Dear Sir/Madam,

**REGULATORY REFORM (FIRE SAFETY) ORDER 2005**

**Care Homes – protection from fire and prevention of future deaths**

Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service wish to highlight some critical fire safety issues to those who own or manage residential care homes for vulnerable residents, or children’s homes.

Over the past few years there have been a number of incidents in Shropshire and other parts of the UK that have resulted in a number of deaths, injuries and near misses.

**Press release by – London Fire Brigade:**

Further to yet another recent tragic death of a vulnerable resident within a care home environment the Coroner has made recommendations about the appropriate levels of fire safety within care homes. This follows on from a recent prosecution of a care home in Southwark, South East London for fire safety offences relating to the death of a resident where the company was fined a total of £120,000.

The London Fire Brigade believe that some of these deaths were foreseeable and avoidable - and we believe that these issues need urgent consideration and action by care home operators to reduce risks still further.

**Individual Fire Risk Assessments of residents**

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires the responsible person to identify persons at risk as part of the fire safety risk assessment process for the premises and to take appropriate action to remove or reduce the risk.

An individual fire risk assessment for each resident is critical for their own safety and the safety of other residents and staff. This will assess the needs of the individual in conjunction with care workers and family and consider their habits, physical and mental capacity, and their environment. This should be recorded and considered alongside their care plan, other assessments and personal evacuation plans.

This is very critical where residents are known to be smokers and may be in possession of ignition sources such as lighters and matches as these add greatly to the risks of a fire starting. From this information care and sheltered home operators and other responsible persons must identify the appropriate control measures and additional equipment to best manage the risk of fire and protect individuals at greater risk. These could include:

* Supervision of smoking, fire retardant nightwear and bedding, or the removal of such ignition sources.
* Additional smoke detection and telecare systems;
* Water mist systems.

These measures should all be recorded in the significant findings of the fire risk assessment and regularly reviewed particularly where there is a decline in cognitive ability or mobility.

**Our approach to regulation and enforcement**

Our Fire Safety Inspecting Officers, when visiting your premises, will be looking for evidence that fire hazards (including hazards from smoking) have been taken into account and that you have measures in place to control these hazards. Ideally fire hazards will be removed, but when removal is not possible, we expect that the risk will be mitigated by other means, such as those listed above. With regard to any enforcement action under the Fire Safety Order our officers will not take such action in respect of the issues referred to above if evidence confirms appropriate steps have or are being taken, and that suitable safety measures are being progressed.

Two appendices form attachments to this letter:

**APPENDIX 1**

**Guidance for carrying out individual smoking risk assessments.**

**APPENDIX 2**

**Guidance on identifying competent fire risk assessors for residential care establishments. Issued by The Regulation And Quality Improvement Authority**

**Further information is also available on our website at** [**https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/safety-at-work/fire-safety-advice-care-homes**](https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/safety-at-work/fire-safety-advice-care-homes)