

Welcome

Welcome to the Winter 2022 edition of our newsletter!

There have been many changes at Asbestos Action in recent months and I wanted to take time to update you on all that has been happening.

Asbestos Action has moved premises and is now situated at 16-18 Whitehall Street, Dundee, DD1 4AF. Our telephone number remains the same: 0808 196 1861.

As many may now know, this year marked the 20th anniversary of Asbestos Action. This means that for two decades we have supported people with asbestos related conditions (and their families too).

We are extremely proud of our achievements and are so very grateful to everyone who has contacted us and been involved with our charity over the last 20 years. We feel very privileged and proud to do what we do.

I would also like to thank each and every one of you who have donated to the charity for your generosity and support - we simply would not be here if it wasn't for you.

In addition to the two information events at Fife and Aberdeen held during 2022, we held a very successful event at the Perth Concert Hall in September which celebrated our anniversary. But more importantly it highlighted multiple positive updates in treatment options open to asbestos disease sufferers – especially those diagnosed with mesothelioma. (More details can be found on our website - www.asbestosaction.org.uk).

We are very aware that COVID impacted referrals for people

affected by pleural plaques, pleural thickening, and asbestosis. Our own records show that such referrals have significantly declined. We believe this is a problem because it suggests there may be dozens, even hundreds, of people who are trying to come to terms with a diagnosis on their own. We cannot sit idly by and let this happen so next year in 2023 we will be campaigning on this issue to make sure everyone who is diagnosed has access to the right support – without delay.

Several people also agreed to participate in making short films to share their personal, powerful and thought-provoking experiences with others. I am exceptionally proud of the results and my sincere thanks on behalf of Asbestos Action go to these individuals and their families who participated. These can also be viewed on our website.

Asbestos Action is a unique charity with a big heart. We are in a process of change and are looking forward to the challenges ahead. We will keep you updated and will endeavor to introduce you to the new members of the team as they come onboard. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any help or assistance or just to talk.

We hope you have a safe, warm and peaceful Christmas and New Year!



*Dianne Foster,
General Manager*



AsbestosACTION

News

Helping, supporting, advising -
to keep you informed

WINTER 2022



LEGAL UPDATE: Post-pandemic care

While we all must remain alert, it seems unlikely that we will face the prospect of future covid-lockdowns. For our specialist asbestos team at Digby Brown, it is fantastic to get back to meeting clients in person, with appropriate reassurances and precautions.

Although home working and Zoom meetings have brought some advantages, a core feature of our work and the team at Asbestos Action is direct, personal, 1 to 1 support, particularly for those diagnosed with serious asbestos-related disease. Good outcomes are based on trust, built on personal relationships, in the knowledge that the same professional will be available and will progress a case from start to finish.

We did our best to maintain this level of support during the pandemic when, sadly the numbers of serious asbestos-disease cases have shown no sign of reducing. However, during the same period, the number of cases we have seen involving more benign conditions such as pleural

plaques have reduced.

Asbestos disease has not gone away. Rather, it seems that while people were encouraged not to leave their homes, only the most serious of cases were coming to the attention of our primary healthcare services. Perhaps understandably, routine respiratory investigations do not yet seem to have returned to pre-pandemic levels. This is creating a problem for the future. The greater the volume of undiagnosed asbestos disease, the greater the danger that people remain unaware of the risk of developing more serious disease in future, and fail to take steps to preserve their legal rights or receive benefits they may be entitled to.

Any delay in diagnosis is also not helpful. I was recently told by a respiratory consultant that many patients in his clinic are surprised to learn that they have lung disease – having assumed incorrectly that any increasing breathlessness is due to old age. Conversely, younger, fitter people

are far more likely to seek medical advice if there is even a minor drop of respiratory function. The earlier any respiratory condition is diagnosed, the better the treatment options.

This underlines the importance of raising awareness of the risks of past asbestos exposure, to encourage the reporting respiratory problems as soon as they arise, and to make sure that the doctor is made aware of any history asbestos-exposure. Hopefully this will reduce the numbers of those with presently undiagnosed asbestos conditions, which will allow greater access to medical, financial and legal support.



*Fraser Simpson, Partner
Digby Brown*

New board member



Ian Kellie joined the Board in September 2022 and looks forward to the next stage in Asbestos Action's journey. Ian was a professional occupational hygienist for over 40 years, with experience in the steel industry and the Health and Safety Executive before branching into consultancy with university-owned companies in Dundee and Aberdeen and eventually setting up his own business, based in Tayside. Latterly Ian became heavily involved with the BOHS, occupational hygiene's professional body in the UK and served as Chief Examiner for three years. Ian's interest in asbestos stems from his early days with the British Steel Corporation and continued throughout his career, culminating in helping develop training modules for building inspectors and

asbestos analysts with BOHS. In his spare time, Ian enjoys outdoor pursuits including hillwalking and geology, and in winter, sliding on the ice for the 'roaring game' of curling.

Asbestos Action 20th Anniversary Conference



We were honoured to host our 20th anniversary conference on Wednesday 7th September 2022 at the Perth Concert Hall.

This event was not just about marking two decades of support and campaigning from ourselves, healthcare professionals and other stakeholders but about commemorating the thousands of real people who have been affected by asbestos-related illnesses.

It was an incredibly poignant day of reflection and contemplation of what the future holds for families across Scotland, medical research, and how the landscape is changing for access to innovative treatments and justice.

After a warm welcome from our Chair, Iain M. Murray MBE, we heard from Professor Kevin Blyth, founder of the Scottish Mesothelioma Network:

"The internet can be a scary place when you have a cancer diagnosis, especially if it's a rare cancer diagnosis."

"Our website offers clear information, virtual support groups and contact details for mesothelioma nurses in your region."

Fraser Simpson, Partner and Head of the Industrial Disease team at Digby Brown Solicitors, helped shed light

on how changes to the law can better serve asbestos sufferers and their families to get the recognition, damages and support they deserve.

Liz Darlison MBE, CEO of Mesothelioma UK and Consultant Nurse, spoke about the journey to 2022 and beyond for the national charity for mesothelioma.

Consultant Forensic Scientist, John Raper, provided an expert's perspective on 'Asbestos exposure: Knowledge and Standards'.

We also heard from Susan Smyth whose interest in the respiratory field began as a student nurse on a placement. She spoke about the role of the Scottish Mesothelioma Clinical Nurse Specialist, and how she supports those suffering from mesothelioma.

But more importantly than the professionals, we were privileged to hear first-hand accounts from real people as they hoped to inspire others to seek help.

Christina Beech and Michelle Rodger know first-hand how an asbestos-related disease affects not only the person diagnosed with the condition but their loved ones and friends.

Christina's father-in-law, Ernest Beech (known to all as Barry) was diagnosed with mesothelioma after being exposed to asbestos during his working life. Christina told the Conference how vital the input was from the charity

Michelle recalled memories of her father, Tam, coming home from work looking dusty and dirty. Little did she know that this would later manifest itself in the form of asbestos related illness for her father.

Throughout the course of the day, we played some videos from service users who have been affected by asbestos related illnesses and have sought help from Asbestos Action:

"Caring, supportive, a comfort blanket – that's how I would describe Asbestos Action." – Mary Lavery



"It's the most devastating news I've ever had in my life... Asbestos Action has given me hope, given me light when it was dark." – Ian Watson

In-person events are back



For those who missed the update, Asbestos Action can now host in-person events again and the first of these was held earlier this year on Thursday 7th April.

Friends and members of the group gathered at the Victoria Hotel in

Kirkcaldy where everyone enjoyed afternoon tea and a proper chat with old friends and new.

In addition to the chats were presentations from expert speakers followed by an interactive Q&A session.

Lung Cancer Nurse Specialists Anne Wilson and Ed Cairns from Victoria Hospital led a clinical discussion on maintaining support and services for sufferers of asbestos-related diseases both during and post-pandemic.

While Gary Ross, Associate with Digby Brown Solicitors, led an insightful presentation on how people can secure compensation decades after they were exposed to asbestos and the key issues with time barring.

For many reasons, it was truly was a welcome day, because above all else it was great to catch up with everyone and have some real life face-time.

Don't worry though, it wasn't a one-off!

Fundraising so far this year...

Asbestos Action has received an amazing **£6,438** since April this year thanks to the fundraising activities of some wonderful people including:



Sam Whyte ran the Loch Ness Marathon



Findlay ran the Berlin Marathon



Euan, Gary & Jordan from Digby Brown Solicitors completed the Great Scottish Run



A massive thank you to everyone from Asbestos Action!

Meet the specialists - Anne Wilson

Anne tells us about the work she does: *"I have been a Lung Cancer Nurse Specialist since 2014 when I obtained my dream job.*

"I have worked within Respiratory my whole working life, having visited a relative in the Respiratory Ward just after I qualified as nurse and quickly realised this is where I was meant to work, going on to secure a position within the unit shortly afterwards.

"Over many years I gained qualifications to allow me to progress within the Respiratory team and worked laterly within the Unit as a Respiratory Nurse Practitioner enhancing my Respiratory knowledge and skills further. This post and the encouragement of a brilliantly focused Senior Charge Nurse on the Respiratory Ward allowed me then to go onto gain the qualifications to enable me to obtain my role as a Lung Cancer Nurse Specialist.



"This role has brought me the greatest satisfaction by allowing me to work with patients and families at time of greatest need and has allowed me to meet so many wonderful patients, families and colleagues over the years."

We asked Anne

Q. What do you like most about your job?

A. I absolutely love my job. I feel privileged to be able to meet and speak with patients and families at their most vulnerable times and to be able to provide emotional and practical support for them during this time. I am able to share my knowledge of Lung Cancer/Mesothelioma with patients and families to hopefully make this frightening time a little easier. and navigate the pathway easier for them. I work with an amazing multi-disciplinary team of professionals who all help to provide best possible care for patients and families.

Q. Biggest work challenge?

A. Applying my knowledge of lung cancer/mesothelioma investigations and treatment plans with my patients and their families within the time constraints of part-time working. I always strive to help patients and families understand their investigations and treatment plans so they understand the complexity of the information they are given regarding the diagnosis but worry constantly that I am meeting the needs of my patients due to part-time working.

Q. How do you like to relax away from work?

A. With my wider family, looking after my new grandson and spending time with my husband. I also love to meet up with and go out with friends for lunch and drinks. Total relaxation achieved with yoga and pilates.

Q. Your ideal holiday?

A. I am about to go on my ideal holiday with my husband. Trip booked to South Africa see big game on safari, visit some wine regions then whale watching. Cannot wait.

Q. Favourite film?

A. Cannot believe I am telling you this but favourite film is White Christmas (watched way too many times) and also Casablanca.

Q. Favorite meal?

A. I love cooking and going out for lovely meals but actually beans on toast with grilled cheese is always my favourite meal.

Q. Person you would most like to meet and why?

A. This would actually be my grand-parents. I never had the chance to meet them and would have loved to have known them, now I see the relationship I have with my grandson.

Q. Your favourite guilty pleasure?

A. Easy chocolate, lots of!

How you can help - donations:

How to donate

- Complete the **form below** and send cheque to "Asbestos Action"
- JustGiving - www.justgiving.com
- **Standing order** (contact us for information)

Your details

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE:

EMAIL:

Donation amount - I wish to donate (please tick):

£10 £20 £30

OTHER £:

GIFT AID – important (please tick):

Boost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate

I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in the future or have in the past four years, to Asbestos Action. I understand that I must pay an equal amount of UK income tax at least equal to the tax that Asbestos Action will claim in my donations in each year (*currently 25p for every £1*).



SIGNATURE:

DATE:



AsbestosACTION

About Asbestos Action

Asbestos Action is a charity that relies almost entirely on donations from appreciative sufferers and their families.

The charity was founded in 2002 by a small group of sufferers to assist those diagnosed with an asbestos-related condition.

We are committed to helping anyone affected by an asbestos-related condition, from supporting sufferers and their families after diagnosis to home visits to help fill in complicated benefits forms.

With a small staff of five the charity punches well above its weight in providing this emotional and practical support.

You're the reason we can keep providing our vital service, so no one has to face asbestos-related disease alone.

Donating can help us to support more sufferers and their families who have been affected through no fault of their own.

Contact details

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