

**Written evidence submitted by The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
(PHS0188)**

RoSPA is a charitable organisation whose aims are that people have a life free from serious accidental injury and we wish to exchange life-enhancing skills and knowledge to reduce serious accidental injuries. RoSPA's National Home Safety Committee brings together key partners to consider strategic approaches to accident prevention.

RESPONSE TO: Prevention in health and social care Inquiry

The nature of the issue: accident prevention in the home

Unintentional injuries in the home are responsible for substantial morbidity and mortality. Young children and older people are particularly at risk.

There are significant inequalities – with the vulnerable and those living in deprived communities being more susceptible to harm. Preventable accidents place a huge burden on our stretched NHS and social care services with over 33,000 hospital admissions among under fives in 2021-22 and around 425,000 admissions among over 65-year-olds, the majority of these as a result of falls.

Home accidents have not benefited from rigorous and enduring national strategic approaches and there is a lack of robust national accident data for use by public health professionals, but there is so much that we can do to stop unintentional injuries from happening.

Why it deserves attention now.

There are effective approaches available to prevent many home accidents. Young children, older people and society would greatly benefit from such approaches which would save lives and reduce injuries.

For example, child injury risk can be reduced through home modifications and undertaking a range of safety practices; providing education and supplying and fitting some safety equipment improves home safety and can reduce injury-related hospital admissions.

The largest evidence-based programme was the national Safe at Home Scheme which was managed by RoSPA on behalf of the Department for Education and delivered through local partners in over 130 areas of the country between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2011.

Safe At Home helped reduce the 5% annual rise in hospital admissions due to an unintentional injury to just 1%. In the 10 best performing SAH areas, a 29% reduction in hospital admissions appears to have been the result of the SAH programme, allied to excellent local leadership, enthusiasm and effective inter-agency coordination. At an estimated cost to society of £33,200 for a serious non-fatal injury to an under-5, this equated to a saving of £27million compared with the programme's cost of just £1.7million in these areas.

Recent research showed impact up to 2 years after the scheme ended.

The number of people aged 65 and over in England is projected by ONS to rise to over 20% of the population by 2028. Thirty percent of people aged 65 and over will fall at least once a year. For those aged 80 and over it is 50%. Falls kill over 4500 people over 65 every year, but for those who survive, a fall can lead to pain, distress, loss of confidence, lost independence and

an increased likelihood of repeat falls. Falls result in over £4.4 billion costs in social care and hip fracture costs alone.

RoSPA has championed evidence-based falls prevention approaches including strength and balance programmes. Home hazard assessment and improved stair design which could prevent 700 falls deaths on stairs alone.

How Government policy in this area could be improved.

Funding evidence based projects: Programmes like those mentioned above are proven to save lives and reduce injuries.

Local authority public health teams need to be consistently resourced so that they can specifically address accident prevention in their local communities as part of a long term plan

Short term funding has meant limited local schemes are often constrained and difficult to evaluate and sustain. Dedicated funding for national programmes would enhance effectiveness and long term benefit

Examples of important projects that need to be implemented include:

- Child Safety Equipment Programmes using evidence based child safety equipment programmes
- Whole-life falls prevention (children through to older people)
- Evidence based strength and balance programmes
- Safer stairs – Improving and adopting clear safety standards for stairs in housing stock
- Consistent home hazard assessment for older people vulnerable to falls

Data. Practitioners at local and national level need improved granularity and speed of access to data which includes cause, location, mechanism of accident and products involved. This is vital for priority setting, planning and evaluation.

Further Information:

Hill T, Coupland C, Kendrick D, *et al*: Impact of the national home safety equipment scheme ‘Safe At Home’ on hospital admissions for unintentional injury in children under 5: a controlled interrupted time series analysis.

<https://jech.bmj.com/content/76/1/53>

RoSPA Big Book of Accident Prevention:

<https://www.rospace.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/public-health/big-book.pdf>

University of Nottingham 2011 evaluation of the National Safe at Home Scheme:

<https://www.rospace.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/home-safety/final-evaluation-report-safe-at-home.pdf>

Public Health England. Reducing unintentional injuries on the roads among children and young people under 25 years. London: PHE, 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-unintentional-injuries-among-children-and-young-people>

Public Health England. Reducing unintentional injuries in and around the home among children under five years. London: PHE, 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-unintentional-injuries-among-children-and-young-people>

Watson M C and Errington G. Preventing unintentional injuries in children: successful approaches. Paediatrics and Child Health.2016; 26(5), 194-199

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1751722215002553>

Watson M C, Thompson S. Government must get serious about prevention BMJ 2018; 360 :k1279 doi:10.1136/bmj.k1279

<https://www.bmj.com/content/360/bmj.k1279.full>

RoSPA. Safe and active at all ages: a national strategy to prevent serious accidental injuries in England. Birmingham: RoSPA, 2018.

[A National Accident Prevention Strategy for England - RoSPA](#)

Watson M C and Lloyd J. IHPE Position Statement: Unintentional Home Injuries to Children (Under 5s). Lichfield, IHPE, 2019.

<https://ihpe.org.uk/resources/position-papers/>

Global Guidelines for Falls in Older Adults

<https://worldfallsguidelines.com/current-guidelines>

[Falls and fractures: consensus statement and resources pack - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[National population projections - Office for National Statistics](#)

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