

The firesetter



So what is this fascination many young people have with fire?

Every year, fire-related statistics are collected by Fire Brigades and local authorities throughout the UK. They are used to find solutions to firesetting and develop tactics to defeat deliberate ignitors (arsonists) across the country.

This type of information includes:

- ★ How a fire started?
- ★ Where did the fire happen?
- ★ Was property involved?
- ★ What material was lit to cause the fire?
- ★ How much damage was caused?
- ★ Were there any casualties? Who were they? (age, sex etc)
- ★ Were there any injuries?
- ★ When did the fire take place and how long did it last?
- ★ Were the Fire Brigade called?
- ★ Were there any smoke alarms? Did they work?
- ★ How was the fire-fighting handled? (before and after brigade attendance)
- ★ Were any rescue methods used?

'Crimestoppers' is a national initiative run by the police that encourages people to come forward, anonymously, if they have any information about a crime that may be helpful to the police. **CRIMESTOPPERS 0800 555 111**

Crimestoppers 'Arson' Alert is part of this scheme and some Fire Brigades, such as Suffolk, now carry the helpline number on all their Fire Engines. Another problem that Fire Brigades face are hoax calls. Not only do they waste valuable time and resources but they can stop the Fire Brigade attending REAL fires, and saving lives.

In Lancashire an innovative partnership between Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and mobile phone providers means that hoaxers can now be identified and punished.

In Northumbria the Police, along with the Tyne and Wear Fire Brigade established the pioneering '**Arson Task Force**'. Its objective was clear - to reduce deliberate ignitions and firesetting in Newcastle. In the west of the City, criminal acts accounted for 83% of property fires and 90% of all outdoor fires, costing the Fire Brigade £200,000 every month. That's wasted money, money they could have used to provide pensioners with free smoke alarms, or paid for officers to run fire safety courses at schools.

Discuss other positive ways the Fire Brigade could have used this money?



This Force has worked on reducing such instances (in number and scale). This has required an understanding of the behavioural causes of young people becoming involved in deliberate ignitions and firesetting.

The fascination

Fire can be attractive, but it can also be terrifying as well...

People have always been intrigued by fire. Whether it's an open fire or smoking a cigarette, a child may stare for some time to appreciate a flickering flame.

We are taught from an early age that fire can be dangerous and that it should be treated with care. But fire is also intriguing. We are told **'NO'**, or be careful, and this can fuel our interest. Naturally we want to know more about it and that's fine, as long as we respect what it can do and act responsibly and that means never playing with fire. We need to understand the perils and the pitfalls of experimenting with fire and when we can, we need to help others understand why it can be so dangerous.

Why do young children play with matches and lighters etc?

- ★ Peer pressure from other children.
- ★ A belief that they are toys; they are small enough to fit in their hands.
- ★ Curiosity with flames and their attractive properties.
- ★ A need to know what happens when things are set alight.
- ★ A cry for help.
- ★ A way of showing anger/upset.
- ★ Copying parents i.e lighting a cigarette.

Children from families where a parent smokes are particularly at risk because lighters or matches are more readily available. Young people whose parents work in fire-related industries such as the Fire Brigade or some

manufacturing industries can also have a greater fascination. So remember, pass on the information you learn from Be-right Spark to your parents, families and friends.

Who is a potential firesetter?

Research shows that children from the following families may be at risk:

- ★ Single parent.
- ★ Ill-disciplined with no structured lifestyle or routine.
- ★ Living on or below the poverty line.
- ★ Those where there is no emotional stability.

