

# The Herald

## Leukaemia risk: 80% afraid of living near power lines

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More than 80% of Scots have fears about living near or under power lines, according to a survey commissioned by the charity Children with Leukaemia. The study, presented yesterday to a cross-party group of MSPs, found 81% were concerned about possible links between childhood leukaemia and exposure to electric and magnetic fields (EMF) caused by high-voltage power lines. Around 67% said they would like planning controls introduced to stop homes being built near power lines, while 37% were in favour of burying existing power lines to reduce the fields emitted. Only 1% of the 365 people polled said nothing needed to be done.

Eddie O'Gorman, chairman of the charity, said: "It's a very clear message for the policymakers in Scotland. Even those people not affected want a moratorium on building where it puts homes and power lines next to each other.

"We have a duty to do everything we can to protect young lives now and in the future."

The charity is calling for an immediate moratorium on building houses or schools near overhead power lines. An early-day motion calling for the government to impose the moratorium has the support of 170 MPs, according to the charity. Leukaemia is the most common childhood cancer and has claimed the lives of more children in the UK in the last five years than any other disease. The number of new cases is increasing each year.

A study commissioned by the government, due later this summer, is expected to recommend no homes be built within 230ft of high-voltage lines. It is the work of the Stakeholder Advisory Group on Extremely Low Frequency Electromagnetic Fields (Sage), set up in October 2004 following the publication of a report by Dr Gerald Draper, of the Oxford childhood cancer research group.

Dr Draper suggested under-15s living near power lines could have a 69% increased risk of getting leukaemia.

A Scottish Executive spokeswoman said: "There is no new evidence to suggest a link. The Scottish Executive is represented on Sage. Guidance on the health policy options relevant to electromagnetic fields is also under preparation by the World Health Organisation.

"The Scottish Executive will consider the outcomes of these processes in the development of future policy in this area."