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RCM H&S Activists briefing re Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete – RAAC

You may have seen the headlines regarding RAAC - which is a lightweight form of precast concrete, commonly used in buildings in the UK between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s. It is mainly found in roofs, although occasionally in floors and walls.

It is less durable than traditional concrete and there have been problems as a result, which could have significant safety consequences, that is, it is liable to collapse.

On 7 September 2022, the Office of Government Property sent a 'Safety Briefing Notice' to all Property Leaders, regarding the dangers of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). It states that "RAAC is now life-expired and liable to collapse." The Local Government A has been contacting councils in relation to RAAC in schools, but it can be found in all types of public building.

100 schools across England were closed in summer 2023 due to the presence of RAAC in the buildings. RAAC is present and a risk to public buildings, housing blocks and hospitals.

On 1 September 2023 Department of Social and Health Care (DHSC) published a fact sheet explaining how the NHS is dealing with the reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) crisis. 'The NHS is at the forefront of understanding and tackling the issue and has issued instructions requiring the removal of RAAC planks by 2030'.

[RAAC in the NHS - media fact sheet - Department of Health and Social Care Media Centre \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/01/raac-in-the-nhs-media-fact-sheet-department-of-health-and-social-care-media-centre/)

England:

- NHS England issued instructions to all 224 NHS Trusts link to prepare identify and report RAAC.
- All hospitals with RAAC should be part of NHS England's ongoing national RAAC programme. [RAAC in hospitals management information](#)
- As of October 2023: 42, Hospitals were registered with the presence of RAAC can be found [Here](#)

Scotland

- In December 2022, NHS Scotland Assure commissioned a survey team to establish the extent and condition of RAAC across the NHS Estate.
- For more information about progress of the survey programme please refer the RAAC webpage for each NHS Scotland Board: [NHS Scotland RAAC list of properties](#)





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Wales

- In 2022, NWSSP appointed a specialist structural engineer on behalf of the Welsh Government to review the reports received by organisations and those locations where RAAC had been identified. The specialist reviews were completed in November 2022, with all site survey reports produced as part of this commission being shared with the relevant organisations.
- Health boards and NHS trusts were further requested in February 2023 to complete a further iteration of investigation to consider the findings of the specialist engineers reports. These enhanced assurance reports are currently ongoing. Those which have been completed are being collected and reviewed. [Wales RAAC affected hospitals](#)

Northern Ireland

- On 3 July 2023 Northern Ireland Department of Health Safety notice issued - [Health-ni.gov.uk DOH raac-planks-2023](#).

The RCM believe that the numbers of NHS Hospitals and Health Boards affected are rising with maternity services affected in some cases re allocated within hospital estates when RAAC has been identified.

This briefing paper is designed to aid RCM Local H&S representatives to support members and have an understanding and awareness of which questions to ask when they attend the NHS Trust Health & Safety meetings.

What can you do as an RCM H&S representative

Remember H&S representatives are entitled to paid time to attend the Trust/HB Safety meetings. The employer has a duty to consult with and provide safety reps with reasonable facilities, assistance, and paid time off to carry out their duties including undergoing training.

It is very important that H&S representatives use these rights to check employers risk assessment and plans for risk prevention.

Under Regulation 4A, employers have to consult safety representatives on the introduction of any measure in the workplace that may substantially affect the health and safety of employees.





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Where the employer has stated that the RAAC is present in the Maternity Unit, gather as much information as you can by writing to the Trust Director of H&S and Director of Estates. (copy your DOM/HOM into the email and your Regional Officer).

- Asking the relevant questions.

The RCM seeks assurances and evidence that:

- All risk assessments have followed **DHHS NHSE** and **IstructE** guidance.
- RAAC being observed – evidence of how this takes place – Risk assessments.
- The presence of RAAC been submitted to the RAAC Register
- Evidence of plans in place how to deal with the issue.
- Clear communication to staff regarding the 'prop' process
- Evidence of contingency plans, should mitigation fail?
- Reassurance of employer's legal duty to keep staff safe and the reporting mechanism.
- Robust transparent timely communication with Employees – including how to escalate concerns that mitigation failing e.g. dust, cracks etc. re. RAAC, duty of employer to keep staff safe.
- Trust Safety dashboard highlighting this issue.
- RCM H&S reps will receive full facility time to attend in order to be involved and reassure members.
- RCM H&S rep share information with RCM Regional & National officers.

Further information:

National NHS Bodies and Advice - Relevant Links

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/reinforced-aerated-autoclaved-concrete-raac/>

<https://www.istructe.org/resources/news/istructe-statement-reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-c/>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/education/raac.htm>

The Institution of Structural Engineers [information on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete \(RAAC\)](#) provides authoritative guidance on RAAC.

Parliamentary documents:

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9917/CBP-9917.pdf>

Media articles:

[ioshmagazine/2023/09/05/crumbling-concrete-crisis-risks](https://ioshmagazine.com/2023/09/05/crumbling-concrete-crisis-risks)





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<https://constructionmanagement.co.uk/raac-in-hospitals-nhs-gives-update-on-remediation-work/>

