workers. Certificates and validation will be issued on completion of the training.



Foster families - fire safety awareness

Training in Home Fire Safety Awareness can be delivered at Community Command level / Station level. Instruction and training can also be given in the correct fitting and sitting of fire alarms in domestic dwellings. This instruction and training will be accordance with the relevant British Standard 5839 Part 6, which covers domestic dwellings old and new.

Home Fire Safety Visits

The home is the place where people feel safest, but it is also the place where the majority of fire deaths occur.

The Fire Service is now undertaking a strategy of Home Fire Safety Visits with an obligation of fitting smoke alarms where required. There is no doubt that working smoke alarms save lives, with a Home Fire Safety Plan.

To arrange a visit, please contact 0845 6012495 or visit our website: www.essex-fire.gov.uk

Provision of Smoke Alarms

Traditionally smoke alarms have been provided to people at risk. Now with funding being provided by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, this provision can be extended to all the people within the community which are considered to be at risk.

The types used are a conventional battery operated smoke alarm with a sealed ten-year lithium battery, those with hearing difficulties can be provided for as well. The unit conforms to British Standard 5446 and is capable of being interlinked.

Guidance

This booklet offers detailed advice on fire safety in the home, and also contains a checklist and risk assessment pro-forma, to help complete Annual Household reviews, whilst spelling out what is being asked for to make the home a safer place.

It is the intention of Community Safety Programmes to make local Communities safer. This training and the supply of smoke alarms is a part of that strategy which is currently funded, so therefore there will be no cost implications.

Advice and Information

1. COMMON CAUSES OF FIRE

Open Fires

Always use a fireguard. Firelighters, logs or coal should be stored outside the fireguard – preferably in a container designed for the purpose.

Mirrors should not be hung over the fire – it encourages people to get too close to the fire. Clothes should not be aired too close to the fire.

Do not sit closer than 1 metre to an open fire. Never put a heater near clothes or furnishings.

Firelighters, matches, aerosol sprays etc. are highly flammable and should not be kept near any heat source.

Do not use open fires for rubbish disposal.

Chimneys

Chimneys should be swept at least once a year, depending on use. Where logs are used the chimney should be swept twice a year.

Some signs of a chimney fire are red-hot particles falling from the chimney into the hearth, a roaring fire in the chimney or a chimney breast too hot to touch.

If a chimney fire is not dealt with promptly it may spread to the rest of the house.

If you suspect a chimney fire call the Fire Service immediately. Some people believe the Fire Service charge to attend chimney fires – this is not true!

Candles and Tea lights

If you use candles ensure they are not left lit and unattended. Always put them in an approved holder and place on a flat, heat resistant surface.

Never place candles on top of a TV or other plastic combustible surfaces.

Keep candles out of reach of children and pets and well away from curtains, furniture and draughts.

Never leave a burning candle in a child's bedroom.

Keep candles away from hair or clothing. Make sure they are properly extinguished, particularly at bedtime, preferably using a 'snuffer'.

Risk of fire or injury is higher if a lighted candle is moved while it is lit.

Always place candles away from curtains, furniture and drapes and always out of draughts.



Smoking materials

Never leave a lit cigarette or pipe unattended – it may fall on to an armchair or carpet, which will quickly catch fire.

Use approved deep ashtrays at all times, and only empty them once the contents are cold.

Never smoke in a chair if you think you may doze off.

Always keep lighters and matches well out of the reach of children.

Smoking in bed is another major cause of fire – the more you discourage it the better. If you know that someone will continue to smoke in bed, even if advised otherwise, ensure that a deep ashtray is available next to the bed.



Electrical Safety

Electrical sockets should be not overloaded. If several appliances are in use, approved adaptors (preferably the in-line type) should be used. Electrical appliances should not be run off a light socket.

Electrical cables should not run under carpets or near to dangerous hazards e.g. a heat source.

Look out for signs of dangerous wiring such as: hot plugs and sockets, fuses blowing for no obvious reasons, lights flickering or brown scorch marks on sockets or plugs. If you see any of these warning signs consult your electricity provider or a qualified electrician.

Always use appliances and plugs that conform to the British Standard and have the 'kite mark' logo.

Some appliances are designed to be left on all the time, check the manufacturer's instructions. All other appliances should be switched off or unplugged when not in use.

Remove plugs carefully; don't remove them by pulling the flex.

Never extend an extension lead. The routing of extension leads should ensure that they do not cause a trip hazard.

Electric Blanket Safety

Electric blankets cause over 2000 fires every year. Ensure that any new blanket has 'overheat protection' which causes the electricity to cut off if it becomes too hot. Ensure that it has the British Standard 'kitemark' logo complying with British Standard 3456b and 'BEAB' printed on it.

If a blanket has scorch marks or exposed elements, it should not be used.

Hot water bottles should not be used in the same bed as an electric blanket – even if the blanket is switched off.

Over blankets are designed to be left on, but under blankets must be switched off before getting into bed. Ensure you check which type you own and use it appropriately.

When stored, blankets should be folded as few times as possible and with nothing stored on top of them – these actions are to avoid the insulation inside the blanket breaking down.

2. GENERAL FIRE SAFETY

Heaters

Heaters should be kept away from furniture and fittings.

Portable heaters should never be placed close to beds or be used to dry clothes.

Heaters should always stand in a safe place where they can't be tripped over. Ideally do not use paraffin heaters. If they are used, store paraffin outside in a metal container.

Portable gas heaters should have the cylinders changed outside in the open air or in a well-ventilated atmosphere.

Both gas and paraffin heaters should only be used in well-ventilated areas.

If a mains gas leak is suspected, call the gas company immediately (see contact numbers at back of book). Electrical switches should NOT be operated, doors and windows should be opened to ventilate the area, and there must be no smoking.

Gas hoses should be marked along their length with the date of manufacture. Gas hoses more than five years old should be replaced.

The Bedroom

If subdued lighting is required in the bedroom, a low wattage bulb should be used in a lamp – it should never be covered with a cloth. Candles should never be used as a night-light. If for any reason a lamp is not available, make sure that a torch is near at hand.



The Kitchen

Cooking accidents are the most common cause of accidental fires in the home. Most of these fires are started by people leaving pans of food unattended, leaving the cooker on after preparation of a meal or by leaving tea towels etc, too close to the cooker.

Pans for food should not be left unattended to cook and cookers should be turned off before the kitchen is left.

Cooking under the influence of alcohol is extremely dangerous.

The flex from kettles or other kitchen appliances should be kept away from cookers. All electrical appliances such as kettles, toasters and irons should be switched off at the plug when not in use.

Care should be taken with panhandles that they are not over gas rings or hot-plates. Failure to do this may result in burns or scalds to others in the home.

Burns or scalds can also occur if the water temperature in the home is too high. Consider having a thermostatic safety valve fitted which will control the temperature.

Treating Minor Burns

Run cold water over the burn until the pain reduces.

Cover the burn with clean non-fluffy material, like non-pvc clingfilm.

If the burn is bigger than a postage stamp, get proper medical advice.

Deep Frying

Deep-frying is a major cause of fire in the home. Chip pans should never be filled more than one third full. If possible replace old chip pans with deep fat fryers or use oven chips.

Change the oil regularly – dirty oil catches fire more easily. The oil should not be allowed to become too hot. If the oil begins to smoke turn off the heat and leave the oil to cool. Smoke means the oil is just about to catch fire.

Wet chips should not be put into hot oil, as this could make it boil over. Food, especially food being deep-fried, must never be left to cook unattended.

What if a pan catches fire?

You should only ever tackle a pan fire if it's in its early stages and you are completely sure you can put it out and stay safe.

If you have a fire blanket, put it over the pan.

Do not move the pan.

Turn off the heat to the pan (if it's safe to do so).

If you do not have a fire blanket, run a cloth under the tap, wring it out carefully, and cover the pan.

Leave the pan to cool completely.

NEVER throw water over the pan.



3. GENERAL SAFETY

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is a serious threat that people need to be aware of. Educating people on the dangers of CO can significantly reduce the health risk as well as save lives. Although everyone needs to be aware of the dangers, older people are more susceptible than others. It is important that gas appliances are serviced by competent engineers.

The signs look out for are yellow or brown staining around or on appliances; pilot lights frequently blow out; increased condensation inside windows; yellow rather than blue flame.

Low levels of carbon monoxide poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning or other illnesses and can have a long-term health risk if left unattended. Among the symptoms are a shortness of breath, mild nausea and headaches.

Carbon monoxide alarms are readily available from most DIY stores. They should be fitted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Burns and scalds

Many older people suffer burns and scalds due to the temperature of their bathing water being set too high. Consider the fitting of thermostats to control the temperature of bath water or reduce the temperature by turning down the thermostat that controls the temperature of your domestic hot water.

Young visitors to your home

As an older person, you will possibly be asked from time to time to look after younger people, younger members of your own or another person's family. It is important that any fire escape plan you have takes this into account. You should also consider having temporary safeguards in place such as stair gates, cupboard locks, etc where appropriate. It may be useful to discuss this with the parents of the younger people.

Medication

If young visitors visit your home please ensure that all drugs, medication etc is kept out of reach, if possible under lock and key

4. SMOKE ALARMS

A fire strikes when you least expect it, often during the night. It also spreads very rapidly, but smoke is the real killer. If you are asleep when a fire starts and you don't have a smoke alarm to wake you, your chances of surviving are severely reduced. Smoke suffocates quickly and you may be dead before the flames reach you.

Smoke alarms do not stop fires, but they do give early warning if a fire does occur. They can be purchased from any good electrical or DIY store. In some circumstances your local Fire & Rescue Service will provide and fit a smoke alarm for certain groups of our communities perceived to be at high risk.

We would always recommend that a ten year smoke alarm (with built-in Lithium battery) is purchased as this saves concern about annual battery replacement. When buying a smoke alarm ensure it conforms to British Standard 5446 Part 1 and has the British Kitemark logo.

Smoke alarms are available for people with hearing impairment. The Fire & Rescue Service recommends that at least one smoke alarm be fitted on each level in the home, and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Ensure that the alarm is working and tested regularly. This should be done once a week. Most alarms are tested by pushing in an obvious test button for a few seconds, until the alarm sounds.

When the batteries are running out the alarm will beep at intervals. Make sure the correct type of battery (normally alkaline) is used as a replacement. Except in the case of ten-year smoke alarms and Fire Angels, it should be replaced once a year. Smoke alarms also need cleaning by gently vacuuming the inside to remove dust from the sensors. If it does not open, vacuum through the holes.



5. NIGHT TIME ROUTINE

Many fires in the home start at night. Make sure you have a bedtime fire safety routine to help you and your family keep safe.

Switch off and unplug all electrical appliances not designed to stay on; make all smoking materials are put out. Never smoke in bed and before emptying ashtrays make sure the contents are cold; Turn off all electrical items not designed to stay on continuously, including portable heaters; Don't leave TVs on standby; and if you can, avoid using the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher overnight. Shut the doors.

6. PLANNING YOUR ESCAPE ROUTE

If your home catches fire, you may have to get out in dark and difficult conditions. It will be a lot easier if you have already planned and rehearsed your escape route and know where to go.

Your planned escape route should stay free of any obstructions, loose floor coverings, or anything else that could be a hindrance. Remember that your escape route may be in darkness. Everyone should know the escape route and where door and window keys are located. Ideally these should be kept near the relevant locks.

If you have serious mobility difficulties you may consider a bedroom on the ground floor or near to a way out. Ensure at least one window above ground floor level opens fully to allow escape in an emergency.



7. FIRE ACTION PLAN

Would you know what to do if your smoke alarm went off in the night?

Would you and your family be able to escape?

PLAN TOGETHER NOW – include everyone.

Your best route is the way you always come into your home. Think about another way too.

Keep your escape routes clear of obstacles; Know where door and window keys are kept; Staying put may be the safer option sometimes.

If your escape route is blocked, stay put and protect yourselves until help arrives. Find a room with a window that opens and if possible, call 999.

If you live in a flat and discover the hallways filled with smoke or fire – go back inside and close the door. Do not use the lift.

Practice your Fire Action Plan: Knowing what to do could save your life. Take a few minutes to walk the route with your family. Check that everyone is able to operate keys and locks. Review your plan if you make any changes in your home.

If there is a fire: Raise the alarm DON'T look for the fire. Raise the alarm and shout to wake everyone up. Follow your plan and get out. Check doors with the back of your hand before opening. If it feels warm, DON'T OPEN IT – go another way. If there is a lot of smoke, crawl along the floor where the air will be cleaner. When outside, call the Fire Service from a mobile phone, phone box or a neighbour's house.

If your escape way is blocked: Get everyone into one room. Close the door and put bedding or towels along the bottom to seal the gap. Open the window for fresh air. Phone the Fire Service or shout for help. If you are on the ground or first floor, you may be able to escape through the window. Throw some bedding, clothing or soft furnishings out. Do not jump -- lower yourself carefully and drop into the soft pile. Consider letting any children or older people go first. If you have to break a window, cover sharp edges with any available soft materials.

Additional Fire Safety in Hi-Rise Flats

The building in which you live has been designed with safety in mind. Outside the building, roads and other areas are designed so that emergency vehicles can get as near as possible. The walls, doors and floors are specially designed to resist fire and stop the spread of smoke. To do this, all doors need to be kept closed when they are not in use.

When the smoke alarm sounds.

- Don't open doors looking for the source of the fire.
- Alert everyone else in the flat, closing the door behind you.
- Don't use a balcony to escape unless it is part of an official escape route, and don't use the lift
- When you are out of the building call 999.
- If a fire breaks out elsewhere in the building, it will normally be safe to stay in your own flat. Open a window if you need fresh air, and stay by the window where you may be seen, but if your own flat becomes affected by smoke, leave at once closing windows and doors behind you.

Checklist for Foster Families

Common causes of fire		No	Yes	Advice given	Comments
1.	Is there an open fire? - if yes then look at Open Fires Advice on Page 6				
2.	Does anyone in the house smoke? - if yes then look at Smoking Advice on Page 7				
3.	Do your family use a chip pan? - if yes then look at Deep Frying Advice on Page 4				
4.	Do any plugs have scorch marks, or get warm in use? - if yes then look at Electrical Safety Advice on Page 9				
5.	Do your family use electric blankets? - if yes then look at Electric Blanket Safety on page 8				
Do existing alarms work?		No	Yes	Why alarms failed	
Enter numbers of working or non-working alarms, and enter details of non-working alarms, eg. why they are not working.					
Details of smoke alarms					
Type of alarm	Number	Location			
Smoke alarms					
Fire Angels					

Household safety review

FIRE SAFETY HOUSEHOLD REVIEW				
Name				
Address				
.....				
.....				
Postcode				
Property and Occupancy Details				
Property type (Tick box)	✓	Occupancy of Household	Number in Household	Any special needs?
Owner/occupier				
Rented - private		Infants 0-5 yrs		
Rented - council		Child 6-18 yrs		
Housing association		Adults 18-59 yrs		
Detached		Over 60 yrs		
Semi - detached				
Terraced				
Flat		Fostered		
Other (details)		Infants 0-5 yrs		
		Child 6-18 yrs		
Smoke Alarm Details				
Location	Number	Type (i.e Smoke? Fire Angel?)	Are they working?	

Section One (Risk Rating)		Circle all applicable
1	An occupant has significant reliance on assistance (e.g. stair lift) and/or medication	10
2	Occupant(s) over 60 / single parent / carer family	7
3	3 or more children under 10 years	7
4	6 or more occupants	7
5	None of the above	6
Section 2 Circumstances (Risk Rating)		
1	Escape route physically unprotected from areas of high risk (e.g. kitchen door removed)	10
2	History of previous fires in the premises	8
3	Candles, lighters, matches, open fire, naked flames, heaters/open fires	7
4	Cooking methods – chip pans	7
5	Is there a lack of understanding regarding overheating of electrical appliances, plugs or sockets	7
6	None of the above	4
Risk Rating is highest score from sections 1 and 2 multiplied together – eg. (7x5 =35)		<input type="text"/>
Section 3 Smoke alarms (Safety Rating)		
1	None	0
2	Yes – but insufficient or badly sited – occupier declined advice	2
3	Yes – all satisfactory	6
Section 4 Fire safety awareness (Safety Rating)		
1	Occupier did not appreciate the need for a fire plan	0
2	Fire plan to be implemented	2
3	Fire plan seldom practiced	2
4	Good – fire plan practiced regularly	6
Safety Rating is highest score from section 3 and section 4 added together – eg. (2+6=8)		<input type="text"/>
Section 5 Risk assessment		
Final Rating is the Risk Rating minus Safety rating = eg. (35-8=27)		<input type="text"/>
Final points rating		
Over 50	High	Seek further advice and action (any single 10 score warrants Fire Service help)
25-49	Medium	Concentrate fire safety advice on areas of concern
0-24	Low	General fire safety advice given based on findings during visit



Essex County
Fire & Rescue Service

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01376-576000
communitysafety@essex-fire.gov.uk
www.essex-fire.gov.uk

FIRESETTERS

YOU may know someone who could benefit from our successful Juvenile Firesetters Scheme, designed to be of positive benefit to young people between three and 18. If you do, please contact the Community Safety team on 01376 576000, or email Jfs@essex-fire.gov.uk

FREE SAFETY VISIT

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service has committed to provide all foster families with protection for their homes.

We will visit you to conduct a home fire safety visit and fit some alarms. Here are the three ways you can book an appointment:

By Phone. Ask for the Home Fire Safety team on:

0845 6012495

By email: follow the Home Fire Safety link at:

www.essex-fire.gov.uk

By filling in this coupon and handing in at your local fire station, or by sending it to the Home Fire Safety Team, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, Kelvedon Park, Rivenhall, Witham, Essex CM8 3HB

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Tel _____

Mobile _____

Email _____