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I met recently with the Minister of State for Care at the Department of Health and Social Care to discuss the impact of fire and rescue services' prevention work and how Safe and Well visits may realise wider benefits within local communities by reducing pressures in the health and care sector.

The requirement under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for each fire and rescue authority to promote fire safety to the extent it considers it reasonable to do so is being met through a variety of fire prevention interventions across the country. A common feature in the fire prevention activity of all local fire and rescue services in England is the home fire safety visit, increasingly being referred to as a Safe and Well visit. Visiting homes, providing bespoke fire safety advice, installing smoke alarms and working in partnership to secure referrals for other agencies or to signpost householders to other sources of assistance is now, pleasingly, integrated in the day-to-day work of local fire and rescue services.

The person-centred approach allows for messaging to be tailored to the specific fire safety risks of the individual. The four key elements of a Safe and Well visit, as outlined by the Standard Evaluation Framework, address key fire-related issues: smoking cessation – smokers' materials being the number one source of ignition in fatal fires; improving people's mobility to support a safe escape; and, battling fuel poverty to reduce the fire risk from alternative heating arrangements. It is important that, while we recognise the additional benefits these visits may have, the focus remains on fire safety.

The Minister of State for Care and I are both keen to offer our encouragement to fire and rescue services in delivering these visits and to drive for consistency in Safe and Well visits. As is often the case, securing a robust evaluation of prevention activity, and demonstrating the impact this work may have in supporting colleagues in the health and care services, can be challenging. However, inclusion of the four key elements in all Safe and Well visits will increase opportunities for improving the evidence base for these interventions.

RT HON NICK HURD MP
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