



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

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

# **RISKWATCH: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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**Agenda Item No:**

**Date:** 16 April 2010

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Members on the progress of special needs resources developed to support the RiskWatch programme.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Government White Paper “Our Fire and Rescue Service” highlighted opportunities for the Fire and Rescue Service to play its part in reducing misery caused by injuries that could have been avoided. The Government set national targets through “Saving Lives, our Healthier Nation” to “reduce death rates from accidents by at least one fifth and the rate of serious injury by one tenth by 2010”.
- 1.2 Against this background, in September 2003 the Service introduced as a pilot a generic safety education programme – ‘RiskWatch’ – which was originally developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in the United States. RiskWatch has been continually developed by the Service and grown in strength and is now an integral part of the Service’s schools educational programme.
- 1.3 The principal ethos underlying RiskWatch is to educate and inform children of school age about a range of safety issues. The Fire Service approach enforces key messages about fire safety, including smoke alarm usage, escape routes and how to call the Fire Service.
- 1.4 The RiskWatch programme is now a key part of the Service’s schools strategy and the Service is now seeking to develop it further to encompass children who have special educational needs (SEN).
- 1.5 This work is aligned to the objectives outlined within the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2010-2013, which states the Service will widen the impact of the RiskWatch education programme to include children who may have special needs such as visual and hearing impairment, autism and/or further learning difficulties. This plan was presented to Members in February 2010.

## 2. REPORT

### **Special educational needs - what does it mean?**

- 2.1 The term 'special educational needs' (SEN) has a legal definition. Children with special educational needs all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn or access education than most children of the same age. These children may need extra or different help from that given to other children of the same age.
- 2.2 Children learn in different ways, and can have different levels or kinds of SEN. Children with SEN may need extra help because of a range of needs, such as in thinking and understanding, physical or sensory difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, or difficulties with speech and language or how they relate to and behave with other people.

- 2.3 The Government has set out in the Early Learning Goals of the foundation stage of education for children from 3 to 5 years what most children should be able to do by the end of school reception year. The National Curriculum for children from 5 to 16 years also sets out what most children will learn at each stage of their education. Of course children make progress at different rates and have different ways in which they learn best. Teachers are expected to take account of this by looking carefully at how they organise their lessons, the classroom, the books and materials they give to each child and the way they teach. So all teachers will consider a number of options and choose the most appropriate ways to help each child learn from a range of activities. This is often described as 'differentiating the curriculum'.
- 2.4 It is important that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) supports all children and young people to reach their full potential by the provision of suitable educational programmes that support learning and development of individuals and support a successful transition to adulthood and the world of further and higher education, training or work.
- 2.5 This recognition will of course complement the Service's approach to equality and diversity and meets the Service's desired goal of reaching vulnerable groups.
- 2.6 The resources currently available for RiskWatch in schools have been developed to suitably meet the needs of a mainstream audience aged 3 – 14 years. The Service is developing a number of new resources to support both teachers and fire crews in delivery of fire safety messages to children and young people including those learners with visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disabilities, learning difficulties and autism. Crews will be given additional resources and skills to deliver RiskWatch messages to children and young people including children who have 'special educational needs'.
- 2.7 Working with educational specialists and advisors from the County Council and Portand College the Service has developed a number of resources to compliment the delivery of the RiskWatch programme. An activity catalogue for teachers to choose suitable activities (20 in total) for their students has been developed to provide a greater awareness of the type of work NFRS can do to support the learning and development of the students. A similar activity book has been developed for NFRS crews to provide a greater depth of knowledge of each of these activities and support them with the delivery of the programme.
- 2.8 To support the activities additional resources have been sourced for a 'special educational needs resource box' which includes, for example, a small cube that smells like a coal fire so that the different senses are used in the learning process.
- 2.9 Resources used to support the activities are all set around the Big Book, 'Birthday Cake Mistake', which was supplied by the CLG to all FRSs, and the RiskWatch and Bleeper activity book already used within the programme.

Felt flames have also been made to help the delivery of the stop, drop, and roll message.

- 2.10 The project also involves the use of specialist software which will enable NFRS to deliver fire safety messages to a variety of learners using symbolised text called Communicate in Print. The use of this software is already common place in their school learning environment and is therefore appropriate to support the delivery of important messages to learners with special educational needs. The development of these resources is a result of the continuing improvement of delivery to the communities NFRS serves.
- 2.11 Community Safety Committee Members will have the opportunity to see the resources used in an interactive presentation with students from Portland College at the rising of Community Safety Committee on 16 April 2010

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

All of the above will be met from within existing budgets which have previously been approved.

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

Guidance on the use of the resource will be given to personnel who deliver the RiskWatch education programme

### **5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

No disproportionate impact on the equality strands has been identified and in fact this initiative seeks to address an imbalance of access by disadvantaged groups to the RiskWatch programme.

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

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

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The development of resources have assisted the organisation in making reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage compared to their peers and to promote the welfare and interests of disabled children, and to improve the support they receive through our educational programme.
- 7.2 This responds directly to our legal obligations as set out within associated statute – for example the Disability Discrimination Act. Additionally, under Part 2 Section 6 of the Fire Services Act 2004, NFRS has a statutory duty to

make provision for the purpose of promoting Fire Safety in its area. The RiskWatch project is part of the Service's arrangements for the provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of steps taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fire.

#### **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The Service risks adverse scrutiny should it not respond to legal obligations imposed on it.

#### **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members support the approach being taken to extend the RiskWatch programme to address those children with SEN.

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

None.

Frank Swann  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**