

13 October 2009

Government refuses to protect young lives, says leading children's cancer charity

LONDON: CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA is the charity leading the campaign for a ban on building homes and schools near high voltage overhead power lines. Today the charity has condemned the Government for failing to act on recommendations and advice from leading scientists, professionals and MPs in their call for action to protect children from the potentially harmful effects of living close to high voltage overhead power lines.

A building moratorium on new homes and schools close to high voltage overhead power lines was identified as the "best available option" for obtaining a significant reduction in exposure to extremely low frequency EMFs by SAGE, the Government's own Stakeholder Advisory Group, in its report published in April 2007. Following that announcement, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) called on the Government to legislate to restrict the building of new homes and schools next to existing power lines.

An association has been found between childhood leukaemia and living close to high voltage overhead power lines and we need a clear message from Government that they will protect our children. Today's announcement is an attempt to sweep the matter under the carpet.

Eddie O'Gorman, Chairman, CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA

The Government will not introduce the ban, instead relying on lesser recommendations such as working with the HPA to deliver public messages and supporting the optimal phasing of overhead power lines, which the charity says will do nothing to reduce public exposure to EMF.

Chairman of CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Eddie O'Gorman, lost two of his children to cancer. He believes that the death of his son from leukaemia may have been associated with the electricity substation in their back garden and said: "Until more research is carried out we expected the Government to follow the precautionary principle by either banning building, or at the very least issuing formal guidance. An association has been found between childhood leukaemia and living close to high voltage overhead power lines and we need a clear message from Government that they will protect our children. Today's announcement is an attempt to sweep the matter under the carpet."

The Government has been under increasing pressure to act following the publication of the Draper Report in 2005, which reported that children with a birth address within 200m of a high voltage overhead power line had a 70% greater risk of developing leukaemia.

In July 2007, a Cross-Party Inquiry of senior backbench MPs recommended that Government introduce a building moratorium within at least 60 metres of existing high voltage overhead power lines.

Caroline Hampden-White from CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA said: "It has taken the Government two and a half years (since the SAGE report was issued) to decide to do nothing to reduce public exposure to EMF. As scientific evidence continues to emerge in this arena the time for precautionary action to protect children is now!"

Ends

For more information, or to arrange an interview with a spokesperson from CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, please call Tina Price on 01258 861 221 or 07966 239 092

NOTES TO EDITORS:

[View copies of the DRAPER Report and SAGE Report](#)

[View Government response to the Stakeholder Advisory Group on extremely low frequency electric and magnetic fields \(ELF EMFs\) \(SAGE\) recommendations \(new window will open\)](#)

CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA is the UK's leading charity dedicated to fighting Britain's biggest childhood cancer. We fund research into the causes, treatment and prevention of childhood leukaemia and campaign on issues of relevance.

Leukaemia is the most common childhood cancer, accounting for one third of all cases. There are approximately 500 new cases of childhood leukaemia each year, out of which around 100 children will die. The remainder go through several years of gruelling treatment. The incidence of childhood leukaemia increased steadily throughout the last century - most markedly in the under fives – and we don't know why.

SAGE is the Stakeholder Advisory Group on Extremely Low Frequency Electric and Magnetic Fields (ELF EMF). It was formed in 2004 following a recommendation from the HPA for Government to consider the need for precautionary measures to reduce public exposure to EMF.

The SAGE Report was drawn up for Government by a group of 40 stakeholders, including scientists, representatives from the energy industry, campaigners and government officials. The SAGE process is funded equally by the energy industry, Department of Health and the charity CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA.

BACKGROUND TIMETABLE OF EVENTS:

March 2002

The World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO IARC) defined Extremely Low Frequency Magnetic Fields (ELF EMF) as 'possibly carcinogenic to humans' and they were classified as a 2b carcinogen.

2004

The National Radiological Protection Board recommended that the Government should 'consider the need for further precautionary measures in respect of exposure of people to EMF'.

2004

The Stakeholder Advisory Group on EMF (SAGE) was established. SAGE is funded equally by the Department of Health, the energy industry and CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA.

June 2005

The Draper Report published in the BMJ (British Medical Journal). The largest single study of childhood cancer and power lines, conducted by the Oxford Childhood Cancer Research Group in collaboration with National Grid and funded by the Department of Health, it used the records of almost 30,000 children with cancer in England and Wales. The study reported that children with a birth address within 200m of high voltage power lines had a 70% higher risk of leukaemia compared with those living 600m or more away. [View a full copy of the report \(new window will open\)](#)

2005

Responding to the Draper Report, CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA called for a moratorium on new homes being built near power lines and an Early Day Motion (EDM 403) in support of this was signed by 223 MPs, ranking it one of the top 40 most supported Motions in that Parliament.

2006

Dr Howard Stoate MP chaired the first meeting of the Cross-Party Inquiry into Childhood Leukaemia and Extremely Low Frequency Electric and Magnetic Fields (ELF EMF). The secretariat of the Inquiry was supported and funded by CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA.

April 2007

The SAGE First Interim Assessment was published. It identified a building moratorium (on the building of new homes and schools within 60 metres of existing 275 kV and 400 kV power lines and the building of new power lines within the same distance of homes and schools) as 'the best-available option for obtaining significant exposure reduction'. For lower voltages – 132 kV, 110kV and 66 kV lines, SAGE suggested 30 metres would be the appropriate distance for such a moratorium. [View the SAGE Report \(new window will open\)](#)

April 2007

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) called on the Government to legislate to restrict the building of new homes and schools next to existing power lines.

June 2007

World Health Organisation (WHO) Environmental Health Criteria Monograph on Extremely Low Frequency Fields (No.328) was published, and concluded that 'provided that the health, social and economic benefits of electric power are not compromised, implementing very low-cost precautionary procedures to reduce exposure [to ELF EMF] is reasonable and warranted.'

June 2007

In answer to a parliamentary question, the Government stated that they had referred the SAGE Report to the Health Protection Agency (HPA) for its advice.

July 2007

The Cross-Party Inquiry into Childhood Leukaemia and Extremely Low Frequency Electric and Magnetic Fields (ELF EMF) publishes its report. The Inquiry MPs were: Michael Connarty MP, Dr. Ian Gibson MP, Sandra Gidley MP, Nick Hurd MP Dr. Howard Stoate (Chair).

October 2007

The HPA issued a response to Government on both the SAGE Report and the Cross-Party Inquiry Report recommending that 'the attention of local authority planning departments and the electricity companies be drawn to the evidence for a possible small increase in childhood leukaemia which may result from siting new buildings very close to power lines.'

December 2007

Motion S3M-800, tabled by Keith Brown MSP, in the Scottish Parliament received cross-bench support from over 30 MSPs, which allowed it to stay on the list of Motions for the whole session.

2008

Nick Hurd MP, Richard Benyon MP and Dr Brian Iddon MP tabled amendments to the Housing, Planning and Energy Bills respectively during the House of Commons stages of these Government Bills, calling for the introduction of precautionary measures to reduce EMF exposure from power lines. Baroness Finlay, Lord Best, Lord Jenkin of Roding and Lord Colwyn also raised these issues during the passage of these Bills

through the House of Lords.
Tim Loughton MP

2009

Nick Hurd MP, Lembit Öpik MP, Dr. Howard Stoate MP and Andrew Stunell MP put down parliamentary questions on EMF requesting further information and the Government's response both to SAGE and the Cross-Party Inquiry.

SAGE wrote three times to the Department of Health asking again for a substantive response.

May 2009

Dr. Richard Simpson MSP raises the issue of childhood leukaemia in relation to the proposed Beaulieu to Denny power line.

September 2009

Dan Rogerson MP pledged the support of the Liberal Democrats to CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA and called the Government's lack of response "a betrayal".

Contacts

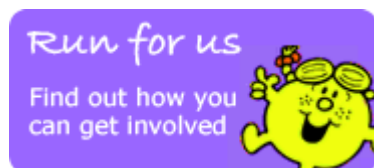
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