**West Sussex – Practice Guidance**

IROs are qualified social workers with at least five years’ experience, and who have acquired the right skills to carry out this role.

**Responding to a fire in the home**

* Staff must ensure they are familiar with fire evacuation procedures for the home and prioritise safe evacuation over any attempt to put out a fire.
* Staff must also be aware of any additional needs that children may have as detailed in their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan.
* The delegated Fire Warden must ensure they have access to the Emergency Fire File and use this to ensure all children and staff are safely accounted for.

**If a fire is discovered in the home**

* All WSCC children’s homes are fitted with smoke detectors which are regularly tested and serviced. However, in the unlikely event that a fire is discovered and the alarms haven’t been activated, it is the responsibility of staff to ensure the alarms are set off immediately.
* Staff must follow the evacuation procedure as soon as a fire is identified or the alarm is activated.
* The delegated Fire Warden on shift must make a decision about whether the tackle the fire to try to put it out, or whether to withdraw from the building and await the Fire Brigade. The general rule is to prioritise evacuating the building before attempting to approach a fire. However, the judgement of the Fire Warden may be that the fire is small enough and contained that an attempt to put out the fire may be possible.
* In the event that the fire is successfully extinguished, the Fire Brigade still need to be contacted to attend the building and ensure it is safe to return.
* If the Fire Brigade advise that the building is unsafe to return to, staff must put the Foreseeable Crisis Plan into action.
* The Shift leader must contact the manager on call at any time there is a fire in the home, irrespective of size or response. The Out of Hours duty team or MASH must also be informed.

**After the fire has been extinguished**

* The health and wellbeing of children in the home is the primary concern in the event of a fire. Following any fire in the home, all children must be reviewed by a qualified medical practitioner.
* If a child is refusing to accept a medical check, staff must take medical advice via the NHS Helpline tel: 111.
* Staff must continue to monitor the wellbeing of any child exposed to smoke inhalation or fire as symptoms can develop over time.

**Recording requirements following a fire incident**

* The Shift leader must complete an Incident report detailing the following areas:
* all known information about how the fire started, where and any known causes; when the Fire Brigade were notified, when they arrived and the actions they took;
* any medical checks that were undertaken involving children and the outcome of these;
* Who was informed about the incident and when
* Analysis of the fire incident should result in a review and updating of all relevant risk assessments of the premises and those risk assessments that relate to children if there is any indication that the fire was intentional.
* The Registered Manager should seek advice of senior managers as to when to contact the Police in the event that a child has deliberately and intentionally started a fire in the home.
* An urgent Professionals meeting must be convened to address any significant change or increase in severity of risk behaviours as appropriate.
* All fire detection and fire-fighting equipment must be fully checked following any fire and replaced where necessary.

**Management responsibilities**

* The Registered Manager should undertake the following tasks after any fire on the premises:
* arrange for a debrief meeting to take place with all staff and children within a reasonable amount of time;
* update the Fire Brigade following the incident outlining all actions taken;
* Contact the insurance company to ensure they are aware a fire has happened on the premises;
* Ensure all parents/carers and professionals are aware of the incident (as necessary) and consider ongoing support needs for the child.

**Links to related documents:**

Fire evacuation Procedure

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan

Foreseeable Crisis Plan