



Berkshire Safeguarding Adult' Multiagency Guidance

Fire Risk in the Community

Version History

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Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to provide multiagency guidance across Berkshire to support the identification, assessment, and mitigation of fire risks in the community, particularly in relation to vulnerable people. Fire safety is a critical aspect of safeguarding, and effective multiagency collaboration is essential to protect vulnerable individuals from environmental harm. This document draws on established best practice, including the latest guidance from Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS), supplemented by general published information on fire risk and prevention and aims to support professionals in fulfilling their safeguarding duties with confidence.

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone’s business; reducing fire risk is a shared responsibility. All parties have a shared duty of care to proactively address fire safety during discussions, assessments and home visits. Fire prevention should be integrated into everyday practice, with open dialogue and collaborative planning to reduce harm to individuals and those around them.

Fire Risk Assessment Tools

Overview of RBFRS Recommended Tools

The Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service recommends use of the Homes Risk Assessment tool (Appendix 1) for assessing fire risks during home visits. This is a standard tool for quickly assessing risks associated with hoarding, adapted to include environmental and fire/electrical hazards.

This tool is designed to facilitate early identification and intervention. When fire risks are identified, prompt referral for further assessment is advised.

Appendix 2 is a copy of the matrix that the RBFRS Safe and Well Team refer to, which can also help to determine levels of risk within a home. This is a useful reference tool but should not be used to substitute for a referral to the Safe and Well Team.

These tools are designed to facilitate early identification and intervention. When fire risks are identified, prompt referral for further assessment is advised.

For further information and downloadable resources, visit the [Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service website](#).

Safe & Well Checks (including consent)

Description and Referral Process

RBFRS offers free Safe & Well checks for vulnerable adults and children. These assessments are carried out by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service Safe & Well Technicians and Operational Crews, who evaluate the home environment for fire risks, install smoke detectors and other equipment where necessary, and provide tailored advice and signposting.

RBFRS will offer Safe & Well checks to people who meet any of the following criteria:

- Aged 60 and over
- Have limited mobility
- An oxygen user
- Sensory need (hearing and/or sight)
- Hoarded homes
- Confined to bed
- Have a learning disability
- Living with a mental illness
- Have dementia
- Use dialysis

RBFRS will also consider offering Safe & Well checks where a person:

- Has a drug or alcohol dependency
- Has emollient creams applied to skin
- Has a mental health need
- Is a smoker
- Is living alone
- Is homeless

- Has no smoke detector or has had a previous fire

Joint visits with RBFRS are strongly encouraged, fostering a coordinated approach to fire safety. Professionals should use the designated [online agency referral form](#) to request this service.

Under Safeguarding procedures, referrals for Safe & Well checks **can be made without individual consent** under vital or public interest thresholds, ensuring that those at risk receive timely intervention. In these circumstances, joint visits must be completed with either the referring agency or family member/friend, and it is the responsibility of the referring agency to organise this.

Fire Service Prevention teams can support rough sleepers by offering clear, practical fire-safety advice. See the rough sleeper leaflets (Appendix 3,4 and 5), we encourage partner agencies print and hand out when they meet individuals who may be difficult to locate or engage with again. These resources help highlight key risks and simple steps to stay safer. RBFRS may provide fire retardant bedding for those who have unsafe smoking habits. Additionally, if rough sleepers have a makeshift home, a smoke alarm or carbon monoxide alarm may be appropriate. If you'd like to have a professional discussion around the needs of a rough sleeper or arrange a joint visit to provide this support together, please email safeandwell@rbfrs.co.uk and they will coordinate a suitable time.

Threat of Arson (TOA) Safe and Well Visits

RBFRS also offers *Threat of Arson (TOA) Safe and Well Visits*. A threat of arson refers to:

- a direct threat towards an individual, property or vehicle to purposely cause significant harm
- an actual direct arson attack
- or anyone deemed to be at risk of arson

RBFRS will consider referrals where there may not have been a direct threat of arson but where there is a risk of arson, such as with domestic abuse, where there are impulsive behaviours, threats to harm or kill or following a direct arson attack.

RBFRS will aim to visit the property within 48 hours.

The purpose of a *Threat of Arson Safe and Well Visit* is to provide enhanced fire safety precautions to a domestic property using a number of risk specific measures, and to provide extensive fire safety advice to the occupants, such as fitting an arson proof letter box and applying fire retardant spray.

- During office hours 9-5, the referrer can contact the RBFRS Safeguarding Team directly at safeguarding@rbfrs.co.uk.
- Out of hours the referrer can contact Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) on 0118 358 9333 and request to speak to the Berkshire Duty Officer.

The referrer must then complete the Form - Threat of Arson Referral and email to either the Safeguarding Team on the email above or to the Duty Officer's work email address.

Training Requirements

All staff and volunteers supporting vulnerable adults and children are encouraged to complete the [RBFRS At Risk Programme \(ARP\)](#) training. In some organisations this training may have been made mandatory.

Regular training ensures that all stakeholders are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to identify and respond to fire risks effectively.

Fire Risks Associated with Emollients

Definition and Products

Emollients are moisturising treatments applied directly to the skin to soothe and hydrate. They may contain paraffin, shea butter, cocoa butter, beeswax, lanolin, nut oil, or mineral oils. Emollients are found in prescribed and unprescribed products, including creams, sprays, ointments, lotions, and soap substitutes.

Risk Scenarios

Although emollients themselves are not flammable, they can soak into clothing, bedding, or dressings. If these fabrics become contaminated and are then exposed to naked flames such as lighters or matches, cigarettes, or heat sources, fires can ignite and burn rapidly, leading to serious injury or death. More than 50 people in the UK have died or been seriously injured in the past decade due to such incidents.

Agencies should seek to raise awareness among vulnerable persons and their carers about these risks and to encourage safe practices.

Safety Advice

- Never smoke in bed or near fabrics contaminated with emollients.
- Avoid cooking with gas or electric hobs if clothing or dressings may be contaminated.
- Do not sit close to open fires, gas fires, candles or halogen heaters.
- Wash clothing and bedding daily at the highest recommended temperature but note that washing will not remove all traces of emollients.

For more details, refer to the [RBFRS resources on emollients and fire risk](#).

Fire Risks Associated with Health Equipment

Healthcare equipment used in the home, such as oxygen therapy devices, pressure relieving mattresses and incontinence products, can increase the spread and intensity of fire incidents. Proper usage, maintenance and disposal are crucial for minimising fire hazards.

Don't overload electrical adaptors by plugging too many appliances into one socket, especially those with a high electrical current rating such as heaters. Visit [this link to 'Electrical Safety First'](#) to check sockets are safe. Be mindful of extra items such as hoists, mobility scooters and other medical devices and consider where they will be charged. If in doubt, request a joint Safe and Well visit with the Fire Service.

Home Oxygen Therapy

Home oxygen therapy involves the use of specialist equipment to deliver concentrated oxygen to individuals with severe respiratory conditions. The presence of medical oxygen significantly increases the intensity of any fire. Smoking or using naked flames near oxygen equipment is extremely dangerous.

- Never smoke, or allow others to smoke, near oxygen equipment (including e-cigarettes and chargers).
- Do not use matches, lighters, candles, incense sticks, oil burners, or open fires where oxygen is used.
- Ensure oxygen equipment is turned off when not in use.

For more information refer to the [RBFERS advice for oxygen users](#).

Dynamic Airflow Pressure Relieving Mattresses and Overlays

These mattresses are used to prevent and treat pressure sores. If punctured by heat sources such as cigarettes or matches, they can cause fires to spread quickly. The emergency backup battery may continue to pump air, intensifying the fire.

- Never smoke near airflow mattresses or allow smoking in bed.
- Keep ignition sources away from the mattress.
- Do not use electric blankets on airflow mattresses.
- Ensure electrical equipment is well maintained and not in contact with the mattress.
- Keep fires and heaters away from airflow mattresses.
- Never charge electrical items or place hot appliances on the mattress.

Incontinence Products

Incontinence products can also contribute to fire risk if contaminated with emollients or exposed to heat sources. Dispose of used products safely and keep them away from ignition sources.

Practical Fire Safety Advice for Staff and Volunteers

Safeguarding adults and children requires practical fire safety measures in everyday life. Key points include:

- Discuss fire safety proactively during all home visits and service reviews.
- Use risk assessment tools to identify hazards and refer for Safe & Well Visits where appropriate.
- Ensure service users and carers understand the risks associated with emollients and health equipment.
- Promote safe usage and maintenance of medical devices in the home.
- Encourage regular laundering of fabrics exposed to emollients, following care instructions.
- Foster collaborative working with RBFERS and other agencies to deliver coordinated fire safety support.
- Record all fire risk discussions, assessments, and interventions in service user files and ensure these are reviewed at least annually or sooner if something changes.
- Report concerns promptly and follow safeguarding procedures where fire risk is identified.
- All agencies should ensure practice guidance and local procedures are updated annually and in line with national best practice and learning from practice reviews.

These practical measures underpin a robust, multiagency approach to fire safety, helping to protect adults with care and support needs from preventable harm.

For a full list of fire safety tips, visit the [RBFERS Safety at Home page](#)

Multiagency Collaboration and Continuous Improvement

Effective fire risk management relies on strong collaboration between health, social care, fire and rescue services, and other community partners. Regular training, joint visits, and shared learning are essential for maintaining high standards and adapting to emerging risks.

Appendices

[Appendix 1 – Homes Risk Assessment Tool](#)

[Appendix 2 - Risk Matrix](#)

[Appendix 3 – Staying Safe from Fire and Flooding Staying Safe from Fire and Flood Risks - People living in tents and temporary shelters](#)

[Appendix 4 - Staying Safe from Fire and Flood Risks – Polish](#)

[Appendix 5 - Staying Safe from Fire and Flood Risks - People living in tents and temporary shelters, Romanian](#)

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