

AUTUMN TERM 2025 HEALTH AND SAFETY BRIEFING

Health and Safety Seminar 2026

Next year's Health and Safety Seminar will take place on Thursday 3 December 2026 and will be an in-person seminar at Hillscourt.

As a departure from previous years, this will be a single, UK-wide event rather than the previous separate events in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is hoped that this will improve chances for networking and the sharing of good practice across the whole UK.

As a reminder, all Health and Safety Representatives are legally entitled to *take such time off with pay during their working hours as shall be necessary* for training, wherever NASUWT is recognised, which applies in the vast majority of schools. NASUWT recommends that requests for time off are submitted as early as possible and that any representatives encountering difficulty in securing time off should seek further guidance from the Union.

Severe Weather

With winter fast approaching, so too is the likelihood of severe weather. Indeed, we have already seen Storm Amy bring disruptive conditions to many parts of the UK.

NASUWT has extensive guidance on severe weather conditions, which is available at:
nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/adverse-weather.html

In addition, Health and Safety Representatives should check with schools/employers that they have appropriate procedures in place to deal with winter weather, particularly taking into account that slips, trips and falls remain the leading causes of workplace accidents.

Behaviour and School Safety

NASUWT has longstanding concerns around pupil behaviour and increases in violent and abusive behaviour and attacks on school staff.

Under Health and Safety Regulations, all employers must take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their staff, which includes risk assessing foreseeable hazards.

It is therefore a legal requirement for schools and employers to have a general risk assessment in place for violent behaviour.

In addition, where pupils have displayed violent or aggressive behaviours, or there are concerns that they may in the future, a specific and comprehensive risk assessment must be undertaken which is subject to consultation with NASUWT Representatives and shared with relevant staff.

NASUWT Representatives should remind schools/employers of their duties under the legislation, and contact NASUWT if they have any concerns regarding a school's/employer's management of potentially violent behaviour that has not been addressed through discussion with the school/employer.

Detailed guidance on the risk assessment of violent and abusive behaviour can be found at:
nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/risk-assessment-of-violent-and-abusive-behaviour.html

Employee Assistance Programmes

It is universally accepted that there is a mental health and wellbeing crisis in education, with figures from multiple sources showing an extremely poor situation across the whole system.

Employers have a legal duty to take all reasonably practicable steps to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of their employees. While this should be focused primarily on measures to prevent mental ill health, they should also be providing support for employees who are experiencing difficulties.

One way to do this is to provide an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), and many employers/local authorities already do this. The exact provisions of an EAP will vary between schemes; however, as a minimum, they should offer a 24/7 confidential counselling service.

NASUWT Representatives should check with schools/employers that they offer an EAP to their staff. If not, they should strongly encourage them to do so. If a school/employer does not offer such a service and refuses to do so, NASUWT should be contacted for further advice.

TUC Safety Reps Connect Event

The next TUC Safety Reps Connect event for Health and Safety Representatives will take place in Leeds on 11 November 2025. This free event is designed to enable representatives to be prepared to organise health and safety in their workplace.

The day will include the chance to hear about new developments in occupational health and safety research, law, and workplace organising from across the trade union movement, and will bring together Health and Safety Representatives in engaging workshops, insightful panel discussions, and networking. Reps will learn from experts and gain valuable knowledge to enhance their role as a safety rep. There will be workshops on work-related stress, preventing violence and harassment, and much more.

Whether a seasoned safety rep or new to the role, Safety Reps Connect is the perfect platform to exchange ideas and stay updated.

As with the Health and Safety Seminar, Health and Safety Representatives attending Safety Reps Connect 2025 are entitled to paid time off from work. Any difficulties in obtaining time off should be reported to NASUWT.

Please note, that there is no national funding for this event, but reps may be able to claim reasonable travel expenses from their Local Association/Federation. Please speak to your Local Association/Federation Secretary before making any commitments.

Further details, including registration, can be found at: <https://tuc.zohobackstage.com/SafetyRepsConnect2025>

TUC Hazards Manual and Brown Book

The TUC has published brand new updated versions of both the *Hazards at Work* textbook (the encyclopaedia for all things health and safety) and the *Brown Book: Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations*.

Both publications are available for purchase from the TUC website, with the *Hazards at Work* manual at £25 and the *Brown Book* at £7 a copy.

Asbestos

With the new academic year underway, this is a good opportunity for NASUWT Representatives to check that schools/employers are managing asbestos correctly.

Eighty percent of the school estate contains asbestos, and any school building built before 2000 can have asbestos present. Asbestos can be lethal if not managed correctly. The last Health and Safety Executive inspection programme found a third of schools had some deficiency in their management of asbestos.

Detailed advice for representatives in dealing with asbestos can be found at: nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/asbestos.html