

Port Glasgow New Parents Initiative Practice Exemplar

Name and Timescales

Port Glasgow New Parents Initiative

Summary

A collaboration between The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), Port Glasgow Community Fire Station, Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership and Port Glasgow Community health visitors to offer a home fire safety visit (HFSV) to all parents with new born babies within the Port Glasgow Community Fire Station area.

Need for Initiative

Crew Manager Stephen Anderson was inspired to act following the arrival of his baby son Finn. Stephen's wife Erin voiced concerns about fire safety within their home, particularly when Stephen was at work and she was in the house alone with the baby.

This led Stephen to think that if he, an experienced firefighter, and his family had concerns then surely this could be a worry for all new parents? With the prospect of bringing their new arrival home parents would ensure they had all the equipment they needed, but many may not have given home safety a second thought.

Stephen, with the support of his colleagues at Port Glasgow Community Fire Station, approached Port Glasgow Health Centre. As health visitors and midwives are prominent in the early stages of a new born baby's life, they were ideally placed to make parents aware of the benefits of a HFSV. Following discussion, a referral pathway was established.

Partner Agencies involved included:

- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS);
- Inverclyde Health & Social Care Partnership;
- Local MSPs; and
- Port Glasgow Health Centre.

Aims and Objectives

- To offer each household in the Port Glasgow Community Fire Station area a HFSV providing tailored advice and education and the provision of smoke and/or heat alarms, where required.
- Ensure, where at all possible, dwelling houses with new babies have working smoke alarms and that parents have a heightened awareness of fire safety within the home.
- Offer advice and reassurance to new parents in relation to providing a safe home environment for their family.

Delivery

A HFSV is a comprehensive assessment that examines the levels of fire risk within the home. If required, smoke alarms and/or heat alarms are fitted free of charge and fire personnel will discuss a fire escape plan with the occupiers so that they know what to do in the event of an emergency. Port Glasgow New Parents Initiative not only offers a HFSV but also tailored advice and signposting in relation to specific risk reduction measures for babies and young children.

A simple, but effective referral pathway involved health visitors making new parents aware of the HFSV service offered by SFRS, during house calls and providing literature, where required. If

accepted, Port Glasgow Community Fire Station personnel contact the household to arrange a suitable date and time to conduct the visit.

Successes and Challenges

Successes:

Collaborative and effective partnership working

This is a new referral route for SFRS working with partner agencies not necessarily previously engaged with. Partners involved in this collaboration worked well together in setting up and delivering the aims and objectives of this initiative. Each partner played their part in generating referrals, raising awareness in social media and promoting the benefits of a home fire safety visit, to a target audience not necessarily previously engaged with by SFRS.

Challenges:

Maintaining a steady flow of referrals

Referrals are, of course, dependent upon the birth of babies. Due to the initial launch concentrating in one area, referrals can be sporadic. In addition, there is a risk that partner agencies may become less enthusiastic in offering the service. To combat this, it is hoped that the initiative can be expanded to other areas and that regular contact and/or training to existing partners and new staff members will keep up the momentum.

Impact/Change

- Heightened awareness of SFRS and the services it provides within communities. Most new parents previously hadn't considered having a HFSV, however, after health visitors broached the subject, they realised the benefits of a visit, especially as it covers a variety of advice and not just concentrating on smoke detection.
- Increased ownership of smoke detection within properties. Where applicable, smoke detection was installed and advice tailored to the individuals, including bedtime routine and fire escape plan.
- Heightened safety awareness for both partner agencies and members of our communities. Support from professionals with specialist knowledge to understand how to make their home environment safer was achieved through advice and education, enabling parents to identify ways to stay safer in their homes. This resulted in positive impacts on wellbeing, increased confidence and a change in parents attitudes and behaviour.

The Port Glasgow New Parents Initiative has been very well received by both stakeholders and new parents. Parents have commented that they have benefited from the reassurance that the HFSV has given them. One new parent commented:

"I wasn't prepared for how much of my time a new baby would take up, so having the health visitor referring me for a HFSV instead of having to make contact myself was a real help. I also didn't know that I should check my smoke alarm every week and the importance of shutting doors at night. This was all explained during the visit and I'm now more confident that I'm providing a safe environment for my newborn."

The initiative will be evaluated in due course. SFRS reporting mechanism for HFSVs will provide statistics on how many visits have been conducted and SFRS Information Reporting System allows specific addresses to be searched to determine if any incidents have occurred there.

Reflections

Crew Manager Stephen Anderson reflecting on the initiative:

"I have learned that starting something like this from scratch is quite difficult and requires a lot of effort and willingness from others. However, with the correct motivations and people involved it can be achieved.

Dealing face to face with people has helped rather than trying to organise things over the phone or via email.

I wouldn't change anything as this has been, up to this point, a success and also a very good learning experience for the future work of the SFRS. Utilising publicity helps a lot. I employed social media and the local MSP to help get the message out which has been beneficial."

Update – October 2019

Since the initiative started we have seen a steady uptake from households in the catchment area of 8 per month. This is a success rate of approximately 87% based on most recent birth rate statistics in the pilot area.

Due to the ongoing success we are currently rolling out the initiative to the rest of Inverclyde and are in the process of arranging for Renfrewshire to come on board also. The hope is to soon have the entire ERRI (East Ren, Ren & Inverclyde) area running the initiative.

We have had some very welcome attention with local MSP, Stuart McMillan inviting Minister for Community Safety, Ash Denham MSP to Port Glasgow to learn more about the work between ourselves and the Health Visitors. She seemed very impressed and keen to see the work replicated elsewhere. An article on this visit can be found on the SFRS website.

Additional Information

<https://www.greenocktelegraph.co.uk/news/17536709.port-firefighter-is-raising-the-alarm-to-make-sure-all-babies-born-in-inverclyde-are-safe-at-home/>

<https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/news-campaigns/news/2019/10/community-safety-minister-visits-port-glasgow-fire-station.aspx>

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