



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Help and Advice Group

Northern Synod Office, 4 College Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JJ (0191-232 1168)

## Bulletin 34: PROPERTY UPDATE

The Help & Advice Group was set up by Synod in 2009, to support local churches in being informed and effective in their life and mission. The Group is made up of four members of local churches, together with administrative support from the Trust Officer. We are willing to try to provide specific advice or organise training days on particular topics. Please get in touch if you have questions or wish to suggest a training or discussion event.

This article is part of a series giving an overview of particular subjects on interest for local churches. We also circulate general updates from time to time. Bulletins will also be posted on the members' area of the website with direct links to other websites.

Where readers are directed to web-based resources, the Synod Office is willing to respond to reasonable requests for printed out information for readers without web access, although they may find it more satisfactory to follow up their interest through their local library's web access.

---

### Safe Use of Ladders

The Health & Safety Executive has published brief guidance on the safe use of ladders: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf).

Whilst much of this is good common sense, it does list things worth bearing in mind, and explodes the myth that ladders are banned under health & safety law.

The HSE has also published a brief guide to working at height, which includes use of contractors: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf).

### Asbestos

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 impose a duty to manage asbestos in non-domestic premises. This involves assessing the presence and condition of any asbestos in the buildings and preparing a plan to manage it. This may involve sealing in, monitoring in situ or safely removing the asbestos-containing materials. The Synod has a list of professionals who can carry out an asbestos management survey and produce a report.

Anyone working in the building should be informed of the presence of asbestos, and contractors should be asked to sign a declaration that they have read the asbestos register. For major works, a more detailed refurbishment and demolition survey should be done. Further detail is given in section 291N of the Property Handbook, which can be found at: [www.urc-northern-synod.org/members/members\\_downloads/S291N.pdf](http://www.urc-northern-synod.org/members/members_downloads/S291N.pdf) (user name: synod, password: calvin).

Although many church buildings were constructed before asbestos was in regular use, materials may have been introduced later, in wall, floor or ceiling coverings, pipe lagging, protective screens, toilet cisterns, roofing, etc. Accordingly, it is always worth checking to be sure.

The importance of having an asbestos register was recently underlined by a case in Alnwick where a care home was fined £10,000 for failing to do so, and exposing contractors, staff and residents to asbestos.

[andrew.atkinson@urc-northernsynod.org](mailto:andrew.atkinson@urc-northernsynod.org)