

Arson with intent to endanger life

A Midlands man was alleged to have poured petrol over the sofas at his home and set fire to the property in an attempt to defraud an insurance company and to ensure that his ex-wife did not benefit financially from the sale of the marital home.

He denied starting the fire deliberately, suggesting that it had occurred whilst he was away from the property, as a result of an electrical device overheating.

Insurers and fire brigade staff carried out an investigation. Photographs from the scene and reports of both the insurers and fire brigade were reviewed by the Cogent consultant and a report prepared for the defence.

Inconsistencies and lack of correct procedure were highlighted by the Cogent consultant i.e. critical fire debris samples were not taken from the scene for further analysis and some items were removed from the scene prior to the investigation.

The Cogent consultant attended court and advised the defence counsel on a line of questioning for cross-examination of the prosecution expert, as a result of which the prosecution expert withdrew his opinion that the fire was started using petrol as an accelerant.

