



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

Fire fatalities update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date 7th October 2016

Purpose of Report:

To update members of the Community Safety Committee on the fire fatalities which have occurred from April 2016 to date and the associated fire investigation and community safety activity.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2015 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) responded to 9518 incidents. Of these, 1536 were primary fires (the most serious type of fire). As a result of these primary fires there were four fatalities during 2015. All four victims were male, two being aged between 31 and 64 and two being over the age of 64.
- 1.2 In recent years fire deaths have fluctuated. In 2012 there were six, in 2013 there were two and in 2014 there were a total of five fire deaths.
- 1.3 The Authority is required to report all incidents however the national focus is mainly on accidental fire fatalities. This report refers to all fire fatalities for two reasons, firstly to draw attention to all patterns related to lifestyle and demography and secondly that the cause of the incidents referred to has not yet been officially determined by the coroner in all cases.
- 1.4 Between April 2016 and the date of this report there have been five fatalities as a result of fire. The cause of some of these fatalities is yet to be confirmed by coroner's inquest.
- 1.5 The Fire and Rescue Services Act places a duty on the Authority to investigate fires and promote fire safety. The Fire Investigation (FI) function is the first stage in a process of determining the cause of fire and has also evolved to focus on prevention and protection strategies, with the community safety function, to continue to reduce the number of fires.
- 1.6 Members are aware that community safety is a statutory function of Fire and Rescue Authorities. The community safety activities within NFRS are developed and targeted to reduce the number of fires occurring and the consequential injuries and fatalities.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Since April 2016 there have been five fire fatalities in Nottinghamshire. At the time of writing this report not all cases have been heard by the coroner. Therefore the formal cause has not been verified by coroner's inquest.
- 2.2 The FI Team work closely with all NFRS departments, particularly Community Safety to ensure vulnerable persons are identified, so that additional support can be given, such as enhanced fire detection, fire resistant bedding and advice given to other agencies and support groups.
- 2.3 Following a fire death, NFRS conducts a "fatal fire review" where representatives from the Partnership and Engagement Team, Service Delivery, Communications and Media Team and Fire Investigation Team attend. The key aims of this review is to consider the lessons learned and what can be done to prevent similar, future fire deaths and to establish an 'action plan' that will clearly record ownership of any agreed priorities.

- 2.4 This action plan is then reviewed at subsequent follow up meetings and can include internal and external partners. A review of this nature ensures that key learning outcomes are recognised and addressed to ensure that the organisation develops how it responds following a tragedy of this nature.
- 2.5 Where our targeting, or that of a partner, identifies a member of the community who is considered to be at risk and all NFRS support actions have been exhausted, the community safety team will make referrals to the relevant 'vulnerable persons panel' to ensure multi agency lessons are learned and suitable support or care is provided to people living with vulnerability.
- 2.6 There is an obvious demographic pattern of vulnerability from the fatalities which have occurred in Nottinghamshire. It appears that those at most risk from serious injury or death as a result of a fire in their home are:
- Male
 - Middle aged (average age of approximately 64, youngest 44, oldest 82)
 - Single, divorced or widowed
 - Living alone
 - One, or a combination, of the following health or lifestyle contributory factors:
 - Mobility issues
 - Alcohol use
 - Smoking or naked flame cooking
- 2.7 NFRS has access to extensive data sets as a guide to who could be most vulnerable within our communities and where they might be located. These are the nationally held 'Exeter Data', the City and County Adult Social Care data and our own Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS). We also have access, through data sharing agreements, to any other partner held information where there is a legitimate personal or community safety reason to request such access.
- 2.8 At present NFRS is cross referencing the Exeter Data with the adult social care data already held to remove and update duplicate records. The Exeter Data is NHS England information collated from all GP records nationally and issued by postcode to each Fire Service in England.
- 2.9 Once the cross referencing work is complete, there are over 190,000 records, NFRS will check and if necessary revise the targeting approach for community safety activity in light of the information in 2.6.
- 2.10 Members have endorsed the services approach to greater involvement with Health and Wellbeing as part of our community safety strategy and the wider contribution to public services in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham. The Service is sharing this targeting information with health and social care partners to identify even earlier signs of vulnerability. This approach will enable the service to contribute to supporting people to live independently

and safely at the earliest possible stage. These people, without this support, will be those most likely to suffer injury or death as a result of fire.

- 2.11 Examples of this type of collaborative work are the New Cross and Broomhill community projects, the Gedling Handyperson project and the Hoarding Framework. Future developments include working with clinical Community Assessment Teams to help support people to remain in their homes safely and to carry out hospital discharge assessments to ensure people are safe and have the required support to return to their homes as soon as possible. This initiative is in the best interests of the person involved to either keep them out of hospital or help them return home quickly but also supports the health community in reducing the demand for acute inpatient services and making capacity available as soon and safely as possible.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Fire investigation, Community Safety and risk analysis financial implications fall within agreed budgets.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

In order to develop the role of community engagement from a health and social care perspective, Public Health England are providing Health Literacy and Public Health Awareness training to NFRS staff. This training is either free of charge or contained within existing budgets.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no anticipated implications for equality. The targeting of services is based on vulnerability.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Part 2 Section 6, places a statutory duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities for the provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of the steps to be taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fire and to give information, on request, about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property and the means of escape from buildings and other property in case of fire. The information in this report demonstrates some of the steps being taken to ensure that NFRS is complying with this duty and supporting the wider public sector through appropriate collaboration.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Effective fire investigation, community safety and collaboration measures not only support the Authority in discharging its statutory duties, but provides valuable support to partner agencies in discharging their duties. These activities fundamentally support the most vulnerable members of the communities we are here to serve.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of the report and support the continuing work and development of the targeting of vulnerability in conjunction with partners to benefit those vulnerable in our communities.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER