



Fire Safety... It's Not Just About the Building

Whilst certain types of buildings present unique fire challenges, and recent failures in building and fire safety practices have been brought centre stage, fire safety is not just about the construction and fabric of a building.

Did you know:



The fatality rate is highest among **older people**?



Factors such as **living alone**, having **medical conditions, illnesses** or temporary lack of **physical mobility**, put people at greater risk of a fire-related injury or fatality?



The majority of fires resulting in fatalities, occur within the home between **10pm and 6am** when people are asleep?



In 2019/20, **cooking appliances** were by far the biggest ignition category for accidental fires in the home, accounting for **48%** of fires?



Although cooking appliances were the ignition source for almost half of all accidental fires and casualties in 2019/20, the percentage of fatalities is relatively low at just over 10%. The reverse is true of **smoking materials**, which accounted for less than 10% of all accidental dwelling fires and casualties but resulted in over **20%** of fatalities.

Risk profiles

A report by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) titled “Fire fatalities in Scotland and recommendations to help reduce them” is a significant and helpful piece of research in highlighting the characteristics of those who are most vulnerable and at risk of injury or fatality in the event of a fire.

Using this research and our experience in the fire safety sector, we’ve created seven risk profiles to demonstrate the personas of vulnerable individuals who may need further preventative solutions in place.



Electra

Electra buys electrical goods from online marketplaces, not realising that the selling of these products is unregulated. According to Electric Safety First, faulty electrical goods account for 25% of electrical fires.



Bones

Bones has a medical condition, illness, temporary or lack of physical mobility that prevents them from responding appropriately or being able to escape easily from a fire.



Sous

Sous enjoys cooking but doesn't always keep their eyes on the stove. Cooking appliances are the ignition source for almost half of all accidental fires and casualties.



Indie

Indie lives alone with no one observing behaviour changes such as waking up in the middle of the night to cook, which could signify the onset of dementia.



Snooze

Snooze is likely to not hear a smoke alarm when they are in a deep sleep because of their lifestyle habits. In the event of a fire, this means they could inhale damaging or lethal amounts of toxic smoke and gases whilst asleep.



Vapor

Vapor uses smoking materials in the home in rooms like the bedroom or living room, where careless disposal of the smoking materials can result in upholstered furniture, bedding or rubbish catching fire.



Moli

Moli is bedbound, lives alone and is visited three times a day by carers. To reduce the likelihood of bed sores, emollient creams are applied to Moli's skin. The residue – from both paraffin and paraffin-free emollients – have been found to soak into clothing, dressings and bedding leaving a flammable residue.

What can housing providers do?

To reduce fire risk for vulnerable individuals social housing providers should use person-centred fire risk assessments (PCFRAs) to identify those at higher risk and gain an understanding of their risk profile, so appropriate measures can be put in place.

Used in conjunction with an assessment and measures based on the type and structure of a building, PCFRAs, can help to save lives as they consider the needs of the individual and recognise that one person may need something completely different from another.

Many housing providers and local authorities are acknowledging that **It's Not Just About the Building** and are considering the risk profile of their residents to improve fire safety.

This was the case at:



Two of Swindon Borough Council's pathway homes, where the residents living in both homes had mobility difficulties.



One of the UK's largest social housing providers needed a safeguarding solution for a vulnerable resident identified as being at risk of fire or causing a fire.



A London Borough Council needed to easily retrofit a fire suppression system across 11 of its sheltered housing schemes.



An installation was carried out for Housing 21 to improve the protection of older residents and the two-storey extra care scheme's means of escape.

If you're planning to improve fire protection for your residents, including solutions for any of the risk personas we've identified please contact us.

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