



Community Services: Education

Argyll House
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To: Heads of all Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

Asbestos in educational establishments - policy and procedures

- 1 Public concern and awareness over the hazards which may be associated with the presence of asbestos has occasionally been reflected in educational establishments when staff or parents of pupils have expressed anxieties about the possibility of a danger to health because of the existence, or suspected existence, of asbestos in the fabric of the building.
- 2 Asbestos was a widely used ingredient of many materials in post-war building projects, including schools and swimming pools. It was often a constituent of wall panels and ceiling tiles and used in heating systems for insulation purposes. It should be emphasised that where surfaces are undamaged and intact there is little danger that fibre levels will approach the safety limits currently set by the Health and Safety Executive.
- 3 It is generally safer in such circumstances, especially where it is safe by position and out of reach, to contain asbestos in situ, since there can often be a greater hazard created in removing the material. Containment can be achieved by sealing, painting and physical encapsulation. However, if surfaces are found to be ruptured, those materials will be given immediate remedial treatment, and if necessary, removed by arrangement through Facility Services.
- 4 Facility Services have carried out a survey to determine the extent of the incidence of asbestos and when asbestos is identified in an establishment an extract from the register completed by Facility Services showing the location and condition of asbestos will be issued and must be held in a special file.

This file must be available for inspection by safety representatives, staff and other interested parties including contractors who will require details of asbestos related

work in the property. It is essential that the file should be kept up-to-date at all times. Facility Services will, in advance of any works, notify the contractor of the presence of asbestos in the areas where work is to be carried out. Only HSE licensed contractors will be used for removal of asbestos in Council premises.

- 5 If the Head of an establishment has reasonable cause to believe that hitherto unidentified asbestos is present in the property, or that there is a potential hazard from asbestos, the Head must notify Facility Services immediately on the **emergency helpline number 01369 708575** and should consult the safety representatives. Upon receipt of this information Facility Services will investigate the situation, check the asbestos register and where necessary undertake tests to determine the nature of the substance and take the necessary remedial action. The analysis and any subsequent test certificate must be added to the asbestos register and to the special file.
- 7 Wherever materials containing asbestos are to be removed from the premises, Facility Services will inform the appropriate senior officer of the project. To ensure the safety of the occupants of the building the details of the operation will be discussed with the Head of the Establishment who will be advised of the methods to be used and the programme to be followed and the detailed contents of any necessary communication to staff, parents and other interested parties will be agreed.
- 8 The area to be cleared will be sealed off prior to the removal of the asbestos and the seal will not be removed until air tests have shown that the area is safe. Analysts' reports on the composition of the materials to be removed, together with results of the air tests, will be supplied to Facility Services for inclusion into the asbestos register and a copy provided to the Head of the Establishment who should keep these documents in the special file.
- 9 Asbestos information is held by Facility Services and initial queries regarding existing survey reports and any other information should be made, in the first instance, to Facility Services.
- 10 It cannot be emphasised too strongly that asbestos may be a hazard only when fibres of the substance are released into the atmosphere and that where surfaces are sealed and undamaged this cannot happen. A careful watch must be kept on the fabric of the building and appropriate action taken where warranted.

Yours sincerely

Executive Director of Community Services

June 2017