



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Health and Environmental Services Committee
Subject:	Consultation on Home Accident Prevention Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2024
Date:	6 th August, 2014
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Head of Environmental Health, extension 3281
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Environmental Health Manager, extension 3600

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has produced a consultation seeking views on a new 10-year Home Accident Prevention Strategy.
1.2	The previous Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2004–2009 delivered many positive outcomes and made a significant contribution to reducing home accidents and deaths. This new Strategy aims to build on that contribution. A comprehensive action plan to accompany the Strategy will be developed by the Public Health Agency in partnership with key stakeholders.
1.3	The Partners identified in the consultation are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety (DHSSPS)▪ The Public Health Agency (PHA)▪ Health and Social Care Trusts▪ Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)▪ The Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS)▪ Department of Education (DE)▪ District Councils▪ Home Accident Prevention Northern Ireland (HAPNI)▪ Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)▪ Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)▪ An Munia Tober▪ The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
1.4	Belfast City Council has aimed to address Home Accident Prevention since the inception of a Home Safety Pilot Scheme in 1992. Under Article 27 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, councils are authorised to promote safety in the home in order to reduce the high number of accidents and injuries. This legislation provides the <i>vires</i> for councils to carry out a range of home safety functions. In recent years, Belfast City Council's delivery of these functions has contributed to the DHSSPS Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2004-2009.

1.5	<p>The Belfast Home Safety service currently includes the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of home safety checks, which are primarily aimed at families with children under 5 years of age and older people. Home Safety checks are carried out using the RoSPA digi pen scheme (currently under review by PHA/out for tender); ▪ Provision of advice on how to prevent accidents and, if necessary, providing appropriate safety equipment such as child-safety gates, fireguards and lockable medicine boxes; ▪ Provision of advice and safety equipment including child safety gates, fireguards, lockable medicine boxes and home safety packs (which include plug-socket guards, door-stoppers, toilet locks, cupboard locks and a lock for a DVD/Video player). Touch lamps and 4 gang sockets are also provided to elderly residents (Equipment provided to householders under the home safety check scheme is currently funded by Public Health Agency via Belfast Home Accident Prevention Group); ▪ Distribution of Winter Warmth packs (consisting of a fleece blanket, thermal underwear, woollen hat, woollen scarf, gloves and socks) to elderly and vulnerable residents; and ▪ Educational visits/presentations to older peoples groups, Surestarts, Church groups, schools, residents' groups.
1.6	<p>Belfast City Council's Home Safety Check service is unique in Northern Ireland in that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staffing costs are currently funded by the Council, rather than via the Public Health Agency; ▪ Belfast City Council's Home Safety Checks include checks of all electric sockets, plugs and fuses and carrying out minor repairs, such as changing plugs, if required; ▪ Provision of energy efficiency advice; ▪ Focused referrals to/from other related services including Public Health/housing service within Environmental Health, Occupational Therapy, Good morning Schemes, N.I.F.R.S.
1.7	<p>The service completes 1600 Home safety checks per year.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>This will be a 10 year Strategy (2014–2024) and is aimed at the entire population of Northern Ireland as accidents can and do affect everyone.</p>
2.2	<p>The consultation identifies groups of people who are more likely to have accidents and more likely to suffer long-term effects as a consequence of an accident. It is proposed that the strategy focuses on children under 5, people over 65 and people who are socially deprived. However, it is recognised that the risk of having an accident can increase depending on a range of circumstances including disability, illness, multiple medications or other types of vulnerability.</p>
2.3	<p>It proposes to prioritise interventions in relation to falls, carbon monoxide, smoke, fire and flames and blind cords.</p>
2.4	<p>It is proposed that the Public Health Agency will be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the strategy and for the development of an action plan with key partners to deliver the strategy.</p>

2.5	The consultation highlights the improvements in road safety accidents and workplace accidents that have been achieved via targeted legislative and awareness-raising campaigns. Deaths from Home safety and leisure accidents are now higher than deaths on the roads. The consultation document asks for views on new approaches to reducing Home safety accidents.
2.6	The consultation also seeks views on how the progress of the strategy and future action plan will be monitored and asks for general suggestions that would assist with the delivery of the strategy.
2.7	<p>A draft consultation response addressing these issues has been prepared and is attached for consideration, together with a covering letter (See Appendices 1 and 2). In particular, the draft response highlights the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council believes that the continuation of The Home Safety Check scheme is critical to ensure the proposed objectives and priorities are met; ▪ There needs to be focussed education and awareness campaigns in relation to the priority issues across Northern Ireland. Home Accident Prevention NI (HAP N.I) would be in a good position with its links to both the community, local and central government to assist with this; ▪ Home Accident Prevention could be introduced into the primary school curriculum; ▪ The good practice that already exists especially around partnership working should be developed further. The HAP groups should be utilised to their full capacity in order to ensure home safety initiatives are delivered in such a way that they deliver on the action plan priorities whilst still addressing local issues on the ground. Local Government Reform will give the HAP groups greater economies of scale and assist in a uniform approach across Northern Ireland to the proposed action Plan. ▪ Social media and TV advertising are two ways that awareness can be raised and can be extremely effective. ▪ Adopting the HHSRS could be a critical step in ensuring dwellings which are unsafe to live are adequately assessed and dealt with appropriately.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u> There are no direct or immediate financial implications.</p>

4	Equality Implications
4.1	None.

5	Recommendation
5.1	The Committee is requested to review the draft response and agree the final reply to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety consultation on a Home Accident Prevention Strategy for Northern Ireland.

6	Key to Abbreviations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety (DHSSPS) • The Public Health Agency (PHA) • Health and Social Care Trusts • Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS)• Department of Education (DE)• District Councils• Home Accident Prevention Northern Ireland (HAPNI)• Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)• Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)• An Munia Tober• The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
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	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Draft consultation response. Appendix 2 - Covering Letter

Consultation response pro-forma
A Home Accident Prevention Strategy Consultation for Northern Ireland

Name and address of organisation or individual responding:

Belfast City Council,
Health and Environmental Services Department,
The Cecil Ward Building,
4-10 Linenhall Street,
Belfast
BT2 8BP

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, name of contact person:

Claire O'Neill

Note: If you wish to respond to some or only one of the questions, please do so. The Department will welcome and will consider all responses.

- 1 Given the case that has been made for having a home accident prevention strategy, do you agree that the Vision and Strategic Aim are appropriate? We would welcome any amendments that you may wish to suggest.**

The Council has no issues with the vision and/or strategic aim and would not wish to see any amendments.

- 2 We would welcome your views on the definition of a “home” (Chapter 2, P 14).**

The Council is happy with the definition provided.

- 3 We have identified priority groups as being the under-5s, over-65s and people who are socially deprived. We would welcome your views on this prioritisation.**

The Council welcomes the prioritisation of under 5's, over 65's and people who are socially deprived.

The Council would welcome the inclusion of 'vulnerable adults' as a priority group. NHS Direct defines a 'vulnerable adult' as someone aged 18 or over, receives or may need community care services because of a disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

4 We have identified priority issues for focus as: falls, carbon monoxide, smoke, fire and flames, and blind cords. We would welcome your views on this prioritisation.

The Council would strongly agree with all of these priority issues and would in fact suggest that the Government seek to introduce legislation to regulate these hazards, particularly in the rented sector. At present it is possible to only make recommendations to Landlords to help improve home safety matters but they do not have to implement them.

The Council advocates for the introduction of A Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS) which is the regulatory standard in England and Wales. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hhsrs-operating-guidance-housing-act-2004-guidance-about-inspections-and-assessment-of-hazards-given-under-section-9>

This standard includes risk of falling, carbon monoxide and other fuel combustion products, fire, explosions, hot surfaces and materials, electrical hazards, collision and entrapment. This standard looks at the occupant of the property as well as the structure of the property to ensure all risks are minimised. The Department for Social Development (DSD) are currently reviewing the statutory fitness standard for Northern Ireland and the Council would support the move to adopting the HHSRS as it provides a holistic approach to the assessment of all dwellings and includes the priority areas referred to above.

5 Do you agree that the Objectives and Strategic Priorities are a good basis for action? We would welcome any amendments that you may wish to suggest.

The Council agree with the objectives and strategic priorities and believe they will be key to informing future action plans and the work programmes contained in them. The City Council looks forward to working with other partners in the identification and delivery of these work streams.

6 The Public Health Agency will be responsible for implementation and evaluation of the Strategy and will develop an Acton Plan in conjunction with a multi-agency Implementation Group. We would invite your views on potential actions that could facilitate delivery of the proposed objectives and priorities.

- Systems for capturing information on Home Accidents need improving and further work is needed to inform the targeting of future home safety interventions and work programmes;*
- The consultation paper refers to an action plan to accompany the strategy to be developed by the Public Health Agency and the development of structures to oversee the action plan. The Council agrees with this in principle but would like to be consulted further on this matter. The Council looks forward to commenting on this at that time;*

- *The City Council is happy for the PHA to be responsible for the future implementation and evaluation of the plan and welcomes the support this will provide HAPNI, local HAP groups and local authority Home Safety Services to deliver better home safety outcomes.*

In addition to the above, the City Council would ask that any future action plans reflect the following;

- *The Council believes that the continuation of The Home Safety Check scheme is critical to ensure the proposed objectives and priorities are met;*
- *There needs to be focussed education and awareness campaigns in relation to the priority issues across Northern Ireland. Home Accident Prevention NI (HAP N.I) would be in a good position with its links to both the community, local and central government to assist with this;*
- *Home Accident Prevention could be introduced into the primary school curriculum;*
- *The good practice that already exists especially around partnership working should be developed further. The HAP groups should be utilised to their full capacity in order to ensure home safety initiatives are delivered in such a way that they deliver on the action plan priorities whilst still addressing local issues on the ground. Local Government Reform will give the HAP groups greater economies of scale and assist in a uniform approach across Northern Ireland to the proposed action Plan.*

7 We would welcome your views on how best to raise public awareness of home accident prevention.

The Council notes on page 9 of the consultation document that a wide range of interventions including legislation and public awareness campaigns have delivered reductions in road traffic and workplace accidents.

The Council notes that more people are killed due to accidents at home on an annual basis than accidents on the road and agrees that the approach outlined in the above paragraph should be adopted for home accident prevention.

8 Progress in delivering the Strategy will be monitored and its effectiveness will be reviewed periodically. How best should we monitor and assess the impact of the Strategy over time?

The success of the strategy and the action plan to support it will depend largely on the evidence that will be developed to inform the strategy and subsequent action plans. The baseline will need to be recorded and the success of the strategy will depend upon the realisation of actual reductions in home accidents.

It will be important that action plans are supported by robust performance systems that report not just on activity but set realistic targets that allow the various agencies to demonstrate measurable home safety outcomes. The City Council notes that the plan will be reviewed after the first year and every 3 years after that. We would ask that consideration is given to some form of mechanism that allows the relevant agencies to report on progress on an annual or bi-annual basis.

Annual progress reports need to be prepared to ensure plans are being delivered and that health benefits are being realised. This would allow the PHA and partners to sit down and report on what is going well and to consider and review aspects that are not going well and may need different support and/or interventions.

The multi-agency implementation group established to implement the action plan could carry out his role.

9 Please provide any other comments or suggestions that you feel could assist the development and/or delivery of the Strategy.

There is already a lot of good work around home accident prevention but is not consistent throughout Northern Ireland and certainly a lot more could potentially be done. Awareness of the issues is a major concern for the Council as campaigns always appear to be delivered re-actively rather than pro-actively. The Home Safety Check Scheme is a great mechanism to talk to people about potential accidents in their home, but it needs to be run in conjunction with more targeted, awareness raising campaigns.

Social media and TV advertising are two ways that awareness can be raised and can be extremely effective. If we take the Road Safety campaigns on social media and TV and radio as an example, these have been extremely effective in helping to reduce road traffic accidents and deaths.

TV and radio campaigns may well seem costly but if it helps keep people out of A & E departments thus lifting the pressure on the departments and ultimately saving money in the long run then they can only be seen as a good thing.

Adopting the HHSRS could be a critical step in ensuring dwellings which are unsafe to live are adequately assessed and dealt with appropriately.

Finally, whilst the strategy will provide direction in the next 10 years, we feel that this will need to be supplemented by robust funding streams to enable all stakeholders to implement the strategy fully.

Health Protection Branch
DHSSPS
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Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Dear

Re: Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2014-2024 (Draft for Consultation)

The Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department's consultation on a Home Accident Prevention Strategy. Belfast City Council has aimed to address Home Accident Prevention since the inception of a Home Safety Pilot Scheme in 1992. Under Article 27 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 councils are authorised to promote safety in the home, in order to reduce the high number of accidents and injuries. This legislation provides the *vires* for Councils to carry out a range of home safety functions. In recent years, Belfast City Council's delivery of these functions has contributed to the DHSSPS Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2004-2009.

The Council's Health and Environmental Services Committee, at its meeting on 6th August 2014, agreed the attached response to the above-mentioned consultation document.

I would point out that both the foregoing comments and the attached response will be presented to the Council for ratification on 4th September. I will advise you shortly thereafter of any amendments made to them.

In the meantime, should you require clarification on either document please contact Mr. Stephen Leonard, Environmental Health Manager on either 02890270305 or leonards@belfastcity.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Democratic Services Officer

Enc.