

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

To: **EDUCATION FACILITIES WITH
CHILDREN UNDER 5 AND CHILDREN WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS**

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Dear Colleagues

ESTATES AND FACILITIES ALERT - RAISING AWARENESS OF THE DANGERS OF BLIND CORDS/CHAINS

The purpose of this letter is to draw attention to the dangers of blind cords/chains and to ask for your assistance in highlighting this issue.

Children under 5, particularly those aged 16-36 months are at most risk from blind cord/chain strangulation, although this can affect older vulnerable children as well. It is estimated that children can die as quickly as within 18 seconds of becoming entangled.

In the UK, since 1999, we are aware of a total of 30 deaths from blind cord strangulation, with 17 of these since 2010. These are traumatic events for the families involved and are deaths which are preventable.

In February 2014 new European standards aimed at improving blind cord/chain safety were introduced. The new standard requires that new blinds must be "safe by design" or be supplied with appropriate child safety devices installed. This means that manufacturers are required to install safety devices on all looped cords or to provide the facility to store cords and chains out of reach. That said, there are still 1-200 million window blinds across the UK that do not comply with the new European standards, therefore the dangers associated with blind cords/chains remain.

Information on making blind cords/chains safe issued by the British Blind & Shutter Association (BBSA) is available by accessing the link below.

http://www.makeitsafe.org.uk/uploads/categories_11_53301a8518e5f.pdf

As a provider of services with premises where young children will be present I hope that you will find this information helpful and relevant.

Blind cord/chain deaths and injuries are preventable and we all must redouble our efforts using whatever means and interventions at our disposal to reduce or eliminate completely these unnecessary tragic events.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael McBride".

DR MICHAEL McBRIDE
Chief Medical Officer