



Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust

caring supporting improving together

Safer Together
PROJECT

Safer Together

A partnership between Belfast Health & Social Care
Trust and Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service
using Co-production to develop fire safety resources
for social workers and service users



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Safer Together Project

The Safer Together concept has evolved from collaboration with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) over a three-year period. A partnership agreement between the two organisations formally set out the intention to work together to make their service users safer in their own homes.

Following a number of incidents in the Belfast area, Senior Social Work Practitioner Connor Breen (BHSCT) and Station Commander Michael Roberts (NIFRS) worked together to set referral pathways in place to link both agencies. Fire safety training was delivered to social workers in the community and firefighters were informed about the work of Older Peoples' Services and they also received Dementia Awareness training. Older Peoples' Day was held at Central Fire Station in Belfast when over one hundred older service users were invited to have a day of fun and activities and also receive some vital fire safety information.

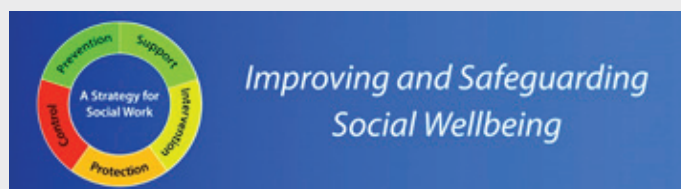
Research has highlighted that people aged 60 and over, are over-represented in fatal fire statistics in Northern Ireland¹. Recent studies at Ulster University have identified that those working with older people could be useful in reducing fire risk in the homes they visit in the community². Since 2014, research at Ulster University has been carried out by Peter Cassidy who is also a Crew Commander in Prevention & Protection at NIFRS. The aim of the research is to design and evaluate educational resources to reduce fire risk among older people in Northern Ireland.

The Safer Together Project combines the activities at Ulster University with the work being carried out at the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service to create a bespoke package of resources to increase the fire safety awareness of social workers and service users. The development of the resources has involved social workers and service users throughout to meet the needs of those working and living in the community. Thanks to funding from the Social Work Strategy this project has been brought to life in the form of educational videos, risk aide memoirs, leaflets and safety devices all aimed at assisting and supporting social workers and service users to reduce fire risk in the community.

This pack is part of the resources that have been designed by the Safer Together Project Team to educate and inform social workers of about fire risks in the community. As well as describing what risks to look out for, the resources outline what to do if risks are observed and what support is available in the community to make service users safer in their own homes. **Further information about the project team, how the project was carried out and the outcomes are given below.**

¹ Harpur, A., 2014. "A Detailed Investigation into Occupant Behaviours and Influencing Factors Surrounding Fatal Dwelling Fire Incidents in Northern Ireland". PhD. University of Ulster.

² Cassidy, P, McConnell, N, Boyce, K. The older adult: Associated fire risks and current challenges for the development of future fire safety intervention strategies. *Fire and Materials*. 2020; 1– 11. Accessed Online; available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/fam.2823>



The Project Team

BHSCT: *Safer Together Project*



Connor Breen
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust

Connor Breen is a Senior Social Work Practitioner currently employed by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. He qualified as a social worker in 2002 after training at Sheffield Hallam University and University of Ulster, taking up his first post within Children's Services. His career path took him into Older People's services and he now finds himself working in a Community Social Work Team. Connor has over 27 years of experience working in various health & social care roles. He previously spent 12 years as a member of a voluntary ambulance organisation where he qualified as an Ambulance & Emergency First Aid Instructor. Connor realised when developing the Safer Together project model the effectiveness and importance of his previous joint training with NIFRS within the ambulance role & how this could be translated into social work.



Michael Roberts
Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service

Michael Roberts is a Station Commander at Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with over 27 years' experience and is based in Eastern Area Command, Belfast.

In his role of Station Commander Prevention & Protection for South & East Belfast, Michael has developed relationships and partnerships with a range of groups all with the aim of keeping people safe from fire. Michael is delighted to be involved with the Safer Together Project and has witnessed first-hand the difference such an initiative can have to the community.



Peter Cassidy
Ulster University/ Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service

Peter is in the final year of a part-time PhD in Human Behaviour in Fire.

The aim of this study is to investigate potential intervention strategies and their effectiveness in minimising the risks associated with accidental dwelling fires for older people. This is mainly examining the role of individuals, and agencies, that are in contact with the most vulnerable and how they can be employed to reduce the risk from fire. Peter has also been an operational firefighter with Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service for twelve years and has recently taken a new role as a Crew Commander in the Prevention and Protection department in Southern Area Command based in Portadown.

Co- Production



A combination of the lived experiences of the project team and the research carried out at Ulster University guided the creation of the resources and co-production was used to achieve the final outcomes. Resources for social workers were produced by developing the existing partnership between Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service. Resources for older people in the community were produced by engaging a group of service users at Grove Health and Wellbeing Day Centre.

Staff and service users at Grove Health and Wellbeing Day Centre facilitated several focus group sessions to discuss various fire safety related issues including fire risks for older people, current fire safety intervention strategies and resources, and strategies, that would be useful in reducing fire risk in the homes of service users and others in the community. Two service users then volunteered to be central to the decision-making process and were fully engaged and very willing to contribute to the project. Their insight and enthusiasm were vital to the success of the resources that have been created.

The Resources

BHSCT: Safer Together Project

Fire Risk Awareness Videos

There were two fire safety videos created, one for Social Work & Social Care and the other for service users and the family, friends and neighbours of older people.

Risk Awareness Form

Co-production was used to create a Fire Risk Awareness form that can be used by social workers in the community. Co-production allowed the individuals from the agencies involved to share their experience to work towards shared outcomes.

A3 Poster

An A3 poster has been created that reflects the risks outlined in the risk awareness form. The poster aims to remind social workers to be vigilant for fire risks in the community as feedback from focus groups highlighted that it can sometimes be overshadowed by other priorities.

Fire Risk Identification and Management Information Booklet.

Feedback from focus groups identified that people working in the community need more support to identify and manage fire risk. This booklet provides social workers with detailed information on fire risks and intervention strategies to mitigate the risk.

Leaflets

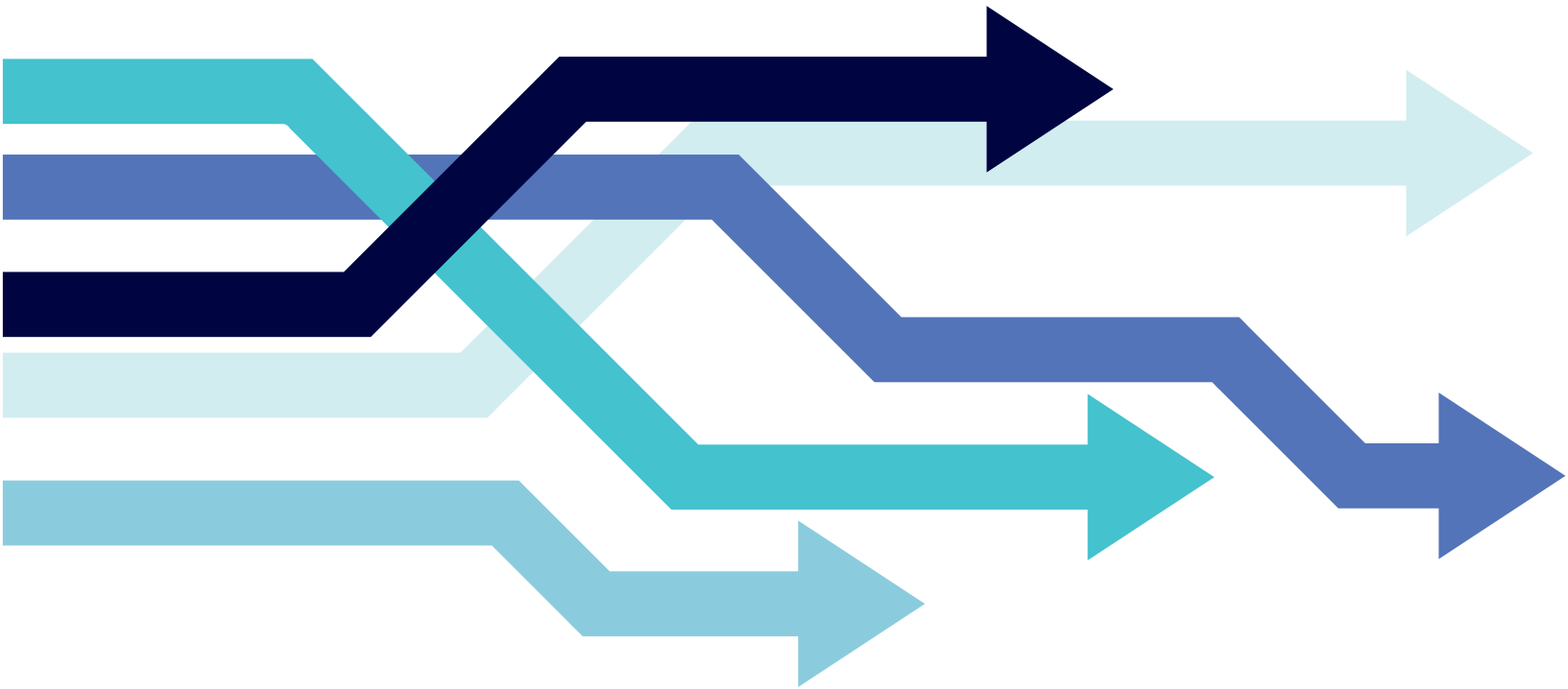
Two fire safety leaflets and a door hanger have been developed. One leaflet is aimed at addressing the issue of neighbours not responding to smoke alarms sounding and the other is to highlight the main fire risks for older people on one page. The door hanger was a suggestion from one of the older people at the day centre and is a tool to help create bespoke fire escape plans for older people.

Safety Devices and Resources

To provide fire safety solutions for the most vulnerable in the community various resources have been purchased to be available for service users that meet the criteria. There are a limited number of fire-resistant bedding packs, smoking aprons, personal alarms and emergency torches.



Going Forward



Social Work is fundamentally about improving and safeguarding social well-being and the Social Work Strategy emphasises this. Social workers aim to support people to live safely, purposefully and well in their own homes and working with partner agencies to achieve this has always been fundamental to social work practice.

The promotion of well-being begins with safety and Belfast Trust Older Peoples' Social Work, Service working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, can help to enhance and improve shared outcomes beyond what could be achieved in isolation. This enhanced partnership arrangement can now provide early intervention by identifying, managing and mitigating fire risk with service users. It helps people to have more control over their own environment by promoting honest and open conversations about fire risk and providing solutions.

The Safer Together Project was developed using a partnership approach. This approach has created protocols for joint fire safety interventions and visits. It is a holistic approach which actively engages both the social worker and older person in helping them to understand and manage fire risk.

We believe the 'Safer Together Model' is transferrable across all Health and Social Care settings.

We
are
“Safer
Together”





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Safer Together PROJECT

Prevent Harm Raise the Alarm



Working Together



Excellence



Openness &
Honesty



Compassion



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**