



SUBJECT: Boundary Walls – Safety Inspections

RECIPIENTS: All Service areas (including schools)

ISSUE DATE: June 17 **REF:** HSB86

HSE Safety Note – Boundary Wall collapse.

In August 2016, a six-year old girl was severely injured when a boundary wall spanning the rear of a privately-owned and council-owned property collapsed onto a public pathway. The wall was approximately 50 years old, of single skin construction and about 1.8 metres (6 feet) high. There were visible defects before the collapse. Immediate action was taken by building control and further immediately dangerous walls were identified and action taken to make them safe. HSE is still investigating.

This reminder aims to raise awareness of potential issues with single skin walls that are aging and highlight practical advice on the steps to take to minimise the risks of future wall collapses. Though wall collapses occur infrequently they should be regarded as high consequence type events due to the severe injuries that might happen. There are a number of issues that should be considered by Local Authorities. These include the need to:

- Have an adequate proactive inspection system in place to identify dangerous wall conditions completed by competent persons;
- Assess concerns raised either internally or externally and respond adequately;
- Learn from previous wall collapses including where no injury has occurred.

Local Authorities are asked to review their systems for prioritising and inspecting their properties to ensure that their inspection systems are suitable and prioritise inspections on the highest risk walls.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has useful guidance on the actions required by Local Authorities and the types of defects in walls that need to be identified

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/your-garden-walls-better-to-be-safe>

Further guidance is also contained in the Institute of Structural Engineers

<http://www.structural-safety.org/publications/view-report/?report=3059>

BS 8210:2012 “Guide to Facilities Maintenance Management” provides guidance on maintenance management and inspection programmes and advises that “failure to maintain the structure and fabric can affect its function and presents safety risks in addition to reducing the value of the facility as an asset”

If you require further assistance or clarification on the subject please contact:

Corporate Health & Safety Advisers (see George section: Corporate > Information for Working > Risk Management > H&S Advisers)