



Ageing Safely

March 2013

Publicity Line

It is well recognised by fire and rescue services (FRS) that elderly people are at greater risk from fire. Almost twice as many people over the age of 50 die in house fires compared to those under 50. People over 80 are 10 times more likely to die in a fire than someone under 30, and this comes with a cost beyond the tragedy of lives lost: fires effecting over 65s cost the wider economy an estimated £2.3 billion in 2011/12.

This vulnerable age group is the fastest growing in the UK, and it is estimated that over 65s will represent 23% of the UK population by 2033. It is therefore critical that fire and rescue services plan to mitigate deaths and injuries amongst the elderly population. FRS also have a role to play in helping elderly people stay safe in their homes for longer, as the increasing cost of adult social care represents a significant challenge for government more generally.

NFCC has therefore created a strategy document entitled 'Ageing Safely' which requires fire and rescue services to think and plan far beyond their traditional role as an emergency response service. We want them to lead the way and work with partners to be pro-active in tackling risk factors such as ill-health, isolation and poverty.

Fire prevention advice has to be tailored to individual needs and assist them in remaining as independent as possible. Services already do a great deal to support people to live independently – such as fitting alarms for those with hearing impairments and signpost to sources of advice, information, benefits and support.

It is hoped that this strategy can lead to a number of specific outcomes, in particular a stabilisation of the number of deaths and injuries amongst older people, even as their numbers increase. By engaging with public sector partners, charities and elderly people directly, we hope to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy and the interventions undertaken by individual fire and rescue services.

England ✓

Wales ✓

Scotland ✓

Northern Ireland ✓

NFCC will:

- Provide help and guidance to fire and rescue services and partners on reducing risk to the elderly population
-
- Prevent fire through provision and dissemination of information, advice and guidance

- Promote the use of assistive technology, such as mobile sprinklers or personal alarms
- Promote especially high standards of fire safety in buildings designed to cater for elderly people. This includes lobbying government for the legal requirement to fit sprinklers in all care homes.
- Be responsive to the views of elderly people and experts from the field and assist people to recover from their experience of fire.
- Learn from case studies to refine and improve this strategy going forward