



Home Office

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP
Minister of State for Crime, Policing
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Sarah Bourke
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Dear Sarah Bourke

Regulation 28: Report to prevent future deaths

I am writing in response to your report, sent on 13 October, concerning the death of Mr Reginald Cauthery, issued under paragraph 7, Schedule 5 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and Regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013.

First, I would like to offer my sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Mr Cauthery. You have asked me to respond, in my capacity as Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire, to your concerns regarding the function and use of the telecare system and its connection to smoke detection alarms. I note the inquest concluded that Mr Cauthery died from a fire at his own home, which was likely to have been caused by a fault in his mechanised bed.

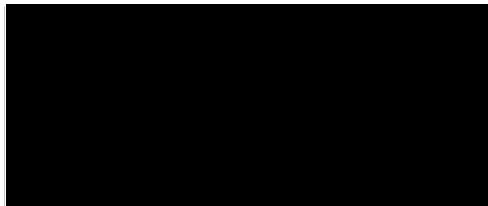
The Home Office is responsible for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which applies to existing non-domestic premises and the common parts of multi-occupied residential buildings. It does not apply to individual homes. The Fire Safety Order places certain duties on the person responsible for the premises (usually the owner, landlord or employer) to ensure its fire safety. It is Local authorities that have a duty under the Housing Act 2004 to take enforcement action if they identify seriously hazardous conditions - including fire - in residential accommodation. This is assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System risk assessment tool.

Under the FSO, Fire and rescue services do not have statutory powers to enforce changes to telecare systems. Further, fire and rescue services (FRSs) do not install or maintain telecare systems and have no capability to link them to smoke alarms. Such work must be undertaken by telecare engineers.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires FRSs to undertake community fire safety activity to the extent they consider it reasonable. As part of their fire prevention function FRSs provide home fire safety checks which includes educating individuals on fire safety measures in their homes.

Local agencies are best placed to consider the care packages and equipment, including telecare systems, that are required to support vulnerable people. Officials from my Department have sought information from London Fire Brigade (LFB) on its policy regarding telecare systems. LFB confirmed that where telecare systems are installed it advises all care providers and support workers that the systems should be linked to smoke alarms as standard.

To ensure that lessons from this case are learned, the Home Office will be sharing information from this case with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), which drives improvement and development throughout the UK FRSs. We will encourage it to disseminate the findings from your Regulation 28 report and ask FRSs (as part of their fire safety checks) to continue highlighting the importance of linking telecare systems to smoke alarms to help inform local agencies and carers about using them effectively.



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