



The National Home Safety Equipment Scheme
Reducing injuries to children at home

Below are some case studies and family comments from a number of areas around the country.

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Safe At Home case study 1: Dudley

"I'm not daft, but sometimes you do need a bit of advice". In one short sentence, Dudley mum Laura Duckhouse succinctly sums up RoSPA's trailblazing Safe At Home scheme.

The project, which supplies and installs home safety equipment and provides parents with accident prevention advice, is the largest of its kind in the world. The fact is that while accidents in the home are the biggest cause of injury to under-fives, many of them can be easily prevented. Safe At Home simply aims to build on the good work many parents are already doing to keep their children out of harm's way by aiding supervision with the "right tools for the job". And as Laura, her partner Darren, and their 11-month-old daughter Lauren are discovering, the project is an "absolute lifesaver".

Laura, aged 29 and originally from Worcester, moved to Kingswinford in Dudley three years ago to be with Darren. She takes great pride in keeping her immaculate home spotless, but when two became three with the arrival of Lauren, the challenge of keeping on top of the housework paled next to that of keeping a curious and active baby safe.

Laura says: "I'm petrified of anything happening to Lauren, she's so lovely. And anything could happen, so this scheme is brilliant. It has saved her from hurting herself, and I've got a little nephew too, so it's not just about Lauren." After a slight pause, she adds with a grin: "Plus, it's about what people think of me too - if I'm not doing my best to protect Lauren, they might think I'm not a good mother."

But of course, accidents in the home can happen so easily, especially when there are a thousand-and-one competing demands for time and attention. And every parent or carer knows how tiredness can affect judgement and concentration - even for a super-mum like Laura. "There was one time when I was sat on the chair in my lounge, exhausted because Lauren was teething," she says with a rueful smile. "I shut my eyes for just a second only to open them to find she'd got black all over her face and over the carpet from the coals in the fireplace." Thankfully, the coals weren't hot, but the incident provided an object lesson in how quickly accidents can happen, prompting Laura to some hasty make-do measures. "We put two big white cushions in front of the fire," she explains. "But they didn't stay white for long - they were soon wrecked!"

Aware that a new stage in Lauren's development was just around the corner, Laura and Darren, also 29, knew that home safety equipment could play an important part in keeping their inquisitive soon-to-be toddler safe. What was more, Laura's severe asthma was being exacerbated by running backwards and forwards between rooms as she juggled all the responsibilities of being a full-time mum and a homemaker.



Happily, Safe At Home is now running in nearly 60 areas in England in order to serve families like Laura and Darren's. RoSPA delivers the project by working with councils, charities and children's centres, and it was on one of her weekly trips to a local children's centre that Laura first came into contact with the scheme. She met Keith Marshall, Dudley Council's home safety equipment installer, who soon arranged a home assessment - where RoSPA-trained professionals visit a property to see what equipment might be needed to improve safety.

Keith works flat out to make sure families who qualify for help through Safe At Home get the equipment they need. He says: "Laura and Darren's situation is very common. Many parents love their child and want to protect them but the equipment is expensive. Like with Laura's fireplace - the child doesn't know whether the coals are hot or cold, and in fact they can stay hot for a while. Although Laura had put two cushions in front of the fire, that might have presented more of a problem than it solved because the cushions could have been a fire hazard. By providing a fireguard we eliminated the problem, which has given Laura more confidence and freedom - she doesn't have to keep running in here to make sure Lauren isn't chewing on coals."

In addition to the fireguard, Laura and Darren received safety gates, a non-slip bathmat, cupboard locks, corner cushions for their coffee table and window restrictors.

Many Safe At Home schemes involve co-operation with other agencies too, as is the case in Dudley, where Keith co-ordinates home assessments with the fire service. The partnership saves the fire service time and allows them to offer their own advice and equipment. In Laura and Darren's home, for instance, vital smoke detectors were fitted.

But while Laura and Darren hope their fire alarms will never sound a beep in anger, the equipment delivered by Keith is already being pressed into service. "It was the kitchen I was mainly worried about," Laura says. "I like to keep a clean home so I've got lots of bleach and washing powder - the cupboard locks I've been supplied with are brilliant. I've also got an oven that gets hot on the outside and Lauren could pull herself up on it so it was

important to get a safety gate on the door to the kitchen too.

"When we moved in to this house a few months ago it scared us to death that Lauren could fall out of the windows, because although they had locks on them I know she would've soon figured it out. Keith went to see our landlord about installing window restrictors - along with everything else - and now they're in I know there's no way she'll open those windows."

Stories like Laura's demonstrate RoSPA's mission - to save lives and reduce injuries - in practice. But in a scheme the size of Safe At Home, which aims to help 100,000 families across England, that reality can sometimes be obscured by the sheer scale of the project. That's why Errol Taylor, RoSPA deputy chief executive, visited Laura to get a firsthand glimpse of the difference Safe At Home is making.

Errol was more than impressed at how the scheme was complementing the efforts Laura and Darren were already putting into Lauren's safety. He also very much enjoyed meeting Lauren: "She is a delightful toddler, full of curiosity about the world around her," he says. "It really is tremendous to be helping Lauren's parents keep her safe by providing expensive equipment such as safety gates and fireguards.

These items are great at preventing Lauren from getting too close to hot surfaces, scalding liquids and toxic cleaning products.

"But home safety doesn't have to be expensive - by seeing the world through Lauren's eyes we can also make small changes which make a big difference. For example, fixing the flat screen TV to the wall means that it can't topple over when tugged. That's what the information and advice element of Safe At Home is all about."

Laura, Darren and Lauren are not alone in Dudley in receiving help through Safe At Home. The local authority, which was the first in the country to be approved for Safe At Home funding, had been running a similar project for six years before the national home safety equipment scheme was officially launched in February. Now around 150 families in the borough have received safety equipment, with many more on the waiting list and an even greater number benefiting from the kind of accident prevention advice Laura found to be so handy.

Dolores Nellany, the council's food and occupational safety manager, heard about Safe At Home just in time. "If it wasn't for RoSPA, our scheme would have folded," she says. "We were living hand to mouth because we've never really had proper funding," she adds.

Councillor David Stanley, the council's lead member for the environment and culture, also knows the value of the scheme, and will be working with Dolores to ensure it can be sustained for years to come. "Far too many children are hurt as a result of accidents in the home, so it is a privilege to have support from RoSPA to help us prevent these unintentional and unnecessary injuries," Councillor Stanley says. "We are indebted to RoSPA for offering us support in protecting the borough's children. Safe At Home really is a wonderful scheme."

His sentiments are echoed by Laura as she watches her playful 11-month-old scramble to her feet and attempt a few wobbly steps across the living room floor. "It's such a brilliant scheme; I just don't know what I'd do without it."



Laura and Lauren with (l-r) Dolores Nellany, Dudley Council's food and occupational safety manager, Errol Taylor, RoSPA deputy chief executive, Councillor David Stanley, cabinet member for environment and health at Dudley Council, and Keith Marshall, Dudley Council home safety equipment installer.



Safe At Home Case Study 2: Sunderland

Keeping Sunderland's Children Safe At Home

"It's really helpful to have the window restrictors on them now – so I'm over the moon that they were fitted."

AN INNOVATIVE scheme to reduce the number of child accidents in Sunderland looks set to be a success. The Safe At Home scheme is run by ETEC Development Trust in partnership with Sunderland Sure Start Children's Centres, Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. The scheme has now fitted safety equipment in more than 500 households across Sunderland.

The national scheme, which started in Sunderland in November 2009, aims to supply and fit a wide range of safety equipment for eligible families across the Sunderland area in a bid to reduce the number of accidents suffered by children in the home.

Janet Laidler, ETEC's Children's Essentials Service Project Manager, said: "I think this is a brilliant scheme. The equipment is supplied and fitted absolutely free. Not only does this help families with the expense of making a home safe for young children but it also ensures that the equipment is used and installed correctly."

Hospital theatre operative Stacey Krager, of St Gabriels, Sunderland, is just one of the Sunderland residents to have benefited from the scheme.

Stacey had already started to make her home safe for her two young children by installing a safety gate and corner cushions but was able to improve things further through Safe At Home.

Safe at Home fitted Stacey's home with a fire guard, window restrictors and a non-slip bath mat after a referral from her health visitor when she had her second child, seven-month-old Aaron. Her eldest child Reece, two and a half, also benefits from the scheme.

Stacey said: "We have very low level Velux windows upstairs and if Reece just wandered into our room – as he often does – he could fall through them.

"It's really helpful to have the window restrictors on them now – so I'm over the moon that they were fitted. It's more helpful having the professionals fit the safety equipment as you know they are doing it right and installing it in appropriate places. When you are installing the equipment yourself, you are never quite sure if you are doing it right."

RoSPA figures based on hospital attendances showed that Sunderland was the 11th worst place in England for child accidents.

Janet Laidler said: "ETEC already had a contract with Sure Start in Sunderland to provide home safety equipment to a number of families in the area.

"However, there was no fitting service and the equipment pack was less comprehensive.

"The introduction of Safe At Home created an opportunity for the two schemes to be merged. This allowed funding, set aside by the local authority for child safety, to be used to increase the reach of the new scheme to a wider cross-section of the community."

Success of the Sunderland scheme will be monitored at the end of its first year against statistics provided by Sunderland Royal Hospital.



Safe At Home Case Study 3: Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton Families Benefit from National Home Safety Equipment Scheme

A major new scheme aimed at reducing home accidents among under-fives has been launched in Wolverhampton.

Among those who have already benefited from the initiative is Maryann Edge, 32, and her children, Lily, aged six months, and Tom, aged three. They recently received a visit from Steve Tate, home safety officer for the city's Bushbury Triangle Children's Centre.

One of the first things he did was to fit a potentially life-saving safety gate which has already proved effective at keeping Lily and Tom away from the home's number one risk: stairs.

Every year, more than 230,000 children under the age of five, find themselves in hospital emergency departments as a result of a fall.

In addition, Steve fitted a fireguard around Maryann's fireplace to protect her youngsters from the sharp corners at eye height.

But the living room isn't the only area of their home that was made safer as a result of the scheme.

Maryann said: "The visit has made me think much more about safety in all areas of the house. The whole family now uses the bath mat because it stops us from slipping and we like the cupboard locks in the kitchen."

Bushbury Triangle joined the national Safe At Home scheme in January to support a long list of vulnerable families who can benefit from the whole package of information, education and professionally-installed equipment.

The project builds on an existing home safety service that was already being offered by the centre to the community.

Safe At Home is complementing local efforts to improve the lives of residents where unemployment is high because of decades of decline in Wolverhampton's manufacturing industries.

Although the city has developed a science park and is becoming a regional centre for shopping and entertainment, it is ranked among the 10 per cent most deprived local authorities in England.

Unfortunately, high accidental injury rates are normally associated with deprivation . Fortunately, Wolverhampton is bucking this trend.

This is thanks to great community facilities like Bushbury Triangle, which is a hive of activity offering a well-equipped nursery and a range of educational services including ante and post natal support and classes in parenting, nutrition and computer literacy.

Since Steve Tate and Gill Heath, the centre's business manager, saw the opportunity to join the national project, they have been helping local families to cut the risk of accidental injuries by introducing them to slides, factsheets, films, spot-the-hazard exercises and discussion groups.

Errol Taylor, RoSPA deputy chief executive, went to visit Maryann and her family to witness firsthand the difference being made by Safe At Home.

"Lily and Tom are delightful children, full of curiosity about the world around them," he said. "It really is tremendous to be helping their mum keep them safe by providing expensive equipment such as safety gates and fireguards. These items are great at preventing children from getting too close to hot surfaces, scalding liquids and toxic cleaning products.

"However, home safety doesn't have to be expensive. By seeing the world through Lily and Tom's eyes, we can also make small changes that make a big difference, and that's what the training and advice element is all about."

By concentrating on the areas with the highest injury rates, Bushbury's staff should be able to make a big difference to the lives of Maryann and her neighbours, as well as demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the centre's work in tackling domestic accidents.

Gill Heath said: "We not only fit safety equipment for families but also identify other hazards in the home. Families, like Maryann's, welcome the opportunity to learn how they can contribute to making their home a safer place to live, for their children and themselves."

Safe At Home was launched nationally in February 2009 after RoSPA was selected by the Department for Education (formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families) to run a new £18million national home safety equipment scheme. It was the largest contract awarded to the safety charity during its 93-year history.

The evidence shows that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be injured or killed in accidents. In fact, children of parents who are long-term unemployed or who have never worked are 13 times more likely to die as a result of unintentional injury and 37 times more likely to die from exposure to smoke, fire or flames than children of parents in higher managerial or professional occupations.

See www.safeathome.rospa.com for more information, or call Bushbury Triangle Children's Centre on 01902 862693



From left: Safe At Home co-ordinator Sarah Brent, RoSPA's deputy chief executive Errol Taylor, Maryann Edge with her children Lily and Tom, and Steve Tate of Bushbury Triangle Children's Centre.



Comments from other families

Below are just a selection of comments that families have made to our co-ordinators as they have visited homes across the country. We'd love to have your comments too.

Rochdale

Family were very happy with the service and felt their home was much safer now the equipment has been installed. Child is 14 months old, very mobile and inquisitive so family felt the safety gates, cupboard locks and fire guard were imperative to their child's safety in the home.

"Good service. Fitter nice and friendly and explained all about the equipment."
"Children's centre worker went through checklist and gave lots of useful advice such as cold water in bath first."

Daughter 12 months old and crawling, gates stop her getting upstairs.
Mum felt much happier and thought home safer now equipment is installed.

"Excellent service!"
16month old son had recently burnt his hand on a radiator so family were referred to Children's Centre for the equipment. Mum said visit from CC worker had made her think about safety in the home and as such she had re-organised the house to make it safer for the children.

Sefton

Chaela was very complimentary of the scheme as she now feels safer in the home. She stated that she can leave the children in the living room knowing that they can't get upstairs and that the fireguard is in place to stop burns/scalds.

Sarah was a very safety conscious mum who had been very worried about her son, Kyle's safety. As she is pregnant she wanted to make sure her home was safe for both children. She felt the SAH scheme had helped to make her home safer and eased some of the worries she has now Kyle is crawling and investigating more. She was considering purchasing the equipment but as she is on a limited income it would have been difficult, again SAH had eased her worries.

Sarah was extremely happy with the scheme and has told friends about the scheme so that they can get the same equipment and advice, which she felt was invaluable to parents.

Liverpool

Lyndsey felt that the scheme was really good and was very happy with the service she had received. She felt that her home was now safer for her daughter, who had already had a fall on the stairs and now she did not have to worry about her getting up the stairs.

In another family both parents were 'made up' with the scheme as they felt it had made them think seriously about the safety of their baby. They had just bought some of the equipment, but had returned the safety gates as the ones supplied by RoSPA were much safer. They had been visited by the Family Support Worker and were very complimentary about the advice they had

been given. They also commented on how helpful the fitter had been and how he had also given lots of advice.



Lynne and her family were extremely happy with the scheme. They had heard about it through the Children's Centre and had been visited by the Family Support Worker who had given them lots of advice. Within two days of the visit the equipment was fitted and they were very impressed with the service. They felt the house was safer and that the equipment was essential to keep the children safe.

According to Kelly, the scheme is really good and has made a real difference as home feels safer. Child 15 months old and crawling so now Mum feels she can allow her to explore the home. The Health visitor went through checklist and hi-lighted a number of key safety issues which Kelly was not aware of – e.g. cold water in bath first and Kelly felt this was really useful and important. The equipment was fitted within a week of the visit which Kelly felt was an excellent service.

Rotherham

Dana's family were very happy with the service and felt their home was much safer now the equipment has been installed. There are 2 children aged 6 months and 1 year old. Both children are very mobile and inquisitive so family felt the safety gates and cupboard locks were very important to their children's safety in the home. Dad felt that they were able to go into the kitchen to cook and although they could still see the children in the living room they could not get into the kitchen.

Salford

Karen was referred to scheme after son had an accident on the stairs. FIS sent a worker round the same day and fitting was completed within the week. Karen was very pleased with the service and felt the scheme was excellent. She now feels her house is safer and she can leave children in room for a short-time and knows they are safe.

Wigan

Nadine was extremely happy with the service and felt her home was much safer now the equipment has been installed. She has three children all of which are very mobile and inquisitive and she has had concerns that they are able to get up and down the stairs and felt the safety gates had made the stairs much safer. Nadine was very positive about the scheme and felt it should be offered to more families as safety equipment is so important.

Diane felt the service was excellent. She was desperate for equipment, particularly cupboard locks as the youngest was very inquisitive and kept taking things from the cupboards. She felt much happier and thought home safer now equipment is installed.

Dudley

Nazma found out about the scheme through a friend and the local Sure Start centre. It took some time for the referral to be followed up but once the home check had been completed the installation was then being done only one week later.

She said the check was very thorough and really good. The check made her think about aspects of common-sense that had not occurred to her such as moving the kettle away from the edge of a work-surface.

Southampton

Shajeda was really happy with the safety gates that had been fitted into her flat. (Shajeda lives in one of the problematic apartment blocks in Southampton with 4 staircases...) She also felt that the cupboard locks had made an improvement to the safety of the house.



Middlesbrough

Scarlett, 18 months old, fell 3 months ago when her sibling was carrying her, She had 3 days in hospital. Her mother felt the equipment would be very helpful and give her peace of mind.

Bolton

Karen said the Scheme is 'excellent' and has made her feel much safer in the home. Karen felt the visit from the worker from Little Lever Children's Centre had made her more aware of safety and hi-lighted a number of issues which she had not considered.

The fitting had been delayed slightly as Karen had been unable to keep a couple of appointments due to other commitments but she stated that the fitting company were very understanding and were able to come as soon as she was available.

Oldham

Jodie was very happy with the service and felt her home was much safer now the equipment has been installed. She had been thinking of getting some equipment but had not been able to afford them so this was a great help financially. She had heard about the scheme from her friend who had already got the equipment and so contacted the Children's Centre who arranged for someone to visit. She said the visit had been useful and she had learnt a lot.

Rachel was happy with the scheme and felt it was a great idea. As she has an older child she was already aware of a lot of safety advice but felt the visit was a good reminder.

Leanne felt the scheme was good. She was concerned about the dangers in her home and she felt the help and advice given through the scheme had been really useful. Leanne was safety conscious and we discussed a number of issues such as falls prevention, poisonings and scalds. She was not aware of the cold water in the bath first and now she does this to ensure both her and the children don't get scalded.

Rachel was very happy with the service and felt her home was much safer now the equipment has been installed. She had been thinking of buying the equipment but as she had recently moved the fact she could get the equipment free had been a great help financially.

She felt the visit from Maggie had been really good as she was given lots of safety advice.

Janna was very happy with the service and felt her home was much safer now the equipment has been installed.

She had completed a form in the Children's Centre and then Hasna had visited and spoken about safety in the home.

I noticed that she had blinds but no cord winders so we discussed the dangers from cords and I advised that she tie up the cords to keep them out of the children's reach.



Blackburn

Natalie

Natalie was very happy with the scheme. She had been considering buying the equipment but was grateful as the scheme had saved her some money.

I advised that the fireguard should be used as soon as the weather gets colder and fire is in use. We also discussed putting cold water in the bath first, Natalie said she had not been aware of this prior to the nursery nurse's visit and now she tried to remember to do this each time.

Sunderland

Mum advised that she had discussed home safety and the scheme with her health visitor when she had visited for the routine check. She felt it was a great scheme which meant her house was now safer for her children

Wyre Forest

The parent was very happy with the service both check and installation. She appreciated that the accommodation was not ideal for a young child; when she and her partner decided to move there it seemed that they were unlikely to have children. It is likely that they will move to a more amenable home in the near future.

Leicester

Sameja family

(Grandfather) The pop-it lock has made a difference and has stopped the child gaining access to chemicals under the sink as she is 'into everything' at the moment. The gate on the bedroom is good as it stops the child getting to the stairs without an adult.

Newham

Ranga was "delighted with all the support".

Dover

RM was delighted at speed of fitting post referral. Fitter cheery and helpful.

Mansfield

Ms Fells said that she had been referred by her health visitor for the scheme. She was very pleased that she was to receive some free equipment and the advice. She has a young baby girl who has just started crawling and she said the safety gates will be so helpful to help prevent her falling down the stairs. She also has twins who are at school so we discussed the importance of teaching them how to use the gates properly and appropriately.

Throughout the assessment and fitting Stephen (the fitter) discussed safety issues with mum. Firstly about trying to clear away the clutter on the floor in the living room to prevent trips and falls, and also to change the socket adapter she had plugged into the wall which was overloaded. He also recommended that mum try to tidy away the trailing cables from the television and fridge which was in the living room. He also made mum aware that a hot drink stays hot enough to scald for up to 15 minutes which mum was surprised at. Whilst fitting the equipment Stephen reminded mum to make sure the gates are shut at all times, that the older children do not play or swing on them and that they check the bolts periodically to make sure they are tight enough. With the cupboard locks Stephen advised mum to keep the keys safe by perhaps putting one up high on a hook. Stephen explained how the window restrictors worked and showed mum how to open them in the event of an emergency.

South Ribble

Lindsay had heard about the scheme from her sister who has already had the equipment and her health visitor also mentioned it. She contacted her local Children's Centre who then arranged a visit to complete the paperwork. She was very pleased with the scheme and although she had an older daughter she stated that 'you forget a lot of the advice so it's good to have someone come and go through it all again'. She felt it was a great scheme which meant her house was now safer for her children.

