

Surrey asbestos pay-out to Epsom caretaker's family

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The family of a former Epsom school caretaker has paid tribute to an 'amazing' husband and dad after lawyers recently secured them a settlement in connection with his asbestos-related cancer death.

Colin Bradley, was diagnosed with mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the lung associated with exposure to asbestos, often decades previously.

Following his diagnosis, Colin, from Epsom, instructed asbestos-related disease specialists at Irwin Mitchell to investigate his illness and help him access the specialist treatment and care he required. However, he died aged 75 before he could see his case concluded.

The case was continued by Colin's son Darren Bradley, 53, in his dad's memory. His legal team has now secured a significant settlement from Surrey County Council in connection with Colin's mesothelioma.

Colin was employed by the local authority as a caretaker at Cuddington County First School from 1976 to 2003. The school is now Cuddington Primary School, run by the Howard Partnership Trust, who were not involved in the case against Surrey County Council - the defendant in the claim.

Surrey County Council admitted that the exposure Colin had to asbestos dust should not have happened, and conceded liability in his claim.

For this year's Workers' Memorial Day of 28 April, Darren joined the legal team to warn people of the ongoing danger posed by asbestos and to pay tribute to an 'amazing' dad who was taken from his family due to exposure to the hazardous substance.

Paul Ramsay, the asbestos-related disease specialist supporting Darren and his family, said: "The past few years have been incredibly difficult for Darren and his family. To face the distress of Colin's diagnosis and declining health due to mesothelioma has taken its toll on all of them.

"Colin was determined to get at the truth of his asbestos exposure and while nothing can bring Colin back to his family, the conclusion of the case and settlement gives them some closure and the answers they were looking for.

"However, Colin's death is also a stark reminder of the dangers still posed by asbestos, including in public buildings. While many people associate the use of asbestos with heavy industry its use was much more widespread, including in schools, hospitals, leisure centres and offices.

"Our own research shows that the presence of asbestos in public buildings, including schools continues to be a real concern throughout the country. In speaking out, Colin's family hope to make others aware of the risks of this material. This year's Workers' Memorial Day is an opportunity to remember workers like Colin and pause to reflect and remember all those who have been lost."

Before his death Colin believed he had been exposed to asbestos in the boiler room and various service areas whilst working at the school.

Colin had always been in good health and did not drink alcohol or smoke but began to feel unwell in August 2020, with a loss of energy and appetite.

After consulting his GP and being sent for tests, mesothelioma was diagnosed in December 2020. Colin began chemotherapy on 13 January, 2021, but his condition continued to deteriorate. He died six months after his diagnosis, on 22 June 2021.

Colin was married to Lorraine Bradley, 65, who is step-mum to Colin's sons, Darren, Mark and Simon Bradley.

Darren said: "All of our lives changed the day of dad's diagnosis. As he'd always led such an active and healthy lifestyle, it was hard to accept anything so serious could be wrong. The speed his illness progressed shocked us all.

"Dad was the central figure in our family, always there encouraging, supporting and looking after us all, even long into our own adult lives. His loss has left a huge void - and it is especially upsetting to see Lorraine left widowed and alone when they still had so much to look forward to in their retirement - but I take some comfort knowing that he would have been proud that we secured an admission of liability from his former employer.

"It's hard to imagine you could come across such a dangerous substance in a school environment and it's shocking to

think it could still be there in other schools, posing a risk to others.

“I hope that by speaking about my amazing dad, we can reflect on how much we miss him every day, but also warn others of the dangers that still exist by coming into contact with asbestos. If we can help keep another family together or help make the argument for asbestos removal, dad’s death won’t have been in vain.”

Workers’ Memorial Day on 28 April remembers those who have died as a result of their employment, and campaigns to improve health and safety standards in the workplace and increase protection for employees.

Research undertaken by Irwin Mitchell suggests more than 4,500 public buildings across 20 of the UK’s largest local authorities still contain asbestos, averaging at 225 buildings per authority.