

What else can I do to help?

There are a few things you can do around the home to reduce the opportunities for a young person to play with fire.

- Keep matches and lighters out of reach and sight.
- Children should never be left alone in the house.
- Try to explain the dangers of fire and the hurt it can cause.
- Ensure your home has a working smoke alarm on every floor.
- Make a fire escape plan and practice it with the whole family.
- Set good examples of fire behaviour. Young children learn by exploring, experimenting and copying adult behaviour.
- Teach your children to avoid giving in to pressure from friends.



Remember - don't ignore it, act on it

- If you would like more advice on home fire safety contact Avon Fire & Rescue Service.
- Remember if you do have a fire get out, stay out and call 999.



Firesetters - what is the truth?

Myth - It is normal for children to play with fire.

Fact - Although curiosity about fire is common, playing with or setting fires is not typical and it is dangerous.

Myth - Firesetting is a phase that children grow out of.

Fact - This is not a phase. Young people need education or they will continue to experiment with fire.

Myth - If your child only sets small fires, you don't need to worry.

Fact - Any fire can quickly get out of control and endanger lives.

Myth - Telling your children not to play with fire or punishing them if they do, will cure the problem.

Fact - These measures are often not effective. Understanding why a child has an interest, teaching them about fire in a safe manner and limiting access to matches and lighters are often more successful.

For more information contact:

The Firesetters Team
Avon Fire & Rescue Service
Temple Back
Bristol
BS1 6EU

Call 0117 926 2061 extension 393 (voicemail)
Email: firesetters@avonfire.gov.uk
Visit www.avonfire.gov.uk



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Playing with Fire

A parent and carer's guide to getting help with young firesetters



What is firesetting and why do some children start fires?

Children and young people of all ages display an interest in fire for reasons that could include natural curiosity or emotional distress.

This type of behaviour is often referred to as firesetting or fire play. Although you might think it's normal for children to be interested in fire, without help and guidance firesetting can become more serious and lead to property damage, injuries or even deaths.

What signs should I look for?

Signs of regular firesetting you should look out for include:

- Small burn holes or scorch marks in furnishings.
- Burnt paper in waste bins.
- Fascination with fire.
- Missing matches or lighters.
- Finding matches or lighters in a child's belongings.

For older children and teenagers there may be additional signs. These include:

- Finding lighters in pockets.
- Clothing smelling of smoke.
- An unusual fascination with fire or the fire and rescue service.
- Learnt behaviours from another family member involved in firesetting.

If you notice the signs, don't ignore it, act on it



Is there anywhere I can get help?

Avon Fire & Rescue Service has specially trained members of staff who work directly with young people with a history of firesetting behaviour.

The Firesetters scheme aims to help children and young people understand the feelings that lead them to start fires. It also attempts to raise their awareness of the dangers of fire and the consequences of their actions.

The scheme offers education and advice for both children and their families during confidential meetings conducted by a team of two enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked Firesetters Advisors.

Getting help is free, easy and confidential. If you would like to know more about the Firesetters scheme, and how to make a referral, call Avon Fire & Rescue Service on 0117 926 2061, extension 393, email firesetters@avonfire.gov.uk or visit www.avonfire.gov.uk

