

**P-04-522 Asbestos in Schools –
Correspondence from Petitioner to Committee, 26.02.18**

Bore Da

I must apologise for the lateness of this response, which is entirely due to pressure of work.

I am grateful for your supplying a copy of the letter of the Cabinet Secretary of the 6th February.

I note she states:

“Condition and Management of Asbestos in Welsh Schools

As I indicated in my letter of 3 November, information about the presence of asbestos in schools throughout Wales and confirmation that asbestos management plans are in place forms part of our annual condition survey. I am pleased to report that the vast majority of local authorities have confirmed that those schools in their estate with asbestos present also have an asbestos management plan in place. My officials are currently working with local authorities to ensure that this information is current and that any gaps in the information are addressed.

At present I have no plans for my officials to share the data; however once the information has been received, further consideration will be given to the most appropriate way to deal with it.”

I am deeply concerned that there are local authorities who do not have an asbestos management plan in place. This is in breach of Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. I am also concerned that whilst the Cabinet Secretary indicates that her officials are working together with local authorities to address gaps etc, there is no time scale provided. In my respectful experience, where there are no timescales then matters inevitably. I remain grateful to this Committee for continuing to shine the light of scrutiny upon this issue. It would appear that there are local authorities not adhering to Welsh Government’s guidance as it presently stands.

I must also commend to the Committee the presentation provided by Mr John Evans of Santia to the Cross Party Group on the 9th January. Whilst the

presentation is very valuable to gain a better understanding of the issue, I would refer specifically to slides 12–14 which refer to the FOI responses to Lucie Stephens which revealed inter alia the schools in Wales containing asbestos. I also refer to slides 21–24 where Mr Evans raises considerable concerns regarding the

I refer to his comments on Slide 24

“Given the expected widespread occurrence of ACMs in schools in Wales, the strong recommendation is that this CPG should request the present Cabinet Secretary for Education to require the local education authorities to provide copies of the AMPs governing the management of Asbestos in schools in their administrative areas • Each school should, in line with the advice issued by the Assembly Government in 2014, (Guidance document 138/2014 – Asbestos Management in Schools) have its’ own AMP prepared under the cover of an Education Authority wide Asbestos Management Plan • Arrangements should be made for these AMPs to be subject to independent audit to ensure that they are compliant with legislative requirements and are adequate for preventing all exposures to Asbestos”

In other words whilst the Guidance and its review is very welcome, it is essential that the Guidance is adhered to.

With regard to the other matters in the letter of the Cabinet Secretary, I fail to understand the coyness with regard to the dates and I look forward to being provided with a copy of the Consultation.

Turning to the stakeholders and correspondence, I refer to my email of the 19th February to **Natalie James–Rutledge** (Tîm y Rhaglen i Sicrhau Addysg ac Ysgolion ar gyfer y 21ain Ganrif/21st Century Schools and Education Programme Team), which is attached in full so that the committee may see that I instigated the correspondence. I am yet to receive a response.

“Dear Natalie

Thank you for your email. I must apologise for not responding sooner. I have extremely busy at work since the beginning of January.

In response to who might be invited to contribute as key stakeholders, I have made suggestions to the Petitions Committee over time. This has included on the 6th May 2015

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=218&MID=2917>

“In particular such a group should be led by the Department and include Assembly Members, members representing local authorities, governors, trade unions, health professionals, the HSE and asbestos experts”

The Petitions Committee had previously corresponded with Governors Wales

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s32207/04.09.2014%20Correspondence%20-%20Governors%20Wales%20to%20the%20Chair.pdf#search=asbestos%20governors%20wales>

Subsequently I have also suggested that key stakeholder groups should also include those representing asbestos experts. There are a number of different organisations that can be contacted. Also it is important that Victims Organisations ought to be considered. In particular the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK <http://www.asbestosforum.org.uk/contact.asp> and also Mesothelioma UK <http://www.mesothelioma.uk.com/contact-us/>

I would be grateful also if the Cross Party Group could be added as a key stakeholder as the Group includes colleagues from a variety of different areas keen to highlight asbestos issues.

Kind regards

Cenric”

Once again I apologise for the lateness of this response which I trust is of assistance. I have copied Dawn Bowden AM into the correspondence in her capacity as Chair of the Asbestos CPG.

Diolch yn fawr unwaith eto.

Cenric