

A conference on coronavirus, asbestos, traffic pollution and more will take place on 5 May. For more details, email [hank.roberts@neu.org.uk](mailto:hank.roberts@neu.org.uk)

# H&S reps have got your back

**FROM online safety during the pandemic and keeping Covid-safe in practical lessons, to back pain, outdoor learning and climate change, there was a packed schedule of topics during the NEU's health and safety (H&S) month.**

Several key speakers were lined up to run webinars throughout November, and there were training programmes for becoming health and safety reps.



Organisers Ian Watkinson, chair of the H&S organising forum, and Jenny Cooper (left), organising forum vice-chair, said they were pleased at the number of people

who had taken part in the different sessions.

Jenny explained: "H&S month online was an initiative thought up to replace the usual H&S reps and advisers' briefing because we could not physically attend such an event due to Covid-19. It has gone really well and played a huge part in educating our membership on the whole gamut of things that come under 'health and safety'. Covid has, of course, increased our members' interest in it."

The month kicked off with a webinar featuring Andrew Kingscott, head of public administration at government agency the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), discussing the HSE's spot checks on schools to make sure they were Covid-compliant. Such checks may have added to the stress educators are under



Physiotherapist Lorna Taylor discussed practical advice on maintaining musculoskeletal health while working at school in new bubble arrangements and the use of suitable seating when learning or teaching from home.

This session also saw the launch of the union's new musculoskeletal health guidance for educators in early years and primary settings. PHOTO: Jolly Back

and webinar sessions on work-related stress highlighted this as one of the biggest H&S issues before the coronavirus outbreak.

There was advice on running practical science, technology and art sessions to ensure they are safe by social distancing and "meticulous cleaning".

## Internet, asbestos and air safety

Internet safety of pupils and staff has become a huge concern during the pandemic as learning has moved increasingly online. Online safety expert Karl Hopwood emphasised the importance of ensuring suitable filters and monitoring systems were in place to safeguard from potential harmful and inappropriate material.

NEU executive member Hank Roberts asked why people in the UK were still dying from exposure to asbestos, and said the union needed to take action to end "this outrage".

November also saw the week-long online Youth Climate Summit, which was supported by the NEU, and climate activist Clover Hogan gave a webinar on managing climate fear and anxiety (see page 16).

Hilda Palmer from the Greater Manchester Hazards Centre told members

that more than 2,000 schools and nurseries in England and Wales lie in areas with illegal levels of air pollution, and asked what trade unions can do to protect pupils and staff (see page 19).

The Learning through Landscapes charity described the benefits of using playgrounds, school playing fields and surrounding areas to help children become more active, learn outdoors and have fun (see page 26).

## Why not train as an H&S rep?

"Looking at the numbers attending, H&S month was definitely a worthwhile enterprise that we can build on," Ian Watkinson said.

He is hoping the sessions during the month will have encouraged more members to train as H&S reps: "Ideally, we'd like to see reps in every school, branch and region."

The number of H&S reps has more than doubled, to over 1,100, since the start of the pandemic and three-part training sessions were run during the month for those interested in becoming an H&S rep or officer.

■ Anyone interested in feeding information into the organising forum, which meets regularly, can do so through their region or branch.



**SAFER Internet Day is 9 February and the 2021 theme is An internet we trust: exploring reliability in the online world.**

**Resources will be available to download at [saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/2021](https://saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/2021)**

**The UK Safer Internet Centre runs a helpline for professionals working with children and young people who have concerns about safety issues. Call 0344 381 4772 or email [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)**