

SUMMARY OF INTELLIGENCE ON ACCIDENTS

KEY FACTS

- Accidental injury is a leading cause of child death in England and Wales.
- Around 2.7 million accidents that lead people to seek hospital treatment occur in UK homes each year, over 40% of them caused by falls. Half a million people in England are admitted to hospital due to accidental injury each year.
- Treating injury costs the NHS over £2 billion a year.
- The cost to society of accidents in the home was estimated at £25 billion in 1996.
- Over 300,000 people are killed or injured in road traffic accidents in Great Britain each year.
- Falls are a major cause of disability and the leading cause of injury mortality in people aged over 75 in England and Wales.
- One-third to one-half of people aged over 65 fall each year.
- Over 400,000 older people in England attend accident and emergency departments following a fall.
- Up to 14,000 people die annually in the UK as a result of an osteoporotic hip fracture.

Inequalities exist

- There is a strong association between childhood injury and social deprivation, particularly for pedestrian injuries.
- Men are more likely to die from accidental injury than women. In England, the accidental injury death rate for men is double that for women. For young men (aged 15 to 24), the accidental injury death rate is over 3.5 times that for women in the same age group.

WE ARE NOW GOING TO...

Children and young people – starting on the right path

- Working with the charity SMARTRISK to assess the effectiveness of their 'Heroes' programme in changing behaviour and what lessons might be applied elsewhere. The programme warns adolescents about the risks of accidental injury and explains how they can avoid such risks.

Local communities leading for health

- Commission the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents to establish an accreditation scheme for safety centres across England to sustain best practice and new ways of delivering accident-prevention messages.

Increased physical activity reduces the risk of falls for older people (see physical activity factsheet for our plans to increase activity levels for the whole population).

Health Development Agency evidence briefings summarise evidence on the effectiveness of approaches to promote health, and include *Prevention and Reduction of Accidental Injury in Children and Older People* (2003)

(www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/accidental_injury_summary.pdf)

WHAT THE CONSULTATION RAISED

The most common subjects raised by consultation responses on accidents were road safety and raising public awareness. Issues also raised included older people, accidents in the home and in the workplace, and targeting groups such as the elderly with advice and home equipment.

WHAT WE ARE DOING ALREADY

The 2002 report by the Accidental Injury Task Force, *Preventing Accidental Injury: Priorities for Action*, outlined cross-government action that would have the greatest impact in preventing injury. It suggested that for modest investment good progress could be made quickly to avert deaths and illness due to accidental injury. The recommendations are being taken forward by government, local government and the NHS.

Road safety

- The Department for Transport (DfT) works with the Department of Health in promoting safe cycling and walking, especially for children travelling to school. In addition to reducing road accidents, these programmes also help to reduce obesity in children.
- A recent review of the Government's Road Safety Strategy showed that it is on course to meet its target for reduction in deaths and serious injuries to children. However, deaths involving teenagers and young adults have not decreased recently – in fact there were increases in deaths from car and motorcycle accidents in the 17–19 age group.
- The DfT's successful THINK campaign includes hard-hitting media messages aimed at teenagers. Educational material provided for secondary teachers by DfT and DfES includes practical messages on road safety for teenagers as part of their citizenship classes.

Children

- Sure Start programmes work to reduce the number of children aged 0–4 admitted to hospital as an emergency with gastro-enteritis, a respiratory infection or a severe injury.

- The National Service Framework for Children, published in September 2004, recommends that home visitors advise parents with very young children on steps to take to protect their children against falls, scalding, burns, drowning, choking and poisoning.
- The Child Accident Prevention Trust mounts Child Safety week every June to encourage local child safety initiatives.
- The Community Fire Service leads local efforts to teach fire safety to parents and children.

Older people

- The National Service Framework for Older People (2001) requires integrated falls services to be in place locally by 2005. It provides guidelines on the elements these services need.
- NICE will publish clinical guidelines on preventing falls in older people in November 2004.
- Measures for older people include installation of stair and bath rails at home, checking medicines that might weaken muscle tone, and prescribing a course of physical activity tailored to the condition and needs of the individual.
- The National Primary Care Development Team has created a Healthy Communities Collaborative that has successfully reduced falls in older people by 32% in three deprived communities.
- The Department of Health, working with Help the Aged, published guidance for managers and staff in residential care homes (2004) and another document giving examples of falls services across England (2003).
- The National Osteoporosis Society published the *Primary Care Strategy for Osteoporosis and Falls – England* (2002) and is taking forward its Osteoporosis Nurse Initiative providing a falls and fracture risk assessment programme to reduce the number of osteoporotic fractures in older people.
- More than 300,000 people are now benefiting from intermediate care services, 200,000 as a result of new services developed since 1999.

Patients

- The Government has established the National Patient Safety Agency to improve the safety of NHS patient care by promoting an open and fair culture and by introducing a new national reporting and learning system for patient safety incidents. The reporting system is being implemented across the NHS during 2004.
- The NHS Improvement Network is supporting hospitals in developing interventions to reduce in-patient falls.

WE WILL HAVE DELIVERED IF...

...we reduce death and injury from accidents, and:

- 'reduce the number of accidental fire-related deaths in the home by 20%'; and
- 'reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in Great Britain in road accidents by 40% and the number of children killed or seriously injured by 50%' (2004 Government PSA targets).