



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-522
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/01182/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

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15 July 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 26 June, where you asked me to expedite my reply to you with respect to asbestos management in schools for the Petitions Committee, and specifically address the key points raised by petitioner Cenric Clement-Evans, which are that:

- a. a Steering Group be set up to assist the Department for Education and Skills to inform policy development;
- b. there should be easy access to information around asbestos in schools; and
- c. that the Minister accepts responsibility for asbestos policy in schools.

I have recently met with my officials to discuss the complex issues around the management of asbestos in schools, and will now address the issues raised in turn:

The steering group in England was set up to review the policy of Asbestos Management in Schools in England following the statement of the Committee of Carcinogenicity in 2013. Following the publishing of these review findings we are satisfied that the work carried out by this group of experts will provide sufficient information for Welsh Government to deal with the issue of asbestos at this time. However, I will continue to maintain close contact with the UK Government Department of Education (DfE) as they develop their plan for improving their evidence base, and I will review our policy once these findings are made public.

In the meantime, my officials will, as with previous guidance development in this field, work with Health and Safety Executive Wales (HSE) and Public Health colleagues to ensure our guidance remains current. Easy access to information around asbestos in schools is paramount. My officials will remind duty holders of their requirement to maintain a clear asbestos management plan.

Local authorities can already undertake maintenance and repair works to support asbestos management in individual schools, using their Revenue Support Grant. I can also confirm that our 21st Century Schools and Education Programme represents a £1.4 billion investment over a five year period that will improve some of our poorest condition schools and will result in the reduction of the number of school buildings in Wales with asbestos-containing materials.

I wish to assure you of my continued commitment to this issue and of my support to both the HSE and duty holders through the provision of guidance on this subject matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis', written in black ink.

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills