



# Firesetting

Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Scheme



## Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Scheme

London Fire Brigade's Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Scheme has a specialist team who are trained to work with children and young people up to the age of 18 who demonstrate any type of firesetting or unusual fascination with fire. This is always done with consent from the child's parent or guardian.

### What does the scheme do?

The scheme offers one-to-one fire safety education and advice to the child and their parents or carers. The first visit takes place in the child's home or at London Fire Brigade Headquarters (HQ). Further sessions are usually at the child's school, Brigade HQ or other suitable location where the child feels comfortable. The case workers will speak to the child and

parent/s or carer to find out more information about the firesetting and establish a trusting relationship. The team do not scare children using shock tactics, as education and an understanding approach has been proven to be more effective at changing firesetting behaviour. Each session is tailored to suit the child's individual needs and abilities. The number of visits will vary but there are a minimum of three.

### Who can make a referral to the Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Scheme?

- Parent/carers
- Schools
- Police
- Social services departments
- Youth offending teams
- Other professionals

Without help and guidance, firesetting behaviour can increase and lead to more serious consequences.

## Advice to parents and carers

We recommend the following advice if there are concerns about a child or young person playing with or setting fire:

- Explain to children that fire can hurt and kill and they should stay away from fire of any kind. Tell them it is only safe for adults to use matches or lighters.
- Keep all matches and lighters out of sight and out of the reach of children. Use childproof lighters.
- Never leave children alone in the house or in a room where there is a burning candle, open fire or cooker on, even for short periods of time.
- Carry out regular checks for signs of firesetting, such as burn marks on carpets, beds, burnt items or paper in sinks or waste bins.
- Keep outbuildings, garden sheds and garages locked to prevent access to flammable items.
- Make a home fire safety plan with your family and practise it.
- If a fire happens, warn the family and
  - Get out
  - Stay out
  - Call the fire brigade out
  - Dial 999



## Home Fire Safety Visit

Make sure your home is fitted with smoke alarms. We recommend installing a smoke alarm in every room except the bathroom, toilet and kitchen. A smoke alarm will alert you to a fire quickly so your family can escape safely. Test smoke alarms weekly by pressing the test button and change the battery once a year or when you need to.

London Fire Brigade offer a home fire safety visit to the home to provide advice on how to make it safe from fire and, where appropriate, fit a smoke alarm. To request this free service call 08000 28 44 28.



## Why do children set fires?

Children play with fire for various reasons which range from curiosity in toddlers to older children using firesetting to express feelings of anger or emotional distress. Without help and guidance, firesetting behaviour can increase and lead to more serious consequences like serious injury and damage to homes, schools and property. Early intervention is key to changing this behaviour.

## What are the signs of firesetting?

- Burn holes in carpets, bedding and clothes. Charred paper or melted objects in bins or sinks.
- Matches or lighters hidden in your child's room, under the bed or school bag.
- An unusual fascination with fire.
- Unexplained fires in your home.

**This behaviour should never be ignored to make sure it does not continue into adulthood.**

## What should you do if you suspect your child is playing with fire?

- Follow the advice in this leaflet to reduce the chance of fires being set.
- It is not uncommon for children as young as two to show an interest in fire or mimic the behaviour of adults. Many children are fascinated by fire, such as the glow of a candle or watching an adult light up a cigarette. Consider how your own actions may be influencing the behaviour of your child.
- Contact London Fire Brigade's Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Scheme for support and advice.

## Find out more

If you would like more information or wish to make a referral, please contact the Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Scheme:

T 020 8555 1200 x30842 or x30841 or E [firesetters@london-fire.gov.uk](mailto:firesetters@london-fire.gov.uk)