

Omagh Office schools

Dear Principal / Leader in charge

### **The General Product Safety Regulations 2005 - Blind Cord Safety**

We are contacting all childcare operators in the area, to highlight the risks associated with blind cords. As you may be aware, since 2010, 18 children in the UK have died from deaths associated with blind cords and in Northern Ireland 4 deaths have occurred in recent years. Children under 5 years of age are most at risk from blind cord strangulation. It can take just 15 seconds for a child to lose consciousness if they get tangled in a blind cord. Death can occur in just two or three minutes.

Since 2014, blinds are required to be supplied "safe by design" i.e. supplied without a cord/chain or be supplied with the appropriate child safety devices. Where a loop is present, or could be created, a safety device must be installed. These safety devices either:

- break under pressure.
- tension the cord or chain.
- provide a facility to store the cord(s) out of reach.

If you are fitting blinds yourself, you must follow the instructions supplied with the product and make sure you fit any safety device.

If the blinds on your premises were fitted prior to 2014 or fitted in-house, the following steps can be taken to reduce the risk of strangulation:

- Pull cords on blinds (and curtains) should be kept short and chains securely tidied away out of children's reach. Use one of the many cleats, cord tidies, clips or ties that are available.
- Cords should be fastened up in a figure of eight after every use of the blind, making sure that all the spare cord is secured on the cleat. Cleats should be positioned out of children's reach on an adjacent surface at least 1.5 metres from the floor.
- Tidies and tensioners should be firmly fixed to an adjoining surface so that the cord or chain is permanently held tight.
- Blind cords should never be cut. Cutting the cord in the wrong place can make the blind inoperable and it may lead to one cord becoming a lot longer

increasing the risk of entanglement. Cut cords can become tangled up resulting in the reformation of a loop.

- Make sure the cords on the back of Roman blinds are connected with a safety device that breaks away under pressure.

Please find enclosed a safety information leaflet from British Blind and Shutter Association for your information. Further information is also available at:

<http://www.rospa.com/campaigns-fundraising/current/blind-cord/>

<http://www.makeitsafe.org.uk/>

Should you require any further advice, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Phyllis Alexander".

Phyllis Alexander  
Lead Environmental Health Officer  
(Consumer Protection/Health Improvement/Tobacco Control)

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