

Surrey Safeguarding Children Board and Surrey Fire & Rescue Service.

Procedural guidance when children or young people set fires.

Introduction

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service recognises that fires started by children and young people, in the home or elsewhere, are a cause for concern. Potentially, any child could be at risk from playing with fire.

What is the Firewise Scheme?

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service offers a free educational scheme, called Firewise, to address a child's interest and curiosity about fire with information and education.

Early intervention is vital in changing behaviour.

Within the scheme, Firewise Advisors work with children, with their parents or carers present, to make them aware of the dangers of fire and the potential consequences of their actions.

Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Aims

- reduce the likelihood of children playing with fire in the future
- safeguard children and families

Objectives

- deliver educational sessions to address firesetting behaviour
- help children and their families to be aware of the dangers of firesetting and potential consequences of their actions.

Outcomes

- young firesetters do not repeat their firesetting behaviour
- children and families are safer due to a reduced risk of fire

What are the tell-tale signs of firesetting behaviour?

- Small burn holes in the carpet
- Charred paper in sinks and bins
- Matches or lighters hidden in a child's bedroom
- Unexplained fires in or around your home
- An unusual fascination with fire

Why should I make a referral?

These incidents may take place in or around the home or further afield. Without help and guidance from an early stage firesetting behaviour can increase and lead to more serious consequences.

Why is Early Help important?

It is important to identify and refer young firesetters. The younger the child, the greater the chance of preventing repeat firesetting behaviour.

Who can make a referral?

We accept referrals from Children's Services, Surrey Family Services, parents, carers, schools, police and other professionals. However we require consent from a parent or carer to work with any child or young person - unless part of a Youth Restorative Intervention or Court Order.

How do I make a referral or ask for advice?

Call our free 24 hour number: 0800 085 0767

Email: firewise@surreycc.gov.uk

What happens next?

One of the Firewise team will call you back to take more details and to discuss the particular situation. If Firewise sessions are to take place, then two Firewise Advisors are assigned to the case. The lead advisor will arrange a convenient time and location, usually the home, for a first session.

The advisors will use their training, personal experiences and age appropriate resources, such as games, drawing materials, DVDs, jigsaws and books, to help the child understand the dangers and longer term consequences of playing with fire.

Who are Firewise Advisors?

Most Firewise Advisors are Surrey Fire and Rescue Service personnel who, in addition to their main post, volunteer to undertake the role.

All Advisors receive specific training to work safely and effectively with children and young people and have cleared a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance check to the enhanced level.

Are records of the sessions made?

For each educational session case notes are made with details of the content, the reaction of the young firesetter and further recommendations.

These records can be shared with the referrer if required, and, if appropriate, with other agencies such as CAMHS, Children's Services and Surrey Family Services.

What happens at the end of the sessions?

The young firesetter and parent/carer will be informed about the proposed number of sessions. On completion of the final session a six month review date will be set. Should the risk be assessed as high an additional one month review date will be set.

If repeat firesetting has occurred, within the review periods, the case will be re-opened. If there is no evidence of further firesetting, the case will be closed.

What happens if there is a continued risk of firesetting? (Inter-agency referral)

Should the Firewise Advisors and the Firewise lead agree that there is still a risk that the young firesetter will continue their firesetting behaviour, in spite of the educational sessions, the case will be referred to Children's Services.

The Firewise team will detail their concerns and the need for specialist services from other agencies, in order to address the child's firesetting behaviour and safeguard the child or young person.

If the child concerned is known to Children's Services, the Firewise team will contact the Children's Services lead, e.g. the allocated Social Worker, who will assess the child's needs and the support available to address the safeguarding concerns that have been highlighted.

If the child is not known to Children's Services, the Firewise team will refer to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for the child's needs to be assessed and identify the support available to address the safeguarding concerns highlighted.

Email: mash@surreycc.gov.uk

Secure Email: mash@surreycc.gcsx.gov.uk

Telephone: 0800 470 9100