



## **FIRE SAFETY SUPPORT AND EDUCATION (FSSE) INFORMATION FOR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Fire and Rescue services play a crucial role in making our communities safer, whether it be preventing and protecting people from fire and other risks, or responding swiftly and effectively to the incidents and emergencies that occur. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) work hard to keep people as safe from fire as possible, especially those whose vulnerability to fire is increased, for example, by mental health, domestic abuse or a fascination with fire. In many cases, this means engaging effectively with other agencies to work together to better protect and improve the outcomes for individuals and communities.

Fire Safety Support and Education (FSSE) is one area of prevention that actively seeks to engage with professionals from a wide range of disciplines to benefit individuals, families and ultimately communities. This programme is one of a suite of educational interventions designed to fulfil the organisation's statutory duties of promoting fire safety, particularly when engaging with children and young people (CYP) who have been involved in firesetting. We believe early intervention is the most effective method of behaviour change.

It is recognised that fire service staff are held in high esteem with partners and are considered positive role models by communities and, therefore, ideally placed to be able to influence behaviour change and signpost families to the appropriate support networks when needed.

SFRS engage with CYP at risk of harm and their families to provide educational input in order to prevent further fires from occurring. This intervention will only ever be conducted in a safe environment that suits all parties involved, further supporting the family and the CYP to access early help.

SFRS will conduct, on average, 3 support visits / interventions with CYP and their families, where appropriate, to educate on the consequences of firesetting. Fire Safety Advisors are trained to deliver a specific educational framework and follow internal safeguarding policy and procedures to protect the wellbeing of CYP, family and communities.

## WHAT IS FIRESETTING?

It is important to establish a common understanding of what firesetting means from a fire service perspective; this is broader than a legal definition of setting fires as a criminal act. Firesetting behaviour is not a new problem and any community can be affected.

Wilful fire raising (Arson in England and Wales) is a legal term. It is a criminal act in which one wilfully and maliciously sets fire to or aids in setting fire to a structure, dwelling or property of another (a prosecution must prove that the fire was set by criminal design).

Firesetting is used as a wider term that “does not necessarily imply intent” (Emma J. Palmer, Laura S. Caulfield & Cliver R. Hollin). Many studies identify two basic types of behaviour in setting fires: fire play behaviours and firesetting behaviours, the defining difference being the degree of intent to cause harm or damage. (McCardle, Lambie & Barker-Collo, 2004, Putman & Kirkpatrick, 2005). Firesetting is any unsanctioned incendiary use of fire, including both unintentional and intentional involvement, whether or not an actual fire occurs.

SFRS consider firesetting as **behaviour** that includes setting fires, both accidentally and intentionally. Children and young people who demonstrate having a curiosity around firesetting (fire play behaviour) or those who set fires intentionally (regardless of their intent to cause harm or damage) are not labelled as ‘firesetters’ and SFRS will provide support and education for CYP and their families to impact behaviour change, promoting their safety and wellbeing.

## Characteristics of Firesetting Curiosity (fire play behaviour)

The term refers to an unintentional fire motivated by natural curiosity (experimental where the CYP will not understand the danger or complex process of fire). The CYP has no target for the fire and uses any available ignition source. The fire is set mostly at or near home and is unsophisticated in nature (involves common household items like paper and toys), the CYP does no planning prior to the incident and, if ignited, will try to put out the fire and/or seek help. Simply a **misuse** of ignition sources and fire. In these cases, it is advised a FSSE visit is carried out at home with the CYP and their family.

## Characteristics of Firesetting Behaviour

Firesetting behaviour refers to an **intentional** act where CYP intentionally set fires, they are old enough to understand the dangers of their actions and can be aware or may be unaware of the seriousness of what *they are doing*. The term "intentional firesetting" is not necessarily synonymous with "pyromania".

Firesetting curiosity will have little intention to cause harm or damage, whereas firesetting 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 not be fully aware of the serious consequences firesetting can have.

There is a broad continuum 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 damage or harm. Firesetting also includes small fires set 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 been set with intention to cause damage or harm: quite 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, fatalities or damage and, as a fire service, we have a duty to take measures to prevent and reduce this risk. It is acknowledged by experts in the sector that the firesetter community are a group of individuals that pose the highest risk to fire services because these CYP have been identified by families and professionals alike that they show an unsafe and/or concerning interest in firesetting, exposing themselves, families and communities to injury and, at its worst, death as a result of their firesetting behaviour. CYP of all ages and backgrounds can engage in firesetting behaviour, this behaviour can be predictable, progressive and often preventable.

This means we should consider involvement with all CYP who are involved in setting fires. Support and education from trained advisors can reduce and prevent such behaviour. This may not necessarily involve direct contact with CYP and their families; in very young children, it will probably be the parents or carers who require the support and, in extreme cases, it may be providing support to psychologists or other professionals to be able to carry out this intervention. Working in partnership to support and educate CYP can reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

## **WHO IS FSSE FOR?**

FSSE has been designed for CYP up to the age of 18 years. Although it is acknowledged that adult education is a different model of intervention, historically, FSSE has supported individuals over the age of 18. Prior to the educational input, a trained FS Advisor will work with the referring agency or a key worker to determine if FSSE is an appropriate programme and assess each case individually.

Fire related antisocial behaviour places a significant demand on the resources of the SFRS, other public services and communities. These acts include deliberate fire-setting, malicious actuation of fire alarm systems, hoax calls, hydrant abuse and attacks on personnel. FSSE is designed to address any of these issues with CYP in the aim to re-educate and make communities safer.

## **HOW CAN SFRS SUPPORT**

Due to the recognised risk of firesetting, SFRS have ensured that staff involved in this educational intervention are suitably skilled and supported and understand the complexities of firesetting behaviour.

Anyone who has a concern regarding a CYP and Firesetting should complete the FSSE referral form section A and send it to their local SFRS Community Action Team. Alternatively, it can be emailed to [SFRS.youthengagement@firescotland.gov.uk](mailto:SFRS.youthengagement@firescotland.gov.uk).

The referring agency should seek consent from the person with parental responsibility for the CYP prior to the referral being made.

Once the local area has received the referral, a FS Advisor will get in touch with the referrer for any further information required, then will contact the CYP parent / carer to understand the level of smoke detection and fire escape plan within their home.

By working in partnership with the referrer or any other relevant agency, SFRS can provide a more in-depth holistic programme for CYP and their families. Any joint interventions established will set clear expectations from each partner at the start of the programme.

## **ENGAGEMENT WITH CYP AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Through supporting the right people at the right time, FSSE will offer a flexible approach to assist in the education of those 18 and under who demonstrate an unsafe or concerning interest in fire or have had an involvement with fire related anti-social behaviour.

Consent must be obtained by SFRS from the adult with parental responsibility for the CYP. This consent form will include a privacy statement explaining data protection. Each session will be carried out by two members of the SFRS (1 if the intervention is

being carried out in partnership with another agency) who both have a Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) membership.

The venue agreed will be most suitable and appropriate to the CYP and their family. This can be done in a confidential setting, at school, at the CYP home, within a community centre or at the local fire station. Care is taken on using a fire station venue, as it may heighten the CYP's interest in firesetting behaviour. SFRS recommends any support given to CYP under the age of 11 is done so along with the parent / carer.

The duration of the intervention will be based on individual circumstances but can last up to an hour. FS Advisors will use a bank of resources which provide specialist fire safety education. Resources have been quality assured by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Typically, FS Advisors can provide up to 3 sessions with a CYP. Depending on individual circumstances or need, this may be reduced or extended. FS Advisors have the safety and wellbeing of the CYP at the core of what they do and will share any information appropriately, in line with SFRS Safeguarding Policy and Procedure for Protection of Children and Adults, working in line with the General Data Protection Regulation. FS Advisors may signpost the CYP and their family onto another organisation or close the case.