Growing up with the London Fire Brigade
London Fire Brigade works with all sections of the community. Through our targeted educational programmes, we encourage young people to adopt good habits and behaviours that they can then take with them right into adulthood.

- Children can start demonstrating firesetting behaviour from a very young age and that’s where the Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Scheme comes in. Through one-to-one home visits they help to cut this.

- From as young as six children can learn about fire safety through our schools officers, who visit almost 2200 primary schools every year.

- The LIFE scheme helps give teenagers a new direction, particularly those most at risk of offending. And some of them go on to become firefighters!

- Young people from the age of 14-18, can join our Community Fire Cadet scheme if they make a regular commitment to attend a fire station for one evening a week for 15 months. This can count towards a recognised BTEC qualification.
Catching them early
What makes a child start fires? How can it be stopped? That’s what our Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Scheme (JFIS) staff have been addressing for over 10 years. They work one-to-one with children up to the age of 18 years who set fires and use age-appropriate fire safety messages to stop the behaviour.

How it works
The reasons for firesetting can often be complex so every intervention is tailored to suit each child’s individual needs. We would begin by making an initial home visit to outline the nature of our work and gather information about the child’s history and their firesetting. We would then identify the reasons for it, assess the need for further visits and highlight any other agencies that need to be involved, for example, social services, mental health and mentoring programmes.

To help tackle the firesetting behaviour, we introduce a variety of techniques. These are based on both age and understanding.

**Age 0 – 5 yrs** The use of play to convey the simple message ‘stay away’ from fire.

**Age 6 – 8 yrs** Drawings, songs and picture books that teach children never to play with fire.

**Age 9 – 11 yrs** Stories and exercises that explore the difference between good and bad fires.

**Age 12 – 15 yrs** Scenario and case study discussions that look at consequences, decision making and good social skills.

Once the firesetting behaviour has finished, and we have stopped making the visits, we carry out six-month and two-year follow-up calls to families to monitor any return to firesetting. These telephone calls confirm over 90 per cent of our cases do not set further fires after intervention.

National recognition
The JFIS programme was recently featured in a major TV documentary called *The Kids That Play With Fire*. Cameras followed the work of the JFIS team over four months at the end of 2010, focusing on visits to a 10 year old boy and 15 year old girl who were both setting fires at home. The programme was well received by television reviewers who recognised the impact we have. *Time Out* said “the fire service tackle each case with sensitivity and psychological know-how” while the *Radio Times* said the programme showed “the kind of parenting lessons only the fire service can give.”

Since the broadcast our team has been approached by the NSPCC, Middlesex University and the University of West England, with a view to working together in the future.

A real success story
So far, the Brigade has helped over 2,800 children from across London of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

“The combination of acceptable behaviour contracts and the firesetters scheme dramatically reduced the incidences of fires on the estate. As far as I am aware none of those on the scheme have continued offending.”

Neighbourhood Specialist Officer, Merton

“Please pass on my thanks as the officer in the case to all concerned. This was a fantastic piece of work.”

Acting Detective Inspector, Child Abuse Investigation
Top of the class
Teaching the right message

Our workshop packages have been created and developed by educationalists and are specifically targeted at years Two and Five. Our schools officers use their training and expertise to deliver fire safety messages in a sensitive and reassuring way. This is designed to help children understand the importance of home fire safety without becoming unduly worried about a fire happening at home.

Classroom-based, interactive workshops highlight the key themes central to raising awareness of fire safety in the home:

- **Prevention**: how to prevent fires starting in the first place.
- **Detection**: the importance of smoke alarms and where to get them.
- **Escape**: how to get out of your home if you have a fire.

In addition to this, we also offer the following tailored services:

- Workshops focusing on the consequences of fire play, arson and hoax calls.
- Fire safety workshops at Special Educational Needs schools and Pupil Referral Units.
- Whole school ‘Activity Days’ following a fatal fire involving children. We delivered one of these following the fire at Lakanal House in Southwark where three children died.

Measuring the impact

In 2010/11 we evaluated the programme by testing information retention among children who had experienced one of our visits more than 12 months previously. The average score was 82 per cent, demonstrating that we are providing an effective service that makes a sustained impression on school-age children.

What are the benefits in telling children about fire safety?

We know that if you teach children at an early age then they are far less likely to have a fire or be a victim of one. We inform and educate children to understand the dangers of fire and how to stay safe, and encourage them to share this message with their families. We also promote the importance of smoke alarms too.

Targeting those most at risk

We aim to educate every child in London and encourage them to take fire safety messages home to their families. Due to high demand though, we have to prioritise offering this opportunity to those schools in areas of higher risk from accidental fires at home.

Calling 999: when and how to make an emergency call.

“A great, interactive and engaging visit. The workshop was pitched at an appropriate level for the children. By the end of the workshop all children had developed a good understanding of fire safety messages.”

Year Two teacher, The Annunciation Roman Catholic Infant School, Barnet

“Fantastic presentation! The schools officer had a lovely, humorous manner and the children responded very well to him. Thank you!”

Year Five teacher, St. Luke’s Church of England Primary, Islington

Over 1 MILLION children visited in 10 years
A focused approach

The scheme works by offering an intense five-day course that give youngsters the opportunity to really focus on new skills, while building up a rapport with the staff who run them. The staff explain the impact and consequences of antisocial behaviour, encourage cooperative working, and most importantly build confidence and self-esteem in young people so they are less inclined to commit crime, and instead continue with their education or employment.

The course mimics the real job of a firefighter as participants take part in a range of activities from using ladders, casualty rescue techniques and first aid, as well as learning about fire safety and prevention. Participants have their performance monitored and are given feedback, and at the end of the week they take part in a passing out ceremony, so they can feel like they’ve really achieved something.

How does it benefit London?

Besides helping the young people who attend the course, it makes a big difference to Londoners as well. We’ve seen a real decline in the number of deliberate fires and hoax calls in recent years, particularly in the boroughs where the scheme runs.

What young people say about LIFE

“Before I started the LIFE course I couldn’t be bothered with learning and listening to the teacher. I was hanging with the wrong people and going down the wrong path. One day I got into a fight and arrested for GBH and after this I was eventually put on the LIFE project. At first I was worried, but then the first day was great. The trainers were really friendly and didn’t judge.

I have achieved so much from doing the LIFE course and am now studying for a Public Services National Certificate. I look at life in a completely different way.”

Billie, Dagenham LIFE

Some things we are really proud of

- There’s a noticeable reduction in deliberate fire setting behaviour in the boroughs where the scheme is operating.
- Seven other fire and rescue services have introduced new programmes like LIFE in their areas having seen the success in London.
- LIFE has been featured on national and regional news including London Tonight, BBC and Inside Crime.
- And we now have two serving firefighters who joined us after completing a LIFE course.

Over 500 courses delivered since 2002

There’s often more to youth crime than what we see in newspaper headlines, but one thing is certain – LFB’s LIFE scheme is making a positive difference right across London. Young people, who may have already begun offending, or be at risk of social exclusion, can take part in one of our LIFE courses. This helps to address antisocial and dangerous behaviour, while we build up our relationships with the local community where the scheme operates.
Training for the future with Cadets
Community Fire Cadets (CFC) offers young people the opportunity to gain a credible qualification and life skills they can use in their future workplace. They work alongside London Fire Brigade staff on a vocationally-relevant youth engagement programme.

How does it work?
CFC is a long-term course for young people from all backgrounds and abilities from age 14 up to their 18th birthday who commit to train at a fire station for 48 weeks over a 15-month period. It is designed to improve community cohesion and reduce undesirable behaviour by enhancing key citizenship skills. It gives cadets the chance to play positive roles in their local communities through local projects and joint activities with other uniformed cadet groups.

The cadets take part in fire brigade-led activities with a developmental outcome at a local fire station one evening per week. They learn about the changing role of the modern fire and rescue service and how criminal and antisocial behaviour affect the work of the Brigade.

As well as enhancing their own knowledge of community fire safety, they are encouraged to share this with their friends and families, which contributes to an overall reduction in fires, fire injuries, hoax calls and attacks on firefighters.

As places on CFC courses are limited, the Brigade works in partnership with local agencies to identify those who would benefit most from taking part in the course. So far, young people in three London boroughs have had the chance to take part on a CFC course, and we hope to provide this to more in the future.

Something to offer
The course not only builds up skills and confidence, but it also puts cadets on a stronger footing with future employers too. Cadets have the opportunity to achieve a recognised vocational qualification – the Edexcel Level 2 BTEC Award and Certificate in Fire and Rescue Services in the Community. This demonstrates a real commitment to learning and developing practical skills that are useful in the workplace. Cadets have also represented the Brigade at prestigious events such as The Lord Mayor’s Show, London Fire Brigade Carol Service and the Firefighters Memorial Service.

Building positive outcomes
As a respected body in the community the Brigade is well-placed to reach out to young people, especially those who lack the confidence, social skills or opportunity to succeed. Taking part in the scheme has a positive outcome for cadets, with many going onto further education, studying Public Services at college while others have secured apprenticeships and employment.

It’s good for the Brigade too, as CFC allows us to build closer ties with the local community by working in partnership with other agencies in London. The cadets are linked through YO U London (Youth Organisations – Uniform) to the mayor’s ‘Time for Action’ plan, promoting a range of positive activities for young people.

Thomas’s story
“I joined the Community Fire Cadets course after completing the LIFE course, so I already knew that I wanted to be a firefighter. It really helped further my enthusiasm and interest though, besides gaining a real insight into the job. It also increased my confidence and team-working skills, and I thoroughly enjoyed the activities that we took part in, like the breathing apparatus drill, hose running drills and the camp at the end of the course. I was so pleased to receive the BTEC qualification from the CFC course as it gave me a great sense of achievement as well as invaluable experience when I applied for the London Fire Brigade. I’m now a serving firefighter and loving every minute of it!”

Thomas
Firefighter, Chelsea Fire Station
How to get in touch
Our youth engagement programmes are already recognised as both successful and life changing, but they are resource intensive, particularly at a time when money is tight. With your help there is so much more we can do. If your company is interested in funding one of our schemes please contact our Community Safety Department:
London Fire Brigade, 169 Union Street SE1 0LL
T: 020 8555 1200 x30690
You can also contact our specialist teams directly for further information:
LIFE: life4@london-fire.gov.uk
Schools: schoolofficers@london-fire.gov.uk
Cadets: communityfirecadets@london-fire.gov.uk
JFIS: firesetters@london-fire.gov.uk

london-fire.gov.uk