

Accidents

Headlines

Accidents claimed the lives of 13,861 people in the UK in 2009. Roughly three times as many people suffered a serious, life-changing injury as were killed. Accidental injury was one of the main causes of death for children aged 1-15.

Home remained the most common site for accidents, particularly for young children and older people. Children under the age of five were one of the groups most vulnerable to home accidents. The level of deprivation people experience also increased the probability of having an accident.

There was a downward trend locally in road casualties with 1,461 recorded in Kirklees. The falling casualty total was distributed across all road user groups except for cyclist and motorcyclist. The number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in the district increased by 14% in 2011. The largest number of KSI casualties was recorded amongst car occupants (39%) and pedestrians (29%). A total of five people were killed on Kirklees roads in 2011.

Falls were the most frequent and serious type of accident in people aged 65 and over. Each year, almost 1 in 4 people aged over 65, and 2 in 5 over 85, fell at least once. Many of these falls were preventable.

Why is this issue important?

Every year in the UK, 1 million children under the age of 15 are taken to accident and emergency (A&E) units after injuries occur in the home. Many more are treated at home or by their GP.¹

The vast majority of accidents do not result in death. Many people across the country are injured each year as a result of accidents, and a significant proportion of these injuries are life changing. These are untimely, often violent, events which blight families and communities but their effects are rarely measured in terms of their wider social and health impacts, including [poverty](#) and deprivation.²

Falls destroy confidence, increase isolation and reduce independence. For [older people](#), a fall can hasten a move into residential care. After a hip fracture, 50 per cent of people can no longer live independently.³ The after-effects of even the most minor fall can be

catastrophic for an older person's physical and [mental health](#). Fear of falling again, among older people and those who care for them, reduces quality of life and well-being, even if a fall does not result in serious consequences.

What significant factors are affecting this issue?

There were significant inequalities in death and injury from accidents. Children of parents who were long-term unemployed or who had never worked were 13 times more likely to die as a result of unintentional injury and 37 times more likely to die from exposure to smoke, fire or flames than children of parents in higher managerial or professional occupations.⁴

More people die from accidents at home than on the roads. In the UK, injuries that occur in and around the home were the most common cause of death in children over the age of one.¹

Speeding traffic was the greatest contributory factor to accident frequency and severity. Children in the 10% most deprived areas of the UK were five times more likely to die as a pedestrian than children in less deprived areas, partly because they have fewer safe places to play and may walk more as their parents do not own a car.⁵

Which groups are most affected by this issue?

Children

Unintentional injury to children is a major cause of avoidable ill health, disability and death and has a disproportionately large effect on people in deprived communities. Accidents involving children are a leading cause of childhood mortality in England. In England and Wales in 2009, 193 children aged 0-14 died as a result of an accident. Children under 5 were more vulnerable to injuries at home; over 11s were more vulnerable to injuries on the road. School age children were still the most at risk group of all pedestrian ages with 204 injuries per 100,000 population.⁶

Accidents in the home included burns or scalds, with hot drinks being the most frequent cause of injuries. 304.48 per 100,000 children aged 0 to 16 from Kirklees attended A&E for burns and scalds during 2008/09 and 2010/11.¹

However, house fires caused the most accidental deaths of children in the home. Most of these were because of smoke inhalation. In 2009, there were 262 dwelling fires with three deaths in Kirklees.⁷

Young people

A total of 222 pedestrians were injured in Kirklees in 2011 against 228 last year. The steady downward trend in pedestrian casualties slowed down and levelled off in the last four years. The number of pedestrian casualties reduced amongst all age groups apart from 16 to 19 and 20 to 29.⁵

[Alcohol](#) related accidents (including drink driving) were the leading cause of death for 16–24- year-olds. Young drivers aged 17-19 were ten times more likely to have a drink drive crash compared with drivers of all ages.⁵ During 2009, 16-29-year-olds accounted for 39% of all casualties on the roads in Kirklees, despite being only 19% of the local population. Across the UK, accidents were the principal cause of death until the age of 39.⁸

Older people

Nationally, more than 500,000 people over the age of 65 attended A&E after an accident in the home, 72 per cent of these were injured in falls. Nationally, people aged 75 and over had a death rate of 114 per 100,000 caused by accidents compared with a death rate of 21 per 100,000 in all age groups.³ The main cause of fatal accidents for those aged 65–74 were falls, traffic related accidents and fires. Men aged 65 and over were more likely to be involved in road traffic accidents as passengers and car drivers whereas women were more likely to be involved in road traffic accidents as car and bus passengers.⁵

Falls

Musculoskeletal conditions, including osteoporosis, bone fragility, fractures, and falls, accounted for more than 60% of longstanding illnesses in people aged over 65. Each year, almost 1 in 4 people aged over 65, and 2 in 5 over 85, fell at least once. Many of these falls were preventable.⁹ such falls can break a hip or other bone and then significantly impair physical functioning. The rate of hip fractures amongst older people locally was higher than nationally, rising with age to 1.6% in those aged 80 and over.¹⁰ Older men and older women in Kirklees were more likely to have an injury due to a fall, with women more likely than men (2.3% compared with 1.6%) and those men or women over 80 were even more likely (5.5%).⁹

Where is this causing greatest concern?

For adults the areas of [Huddersfield, Mirfield, and Denby Dale and Kirkburton](#) had the highest number of road traffic accidents. However, residents were more likely to be injured in [Dewsbury](#) and Mirfield or [Batley, Birstall and Birkenshaw](#). These areas were in the top 20 postcodes in West Yorkshire for uninsured vehicles, young driver casualties and children being injured as pedestrians, car passengers and cyclists.

Views of local people

Selected feedback from recipients of Safety in the Home scheme

'Wasn't confident at all before having equipment - very confident now'

'Equipment has been a real help initially refused cupboard locks but now has borrowed some from a friend'

'Really confident when it comes to safety of child-benefited a lot from gate.

'She uses equipment daily fireguard has been a blessing'

'Thank you very much for providing us with safety gates and bath mat - they have been a godsend'

Selected Teacher/Staff feedback from Safety Rangers (year 5)

'Children learn about all aspects of keeping themselves safe.'

'This workshop activity is more powerful than just learning about it in the classroom.'

'Excellent information given to the children, with real life situations they may be faced with and what they should do.'

'It was a well-planned and enjoyable afternoon. The children took a lot away with them.'

What could commissioners and service planners consider?

- Continue to develop a more co-ordinated safety enforcement, promotion and education programme across key agencies (NHS, local authority, police and fire services) and client groups concerned, especially children, young people and older people.
- Continue implementation of government actions to reduce childhood deaths and injuries in the Staying Safe Action Plan.
- Develop further and differentiated opportunities to deliver safety training through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) framework for school age children.
- Maintain and intensify the focus on safety in the home and fire safety (both of which have particular significance for young children) and safety on the roads (especially for secondary school aged children and young adults).
- Continue targeted support for disadvantaged families through the home safety equipment scheme, which provides information and support to make homes safer environments.
- Increase focus on reducing the risk factors for falls amongst older people, including using a range of data sources to identify those most at risk.
- Improve the integration of injury prevention into health professional education curricula.
- Address significant gaps in local and national data collection to improve understanding of the size and severity of unintentional injury.
- Build stronger relationships with local people to help raise awareness of key local injury related problems and target common issues.

References:

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4. *Better Safe than Sorry - Preventing unintentional injury to children*. Audit Commission. Report number: HNR3371, 2007.
5. Kirklees District Road Casualties 2011

6. Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) *Accidents and child development*. Report number: DCSF- 00255-2009, 2009.
7. West Yorkshire Fire Service Statistics. 2009.
8. Department for Transport. *Tackling the road safety implications of disadvantage*. April 2003.
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