



Firesetters Intervention

Guidance Note 2016



CFOA
Chief Fire Officers
Association

Introduction

This Firesetter Intervention guidance is one of a suite of documents designed to assist Fire and Rescue Authorities throughout England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Jersey, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man meet their statutory and legal responsibilities when safeguarding young people.

These documents have been designed to support UK Fire and Rescue Authorities to fulfil their statutory duty of promoting fire safety, particularly when engaging with children and young people (CYP) who have been involved in fire setting.

It is acknowledged that for, many years the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) has engaged with CYP who have been involved in or have shown a fascination with firesetting. This engagement has been undertaken on both a formal and informal basis.

This has ranged from a young person being taken to the local fire station by a concerned relative because the child has set fire to a small amount of paper to a concerned professional asking for assistance due to the severity of the fire interest. The request for assistance has also differed from what the adult believes is the best approach “*I need you to really scare them*” to “*I am at my wits end of what to do*” to what FRSs know is an evidence based good practice intervention.

The FRS is held in very high esteem with partners and its staff are considered positive role models by the public and therefore ideally placed to be able to influence behaviour and signpost ‘families in need’, to the right support networks where needed.

Ultimately, FRSs across the UK engage with CYP at risk of harm and their families to provide educational input in order to prevent further fires occurring. This intervention should only ever be conducted in a safe environment that suits all parties involved in the process. Thereby supporting the family and the child access early help.

There are a number of ways that FRSs describe their particular intervention programme and the staff who deliver it on their behalf. Examples of this are, but are not limited to: tutoring, intervention, advisors, and fire setter practitioners.

For the purpose of this guidance note they will be referred to as tutors.

The first national Firesetter tutoring meeting took place in September 2015. This identified the need for FRSs to develop national and regional notable practice, information sharing arrangements, recruitment and training best practice.

These ongoing meetings will be facilitated through the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) CYP Lead Group and Firesetters Community of Practice. They also provide a networking opportunity and an opportunity to share notable practice.

Aims and Objectives

The aim is to provide the FRS with guidance when working with CYP who set fires.

The objectives are:

- To ensure that FRS and their staff have an understanding of the procedures, guidance, training arrangements for effective engagement with those CYP who have set fires, demonstrated an unsafe or concerning fascination with fire or those who have been involved in fire related anti-social behaviour or fire related crime.
- To identify national or regional trends and use this information to understand emerging issues, shape and influence training and develop partnership working with agencies who engage with CYP. Data and information will be shared at regular National Firesetter tutoring meetings.
- To inspire, educate and engage CYP and their families in positive ways in order to reduce or stop fire setting behaviour.
- To identify and understand the support pathways that can be exploited in order to ensure that the right intervention takes place at the right time in order to support the young person and their family or support network.

This guidance note is to be read in conjunction with the CFOA guidance notes, Safeguarding and Working with Children and Young People.

Legal Duties

England

FRS Act 2004 Chapter 21 Part 2 Section 6 Fire Safety

- (1) A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area.
- (2) In making provision under subsection (1) a fire and rescue authority must in particular, to the extent that it considers it reasonable to do so, make arrangements for—
 - (a) the provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of the steps to be taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fire;
 - (b) the giving of advice, on request, about:
 - (i) how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property;
 - (ii) the means of escape from buildings and other property in case of fire.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2015) as cited Children's Act 1989 and 2004

The Children's Act 1989 & 2004 Section 10 & 11 places a statutory duty on key organisations such as local authorities and district councils to ensure their functions and any services that they contract out to others are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Section 11 does not give agencies any additional functions, but requires that they carry out their existing functions in a way that takes into account the need to safeguard children.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

Wellbeing Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 Section 2 Part 2 Preventing needs for Care and Support.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sect 17

Scotland

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (CYPA)

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) fully support the aims, purpose and sentiment of the CFOA Safeguarding Guidance. Scotland has different legislation and policy frameworks than colleagues in England and Wales such as Scottish Fire and Rescue Service personnel should refer to the following: Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2013

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (CYPA) places statutory duties on public bodies, including the SFRS, to work together to ensure the wellbeing of children and young people. Additional information is available by emailing SFRS.youth@firescotland.gov.uk

Scottish Government, National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Adults at Risk of Harm.

Wales

Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities

Welsh Government, Fire and Rescue Authorities Strategy for Children and Young People.

Welsh Government Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 outlines commitments to the EN Convention on the Right of the Child and its 7 core aims.

Northern Ireland

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

Recruitment, Roles and Responsibilities

The role of a firesetter tutor is a specialised one and the skills, qualifications, personal specification and competencies required to be able to undertake this role need to be known and understood by the employer.

Fire and rescue services should employ a robust selection/recruitment process such as '**Safer Recruitment**' to ensure the risk is managed appropriately and that the safety of the child, staff and the community is fully considered within the process.

It is recognised that those who engage with firesetters must have the appropriate training and competencies related to their specific intervention to meet the requirements of the role as defined by each fire and rescue service.

Tutors are recruited from the diverse selection of staff across FRSs, uniformed, support, partner agencies and volunteers. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and references must be taken up with the results documented to comply with 'safer recruitment' procedures.

The law is very clear regarding those who need DBS checks and at what level this should be. Therefore this needs to be taken into consideration when decisions are made whether to DBS or not. It is recommended that staff who engage with CYP on a regular and consistent basis should have these checks completed. Ideally this will be an essential requirement for the job role and individuals will assume this responsibility prior to undertaking the role, however the intervention programme that is delivered by the individual FRS will also be an important factor when determining what levels of checks are needed.

Tutor wellbeing

A significant percentage of the young people that tutors engage with will have chaotic family relationships and complex needs it is therefore essential for the safety and wellbeing of staff that supervision and or a debrief process is built into the Services fire setter policy and associated procedures.

This will provide clear regular scheduled support and signposting for all staff involved in the tutoring relationship should it be needed.

Supervision

Supervision is a formal arrangement for practitioners that provides the opportunity to those who are working in the firesetting environment to discuss their work. This can be through in-house, external agencies, other Fire and Rescue Services.

Supervision provides advice and guidance for staff who work with CYP, this is especially important when dealing with complex issues or cases, it provides the opportunity to discuss ethics and accountability and is not the same as line management.

Corporate Risk and Protective Factors

It is acknowledged that working with vulnerable members of the community, particularly CYP can expose the service to some level of corporate risk, however this risk can be effectively mitigated by ensuring that robust policies and procedures are in place such as Safeguarding, and these procedures are effectively and regularly communicated to all staff and volunteers, and that this is auditable.

Key policies and procedures should include;

- Safeguarding
- Information Sharing
- Lone Working
- Data Protection
- Public Interest disclosure (whistle blowing)
- Complaints

This risk can also be reduced further by adopting the following measures:

- Risk Assessments for the programme with tutors carrying out their own dynamic assessments per visit.
- The completion of a thorough Risk Assessment, which is subject to annual review or following a significant incident or policy change.
- The case file/ paperwork is updated /completed and kept in line with Data Protection Act 1998 principles.
- Confidentiality and a non-judgemental approach is maintained throughout. There are times when confidentiality cannot be kept i.e. when there is a serious risk of harm to the CYP or others.
- Staff understand the need to escalate to appropriate agencies/bodies when required and have knowledge of the methods and pathways to do this.
- Supervision should be carried out with tutors on a regular basis.
- Staff know their own ability, and understand that if a case becomes too complex or the tutoring relationship breaks down, the case will be referred back into their system.
- Parental or legal guardian permission is requested when working with CYP under the age of 18. The caveat of this is criminal responsibility and consent through the court system.
- Lone working policies are written to incorporate working with CYP.
- Control Measures are set up as a system of work, for supporting staff if:
 - Attending multi-disciplinary conferences as the family are known to multiple agencies
 - The tutoring is taking place at home. Following the risk assessment the appropriate control measures should be put in place and staff should know what they are and understand them. The control measures used need to be revised on a regular basis.

Individual fire and rescue services should understand the scope of its work and importantly its limitations as nationally, services have varying levels of tutoring/intervention.

The wellbeing of all parties is paramount and should the specifics of the case go beyond the capabilities of the tutors involved a referral to partnerships such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) should occur. Referrals to other agencies should be made when additional support for the CYP and family is identified. There is a broad range of partnership expertise across the UK and these pathways should be established, documented and available for tutors to call on.

Knowledge and Skills

Whilst it is possible, the core skills and training required may be generic in nature it is also appreciated that dependant on the level and nature of the intervention more bespoke service specific training may be required to manage the risk appropriately and as such additional training should be directed by individual fire and rescue services.

Staff who are engaged in these schemes must receive training to the level that is required by their individual fire and rescue service. There are various training programmes available and this should be established by the service prior to the commencement of any programme or as part of the ongoing analysis of training needs.

The suggested main requirements are:

- Firesetter – core skills/awareness training.
- DBS – Enhanced DBS and Children's barring/barred list.
- Safeguarding awareness – Children and Adults
- Communication skills with the CYP and their family.
- Record keeping and the importance of accurate record keeping.

This above list is not exhaustive as there are other elements to safeguarding training such as:

- Prevent
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Behaviour management and dealing with challenging behaviour.

When working within a multi – agency team/framework it is important that partners understand the focus of the FRSs work and crucially they understand that the FRS are there to provide specialised fire safety education. The service must ensure that through their training tutors also understand this limitation.

It is also acknowledged that some fire and rescue services through their partnership work are able to provide a more in-depth holistic programme and these staff must be suitably trained and supported to carry out this function. This type of intervention/tutoring should be clear from the outset.

The Tutoring Process

The families that service staff come into contact with, may well be engaged with other agencies such as schools, social services, educational psychologist and this must be established from the outset to best protect CYP, ascertaining who the lead professional is.

Where the CYP or family is known it is imperative that the service is embedded into the preferred multi-agency approach for example, Looked After Child, Troubled Families, Troubled Individuals, whilst recognising the capabilities and limitations of staff.

Each fire and rescue service will develop their own systems of work, but the process to ensure that recording and reporting is suitable and fit for purpose is a given. The paperwork/computerised trail must include the full details of the CYP or vulnerable adult/s. This information must be kept up to date in line with the Data Protection Principles.

It is important that parental/legal guardianship permission should also be recorded within the case file. This should be obtained from the person who has parental responsibility for the CYP before any engagement is undertaken.

All contact made with the CYP and/or their family must be recorded; examples include:-

- Telephone calls
- Emails
- Visits and the education activity that took place.
- Lead professional
- Multi – Agency contact and discussion including minutes of meeting.
- The amount of visits for each case is dependent on the fire and rescue service programme.

It is documented that building the voluntary relationship* with the CYP is an effective method of communication. This will enable fire and rescue staff to provide the necessary education and deliver the action and consequence message.

The visit will also enable the service to deliver Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) or Safe and Well Visits (SAWV) which should include the fitting or testing of existing smoke alarms within the home. On some occasions separate arrangements may be made for this

There are a variety of delivery methods currently adopted across the UK and activities can include play work with children under 6 years old, through to informal education for those up to 25. The types of resources should be learning/understanding ability appropriate and it is recommended that these tools are risk assessed on a case by case basis. This process can be supported by CAMHS.

Staff should appreciate the possibility that their documentation could be requested at any time by the CYP, their family or by a Child Safeguarding Board or the Police in order to provide information for a serious case review or on investigation. They may also be called upon to give evidence in a court of law.

*Voluntary Relationship - Young people able to freely enter into relationships. Building Relationships is central to fostering learning by developing good and satisfying relationships. Smith 2001

Definitions of Firesetting

It is important to establish a common understanding of what firesetting means from a fire and rescue perspective; this is broader than a legal definitions of firesetting as a criminal act, arson in England and Wales and Wilful firesetting in Scotland. Within a literature search conducted in 2005 by Emma J. Palmer, Laura S. Caulfield & Clive R. Hollin it was established the term arson (wilful firesetting) is typically used when referring to a deliberate act of firesetting to property, whereas firesetting is used as a wider term that does not necessarily imply intent

FRSs should consider all incidences of young people involved in setting fires within our definition of firesetting. Many studies identify two basic types of behaviour in setting fires; fire play behaviours and fire setting behaviours, the defining difference being the degree of intent to cause harm or damage (McCardle, Lambie & Barker-Collo, 2004, Putman & Kirkpatrick, 2005)

Fire play behaviours will have little intention to cause harm or damage whereas fire setting behaviours are intentional acts that have a higher level of intent to cause harm or inflict injury. CYP can intentionally set fires but may not have the desire to cause harm or inflict injury, they may be unaware of the seriousness of what they are doing.

This is a broad spectrum from a young child who gets hold of matches or a lighter with little or no comprehension of the potential consequences, to an adolescent who sets fires to deliberately cause injury or damage. It may also include the young person who sets small fires alone and in secret to groups who set fires as part of a social act. The extent or outcome of the fire however may not necessarily have a bearing on the definition; quiet small fires can be set maliciously whereas extensive fires causing millions of pounds of damage, serious injury or death can be caused by a small fire that gets out of control.

All fires have the potential to cause injury or damage and as FRS we have a duty to prevent this risk. This means we should consider involvement with all young people who are setting fires. This may not necessarily involve direct contact with the young person; in very young children it may be the parents who require the support and in extreme cases it may be providing support to psychologists or social workers.

Exit Strategy / Endings

During the tutoring relationship it is imperative that all those involved in the process understand the exit strategy and when the relationship would end. This could be due to a number of issues including, but not restricted to;

- Successful intervention
- Escalated to Multi agency team
- Referred to CAMHS
- Referred to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Criminal investigations being carried out

This should be recorded in the case file with confirmation provided in the form of a letter or telephone call.

Evaluation

All work undertaken should be subject to ongoing monitoring and full evaluation. CFOA are currently developing a CYP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework which would be suitable for adoption when completed, and the preferred method for national, regional consistency.

Bibliography

Arson Control Forum 6 and 7

Evaluation of interventions with arsonists and young firesetters ODPM

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This edition published November 2016

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