



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

**S|T|O|P
FIRE**



People at Risk Strategy 2016–2021



Foreword



As the Director of Community Protection for Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS), it gives me great pleasure to introduce our People at Risk Strategy (2016–21).

NIFRS is committed to protecting all members of society in Northern Ireland from the dangers associated with fire and rescuing them from situations where they may be in danger.

NIFRS identified within our initial People at Risk Strategy (2013–16) that a significant number of people who had tragically lost their lives in accidental fires in dwellings within Northern Ireland could have been deemed to be at risk from fire for a number of reasons (age, mobility, illness, impairment, etc).

NIFRS acknowledged this and introduced the terminology People at Risk within our original strategy. This terminology and the definition of People at Risk supported the delivery of targeted intervention actions by NIFRS aimed at reducing accidental fire deaths and injuries within Northern Ireland.

NIFRS acknowledges that People at Risk in Northern Ireland will come from all walks of life and will be spread geographically across the

country. It is impossible to predict the numbers of people involved but it is clear that, as our population lives longer, with more emphasis on providing support and care in the community and allowing people to remain independent for as long as possible when they require care, the numbers of people falling within NIFRS People at Risk category will increase. This change in community risk within Northern Ireland must be considered against a back drop of austerity within the UK which has resulted in decreased budgets and resources being available to NIFRS.

Therefore the purpose of this strategy is to clearly define how NIFRS will deliver positive outcomes for our community by ensuring that our prevention services are directed and targeted in an efficient and effective manner, delivering timely interventions to those most at risk from fire.

These positive outcomes will only be delivered by NIFRS working in collaboration with other organisations. This strategy will promote and develop this partnership working so that together we can achieve the outcome of making Northern Ireland a safer place for us all.

The people who work for NIFRS care deeply about protecting our community and, in particular, protecting those who most need our help. As a Fire and Rescue Service it is our collective goal that no one in Northern Ireland should ever die in an accidental dwelling fire.

I believe that this strategy will challenge NIFRS to think and plan beyond our traditional role as an emergency response service so that we can support and deliver positive health and wellbeing outcomes for the people of Northern Ireland.

I would like to thank everybody who has already given such wonderful support and I commend this strategy to you.

Alan Walmsley
Assistant Chief Fire Officer and
Director of Community Protection

People at Risk Strategy 2016–21

This strategy draws on techniques associated with an outcome-based approach to public policy and reflects the outcome based approach applied within the Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Governance Framework 2016–21. The key elements of an outcome based approach are:

1. a focus on outcomes – these are things that people can actually identify such as living longer and leading healthier lives;
2. the identification of indicators – which show the change we want to introduce;
3. the development of performance measures – that will show if success is being achieved.

The aim is to deliver a lasting outcome for society with a focus on the impact achieved, such as people living longer, safer and healthier lives.

Drivers for Strategic Review

Review of previous NIFRS People at Risk Strategy (2013–16)

A review of the aims of the previous NIFRS People at Risk Strategy (2013–16) indicated a reduction in the number of accidental fire fatalities in dwellings over the three year period 2013 to 2016 (28 fatalities), when compared to the three year period before its introduction (32 fatalities).

However, further analysis of the data indicated that accidental fire fatalities in dwellings during the final year of the strategy had increased. This was the first increase in accidental fire fatalities in Northern Ireland for three years (accidental dwelling fire fatalities increased from 8 in 2014/15 to 12 in 2015/16). The analysis also indicated that 7 out of the 12 people (58%) who tragically lost their lives in an accidental dwelling fire during 2015/16 would have been deemed to be People at Risk.

As part of the review, NIFRS conducted an analysis of all fatal dwelling fires in Northern Ireland over a 15-year period. This highlighted that 47% of all dwelling fire fatalities over this time were aged 60 or over. A further analysis concentrating on the last three years indicated that out of the 28 accidental dwelling fire fatalities that occurred during this period, 16 or 57% were aged 60 or over. These statistics indicated that there is a higher prevalence of deaths in dwelling fires in Northern Ireland for those over the age of 60.

Academic research by A. Harpur¹ carried out in 2014 was also considered by NIFRS when developing this strategy. This research consisted of an in-depth study of the circumstances surrounding fatal dwelling fires in Northern Ireland for the period 1999–2009 and focused on data derived from coronial reports. The aim of the research was to investigate occupant behaviours and influencing factors surrounding fatal dwelling fire incidents in Northern Ireland.

The research looked at key risk factors and demographics of those who had died in dwelling fires during the 10-year period. Further in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis of the circumstances surrounding older fatalities indicated that the key issue associated with this group was age-related deterioration in mental and physical health which often led to limited mobility.

Northern Ireland Context

Within Northern Ireland over the last number of years there has been a drive for enhanced collaboration within the public and voluntary sectors to ensure that the best outcomes are delivered for the community. This is a clear aim within the Northern Ireland Programme for Government Framework 2016–21.

This drive for coordination and collaboration has been highlighted in a number of regional strategies such as the Northern Ireland Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2015–25² which states “Central and local government, statutory, private, and voluntary and community sectors, will play a key role in contributing to a reduction in the number of deaths and unintentional injuries occurring in the home. It is important that, given the current financial and resource constraints, there is a coordinated approach taken by all partners involved”.

The introduction of the Community Planning Legislation within Northern Ireland has also created a driver for change, with NIFRS represented as a statutory partner across all the Community Planning Partnerships. The importance of developing an effective multi-agency approach to deliver progress in regard to community safety, health and wellbeing has clearly emerged during the community planning process.

¹ Harpur, A, 2014. *A Detailed Investigation Into Occupant Behaviours and Influencing Factors Surrounding Fatal Dwelling Fire Incidents in Northern Ireland*. (Doctorate of Philosophy, University of Ulster.)

² *Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2015–2025*. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

National Context

The concept of regarding the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) as a Health Asset has been introduced within England. This has resulted in a new partnership being established between NHS England and Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) to enable FRS resources to be used to support older people and those with long term conditions.

FRSs in England have now begun to extend their Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) programme into a 'Safe and Well' visit to help the vulnerable and those with complex conditions. To assist in the underpinning of the concept of a 'Safe and Well' visit, design principles for 'Safe and Well' visits have been developed and agreed.

FRSs in the UK, as well as reducing the risks of fire, now aim to also reduce other health risks such as falls, loneliness and isolation, which will also reduce unplanned hospital admissions and help people to stay in their homes safely and for longer.

A Consensus Statement has been developed by five organisations: NHS England, Public Health England, Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), Age UK and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support the move towards Safe and Well visits which was launched on 1 October 2015.

The Consensus Statement describes the strategic intent for the named organisations "to work together to encourage joint strategies for intelligence-led early intervention and prevention; ensuring people with complex needs get personalised, integrated care and the support they need to live full lives, sustain their independence for longer and in doing so reduce preventable hospital admissions and avoidable winter pressures/deaths".

The LGA has produced two reports, *Beyond Fighting Fires* (2015) and *Beyond Fighting Fires 2* (2016), to demonstrate case studies of how FRSs are exploring different ways to use their unique position of trust in the community to help improve the public's health and wellbeing, especially targeted at those at risk.

CFOA also released their first national strategy³ aimed at protecting older people from deaths and injuries caused by fire in the home. CFOA's 'Ageing Safely' strategy states deaths and injuries from fire will rise in proportion to the increases in numbers of older people and that almost twice as many people over the age of 50 now die in dwelling fires in the UK each year compared to those under 50.

This strategy highlights that age cannot be viewed in isolation but should be managed through a holistic approach. The strategy challenged all UK FRSs to review their existing policies and procedures to ensure they are delivering targeted interventions.

To support collaborative protection and prevention activities every FRS in England has access to information on vulnerable persons directly from the NHS. This data sharing is achieved via an information sharing agreement between NHS England and the FRS. This data is known as Exeter Data and is provided via an encrypted email by NHS England from a central hub known as the Health and Social Care Information Centre. To ensure this data remains correct it is refreshed every 12 months.

The strategic objectives of this information sharing agreement are:

- reducing deaths and injuries as a result of fire;
- reducing human misery and impact on the NHS;
- improving health and wellbeing by working closely with Health and Social Care.

These drivers for change have been considered during the development of this Strategy.

How will NIFRS protect People at Risk from the dangers of fire?

NIFRS will protect People at Risk from the dangers of fire by implementing the following strategic actions in the table below.

| Strategic Action | |
|------------------|---|
| 1 | NIFRS will target our resources to deliver positive outcomes for those people most at risk. |
| 2 | NIFRS will develop and establish meaningful relationships with partner agencies regarding the protection of People at Risk from fire. |
| 3 | NIFRS will proactively target and identify People at Risk. |
| 4 | NIFRS will learn from incidents involving People at Risk to improve internal systems, to enhance partnership working, to improve prevention interventions and to influence future strategic planning. |
| 5 | Fires, fire deaths and fire-related injuries involving People at Risk will be reduced through targeted and coordinated media and information campaigns. |
| 6 | NIFRS will explore the opportunities to extend the scope of our Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) process and other prevention interventions to support the wider health and wellbeing needs of People at Risk in Northern Ireland. |



Carmel McKinney, NIFRS Chair, and ACO Alan Walmsley visit Angie McManus and Jimmy, the dog, in her Belfast home

NIFRS will target resources to deliver positive outcomes for those people most at risk

With the introduction of this strategy from 1 April 2016, the previous provision of a free HFSC by NIFRS to everyone within Northern Ireland will cease with NIFRS offering a free HFSC to People at Risk and offering free fire safety advice to everyone else.

This change in approach will allow NIFRS to target our resources at those within our community most at risk from fire. It will also allow us to consider how we can use our resources to support the wider health and wellbeing needs of the community.

The definition of People at Risk, as defined by NIFRS, has now changed under this strategy to the following. People who:

- are aged 60 or older; or
- have a disability or impaired mobility (includes those with an impairment or health condition that would impact on their ability to acknowledge and respond to an emergency in the home); or
- are referred to NIFRS by a partnership agency.

NIFRS will continue to accept HFSC referrals for people who fall outside of this definition but who may be at risk for other reasons; each of these referrals will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. NIFRS will continue to fit free smoke alarms within dwellings where operational crews attend an incident and it is identified that no smoke alarms are present or that the smoke alarms are not working.

NIFRS, when completing a People at Risk HFSC, will now fit an additional smoke alarm in the bedroom of a person at risk suffering from significant mobility impairment. A revised NIFRS Home Fire Safety Check Guidance Document has been introduced to support the outcomes contained within this strategy.

It should be highlighted that the NIFRS People at Risk definition within this strategy has been changed to reflect a reduced target age of 60 or over from the previous target age of 65 or over. It is the strategic intention of NIFRS to further reduce this target age to 50 or over during the lifetime of this strategy.

NIFRS will develop and establish meaningful relationships with partner agencies regarding the protection from fire of People at Risk

Establishing partnership agreements with referral agencies will be a key factor to the success of this strategy. To support this approach an NIFRS Partnership Manager has been appointed and a new People at Risk Partnership Agreement has been developed and introduced within NIFRS.

NIFRS could not and should not try to reinvent structures and initiatives that are already established and successful. We will seek to continue to capitalise upon existing structures, where possible working in partnership with others. Equally, NIFRS will seek to help advance the aims of like-minded partners, utilising our own resources where appropriate to do so and within existing governance constraints.

It is recognised that excellent work continues to be done through organisations and existing partnerships such as Police and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), Community Planning Partnerships, Home Accident Prevention (HAP), Health Trusts, councils and the wider voluntary and community sector. NIFRS will actively seek out and make contact with potential partners to facilitate partnership working that may benefit People at Risk. NIFRS will also strive to identify and help those who are not involved in mainstream organisations and who are therefore harder to reach. NIFRS will target new opportunities for partnership working as a means to deliver this strategy.

NIFRS will proactively target and identify People at Risk

For NIFRS, the key to helping People at Risk is to identify who and where they are in order that resources can be prioritised and the most benefit can be realised. To do this, NIFRS will establish and maintain People at Risk partnership agreements with agencies who deliver care services to People at Risk, and other relevant government/voluntary agencies with a view to identifying those who would benefit from intervention from NIFRS.

NIFRS will explore opportunities to access information to support the targeting of people most at risk such as testing the public interest provision of the Health and Social Care (Control of Data Processing) legislation when implemented.

NIFRS will utilise existing technology to identify areas of community risk and integrate with NIFRS prevention and protection arrangements aligned to developing emergency response procedures to ensure optimum levels of service delivery.



Station Commander Karen McDowell with Martina McGuinness, Deputy Manager, Fermanagh Community Transport at the signing of the Fermanagh Community Partnership

NIFRS will learn from incidents involving People at Risk to improve internal systems, enhance partnership working, improve prevention interventions and influence future strategic planning

NIFRS will complete a Fatal Fire Review for all accidental fire fatalities within Northern Ireland. This procedure considers all aspects of what has occurred, including if the casualty had any underlying health condition or if the casualty was known to or could have been referred by another partner to NIFRS for preventative action. The procedure also reviews the impact of NIFRS’ current prevention interventions in relation to the circumstances of that specific incident.

The process supports organisational learning and ensures that any identified changes to our prevention interventions are introduced to protect the community from the dangers of fire, especially those that are deemed to be most at risk.

NIFRS, when appropriate, will include partner organisations within the Fatal Fire Review process to ensure relevant learning is shared outside of NIFRS.

Fires, fire deaths and fire related injuries involving People at Risk will be reduced through targeted and coordinated media and information campaigns

NIFRS will develop a variety of media strategies to ensure that People at Risk are made aware of the dangers of fire and to ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to increase the fire safety awareness among all People at Risk. This will be supported by targeted local initiatives and activities delivered by Area based Community Risk Managers.

NIFRS will continue to raise awareness of the dangers of fire through the most appropriate medium, and in particular look for new opportunities to communicate with People at Risk. NIFRS will seek to

engage with partners wherever possible to determine if there is a joint approach that can be taken to maximise the benefit of any information campaigns or press opportunities.

To support the outcomes of this strategy, NIFRS will develop a bespoke People at Risk fire safety leaflet for targeted risk based distribution within Northern Ireland.

NIFRS will evaluate community safety campaigns and targeted activities against incident statistics to assess performance, drive improvement and share good practice amongst all relevant practitioners and partners.

NIFRS will explore the opportunities to extend the scope of our HFSC process and other prevention interventions to support the wider health and wellbeing needs of People at Risk in Northern Ireland

Within Northern Ireland there currently exists no formalised agreement or Consensus Statement in relation to changing the scope of the existing HFSC to the wider scope of a ‘Safe and Well’ visit currently being delivered by FRs in England.

In line with the practice in England, the potential exists for the scope of the existing HFSC being delivered by NIFRS to be reviewed and expanded to reflect the wider scope of a “Safe and Well” visit.

The potential exists for NIFRS, through collaboration, to fulfil a wider health and wellbeing role during these visits by identifying risk factors and providing advice and interventions outside of those confined to home fire safety. This could include such areas as fall prevention, mobility, keeping warm, social isolation, mental health, etc.

The potential also exists for the development of efficient referral processes for NIFRS to signpost at risk persons identified during these visits for specialist advice and support where appropriate.

NIFRS, during the life time of this strategy, will proactively engage with government, other organisations and practitioners with the aim of exploring further the opportunity of expanding the scope of our current HFSC.

How will NIFRS measure success?

As stated previously, the approach of this strategy draws on the techniques associated with an outcome-based approach to public policy. Therefore, NIFRS has identified the following:

- the outcomes we want to deliver for the population of Northern Ireland through this strategy;
- the indicators that will show the changes have been introduced;
- the performance indicators to show if success has been achieved.

Strategic outcomes of this strategy for the community of Northern Ireland are:

- that people within our community most at risk from fire receive information and targeted support interventions from NIFRS to keep them safe from fire so they can live safe and independent lives;
- that NIFRS, as a public service, provides a responsive, efficient and effective service which works in partnership and collaboration with others to ensure the best outcomes for the community especially for those people deemed to be at risk from fire.

Indicators of change for the community of Northern Ireland are:

- a reduction in the number of accidental fire deaths in dwellings within Northern Ireland;
- a reduction in the number of accidental fire injuries in dwellings in Northern Ireland;
- a reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires in Northern Ireland;
- a reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires attended by NIFRS in Northern Ireland where it is identified that no working smoke alarm is in place;
- increased collaboration and partnership working in relation to the protection of people most at risk from fire within Northern Ireland;
- increased data sharing across partner agencies to ensure targeted interventions for People at Risk.

Performance measures in relation to NIFRS:

- The goal for NIFRS is zero accidental fire deaths and injuries in dwellings within Northern Ireland; the aim of this strategy is to support us in achieving that vision.

- During the first three years of this strategy, NIFRS will reduce the total number of accidental fire deaths in dwellings against the base line total for the previous three year period.
- During the first three years of this strategy, NIFRS will reduce the total number of accidental fire injuries in dwellings against the base line total for the previous three year period.
- During the first three years of this strategy, NIFRS will reduce the total number of accidental dwelling fires against the base line total for the previous three year period (at the end of this three year period these performance measures will be reviewed and new measures introduced).
- NIFRS will reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires attended in Northern Ireland (where it is identified that no working smoke alarm is in place) by 5% from the 2015/16 baseline over the 5 year period of this strategy.
- 80% of all Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) completed by NIFRS on an annual basis will be completed for People at Risk within Northern Ireland.
- 80% of all People at Risk HFSCs will be completed by NIFRS within 28 days from the date of receipt.
- NIFRS will develop 28 People at Risk Partnerships (during year 1 of the strategy) geographically spread across Northern Ireland.
- NIFRS will develop a further 14 People at Risk Partnerships (during year 2 of the strategy) geographically spread across Northern Ireland.
- NIFRS will maintain a minimum of 40 People at Risk Partnerships geographically spread across Northern Ireland (during years 3, 4 and 5 of the strategy).
- NIFRS will complete a Fatal Fire Review for all accidental fire deaths in dwellings within Northern Ireland.

Performance Evaluation

NIFRS will evaluate our performance in delivering the strategic outcomes of this People at Risk Strategy by the following actions:

- quarterly review of performance at an Area and Service level delivered through the NIFRS Protection and Prevention Delivery Group Meeting structure;
- quarterly reporting on performance to NIFRS Board via the Service Delivery Committee;
- six-monthly Assurance and Accountability Meeting with each Area-based Community Risk Manager to review Area-based performance (Community Risk Manager for each Area Command will be the Group Commander Prevention & Protection);
- annual review of performance at an Area and Service level through the completion of an annual report by the Group Commander Prevention and Protection based at NIFRS Headquarters.



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