



Risk Reduction Guidance: People who Live Alone or have Restricted Ability to Respond

A. Introduction

This guidance is for all practitioners who undertake Adult Social Care assessments, including needs assessments, reviews, risk assessments, care & support plans, safeguarding concern and enquiries and Occupational Therapy Assessments. It equally applies to council managed care and support plans, support plans arranged via direct payments, and those who fund their own care.

Both national and Local SARs have identified that people who live alone and/or who have restricted ability to respond to an emergency such as a fire, an intruder or the onset of a sudden illness require a risk assessment of their living arrangements and the support available to them, including Technology Enabled Care (TEC).

Please read the local [Fire Safety themed SAR published in 2024](#) to understand the local recommendations regarding fire safety.

Detailed advice and the link to a Safe and Well referral process on Fire Safety is available here: [Are you a referring agency? | Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

Throughout this guidance the term “emergency” will apply to a fire, an intruder or the onset of a sudden illness or fall. It also includes any unpredictable situation such as power cuts, water leaks, heating failure etc.

All assessments and review processes must include consideration of the following fire safety and emergency factors:

B. Consider the person you are assessing and reviewing:

1. Who do they live with? Is there support within the home? What support do friends and family offer?
2. Who would call emergency services should there be an emergency?
3. Is the person able to see or hear indicators that there is a emergency, such as a fire alarm. Does the alarm work and is it tested?
4. Does the person have the physical or mental ability to respond to a fire or emergency? Can they do this 24 hours a day? Consider hearing aids which may be taken out at night and the effect of night-time medication.

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5. Does the person have a pendant alarm and fire alarms that are linked to a call centre?
6. Have there been any changes in the person's independence skills since the last assessment or review? What impact does this have on their emergency safety?
7. Does the person use paraffin-based emollient creams, which could fuel a fire.
8. Are there times when the person is intoxicated or impaired by the use of alcohol or drugs.
9. Does the person smoke? Are there risks associated with where they smoke such as in bed or how they manage their smoking equipment (lighters) or dispose of ash.
10. Does the person have health equipment that can increase the fire risk: oxygen cylinders, air flow pressure relieving mattresses or incontinence aids? Are they stored safely?
11. Does the person sit or sleep near a potential source of fire?
12. Does the person have mental capacity to make decisions about where they live, their care and any identified risks.
13. Is there a lasting Power of Attorney in place who can support the person with their property? Or a family member that could support the person?
14. Does the person require a referral to the council's deputies team for support with their finances or property.
15. Do they have care and support from a provider? What does the care and support providers care plan say about fire or emergency risk? Does it seem safe? Is there a provider risk assessment?
16. If the person is in a placement, extra care or sheltered housing are regular fire drills taking place?
17. Is there a contingency plan to deal with emergencies?
18. Is there a requirement for a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP)? See [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005 \(FSO\)](#) (details of who is a responsible person and their duties can be found on this link). This legislation does not apply to single residential dwellings (e.g. bungalows, houses, flats, supported living or care homes)

C. Consider heating in the home -

1. Is it modern and safe?
2. Are there any naked flames left on when the person is alone?
3. Does the owner need to review or update the heating?
4. Do they need financial or practical help to update their heating. A referral to [Cosier Home Energy Advice](#) can be made.
5. Do they have a CO² alarm in place if they have a fuel burning appliance (e.g. a cooker, boiler or fireplace). If there is no working CO² alarm, refer to the Fire Service for a Safe and Well visit.

6. Have there been annual safety checks for gas and heating? This should be arranged by own home-owners (or their legal representatives), local authorities for council housing or housing associations.
7. Is there a lasting Power of Attorney in place who can support the review and upgrade of heating? Or a family member that could support the person?

D. Consider the environment -

1. Are there items that would fuel a fire next to or near a source of heat?
2. Is there any sign of self-neglect, hoarding or excess belongings. Please follow the [Hoarding Protocol](#) and associated pathways on TriX.
3. Do you have any concerns about the electrical overload or faults? Electrical Items not working or in poor condition, lack of supply, overloaded sockets, recharging batteries arrangements? Look out for daisy chaining of extension leads or scorch marks around plug sockets. This website gives more information [Overloading Sockets | Electrical Safety First](#)
4. Is the kitchen and its appliances safe? Are appliances clean and free from oil fat and food deposits? Consider the person's ability to use the appliances. Would stove guards or timers be helpful.
5. Does the person live in a high-rise accommodation?
6. Are the doors and windows secure and can the person lock/unlock them?

E. Consider a safe and well referral to the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS) [Safe and Well Service](#). This must always be done when

1. The person lives alone.
2. The person is unable to respond independently to fire incidents.
3. The person is cared for in bed or has limited mobility.
4. The person has sight or hearing loss.
5. The person's mobility or ability to respond to emergencies has changed or deteriorated.
6. The person has reduced mobility or cognitive issues.
7. The person's environment is giving cause for concern (see sections C&D)

8. The picture below the equipment that can be given by the Fire Service as part of the Safe and Well visit outcome



F. Consider Technology (TEC)

1. What technology is in place to support the person?
2. Is there a pendant alarm is it accessible 24 hours a day? Are they able to press the button?
3. Is the person able to speak to the call centre? Is the base unit in the right place?
4. Are there suitable responders in place, can they attend when called?
5. Is the fire alarm and carbon monoxide device linked to the Apello system so that the fire service can be called even when the person cannot respond.
6. Has the fire service provided suitable equipment to reduce fire risk?
7. What does the council and the service provider say about the use of technology? is this safe? <https://intranet.reading.gov.uk/section/how-do-i/technology-enabled-care-tec-guidance>

Emergency Risks and Mental Capacity

Where risks exist, including those that cannot be managed a risk assessment must be completed with the person, family and informal carers, care providers, partner agencies such as health practitioners and the fire service.

Practitioners must consider whether a mental capacity assessment is required and, where the person lacks capacity, make best interest decisions.

If risk cannot be managed and or the person lacks capacity to make a decision to remain in their home, accommodation with higher levels of care or oversight may be required.

Where risks cannot be resolved through risk assessment and mental capacity pathways the case may need to be considered under safeguarding or the MARM
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process. In some cases, legal advice or processes may be required. This must always be discussed with your supervisor and team manager.

Priority Service Register

Home owners and families can also register with all the Utility Services for priority help see links below:

[Energy Supplier Priority Registration](#)

[Thames Water Priority Service Registration](#)

Read fire safety SAR and Learning Brief (links)

Read the SAB [Fire Safety Awareness Information](#)

Adult at risk Training ([RBFR Fire Safety Training Video](#))

Search top tips on [RBFRS website](#)

Service Providers and Fire Safety

DCASC's Quality and Performance Monitoring Team work with the Fire Service and service providers to ensure that providers have up to date knowledge about fire safety, the safe and well service and how to ensure that these services reach all people and communities regarding fire safety. For more information please contact QPM@reading.gov.uk.