



News Release

Achieving safer and more sustainable communities

Date: 19th February 2010

Launch of 'Learning not Burning' campaign – Firesetter Intervention Scheme

From natural curiosity to criminal acts, people set fires for different reasons. East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service has launched a programme to help them learn not to burn.

Misuse of fire is a danger not only to the individual, but to friends, family and others, it does not discriminate, it does not care. No matter how small, no fire is insignificant and has the potential to be fatal.

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has a team of professionals with specialist training to help individuals who abuse fire. We understand the attraction, the excitement, the comfort and the emotions that fire instils in us and provide prevention through education. Within our communities there exists a constant threat from adults and young people who are involved in firesetting incidents each year, many of which are fires caused through children playing with matches and lighters.

To tackle these problems and raise awareness of these issues, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service is launching the Learning not Burning campaign on Monday 22nd February 2010.

All firesetting education is undertaken in a confidential environment.

What has been done previously?

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Junior Intervention Scheme was set up in 1993, as a result of statistics, which outlined a high percentage of deliberate fires were started by young people. The aim of this scheme is to help young people understand and control the feelings and circumstances that lead them to firesetting, using a range of educational methods and fire safety awareness.

The Adult Intervention Scheme was started in April 2009 and is aimed at those over the age of 16 who have been involved in firesetting/arson related incidents. The scheme is based on education and understanding the effects of firesetting.

Both services are confidential.

Who are the advisors?

All our advisors are employees of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. They include firefighters and non-uniformed support staff who work in pairs providing information, education, support and training.

Junior Intervention Scheme

Notes to Editors: East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service employs almost 1,000 staff and serves a population of 750,000 across East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove. All press releases and associated images are available online. Visit www.esfrs.org and click on News.

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Children who play with fire are an increasing problem. Very often, the child's fire play begins from curiosity. However, in some cases, the problem may be more deep-rooted. The child may turn to fire to vent their feelings of frustration, anger or jealousy. It may also be a very graphic cry for help with a specific but unspoken problem. Unfortunately, many parents do not recognise the symptoms, even fewer the cause.

Why do children set fires?

Children who play with fire do so for various reasons, ranging from natural curiosity to attention seeking. Without help and guidance, firesetting behaviour can develop - leading to more serious consequences such as major injuries, damage to home, schools, property and even death.

What is the programme?

The first visit by the advisors will attempt to discover more about the young person involved and establish a trusting relationship. Advisors can, by agreement, visit your home, or arrangements can be made to meet at a community centre or similar location where young people feel comfortable. A parent or carer will be requested to sign a consent form at the start of the first visit.

The duration of advisor involvement may vary depending upon the specific circumstances and problems. Your advisor will discuss times with you and will be available to answer any questions.

The telltale signs of firesetting

- Small burn holes in carpets
- Charred paper in sinks or wastebaskets
- Matches or lighters hidden in bedrooms
- An unusual fascination with fires
- Unexplainable fires in your home

This behaviour should be recognised and dealt with to ensure that it does not continue into adulthood. You should also consider your own actions and how they may influence the behaviour of children for whom you are responsible.

Make your home safe for children

- Always keep matches and lighters safely out of the reach of children
- Never leave children alone in the house
- Never assume toddlers or infants are incapable of lighting a match or lighter - be safe, not sorry!
- Explain that fire is dangerous and only adults should deal with it - for older children, teach the appropriate uses of fire under an adult's supervision
- Teach your children to STOP, DROP and ROLL if their clothes should catch fire

Adult Intervention Scheme

This new intervention programme is aimed at Adult Firesetters over the age of 16.

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What is the programme?

The programme consists of five 1-hour sessions by our specially trained fire service advisors, based on the following syllabus:

- Introduction, ground rules, contract
- Mechanics of fire
- Human behaviour in fire
- Consequences of firesetting
- Motives and programme conclusion

The effectiveness of the programme relies on the client's willingness to take part in the course. They will be requested to sign a consent form and must agree to attend all five sessions.

Referrals are welcome from any agency or individual

Here are our contact details if you would like more information about these services

Learning not Burning – Firesetter Intervention Scheme

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EASTBOURNE CRIME REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

“Making Eastbourne Even Safer”

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