

Health and Social Care Committee
Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill
RMCA 1 – Asbestos Awareness and Support Cymru

Consultation on the Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill.

Evidence of Asbestos Awareness & Support Cymru

Introduction

1. This evidence is submitted by Asbestos Awareness and Support Cymru (AASC), a support group for victims of asbestos related diseases and their families. It has a web presence plus Facebook and Twitter and offers a signposting service to improve access to the best services available within Wales.
2. It is a registered charity and is a member of the National Asbestos Victims Support Forum.
3. The overall aim is to be the leading connected community within Wales to enhance the quality of life for those victims of asbestos exposure and their families.
4. Financial compensation awarded to families who have lived and died from an asbestos related disease as a consequence of the negligence of employers has made a significant impact upon lives. The move to secure compensation has also strengthened the message that breaches of Health and Safety Law and putting workers lives at risk is not to be tolerated. Human life is precious.
5. The Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill is welcomed as it is demonstrating not only a concern for the welfare of patients but also highlighting the costs incurred by the NHS for what has been negligent behaviour by employers.

Executive Summary

6. AASC welcomes this move to improve care to victims of exposure to asbestos related disease but also sees that financial resources could be used to enhance the care already being provided by the NHS.
7. As a health measure the financial compensation secured through the Bill create positive health outcomes for families affected by asbestos exposure.
8. There has been complacency around the dangers of asbestos exposure which heightens the risk that numbers diagnosed with illnesses such as mesothelioma are going to increase and this will naturally impact upon levels of NHS care provided.
9. The Bill will have the effect of improving care and support provided to asbestos victims.
10. The Bill will demonstrate to the rest of the UK and to the world that Wales does recognise the damaging effect asbestos has had upon workers.
11. The Bill illustrates a Wales wide responsibility for the NHS and that financial resources are needed to ensure that our high quality of care can continue but has been compromised by employers continuing to shirk responsibilities for their employees.

Financial Support

12. Care to victims of asbestos exposure requires financial resourcing, from the initial consultation with the General Practitioner to Consultant, nurse specialist, and other health specialists called upon to provide advice on mobility and breathing exercises such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Each of these professions requires payment and on top of that is the need to cover drug and surgical treatment costs.

13. Support to victims of asbestos related diseases and their families continues outside the NHS through the Third Sector with one to one meetings and group sessions, and hand holding through emotionally traumatic stages of an illness. Emotional support through the Third sector groups such as AASC is crucial not only for the victims but also the informal family carers. Any financial compensation acquired through this Bill and made available to the Third sector would be valued.

14. Extra financial resources secured through the implementation of the Bill could help in the development of increased telephone helpline support, more face to face meetings and improved collaboration between victims, carers and health professionals. Enhancing connections between the 'care givers' and the 'care receivers' will bring about 'piece of mind'. Pathways of care will be strengthened thus minimising the sense of despair, distress, pain, suffering and isolation and replacing with confidence, respect and knowledge that someone does care.

15. It is recognised that administrative costs will be incurred through the processing of compensatory payments and it is hoped that these will not be too onerous and eat into the compensation secured.

Summary.

- AASC welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill and recognises that this is a brave move for the Welsh Government to undertake but it is a move undertaken on behalf of the many who have fallen prey to evils of asbestos dust.

- We hope that the Bill continues successfully through the legislative process to secure extra financial resources which will be made available for improved care.

- The world is watching Wales for what will be an historic step forward in supporting asbestos victims.

Asbestos Awareness & Support Cymru

18 December 2012.