



MESOTHELIOMA UK



Kate Dearden MP (Halifax)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Business and Trade
House of Commons, London, UK

May 1, 2026

Re: Asbestos in Children's Toys

Dear Ms. Dearden,

In your Parliamentary responses of December 17, 2025 to questions (December 8) asked by Ian Lavery MP regarding steps being taken by the Government to protect Britons from exposures to asbestos-contaminated sand,¹ you wrote:

“UK regulators are in touch with counterparts in Australia regarding reports of chemical concerns related to rainbow-coloured sand products. There is no evidence these products are available on the UK market. Our product safety regulations require businesses to only place safe consumer products on the market, including toys or products aimed at children. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), in my Department, and Local Authority Trading Standards enforce the regulations, and have powers to remove products from sale and prevent imports where unsafe items are identified. The Government does not collect data on sales of individual products.”²

Not a lot happened as Christmas came and went and children in the UK unwrapped their presents and proceeded to play with sand products, playsets and stretchy figurines containing asbestos, most of which were exported from China.³ It wasn't until January 27, 2026 that the first recall for an asbestos-contaminated toy was issued.⁴ What shattered the Government's complacency may have had something to do with The Guardian article of January 24, 2026 which reported that tremolite asbestos had been found in a craft product sold by Hobbycraft.⁵

¹ Parliamentary Question and Answer. *Toys and Games: Sales 97782*. December 17, 2025.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-12-08/97782/>

Parliamentary Question and Answer. *Toys and Games: Sales 97783*. December 17, 2025.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-12-08/97783/>

Parliamentary Question and Answer. *Toys and Games: Sales 97784*. December 17, 2025.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-12-08/97784/>

² Parliamentary Question and Answer. *Toys and Games: Sales 97782*. December 17, 2025.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-12-08/97782/>

Parliamentary Question and Answer. *Toys and Games: Sales 97783*. December 17, 2025.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-12-08/97783/>

Parliamentary Question and Answer. *Toys and Games: Sales 97784*. December 17, 2025.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-12-08/97784/>

³ Kazan-Allen, L. *Primer: Asbestos in Play Sand and Toys 2025-26*. April 17, 2026.

<https://ibasecretariat.org/lka-primer-asbestos-in-play-sand-and-toys-2025-26.pdf>

⁴ UK Asbestos Product Recalls between January 27, 2026 and April 16, 2026.

<https://ibasecretariat.org/lka-uk-asbestos-product-recalls-jan-27-apr-16-2026.pdf>

⁵ Tims, A. *Asbestos found in children's play sand sold in UK*. January 24, 2026.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2026/jan/24/childrens-play-sand-hobbycraft-asbestos-removed-recall>

Roll on three months and your assessment of the situation seemed to have been radicalized. “It is staggering,” you told Journalist Anna Tims that “toys are being sold with asbestos. We’re taking action with new measures to strengthen consumer protection and clamp down on irresponsible sellers. We work closely with the EU, Trading Standards and the toy industry to ensure businesses act immediately, and any products which test positive for asbestos are removed from sale and recalled.”⁶

In line with your revised attitude, it may be useful to inform you of a recent EU trade mission to China⁷ to discuss the need to remove “dangerous toys from the market before they reach children...” “We want,” said delegation leader Anna Cavazzini, MEP “to see rapid improvements and we want to ensure that our warnings are being taken seriously by China’s authorities and companies.”⁸ Should you wish to reach out to Anna Cavazzini, her email address is: anna.cavazzini@europarl.europa.eu

As you know, the UK has the world’s worst incidence of asbestos-related mortality. Between 2004 and 2024, 50,000+ Britons died from mesothelioma, the signature cancer associated with exposure to asbestos. In 2026, there is no excuse for the sale of carcinogenic children’s toys in the UK.

We look forward to hearing more about the steps the Government will implement to end the sale of toxic toys. We remain at your disposal for further information. Any enquiries and/or comments can be sent to the IBAS Coordinator Laurie Kazan-Allen: lka@btinternet.com

Sincerely,

Phyllis Craig MBE, Director, Action on Asbestos Industrial Injury & Disease (*Formerly Clydeside Action on Asbestos*)

Lynne Squibb, Charity Founder & CEO, HASAG Asbestos Disease Support

John Flanagan, Manager, Merseyside Asbestos Victim Support Group

Liz Darlison MBE DL, CEO Mesothelioma UK

Adrian Budgen, Founding Trustee, June Hancock Mesothelioma Research Fund

Laurie Kazan-Allen, Coordinator, International Ban Asbestos Secretariat

⁶ Tims, A. *Dozens of toys recalled in the UK after asbestos found in play sand*. April 27, 2026.

<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2026/apr/27/dozens-of-toys-recalled-in-the-uk-after-asbestos-found-in-play-sand>

⁷ More information on the EU Mission to Beijing and Shanghai can be found at this link:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/imco/documents/latest-documents>

⁸ European Parliament. *MEPs conclude China visit advocating sustainable e-commerce, fair competition and product safety*. April 2, 2026.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20260326IPR39405/china-visit-sustainable-e-commerce-fair-competition-and-product-safety>