LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Home fire safety visits (HFSV) policy

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Responsible work team:	**Policy and Strategy Group**

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1 Scope

1.1 This policy applies to all London Fire Brigade (LFB) staff who manage and/or carry out Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs).

1.2 The LFB Values and Behaviours Framework underpins every aspect of organisational activity, including HFSVs. Here are some suggestions as to how values and behaviours can be applied when carrying out HFSVs (these suggestions are not exhaustive):

Service	Providing a professional approach for every HFSV carried out and taking careful consideration in how I represent the LFB. This includes wearing my uniform with pride and taking time to introduce myself to residents before I tailor their advice and support.
Courage	Taking personal responsibility for conduct whilst in a resident's home and challenging any inappropriate behaviour or language. Actively promoting opportunities for feedback from residents after each HFSV.
Learning	Positively responding to any feedback, even if it is uncomfortable. Identifying opportunities for growth by sharing best practice with watch members and providing positive support for FFDs or new members of the watch/staff when carrying out HFSVs.
Teamwork	Taking a professional approach and holding yourself and others to high standards when carrying out HFSVs. Demonstrate an understanding of how Prevention activity protects Londoners and how this aligns with local risk management plans.
Equity	Taking time to understand local demographics and community groups. Engaging with each in a respectful manner and providing accessible fire safety literature in different languages. Taking a kind and compassionate approach when carrying out HFSVs at all times.
Integrity	Holding yourself and others to account by escalating any risks to plan mitigating actions. Having an honest and kind approach so that it generates trust with local communities and individuals.

2 Summary

2.1 This policy is supported by the HFSV guidance note.

2.2 HFSVs are one of the LFB's primary methods of delivering prevention advice, alongside our online Home Fire Safety Checker (HFSC). HFSVs and the HFSC identify potential fire risks and hazards in private dwellings and where necessary, mitigate them.

2.3 The LFB uses a modern approach to HFSVs which is person centred and holistic. This includes reviewing a person's behaviours, characteristics, environment, and health conditions that may lead to an increased risk of fire.

2.4 The advice delivered during a HFSV can reduce the possibility of a fire occurring in a home and follows three basic principles: **prevention**, **detection,** and **escape**.

2.5 LFB staff carrying out a visit will provide advice, equipment such as smoke alarms (where appropriate) and raise a safeguarding referral (see policy number 0736 - Safeguarding adults at risk or policy number 0305 - Safeguarding children at risk) if required. In addition, as there are

known links between impaired health and fire risk, the LFB may also liaise/refer to other organisations and services where appropriate.

2.6 The LFB is committed to conducting HFSVs in a professional, respectful, and non-discriminatory manner, in line with the LFBs Values and Behaviours Framework, Fire Rescue Services Act 2004, alongside local Borough Risk Management Plans (BRMP) which link into the LFB's Community Risk Management Plan 2023-29 (Your London Fire Brigade) (CRMP).

3 Policy aim

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for managing and carrying out HFSVs, to contribute to the reduction of fire incidents, fire related injuries and deaths and promote fire safety awareness in the community.

3.2 This policy aims to meet the requirements of:

- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which specifies fire safety as a core function for the LFB. This includes providing advice relating to fire prevention and what to do in the event of a fire, with the view to preventing fire related injuries and deaths within London.
- The LFB's Community Risk Management Plan 2023-29 (Your London Fire Brigade) which outlines the LFB's strategic objectives, including the use of HFSVs and the HFSC, to reduce the likelihood of fires and other incidents and to mitigate the impact of all identified risks in London's communities throughout the life of the plan.
- The Home Office's Fire and Rescue National Framework, which is used by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to make the LFB accountable, by holding regular inspections across all aspects of the organisation.
- The LFB's Prevention Strategy which takes into account the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Person Centred Framework.
- The Independent Culture Review, which requires the LFB to take immediate steps to address discrimination, harassment and bullying.

4 Eligibility for HFSVs and alternatives

4.1 All residents of London are entitled to receive free home fire safety advice from the LFB. However, in order to take a risk-based approach the LFB uses fatal and accidental dwelling fire data to identify the behaviours and characteristics that indicate where individuals are at highest risk from fire. These individuals are identified during the triage process and will receive a response time based on their risk level as set out in 5.3.

4.2 In interactions with the public where the risk level is not known, the Home Fire Safety Checker should be the first recommended action to help them improve the safety of their home. The checker will prioritise people once they have completed the triage process.

4.3 The LFB also provides alternative ways of accessing home fire safety advice including, but not limited to:

- Educating our partners and producing resources which help them to identify and report fire risk.
- Online and printed literature.
- The Fire Safety at Home page found on the external LFB website.
- The Virtual Hazard House found on the external LFB website.

5 Risk-based targeting of people

5.1 Using LFB data, we have been able to identify common risk characteristics of those who are most at risk of fire. Using a risk matrix approach, residents are triaged against known risk characteristics and are attributed a level of risk: very high, high, medium, or low. For a resident to fall into the very high-risk category, they must have all six characteristics mentioned below, or be at risk of arson.

- Smoker.
- Lives alone.
- Over 60 years old.
- In receipt of care (informal, formal or both).
- No working smoke alarms.
- User of mobility aids, or chair/bed bound.

For more information about HFSV triage, please refer to the Area Team Triage Guidance Note.

5.2 Appointment management is key in ensuring that the LFB is able to facilitate HFSVs within the defined timeframe (see below) following the triage process and that the most vulnerable people are seen as soon as possible. With this in mind, the minimum agreed target for area teams is three working days from receiving the referral to contacting the resident.

5.3 On receipt of a referral or request for a HFSV, the following risk prioritisation table will be used to determine the type of visit and response time:

Risk level	HFSV or HFSC?	Response time
Very high risk	In person HFSV	Contact and offer of HFSV within 4 hours
High risk	In person HFSV	Within seven days
Medium risk	In person HFSV	Within one month
Low risk	No in person HFSV required, refer to HFSC and/or send literature	Immediate

5.4 The LFB takes a proactive approach to working in partnership with local agencies to identify those residents who may be at higher risk of fire. These residents will be referred to the LFB so that a HFSV can be carried out.

5.5 It should be noted that where the Area Team have difficulty arranging a visit or the client has been unavailable twice, the referral agent (e.g., family member or partner agency) must be contacted and informed to discuss alternative ways forward. This discussion must take place before the referral is recorded as 'suspended'.

6 Local risk analysis of postcodes and individual properties

6.1 In addition to local engagement and partnership working, the LFB are able to identify people's risk based on their geographical location, household characteristics and other statistical information utilising datasets. This approach enables the LFB to effectively target those at the greatest risk from fire and is achieved by Group Risk Visits (GRV).

6.2 GRVs are carried out by crews, for further guidance and information see the HFSV Guidance note. Once property addresses have been identified using the LFB datasets, crews are able to generate referrals and subsequently attend and offer to carry out HFSVs. This practice is one component of an integrated and co-ordinated plan for reducing occurrence of fires.

6.3 Hotstrikes are an opportunity to deliver appropriate fire safety messaging, maximise public awareness and provide reassurance immediately after a fire.

6.4 Where the LFB has attended a dwelling fire, a HFSV must be carried out unless there are exceptional circumstances, for example if a resident has been taken to hospital or the residence is uninhabitable. Where the resident(s) have been relocated to a temporary address, a HFSV should be offered at that address.

6.5 HFSVs should also be offered/carried out to neighbouring properties.

6.6 If crews attend a premises for a reason other than Prevention, such as a special service, consideration should be given as to whether the person would require a HFSV. If so, a HFSV should either be carried out whilst in attendance or be booked in at the resident's earliest convenience and in line with triage guidance.

7 Providing advice and literature

7.1 HFSVs should be interactive and carried out with the resident present (and/or carer, relative, support worker if applicable). Unless a resident specifically indicates that they do not wish to participate or are unable to, staff should ask the resident to accompany them around the property so that a review of fire risks can be carried out together. Home fire safety advice can be provided throughout the HFSV. An aide memoire and an aide memoire reference note are available to support the delivery of a HFSV.

7.2 A wide range of literature and resources can be provided to support residents that are able to understand and manage their own home fire safety. When needed, accessible literature should be made available to residents in other languages, braille or in simplified form. Translation services and sign language interpretation is also available to support the delivery of home fire safety advice.

8 Conduct

8.1 All LFB staff are expected to adhere to the behaviours outlined in the Values and Behaviours Framework.

8.2 The LFB has a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, and bullying. Anyone accused of this behaviour will be investigated in line with LFB policies and procedures. This approach applies to all staff.

8.3 The LFB is committed to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 and in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Fostering good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

8.4 All staff must wear their LFB ID throughout the duration of the visit to allow for easy identification by members of the public.

8.5 For both staff and public protection, where HFSVs are carried out by station staff, of those two, one must be a competent firefighter.

9 Provision of standard smoke alarms

9.1 All information relating to the fitting and management of smoke alarm stock levels can be found in the Smoke alarm and equipment guidance.

9.2 In some instances, staff will provide and install smoke alarms in properties where they are absent, where they are of the old removable battery type or where they are not functioning correctly.

9.3 Smoke alarms should be placed in all areas of risk and consideration should be given to the location where the resident spends most of their time. Particularly if the resident is a smoker, has limited mobility and is chair or bedbound.

9.4 The responsibility for pre-ordering and maintaining stock levels of standard smoke alarms lies with the Area Teams. Discretionary buffer stock levels should be maintained by the Area Teams to ensure alarms are available if there is a disruption to supply.

10 Provision of fire safety products (other than standard smoke alarms)

10.1 Sometimes staff will encounter people whose risk profile may warrant the provision of additional fire safety products. These products include things like; hard of hearing alarm systems, flame retardant bedding, arson reduction letterboxes and blanking plates.

10.2 The LFB can provide these items, however if the resident is in receipt of formal care, staff should explain that it is the care company's duty of care to provide or replace these items. Any mitigating actions should also be recorded on the care plan to ensure that fire safety products are properly used at all times e.g., flame retardant bedding is always fitted on the bed.

10.3 Local Area Teams may work with partner organisations to provide other incentives not on this list such as ash trays. More information can be found in the Assistive Technology Guidance Document.

10.4 If a resident has been assessed as needing telecare but it is not linked to smoke detection, it is important to understand that the resident may not be able to raise the alarm unaided and therefore the LFB should identify this as a risk for these residents. Staff should raise a Person At Risk (PAR) referral by completing a PAR form for any resident with telecare that is not linked to smoke detection.

10.5 In cases where a resident would benefit from a Personal Protective System (PPS) staff should raise a PAR. Full details on how a PPS works and who would benefit from one can be found in section 13.2 of the Assistive Technology Guidance Document.

11 Contingency planning and business continuity

11.1 Conducting Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) is considered a critical activity under the Brigade's Business Continuity Framework, meaning that it is essential to the delivery of the Brigade's key services. This includes all categories of HFSVs, from 'low risk' to 'very high risk'.

11.2 Disruptions to the Brigade's ability to conduct HFSVs are likely to arise from a lack of available personnel to conduct visits, supply chain disruptions, or from an issue affecting the availability of key systems and data used to triage requests/referrals and schedule visits.

11.3 Contingency plans are designed to enable LFB to continue delivering key services during times of disruption. Contingency plans for HFSVs are held within the Brigade's Area Team Business Continuity Plans, which can be found in the Business Continuity Area on SharePoint; access can

be requested by emailing the Business Continuity Team on businesscontinuity@london-fire.gov.uk.

11.4 In the event that SharePoint is unavailable, hard copies of Area Team Business Continuity Plans are kept in the Area Team offices (Stratford, Lewisham, Hammersmith and Wembley) in section 8 of the Premises Log Book.

11.5 In the rare event that disruptions are considered so severe that it requires HFSVs to be suspended, this decision will be made by the London Fire Commissioner or AC Fire Stations.

12 Monitoring, quality assurance and evaluation

12.1 Staff who arrange and carry out HFSVs will record information about the resident and the visit on the relevant HFSV forms and HFSV database. Quality assurance exercises will be carried out on the data captured and recorded in line with the Area Team HFSV KPIs. Care must be taken to store forms containing personal information in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). All record keeping on station must be in accordance with policy number 0866 – Record keeping on fire stations.

12.2 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and reflects the strategic aims in LFB's Community Risk Management Plan 2023-29. As part of that policy review, LFB staff will monitor the effectiveness, efficiency and people related outputs of this policy regularly, using the agreed Prevention Activities Evaluation Framework.

12.3 An Enterprise Assurance Framework (EAF) is in place for HFSVs, and a robust QA system (and method of recording) will cover aspects of the following:

- Initial triage (when customer contacts LFB).
- Carrying out the visit.
- Follow up actions after the visit.
- Data recording.
- Out of hours process.
- Safeguarding.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Referral in methods.
- Targeting.

12.4 Responsibility of quality assurance will fall to Borough Commanders, Station Commanders, Watch Officers, Area Teams and Central Teams. Details and timeframes will be established within the EAF.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA		SDIA	**L** – 13/03/24	HSWIA		RA	

Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	**Brief description of change**	**Date**
Throughout	PN926 and PN927 have now been cancelled and replaced by this policy document and the new HFSV Guidance note. Changes have been made throughout the entire policy. Further guidance notes have been written to support this policy and are available on Hotwire.	18/03/2024
5.3	Reworded very high risk response time.	28/09/2026

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Prevention & Protection	Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs)
Community Fire Safety	Flame Retardant Bedding
Arson Reduction Letterbox	Safeguarding

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	**FOIA exemption**	**Security marking classification**