A stakeholder says…

“The single biggest threat to our children in this area is now scalding, which has seen a dramatic increase.”

Carolyne Crispin OBE
Founder and Director of CFBT

The Children’s Fire and Burn Trust (CFBT) is a national charity whose primary aims are to deliver fire, burn and scalding safety messages to children and their carers and to provide psychosocial care for children who have suffered burn injuries and support for their families.

To deliver our burn and scald prevention programmes to the wider community, CFBT has forged pioneering relationships with fire and rescue services (FRSs) and burn units, as well as working closely with a number of agencies, schools, youth groups and mother and toddler groups. We provide a variety of materials, including leaflets, booklets and DVDs for use by brigades and for the classroom, to illustrate the hazards and consequences of burns and scalds.

At present, we are working in partnership with FRSs in London, Greater Manchester, East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire and Tyne and Wear, as well as burn units at Chelsea and Westminster, Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead, Booth Hall in Manchester and the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle.

Recently CFBT was delighted to take over Welephant, the original fire and rescue service’s children’s mascot used to disseminate fire safety messages. There is an excellent website at www.welephant.co.uk, which we will soon be updating and developing and expanding the messages to include burn and scald prevention.

Through this we are hoping to forge many more links with FRSs and safety agencies so that we can work together to get these messages to where they are so keenly needed.

Recent data collated from burn units around the country have shown that the incidence of flame- and surface-related burns to children has significantly reduced. However, the single biggest threat to our children in this area is now scalding, which has seen a dramatic increase in incidence, particularly for accidents involving hot bath water and tea and coffee. Over the years CFBT has been running a campaign called “Hot Water Burns Like Fire”. This has now been taken up by Mary Creagh, MP for Wakefield, and a coalition of other interested charities, trade associations and industry groups which is asking for changes to planning legislation so that thermostatic mixing valves are fitted as standard for baths in all new builds.

To find out more about our work or to discuss ways in which we might work in partnership, please visit our website at www.childrensfireandburntrust.org.uk

Football fires up youngsters

Age discrimination outlawed

From 1 October, new regulations come into force which will outlaw age discrimination.

The regulations have been introduced to help ensure people are not denied jobs or harassed because of their age and that, in most cases, workers of all ages will have an equal chance of training and promotion.

So what are the major implications for the fire and rescue service?

It has always been unacceptable for someone to be treated unfairly because of their age, but from October it will also be unlawful. Employees need to be aware of this change, with disciplinary, grievance, anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies requiring amendment to mirror this fact. The new law brings age discrimination into line with sex, race, disability, sexual orientation and religion and belief discrimination.

The new regulations set a national default retirement age of 65. Unless the employer can objectively justify an earlier retirement age, compulsory retirement below 65 is now unlawful. The regulations do not, however, affect an individual’s right to retire before the age of 65 under the provisions of their pension scheme, as they do not impact on the minimum age at which a member of a pension scheme may elect to retire and draw pension benefits.

Employers will also have the right to request to work beyond the default retirement age of 65, and employers will have a duty to consider such requests. The regulations also stipulate time scales for employers to notify employees of their impending retirement date and their right to request to continue in employment. Recruitment procedures should be reviewed to avoid including anything that is not directly related to the skills required to do the job. As an example, ACAS guidance recommends that age or date of birth questions be removed from application forms and just included in the equal opportunities monitoring form. It should also be noted that questions such as dates when qualifications were attained or requirements for specific periods of experience will have to be clearly justified as relevant if a challenge is made under these regulations.

Although the regulations recognise that differences in treatment on the grounds of age can sometimes be allowed, any exemptions are required to be objectively justified by providing real evidence in support of them.

Further detailed information can be found at www.acas.org.uk

IPDS: Taking the project forward

In FR5 19 we explained about the IPDS Project Board and some of the challenges it is facing.

So you are probably asking how it is going to meet these challenges to support the modernisation of the fire and rescue service (FRS). The answer is through a Service Level Agreement that has been made between the Fire Service College and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to provide the funding for an IPDS team.

This team, consisting of Martin Taylor, Pete King, Chris Millen, Gary Brandrick, Derek Johnson, Lin Charlwood and Margrit Hudson, will be working to assist the Project Board by:

• developing a business case to secure long-term funding for the sustained pillar of workforce development in the proposed Centre of Excellence
• ensuring that other projects such as the Centre for Leadership, the Qualifications Framework and Quality Assurance integrate into IPDS
• working with stakeholders to promote the principles of IPDS
• working with the ADC unit to embed both the process and the culture needed to meet the national framework time scales
• providing secretarial and coordination support to the Fire Rescue & Safety Vocational Standards Group
• continuing to develop the IPDS website in line with the needs of the FRS, e.g. direct entrants, RDS staff, FRS support staff
• reviewing IPDS-related publications to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of the FRS.

Overall then, we are working to support key element 02 in the National Learning and Development Strategy for England to achieve full implementation of IPDS by December 2007.

For more information go to the IPDS website at www.ipds.co.uk

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National Coordination Centre for the FRS is fully operational

The Fire and Rescue Service National Coordination Centre (FRSNCC) in West Yorkshire has played a key role in coordinating successful deployments of New Dimension personnel and equipment to high-profile emergencies. FRS examines how this valuable resource has been developed.

New challenges
In recent years the fire and rescue service (FRS) has faced a variety of new challenges in terms of the scale and range of incidents for which it must be equipped and ready to respond. The floods in Boscotice and Carlisle and, more recently, the massive fire and explosions at the Buncefield fuel depot are just some of the major emergencies that have been successfully tackled by the FRS.

New Dimension programme
Underpinning the response to these emergencies have been the trained personnel and specialist equipment funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government’s (DCLG’s) New Dimension programme, at a cost of over £200 million. The programme is enhancing the capability of the FRS to meet the challenge of responding to major incidents involving collapsed structures, flooding, and chemical, biological or radiological attack. A key aspect of the programme is working with the FRS on effective arrangements to coordinate the timely deployment of New Dimension resources to support the FRS’s response to such incidents.

National Coordination Centre for the FRS
Since April 2004, West Yorkshire control room staff have been responsible for monitoring and tracking the status and location of New Dimension assets. Initially this was limited to the Incident Response Units, but as other specialist New Dimension equipment has been introduced into the FRS, this has been integrated into the monitoring.

New agreement
In November last year, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority entered into a new agreement with DCLG. Grant funding of £1.2 million (initially to the end of March 2007) was agreed for a new facility which expanded significantly on the basic services previously provided. The agreement covers the provision of a 24/7 tracking and monitoring facility at the FRSNCC which will:
- track the status and location of all New Dimension resources;
- log all requests for national support, subsequent actions and significant events;
- provide an “alert” to DCLG when on-the-run New Dimension resources fall below defined minimum levels;
- report accidents or near misses arising through the use of New Dimension equipment to DCLG;
- provide national and cross-regional co-ordination and mobilising capability for New Dimension and associated conventional FRS resources;
- prepare national coordination contingency plans, in liaison with DCLG staff, to meet FRS New Dimension coordination performance standards;
- provide post-mobilisation and exercise evaluations to review, amend and disseminate coordination protocols, procedures and contingency plans.

Mobilising New Dimension equipment
West Yorkshire control room staff – including key members who have since become part-time operators in the National Coordination Centre – provided a coordinating and mobilising service in response to the Carlisle floods in January 2005. They were also on standby to support London, had the bomb attacks on 7 July 2005, and the failed attacks of 21 July 2005, escalated. The FRSNCC played a key role during the response to the Buncefield fuel terminal fire in December, when it coordinated the mobilisation of foam supplies and New Dimension high-volume pumping equipment to Hertfordshire from across the country.

Current arrangements
Since January this year, the FRSNCC has been housed in dedicated accommodation within the Mobilising and Communications Centre at West Yorkshire FRS. The technology platform for both the routine availability and incident management function will be delivered through one of the nine networked regional control centres, which are planned to go live from 2009 as part of the FireControl project. That looks to the future, but the FRSNCC is open for business now.

Kevin Arbuthnot, Head of Command and Control Strategic Development at the Fire Service College, told FRS: “The FRSNCC has added to the overall resilience of FRS operations, especially when faced with major disruptive challenges. However, that contribution will only become fully effective when all FRS and Children’s Services have signed up to the recent national mutual aid protocol for serious incidents” (described in the fire and rescue service circular FSC 42/2006).

Welcome to FRS 20

This edition of FRS looks at new regulations on age discrimination, as well as the new Incident Recording System and the National Coordination Centre. Firefighters are using the new football season as way of getting fire safety messages across to youngsters. Other initiatives include promoting fire safety awareness during religious festivals, a gardening project in Runcorn and an interactive website, www.staywise.co.uk, which has been developed with education experts, other emergency services and commercial partners.

We are always interested in hearing your views and finding out what issues you would like to see covered in future editions. If you have any initiatives or good news that you would like to share with the whole of the fire and rescue service, please email us at frs@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Photo: DCLG
New Dimension high volume pumping equipment mobilised by the FRSNCC.

Photo: West Yorkshire FRS
Incident Response Unit Movers and Modules tracked by the FRS National Coordination Centre.

Photo: West Yorkshire FRS
Staff at the FRS National Coordination Centre.

Photo: West Yorkshire FRS
New FRS National Coordination Centre logo.
Football fires up youngsters

The new football season has started, and two initiatives being run by fire and rescue services in England are using the game to spread a fire safety message.

Play with a football, not fire

In the North East, budding David Beckhams had the chance to sign up for a football skills day that was run by Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service in partnership with Middlesbrough Football Club and the Football Association (FA).

Children aged between 6 and 12 and special needs children aged from 5 to 18 were invited to the ‘play with a football, not fire’ day.

The event, which was about working in partnership to keep children occupied during the school holidays, was held by FA-trained firefighters who coached the boys and girls through various fire safety messages.

All children received a football skills day that were invited to take part in sport, take advantage of opportunities and lead productive lives.

At the tournament, the fire and rescue service’s Community Fire Safety Unit offered people the chance to sign up for a free home fire safety check or smoke alarm or to get advice on fire safety. And the Community Fire Safety Unit bus with interactive games and videos gave young people and their supporters an exciting way to find out more about fire safety.

For further information please contact Jackie Gough at Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service (Tel: 01429 872311 ext. 4034, email: jgough@clevelandfire.gov.uk) or Jane Manners at Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service (Tel: 01234 326198, email: jmanners@mannerspr.co.uk).

Inspectors praise Phoenix Project

The Phoenix Project involving Red Watch and Halton Lodge Primary School in Runcorn has been praised by OFSTED.

Runcorn’s Red Watch Manager Sean Henshaw is pleased to report that the school’s OFSTED inspection at the end of May hailed the partnership between the fire and rescue service and the school as a major success, rewarding the school with an ‘excellent’ for their links with the community.

Road safety

The watch has recently worked on a number of new teaching sessions including road safety, when firefighter ‘Hoss’ Cartwright spoke to the whole school, staff and parents (approximately 300 people), emphasising the importance of wearing seat belts.

He used his own experience of being in a recent collision just after he had dropped his children off at school and went on to ask the children if they liked roller-coasters. Most said they did, and Hoss then asked them if they would like to go on one without a restraint, explaining that lots more people get injured and killed in cars every year than they do on roller-coasters. This helped the children and parents understand the importance of wearing seat belts at all times.

Crews went on to offer the parents their services to ensure all child seats are properly fitted. In June, Red Watch went into Halton Lodge to assist the children in planting their ornate borders. The aim was to improve the environment of the school while interacting with the children about the dangers, damage and nuisance of grass fires.

Sean Henshaw said: “The bond between Red Watch and the children and parents of Halton Lodge has continued to grow. Whenever we are in the area the children come to speak to us and give us information, so we believe we have already met a number of our aims.”

For more information please contact Evan Morris: 01606 868650.

StayWise – safe living through applied learning

A national resource to help save lives.

In recognition of the fact that thousands of children are seriously injured or killed in the UK each year, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) has created a national resource to teach children how to stay safe.

StayWise (www.staywise.co.uk) is an action-packed, interactive website, developed with education experts, other emergency services and commercial partners. By joining together safety-conscious agencies such as the fire, ambulance and police services, StayWise provides a unique ‘one-stop shop’ in applied learning for teachers and community safety practitioners. The website was launched at the House of Lords in 2005 and since then has expanded to include the Injury Minimisation Programme for Schools and the Bicycle Helmet Initiative, as well as input from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the Environment Agency.

StayWise offers free resources that are directly linked to the National Curriculum in England, crossing all age groups and subject areas. The resources also support personnel from many organisations which go into schools to deliver the safety information face to face.

The site is split into three main areas, aimed at three very different user groups. There is an area for educational practitioners, a section for service personnel and an activity area for public use, with games and activities.

RBFRS actively welcomes input and feedback from other fire and rescue services, whether in the form of resources, images for the gallery or sharing examples of best practice.

Liz Rhodes, RBFRS’s Education Development Officer for Staywise, said: “Safety education really does make a difference to the lives of all it touches. StayWise will continue to grow as we develop new content with our partners across the country. We would love to hear from other fire and rescue services, so please take the time to visit the website and register your details.”

If you are interested in contributing to StayWise, please register your details on the website, or contact Liz Rhodes on 0118 932 2761 or liz@staywise.co.uk
National Fire Safety Ethnic Minority Campaign 2006

With the religious festivals of Diwali (21 October) and Eid Ul-Fitr (24 October) on the horizon, the National Community Fire Safety Centre (NCFSC) is launching another fire safety campaign to help the fire and rescue service (FRS) engage with the celebrating communities.

Building on the success of last year’s Minority Ethnic Fire Safety Campaign, the 2006 campaign has evolved to reflect the focus on smoke alarm ownership and maintenance across all audiences, and fire safety issues that disproportionately affect some minority ethnic communities. The NCFSC will support the mainstream smoke alarm maintenance campaign with targeted advertising on eight Asian independent local radio stations (such as Asian Voice, Muslim Weekly and Sikh Times) during September 2006 through to mid-October 2006.

A key element of this campaign is to help the FRS engage directly with minority ethnic communities. Engagement with the celebrating communities during important festivals such as Diwali and Eid Ul-Fitr will potentially help the FRS with specific home fire risk check work. Creating a dialogue with faith communities through targeted initiatives can also bring opportunities for sustained contact and involvement between the FRS and minority ethnic communities. This can help also to address recruitment issues and encourage people from these communities to consider joining the FRS as a career. The NCFSC will provide support for FRS-soundside engagement during Diwali and Eid Ul-Fitr through the provision of greetings cards and posters and national PR activity.

For more information please contact Mike Larking on 020 7944 5695, or email mike.larking@communities.gsi.gov.uk

The Fire Gateway opens to provide online access to services

The first phase of the Fire Gateway has gone live, opening up public access to a wide range of online services and bringing local fire and rescue services closer to the communities they serve.

The Fire Gateway has been developed as part of a national, government-funded project called e-fire, in partnership with the Chief Fire Officers’ Association and the Local Government Association. It provides users with a single point of access to all English fire and rescue services via the internet. The web address is: www.fire.gov.uk

Current online services include:
- a wide range of information on safety in the home and in the workplace
- an interactive home fire risk assessment, giving a personalised fire safety plan
- interactive self-assessment for potential firefighter recruits.

Once fully launched, the system will enable users to make requests direct to their local fire and rescue service for home safety visits, community events and Junior fire settlers’ advice. Public and commercial premises operators will also be able to complete an online self-assessment to get an indication of their progress against compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, which comes into effect in October.

The Fire Gateway has been developed in a way that enables the fire and rescue service to participate in and take advantage of future e-government developments, helping it to deliver further community safety benefits.

For further information contact Neil Thompson: 020 7944 4600 ext. 15734 or email neil.thompson@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Update on IRS

A fire and rescue service circular was issued on 20 June 2006, providing an update on the progress being made on the Incident Recording System (IRS).

IRS will replace the existing fire incident collection using the FDR1 and FDR3 forms, and information on non-fire incidents currently collected on OPS 4 and OPS 5 returns.

What’s in it for FRSs?
- IRS will provide more robust, relevant and timely data, allowing improved policy evaluation.
- Increased data collection, particularly in Special Service data, allows comparisons with other fire and rescue services (FRSs) to improve operational performance.
- Improved access to data for FRSs – more data will be available, and faster. In effect this means FRS staff will be in a better position to assess how best to deliver IRMPs in their area.
- IRS will produce data required for FSEC – and in the correct format.
- There will be no need to complete paper FDR1 and FDR3 forms once IRS has been implemented.
- Electronic completion of forms will improve accuracy, meaning fewer forms are returned – 15 per cent are currently queried.
- Electronic completion will be quicker and easier. Collection has been designed so all questions are by selection from lists.
- There will be common report formatting.

Project pilot
IRS will be piloted on 30 October 2006. The purpose of the pilot is to test that the system meets user need requirements, including usability and accessibility needs, and is fit for purpose. We will also be testing the IRS helpdesk and training and guidance material during the pilot. Once the pilot is complete, all aspects of the IRS system will be reviewed, and any alterations will be made before IRS goes live. The pilot will give us the opportunity to learn about the issues to be expected when rolling out IRS.

Nine FRSs (Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Leicestershire, Merseyside, Warwickshire, West Midlands and West Yorkshire) have agreed to be part of the pilot. The Department for Communities and Local Government plans to hold monthly meetings with these FRSs to keep them up to date with project plans and progress and to discuss issues that FRSs foresee with the implementation of IRS.

The IRS system will be rolled out between July 2007 and July 2008.

For further information on the IRS project, including its history and key documents, visit www.frsonline.fire.gov.uk or tel: 0800 327353.

New child car seat regulations

New regulations governing the use of child car seats came into force on 18 September 2006.

Adverts can be seen on the radio and online to advise parents and carers about the new regulations governing the use of child car seats.

The new law requires that children under the age of 12 be fitted in appropriate child seats. Parents, childminders and other guardians who fail to comply will be issued with a fixed penalty notice of £30.

The Department for Transport hopes the new rules will prevent thousands of casualties reported every year involving children who are inadequately restrained.

For more information go to the Think! Road Safety website: www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/campaigns/childcarseats/childcarseats.htm or tel: 0800 327353.