

## **Guidance note: Risks associated with smoking in a care service**

### **Background**

Following an inquest where a person died after a care worker had left her having assisted her to light a cigarette, we have consulted others and now issue the guidance below.

### **Legal context**

Residential care homes are exempt from smoke-free legislation.

Although it is not a legal requirement, designated indoor smoking rooms or bedrooms may be made available for use by those residents wishing to smoke indoors. (See article from [carehome.co.uk](http://carehome.co.uk) linked below.) If designated rooms are provided, care homes are advised to limit any contact non-smokers may have with second-hand smoke as far as is practicable.

There remains a ban on staff smoking in a care home, but an outdoor area can be designated for staff and visitors.

### **Advice**

It is important that both the health risks and fire risks associated with smoking to those receiving care and support and those providing it are assessed and mitigated.

In particular we would not ordinarily expect care workers to assist people to smoke because of the potential fire and health risks. Where this does happen it must be for a good reason and be part of an agreed plan and in the knowledge of those managing the service. It must be included within the care plan and risk assessment and wherever possible alternatives should be explored to eliminate or reduce the risks, for example the use of e-cigarettes. The advice of the fire service should always be sought.

The risks associated with smoking must be addressed in the service's policies and procedures and expectations of care workers in relation to smoking and assisting others made clear.

## References/resources

- Health & Safety Executive [fire safety website](#).
- Helpful [article on the topic](#) from carehome.co.uk.