The Health Foundation areas of investigation:

1. What was the impact of people’s existing health status on their experience of COVID-19?
2. How did people’s individual, social and economic circumstances affect their experience of COVID-19?
3. What was the impact of government and societal response to the pandemic on people’s health eg lockdown?
4. How has the government and societal response affected the social and economic circumstances that are likely to have implications for people’s long-term health?

Vulnerable person’s call scheme:

Over 2000 calls made by ESFRS to older people between April to October 2020. These people had received a fire home safety visit in the past, and some had complex health needs. This group of people could be at greater risk of social isolation, and may be less likely to seek help. The first tranche of calls were made to people over 80 years of age, and the second trance to those over 70 years of age. As a result 27 people were referred to Community Hubs for support, 66 people to befriending services, and 516 people had a further t/call assessment from ESFRS.

The phone calls highlighted the social isolation felt by some people, and the fact that due to curtailment of social activities some people are now less physically active, and reporting to be ‘fed up by it all’. The majority of people appeared to value the phone call from the Fire Service and welcomed having a telephone number to ring if things ‘got difficult’.

Welfare doorstep visits to shielding people:

The ESFRS Community Safety Team undertook visits to vulnerable shielding people that had not had any contact with local authorities during the lockdown. 527 visits were made to people with a variety of health issues and special needs, of which 372 felt generally supported, and the majority were thankful to the Fire Service staff and volunteers for checking in with them, at what felt like an isolating time.

16 people required further support from ESCC (including 2 with safeguarding concerns). Every resident visited was also given an up to date Fire Safety Information leaflet along with an ESCC letter to include helpline numbers.

Examples of further help provided included a lady who had not received her food box, another lady who needed medical supplies and a further person was unable to collect a prescription. One lady only revealed that she needed help at the conclusion of the visit, perhaps due to the fact that at this stage a sense of rapport had been developed. Many people wanted a lengthy socially distanced doorstep chat due to feeling socially isolated, and felt re-assured by the visit being made by a uniformed staff or volunteer from the Fire service, and accepted information on how to get help if their situation changed.

Virtual Fire cadets:

ESFRS has provided regular support to our 32 young Fire cadets during the Covid pandemic. Our Cadets include some young people who suffer from anxiety, have faced severe life challenges, and two Cadets are Autistic. Some of our young people aged 13yrs to 17yrs old struggled during the first lockdown when schools were closed. Support given by ESFRS included email newsletters and regular on line meetings. Sessions included information on mental health and where to get help during these challenging times. After the meetings the leaders stay on line in case any individual cadet wants to raise concerns relating to health or other issues. We signpost cadets to the new e-wellbeing website specifically designed for young people in East Sussex. <https://e-wellbeing.co.uk/>

Continued..

Virtual Safety in Action:

Our inter-active on line health and safety resources have been sent to hundreds of schools in East Sussex and disseminated to over 100 home educators. Some of the home educators and their children, have struggled during lock down due to lack of social contact from other home educators. There appears to be a growing number of home educators whose children have additional needs, including Autism, Asperger’s and severe anxiety.

The virtual Safety in Action materials have included information on healthy eating, getting active, First Aid and mental health. The materials include some activities that can be used for children with literacy issues, and aim to be as inclusive as possible. There have been nearly 4000 hits on the website to access these materials.

Firewise scheme:

Since the Covid pandemic the ESFRS education team have engaged with 25 young people with an unhealthy interest in fire. The children range from 5 years to 16 years old, and the majority of these children are from socioeconomic deprived backgrounds. Several of these children have been diagnosed with mental health issues and some have neuro diverse conditions. The education team build a rapport with the young people to try to ascertain the background to their behaviour, and teach the young people about possible consequences of fire- setting. These visits have taken place in school settings, outside areas and the young people’s homes to ensure that this valuable work can continue using Covid secure precautions, at a time which is especially challenging to these young people.

S.Hepworth. November 2020