



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Community Safety Committee

# **EVALUATION OF HOME SAFETY CHECK ACTIVITY AND PROCESS – VALUE AND BENEFIT**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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**Agenda Item No:**

**Date:** 11 July 2008

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Members on Home Safety Check activity and progress of evaluation following recommendations of the Community Safety Committee report in January 2008.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Home Safety Check (HSC) is the term given to a visit which involves firefighters and other trained individuals carrying out a comprehensive risk assessment of an individual's home. This identifies potential hazards not only from fire, but also from other avoidable injuries such as trips and falls. Where considered necessary it may involve the provision and fitting of free smoke alarms into the property, complete with a battery which lasts for 10 years.
- 1.2 This initiative developed over a number of years and is now an integral part of the Community Safety work of Fire and Rescue Services across the country. It initially involved a review of the risk from fire alone and was known as a Home Fire Check but has subsequently been developed and re-titled in order to reflect the wider Fire and Rescue Service involvement in reducing risk.

## 2. REPORT

- 2.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service established HSCs as core Community Safety work in 2003. It was a natural progression from the introduction of the Service's Domestic Smoke Alarm policy which was introduced in June 2002 to:

*“encourage all residents to install, maintain and appreciate the benefits that a working smoke alarm will provide for a domestic property”*

Guidance was issued to personnel which detailed the prescribed manner in which HSCs were to be completed. This guidance was subsequently reviewed and revised early in 2005, to incorporate the experiences and proposals of the personnel performing the visits.

- 2.2 In August 2005 an evaluation of customer satisfaction relating to HSCs was undertaken amongst 500 residents who had received visits. The results, published in September 2005, showed that as a direct result of the HSC visit:

- 72% of people had developed an emergency escape plan;
- 89% said that they had started to close the internal doors in their house at night;
- 99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the firefighters that carried out the checks were professional, courteous and that the advice provided was useful;
- The main reasons people were attracted to having a HSC visit were the offer of a free smoke alarm and concerns about previous fire safety measures;
- 81% of people responding had had smoke alarms fitted during the visit.

The most positive outcome of this evaluation was the feedback which suggested that individuals were changing their safety habits as a result of the visits.

2.3 HSCs are currently generated through several means. Amongst them are:

- Requests made directly by the public in response to Community Safety events such as visits to school, hot oil displays;
- Referrals from partner agencies such as Safe and Secure Homes, Greater Nottingham Healthy Housing services, Age Concern, First Contact etc;
- Support for specific initiatives such as weeks of action (local area based initiatives);
- As a result of “Hot Spotting” following fires;
- Smart targeting using tools such as Mosaic, Map Reader and MIS information

2.4 The 2006-2009 Community Safety Plan (IRMP) as presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority on 9 September 2005 set a target of 25,000 HSCs to be completed by the end of 2009. This target has been reiterated and maintained in various documents up to and including the current Community Safety Plan 2007-2010.

2.5 Returns relating to the number of HSCs completed and smoke alarms fitted have been collected formally since the start of the 2003/4 financial year and the following numbers of HSC visits have been completed, on an annually reported basis:

**Home Safety Checks Carried Out Per District - By Financial Year**

|                            | <b>2003/04</b> | <b>2004/05</b> | <b>2005/06</b> | <b>2006/07</b> | <b>2007/08</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>   |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Total HSCs</b>          | <b>2084</b>    | <b>6406</b>    | <b>10124</b>   | <b>11324</b>   | <b>9066</b>    | <b>39004</b>   |
| <b>Total Alarms Fitted</b> | <b>n/a</b>     | <b>(6883)</b>  | <b>(12646)</b> | <b>(15682)</b> | <b>(17975)</b> | <b>(53186)</b> |

2.6 It will be noted from the above figures that the target set for HSCs of 25,000 by the end of 2009 has been exceeded and that over 39,000 have been completed so far. It will also be noted that as part of the process a total of 51,186 smoke alarms have been fitted up to the end of the 2007/8 financial year.

2.7 In October 2004 the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister announced a £24m initiative to provide capital grants to fire and rescue authorities for the financial years 2004/05 to 2007/08 to establish a programme of Home Fire Risk Checks targeted at the most vulnerable households, combined with installation of smoke alarms. Nottinghamshire’s grant allocation is set out in the table below:

| Home Fire Risk Check Grant Initiative 2004/05 - 2007/08 |         |         |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Year  | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
| Amount (£s)   | 120,357 | 120,357 | 120,357 | 240,835 |

This substantial investment has supported the work of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Authority has also provided a budget of £48k for 2008/09 to continue to support this work.

- 2.8 Requests for HSCs continue to be generated by Districts and partner agencies that are often well placed to reach those that are most vulnerable. Where HSCs are completed, and issues that require the involvement of partner agencies are identified, protocols are in place to ensure that this occurs. Any visit that involves a referral to a partner agency is usually only undertaken with the prior knowledge and permission of the occupier of the property.
- 2.9 The success of the scheme has resulted in a backlog of requests waiting for a visit. The continued high level of demand has led to the need for a review of how resources are focussed. The organisation currently has access to geographic and demographic information through tools such as Mosaic and CFRMIS and via a well established department that is capable of hard targeting the risk areas across the Districts and the Service. Detailed information relating to intelligence led modelling was provided in the Community Safety Committee Report dated 20 July 2007
- 2.10 The opportunities provided by information sources such as these are currently being considered as part of a complete review of how HSCs are undertaken. Consideration is also being given to the validity of the information gathered, collected and collated, the resource implications and the practical aspects relating to a HSC visit. This information will form a future report that will reflect the views of stakeholders and enable management to ensure the best value allocation of resources.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Fire and Rescue Authority has provided a budget of £48k in 2008/09 for smoke alarms. An additional £72K has been added to the budget in 2009/10 bringing the total funding available to £120k.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resources and learning and development implications arising from this report.

## **5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

An initial Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix A.

## **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 All of the above ensures that the Authority meets its aspirations as laid out in the Community Safety Plan. Failure to undertake these initiatives and reduce deaths from accidental dwelling fires in line with Government targets could lead to potential intervention and scrutiny of the Service.
- 7.2 Mosaic, when combined with Service data, provides the Service with sound intelligence on the communities that are at risk and ensures that the Authority meets its aspirations as laid out in the Community Safety Plan.
- 7.3 The impact of our Community Safety work will be important in future partnerships arrangements under the Local Area Agreements.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the content of this report.

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

- § Community Safety Committee report on Home Safety Checks - 20 July 2007

Frank Swann  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

## INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Appendix A

| <i>Section</i>  | <i>Manager</i> | <i>Date of Assessment</i>  | <i>New or Existing</i> |
|---|----------------|--|------------------------|
| Risk Reduction  | ACFO Buckley   | June 2008  | N/A                    |
| Name of Report to be assessed   |                | Evaluation of HSC activity and process   |                        |
| 1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the report.       |                | To inform members of the outcome of an evaluation of Home Safety Check activity and of an ongoing review of the initiative.  |                        |
| 2. Who is intended to benefit from this report and what are the outcomes? |                | It is intended that members and managers will have an appreciation of the value of the HSC initiative and an understanding of the ongoing review of how it is applied. |                        |
| 3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the report?               |                | Members and Brigade Managers<br>Head of Community Safety<br>All personnel<br>Partners<br>Vulnerable members of the public  |                        |
| 4. Who implements and who is responsible for the report?                  |                | Head of Community Safety   |                        |

5. Please identify the differential impact in the terms of the six strands below. Please tick yes if you have identified any differential impacts. Please state evidence of negative or positive impacts below.

| <i>STRAND</i>      | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> | <i>NEGATIVE IMPACT</i> | <i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i> |
|--------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Race               |          | <b>X</b> |                        |                        |
| Gender             |          | <b>X</b> |                        |                        |
| Disability         |          | <b>X</b> |                        |                        |
| Religion or Belief |          | <b>X</b> |                        |                        |
| Sexuality          |          | <b>X</b> |                        |                        |
| Age                |          | <b>x</b> |                        |                        |

|  |          |          |   |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|---|----------|----------|
| 6. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> | 7. Should the policy/service proceed to a full impact assessment? | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
|  |          |          |   |          | <b>x</b> |

**I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed. I understand the impact assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.**

Signed (completing person).....John Buckley.....

Date .....June 2008.....