

# DERBYSHIRE ASBESTOS SUPPORT TEAM (DAST)

DAST, 44 Patchwork Row, Shirebrook, Mansfield, Notts NG20 8AL  
Tel 01623 748161

Newsletter

Edited by Joanne Carlin

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## DAST Meeting

We had an excellent turnout at our meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009. It was good to see everyone. I hope you enjoyed the speakers and the hot buffet lunch at the Spot.

## Asbestos Warning to Homebuyers and Tenants

“More needs to be done to make tenants and homebuyers aware of the dangers of exposure to asbestos”, according to speakers Linda Waldman and Heather Williams.

This message is the conclusion of their report commissioned by the building Trade Union UCATT. The report entitled “Safe as Houses” argues that it is morally wrong that homebuyers and tenants have no legal rights to know where asbestos is located when they buy or rent a property. Social housing companies have a legal obligation to inform employees and contractors where asbestos is in their properties but not their tenants.

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s there have been waves of panic about asbestos risks interspersed with periods of indifference. This has been due to the failings of scientific knowledge as well as legislation and financial constraints. Research has shown that 1 in 100,000 living for 10 years in a home containing asbestos is likely to develop an asbestos related disease, suggesting there is little risk from asbestos in our homes. However, this research does not take account of the housewife who daily washes the asbestos floor tiles as she cleans up after her young children or a family pet. Nor does it take into account the DIY enthusiast, who undertakes alterations in the home.

The report argues that there is a conflict between social housing providers’ responsibilities and residents’ rights. Legislation provides for security of tenure for residents, as well as giving them the right to undertake repairs and improvements to make their house a ‘home’. “Such a relaxed attitude towards written consent prior to beginning alterations means that the residents undertake DIY without ever knowing where asbestos is”.

The research found that different housing providers use different styles of information dissemination. Ironically those who were good at it were often portrayed in a negative light. Moreover, the costs of dealing with asbestos, bringing in specialised stripping companies, delaying work schedules, replacing asbestos with other forms of fire protection means that social housing providers may downplay the risks of asbestos. Financial and time constraints will inevitably favour encapsulation and management of asbestos, not removal. The same constraints are also placed on home owners.

The research also argues that the HSE’s message that ‘asbestos is safe in situ’ coupled with their media concentration on certain categories of workers (plumbers, joiners, electricians), sends out the message that only ‘certain’ categories of people are at risk. This is not the case and should also include teachers, DIY enthusiasts and other workers who may come into contact with asbestos during the course of their work.

## **Clearly more needs to be done –**

- Legislation needs to be amended so that power tools display warning symbols to advise users to check what materials they are using the power tools on.
- Asbestos surveys should be mandatory when selling houses and the information included in the Housing Information Pack, recently introduced by the Government.
- Social housing providers should maintain an Asbestos Register and a survey should be carried out when tenants move.
- There should also be more information campaigns to alert DIY enthusiasts about the dangers of exposure to asbestos and a 24-hour hotline to deal with private asbestos-related enquiries.

*“As Safe as Houses? Dealing with Asbestos in Social Housing” Report for UCATT Linda Waldman and Heather Williams June 2009*

## **HSE**

At the meeting we also heard from Mike Johnson from the Health and Safety Executive. The HSE have carried out an excellent campaign over the last 2 years to raise awareness amongst maintenance workers of the dangers of exposure to asbestos. Alongside the radio and poster campaign there is to be a TV advert to be broadcast soon. Like other government health messages it will not only reach the target audience in a powerful way but also their families who are likely to relay the message to loved ones.

We were also pleased that the HSE are targeting young workers and working with colleagues to reach young people. Those just starting out in their working life all too often feel invincible to the ill-health problems that may affect them later in life as a result of what they are subjected to during their working life. Nevertheless, there was a feeling in the meeting that the HSE could do more on this issue and asbestos awareness should be a compulsory element in all apprenticeship and trade college courses.

## **Constant Attendance Allowance**

If you have been awarded Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit for mesothelioma or lung cancer, you will automatically have been sent a form for Constant Attendance Allowance. It is likely that at the time you received the form you felt it was not appropriate for your needs. However, if you or your family feel that your care needs have increased, please contact us on 01623 748161 and we can have the benefit re-assessed.

## **New outreach sessions with Mesothelioma UK**

Along with Liz Darlison of Mesothelioma UK, DAST is running an outreach service for people with mesothelioma, family members of victims are also welcome to attend. The meetings are to be held on the last Wednesday of every month starting on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2010. The meetings are to be held at Helen Webb House, Westleigh Road Leicester, LE3 0HH from 1.30pm – 4.00pm. Liz will be organising the meetings with a speaker and DAST will hold a benefits surgery. If you have any questions about the benefits you are on, or you wish to claim Constant Attendance Allowance as outlined above come along to the meetings.

## **Dates for your Diary**

**MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS in CHESTERFIELD - Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2010 at New Square, Chesterfield** The event is run by the Chesterfield TUC commencing at 10.30am – 3.30pm. There will be various stalls, speakers and live entertainment in the Market Square. DAST will be having an information and fundraising stall including Tombola and we will be selling beautiful handcrafted cards to raise funds for DAST.

**ACTION MESOTHELIOMA DAY – Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 at the Quad Derby** – more information later on in the year.

## Employers' Liability Insurance Bureau

As I have stated in previous newsletters, where insurers cannot be found, victims of asbestos related diseases miss out on just and adequate compensation. We need an Insurer of Last Resort – an Employers' Liability Insurance Bureau. Thank you to everyone who has written to their MP or Gordon Brown on this issue.

A special thank you to Major Bernard Dean who has been diagnosed with mesothelioma. Bernard

had the opportunity of meeting Jack Straw and Gordon Brown at a meeting in Nottingham organised by the network of newspapers, which was brought to our attention by The Derby Telegraph. Bernard was able to face the Prime Minister and Jack Straw and ask them what they are doing to help obtain compensation for all those people who are currently missing out. They promised to do something about this. We hope they keep their promise!

## National Research Centre on Asbestos Related Diseases (NCARD)

There is a lot of support for NCARD and Jack Straw and other Government Ministers have stated that the proposals for a Research Centre are being strongly considered. Unfortunately, we have to watch this space for further developments but we will keep you informed.

## Peak District Sponsored Walk

My fiancé and I will be raising money for DAST by walking 40 miles over 2 days. The walk will take place in the Peak District and include the lunar and bleak landscapes of Kinder Scout and Bleaklow. The walk will take place on Monday 22nd March to Tuesday 23rd March 2010. Your support of DAST in sponsoring our 'walk' will be very much appreciated. We will be staying overnight in a Youth Hostel in order to continue our walk on the second day. Please find enclosed sponsorship forms.

## Pleural Plaques

There has also been a political will to reinstate the law for people diagnosed with Pleural Plaques. Sadly the Private Members Bill to reinstate compensation, which successfully made its way through the Commons, failed at the House of Lords stage. The fact that it made it through the Commons shows the support for a change in the law. Once again Gordon Brown has promised to review the evidence.

Come on Gordon we are facing a general election soon and we need some decisions now!

## Macmillan Coffee Morning

Thank you to everyone who attended the largest Coffee Morning, which we held in conjunction with the Macmillan Information Centre at the Royal Derby Hospital. The event raised £608.93 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

## Search and Support

DAST has registered with Everyclick, a search engine that gives money to charity. All you have to do is go to [www.everyclick.com](http://www.everyclick.com), choose to support the Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team, make Everyclick your homepage and then use it whenever you search the internet.

Visit [www.everyclick.com](http://www.everyclick.com) and register as a DAST supporter. It is a great way to support us each time you use the internet.

## FUNDRAISING - thank you to everyone who has been fundraising for DAST



Amongst other events a raffle and craft fair was organised to raise funds for DAST by Lisa Negus and Fair with Flair.

Sarah Clark (top left) ran the Robin Hood half marathon in memory of her father.

The Bestwood Male Voice Choir (top right) raised £2,500 from their excellent Charity Concert at the beginning of November. I thoroughly enjoyed it and have received other similar comments. Thank you to Brian Beatson, a member of the Bestwood Male Voice Choir, who was diagnosed with mesothelioma, for requesting that the Charity Concert be held in support of DAST.

Thank you also to Major Bernard Dean (bottom left) who raised funds for DAST at the Army Cadet Camp.



Ian Hall (bottom right), who has been diagnosed with mesothelioma, climbed the largest working water wheel in Europe – The Lady Isabella – The Great Laxey Wheel on the Isle of Man, to raise funds for DAST. Congratulations and thank you to Ian for achieving this.

*We really appreciate the support you have given us. I know the events were hard work and emotional at times so please accept our very sincere thanks to you all.*



If you no longer wish to receive our bulletin please telephone 01623 748161 to be removed from the database. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please do so.

### HELP AND SUPPORT

If you need any further information or advice, please do not hesitate to contact us

**01623 748161**

**mail@asbestossupport.co.uk www.asbestossupport.co.uk**

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