

Livingston teenager's quick response recognised by Fire Service



A Livingston boy's quick response to hearing a smoke alarm has been recognised by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and The Society for the Protection of Life from Fire.

Stuart Watson found the fire at a house in Plover Brae while collecting for Cancer Research near his home in the town's Ladywell area in May 2014. No-one was home but three dogs were inside as smoke filled the property.

Then aged 13 years old, he immediately raised the alarm by telling a neighbour, leading to a quick 999 call and firefighters arriving in time to save the pet Yorkshire Terriers and prevent flames, smoke and heat sweeping through the home.

Station Manager Martyn Brandrick, the commanding officer at Livingston, said: "Stuart's quick thinking that day meant three family pets were saved and the fire was confined to the kitchen."

He added: "While our crews were at the scene the owner's daughter returned because her dad had remembered leaving a pot on the cooker."

"She was very concerned for the pets' welfare", he continued. "It's not hard to imagine that if Stuart hadn't raised the alarm then she may have considered trying to reach the dogs, which would obviously have put her at risk.

"It shows why fire detection is vital for every home and why people need to act quickly whenever they hear a smoke alarm activate."

Following the incident SFRS crews welcomed Stuart, along with his twin brother Kevin, younger brother Dylan and sister Jamie-Lee to Livingston Fire Station.

The siblings donned full firefighter kit and were given a crash course in how to operate a high pressure jet as well as a close-up look around a state-of-the-art appliance.

Joined by their mum Clair and her husband Stephen, they returned to the station on Wednesday (22 July) as Stuart received a letter of commendation from The Society for the Protection of Life from Fire.

Station Manager Brandrick welcomed them back and said he was delighted to present the commendation on behalf of the society.

He explained: "We know the public have a vital role in protecting our communities from fire and this is a clear example of an active citizen taking responsibility for the safety of others.

"Many people hear an alarm from a nearby house and assume it's nothing but waiting to find out if it does stop could have tragic consequences.

"If a fire happens every second counts and a quick 999 call buys vital time for our crews. That often means they can put a fire out before it causes devastating damage to property.

"It can also mean the difference between life and death as when someone is trapped a quick response gives firefighters the chance to reach them in time."

SFRS crews throughout the country routinely provide free home fire safety and firefighters want people to consider if they or someone they know could benefit from the popular service.

Many people are unaware of fire hazards within their homes and the short visits from crews allow them to recognise the dangers and take simple steps to keep themselves and their property safe.

The visits, which take around 20 minutes, are conducted by local crews and are always arranged for a time convenient for the householder. Where smoke alarms are found to be needed the firefighters even provide and install them free of charge.

Anyone can request a free home fire safety visit by calling the freephone

number 0800 0731 999, by texting 'FIRE' to 80800 or via the SFRS website at www.firescotland.gov.uk.

Every level of a home should have a working smoke alarms and householders are advised to consider fitting a heat alarm within the kitchen to provide early warning without being activated by the small amounts of smoke produced from cooking.