

Partnering in Fire Prevention

**NORTH YORKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

February 2024

Fire does discriminate



Welcome to the fifth edition of our newsletter sharing with partners the work NYFRS are doing to keep our communities safe from fire. Previous editions can be found on our website alongside other resources for partners www.northyorkshire.gov.uk/your-safety/safe-at-home/home-fire-safety-partnerships

In this edition there is a reminder that fire does discriminate, and there are factors that make somebody more likely to have a fire at home, or to die in a fire. If you work with people sharing these characteristics, please seek their consent and refer to us for a safety visit to reduce their risk. We now have a full year's worth of data from the online referral tool Safelincs to share with you which shows how important your referrals have been in York and North Yorkshire.

There is also an update about our safety visits. Don't worry; the name is changing but we will still be providing person centred advice because the visits are at the core of our home fire safety prevention strategy.

The prevention themes we will be focusing on this quarter are chimney fire safety and electrical fire safety. To tie in with these themes this edition of the newsletter also includes features about carbon monoxide gas and Lithium-Ion batteries. There is also an update about our ongoing prevention work with air flow mattresses.

There is information about our upcoming prevention campaigns, including a new campaign about pet fire safety which is likely to affect a lot of us on a personal basis as well as a professional one.

Referrals recieved

The number of new and repeat referrers to the Fire Service grows each month.

Although it takes a few minutes to fill in the referral form, the information Safelincs asks for allows us to prioritise our resources and offer a visit to those who are at medium to very high risk of having a fire. Anybody who is classified as low risk will automatically receive some written information. If the new year means a new job role for you please take a moment to include a Safelincs handover to a colleague and if your organisation would like any additional training for new starters please get in touch.

In 2023:

- 43% of referrals came from agencies
- 40% came from the home occupier
- The most referrals came from the NHS (17%), Baywater (20%), North Yorkshire Council (15%) and from organisations supporting unpaid carers (5%)
- Where a referral originated from the home occupier 10% of home safety visits were classed as high or very high risk of a fire. This compares to 29% of referrals from agencies; you are already engaging with the people that we want to.
- Few referrals from agencies were classed as low risk of a fire (8%), compared to 24% of referrals made by the home occupier.

As a Fire Service committed to keeping the most vulnerable people safe from fire we want to be visiting those who are at high risk of having a fire; these are the people referred by you. Their risk might be increased because they are over the age of 65, live alone, have a disability or there is another aspect of their life which increases their risk of having a fire e.g. being a smoker. By giving them person centred fire safety advice and referring them onward for further support we can improve their safety.

Prevention Updates

Upcoming Changes in Fire Prevention

We are renaming our visits to **Home Fire Safety Visits**

Why are we changing the name from Safe & Well?

We recognise that as a brand Safe & Well is well known so changing from this should only be done for good reason. Nationally our governing body the National Fire Chiefs Council released the [Person Centred Framework](#), this is now the cornerstone of all Fire & Rescue Service Prevention work. Within this document the name of the visit was changed and is being standardised across England and the United Kingdom. We in North Yorkshire want to ensure we are adhering to best practice and we feel that aligning to this framework and creating a fire centric naming methodology is the best thing for us to do

Partnerships

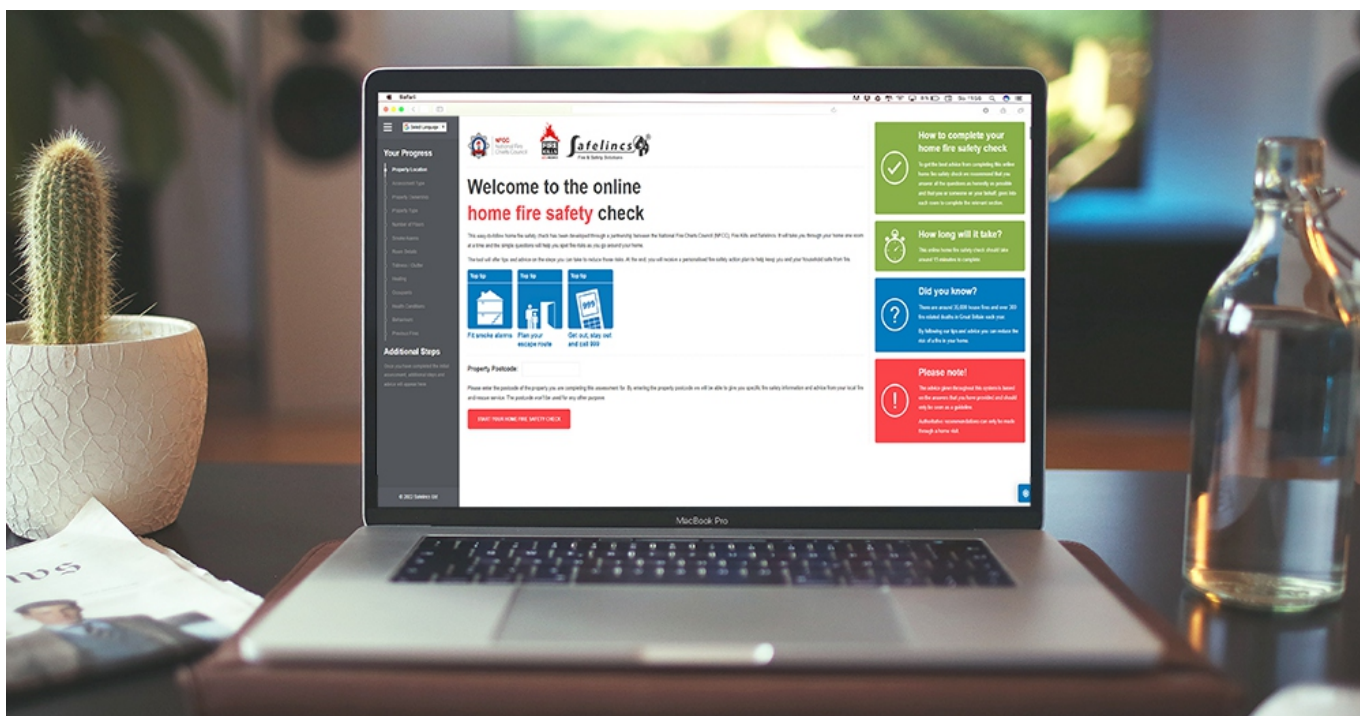
In 2024 we are looking forward to expanding and improving our work with partners.

The organisations, charities and teams already signed up to our partnership offer can benefit from bespoke training and other opportunities. If your organisation would like to sign up to become a partner visit our website to find out how <https://www.northyorksfire.gov.uk/your-safety/safe-at-home/home-firesafety-partnerships>

You can email us at Prevention@northyorksfire.gov.uk

What does this mean?

This exercise is just a name change so over the next few weeks and months we will be slowly dropping the Safe & Well visit name and changing everything over to Home Fire Safety Visits. This will take some time as the branding of this visit is on leaflets, Webpages, Booklets, documents and videos.



Battery Fire Safety

Lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries are found in mobility scooters, e-bikes, mobile phones, powerpacks, laptops, children's toys, power tools and e-cigarettes.

Like all electrical items their use comes with a fire risk, particularly when being charged but also when they become overheated (e.g. left in the sun), punctured or crushed (e.g. when at a waste recycling centre), or because of a fault with the battery.

Lithium is highly flammable and there is a heightened risk of explosion because internal temperatures of the battery continue to rise making it unstable.

Recently North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service have attended a fire where an e-bike exploded. Initial findings show that the battery had been charging but the occupant checked on it and found it to be overheating they unplugged it and placed the bike outside. It was a short time afterwards that the battery exploded.



Risks can be reduced by

- Buying items from reputable retailers and registering products with the manufacturer to ensure the product isn't subject to a product re-call.
- Always using the manufacturer approved charger for the product, and if you spot any signs of wear and tear or damage buy an official replacement charger for your product from a reputable seller
- If buying an item second hand try to establish if the charger is the original and correct type
- Do not charge batteries or store your e-bike or e-scooter near combustible or flammable materials
- Avoid storing or charging e-bikes or e-scooters on escape routes or in communal areas of multi-occupancy buildings. If there is a fire, it can affect people's ability to escape.
- Never leave your appliance charging overnight or when you are away from the property – always keep it in sight
- Always unplug your charger when it is finished charging
- Ensure you have working smoke alarms, especially in the area where you are charging your lithium battery.

In the event of a fire involving a lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery NEVER attempt to tackle it yourself. It is important to remember water isn't effective at extinguishing a battery fire and can actually make it worse. **Get out, stay out, and call 999.**

Please remember, when disposing of a lithium battery, this can't be done in your household waste – you must take this to a household refuse and recycling plant or contact your local authority for more information.

More information can be found at <http://www.batteryfiresafety.co.uk>

If you have concerns about somebody using lithium-ion batteries in an unsafe way please encourage them to have a Safe and Well visit from their local Fire Service and help them use the online home fire safety check [HFSC \(safelincs.co.uk\)](https://www.hfsc.gov.uk/safelincs)

Who is at risk?

We have explored the factors that increase the likelihood of a dwelling fire as well as the factors that put people at greater risk of dying in a house fire.

The people most likely to experience a fire are:

- those living in rented households rather than owner occupiers;
- those living in flats rather than those in a house;
- those under the age of 60;
- those living in a household with five or more members rather than those living in smaller households; and
- those with a long-term illness or disability rather than those without.

However, national data show that there are factors that put people more at risk of dying in a fire, including not being able to self-evacuate. These are:

- older people (65+);
- people with mobility issues;
- those that live alone; and
- people who live in more deprived areas.



Prevention Campaigns

To ensure the safety messages we are providing are relevant and have the most impact we follow a fire prevention campaign calendar which reflects different seasonal activities.

Over winter time we have been focusing on chimney fire safety. As well as asking whether the chimney is swept and whether suitable materials are being burnt on the fire, one of the questions we ask during a home fire safety visit is whether a carbon monoxide alarm is fitted if there is any type of fuel being burnt in the property e.g. gas, oil or a multi fuel stove. If the occupant is not sure we will help them look for the alarm in the most likely place, test it for them, or give advice about where they would be able to buy one locally.

Laura Randles, Energy Project Manager from Warm and Well explains more about how they can help people stay safe:



“At Warm & Well we have fully trained advisors who will discuss and advise on Carbon Monoxide and the dangers and preventative measures that can be undertaken to reduce the risk of poisoning. We will explore clients existing knowledge and highlight the symptoms and appliances to be wary of and what to do if they suspect a leak. We can also support clients in ensuring they are getting their gas appliances checked regularly and look into their eligibility for free gas safety checks. We can also signpost to grants and schemes if clients are eligible for boiler upgrades and energy efficiency improvements to their homes. We offer a variety of support whether its Advice on how to save money on energy costs, switching suppliers, grants and priority services to income maximisation and debt support”.

Contact Warm & Well, part of North Yorkshire Citizen's Advice and Law Centre on 01609 767555 or visit our website <https://www.cany.org.uk/warmandwell/> and complete a referral form and one of their Advisors will be in touch.



Updates on Airflow Mattresses

Last year we highlighted the potential risk of airflow mattresses which are provided for the prevention of pressure sores and used by people who have restricted mobility.

If a fire starts the person will physically be less able to respond but because of the continued flow of air from the pump the fire can also develop more rapidly; this can be compounded by the use of emollient creams.

If you are working with somebody who uses an air flow mattress remember that smoking, using an electric blanket, using electrical devices such as heaters or hair dryers near the bed, charging devices on the mattress and overloading extensions increase the risk of a fire starting and using emollient creams can increase the severity of a fire. If you have concerns about their safety encourage them to have a free Home Fire Safety Visit or print the safety advice for air flow mattress users from our website [Dynamic Airflow Mattress - North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service \(northyorksfire.gov.uk\)](https://www.northyorksfire.gov.uk/dynamic-airflow-mattress).



With thanks to one of our partners we acquired an airflow mattress which we filmed as a controlled burn using thermal imaging cameras. We are exploring ways of sharing our findings with other Fire Services and being able to use the footage as a visual training tool for our staff. There is reciprocal training planned this spring between NYFRS and a Medequip so that together we can best learn how to protect our vulnerable people.





This year we have a new campaign focusing on pet safety

Statistics show that on average, 500,000 pets are affected by fire each year, with 40,000 of those pets dying as a result. Pets themselves are responsible for an average of 1,000 fires a year with the most common cause being knocking stove knobs on and setting fire to items which have been left on the hob.

You can help to pet proof your home by checking electrical wires for damage caused by chewing and using battery operated candles rather than ones with a flame. If there is a fire at home, once you are out, stay out. Don't go back in to save pets, call the fire service instead.

If you would like to share your experiences of pets and fire safety please send them to prevention@northyorksfire.gov.uk and we will include some in the next edition of the newsletter.

We shall be sharing information about all of these campaigns on our social media accounts, please share them to your own pages. If you are holding any events in support of these weeks please get in touch if you would like the Fire Service to attend too.

Our newsletter aims to provide useful information into trending fire risks and an insight into what we are doing to reduce the risk and prevent fires in York and North Yorkshire.

We are trying to promote this newsletter to gain a wider audience of professionals which will help us with our cause and can share our information. We would encourage you to share this newsletter with your colleagues and teams and if you know anyone that would like to subscribe to this newsletter then they can sign up to our [distribution list here](#). If you would like to unsubscribe then please let us know by emailing Prevention@northyorksfire.gov.uk.

Coming next time

The sixth edition of our newsletter "Partnering in Fire Prevention" will be published in Spring 2024.

It will contain an update on our seasonal campaigns as well as any emerging local and national fire safety concerns.

Please contact us with suggestions about what else you would like to see included.



Contact us: Prevention@northyorksfire.gov.uk or call 01609 780150