

Mrs Janice Collins
National Vice-Chairman
Townswomen's Guilds
Gee Business Centre
First Floor, Gee House
Holborn Hill
Birmingham B7 5JR

11 September 2018

Dear Mrs Collins

Reporting of Asbestos in School Buildings

Thank you very much for your letter of 6 September. I am delighted that the Townswomen's Guild shares NEU concerns about asbestos in schools. We work closely with Lucie Stephens and were aware that Lucie had been invited to address your members earlier this year.

In terms of contributing to the campaign, your organisation could join the Asbestos in Schools Group (AIS). This is chaired by the MP Rachel Reeves (although she is in the process of standing down and we are currently considering a replacement). AIS draws together interested parties and campaigners with expertise and interest in making schools safe from the dangers of asbestos and meets once a term at Westminster. Membership is wide, including trade unions, local authorities, charities, representatives of victims and lawyers. We would be delighted if your organisation wished to join.

As Lucie probably explained, the education trade unions, including those representing teachers, school leaders and support staff are members of the Joint Union Asbestos Committee. The NEU is very active within this group and will share information with you where you may be able to help with publicity. For example last week we became aware of an issue in relation to wire gauzes for use with Bunsen Burners. Certain suppliers have been selling gauzes to schools which contain asbestos. As soon as we became aware of this we took steps to share this message as widely as possible. You mention your website and social media and this is a good example of where you might be able to help share important safety messages. Some of your members will be teachers or will have children/grand children and so could help share this sort of information with schools.

You may have seen this short film https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F5bv_YAgZ4, which was made by the family of Sarah Stoddart, a retired teacher who died last year from mesothelioma. Sarah's family is keen that the film be seen by as wide an audience as

possible, to raise awareness so it would be great if you could publicise via your website or social media.

We operate a Joint Union Asbestos Committee twitter account. If you would like to follow us, the link is <https://twitter.com/TheJUAC>. We currently have nearly 3000 followers and would appreciate your involvement here.

There is also a JUAC Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/theJUAC/>

The NEU's Lead Officer for Health and Safety is Sarah Lyons sarah.lyons@neu.org.uk. Sarah would be delighted to talk or meet with you to discuss further ways of working together, including any of the suggestions in this letter.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely



Kevin Courtney
Joint General Secretary
National Education Union