

Fine after 12-year-old fell from ladder at unsecured site

Contractor Westdale Services Limited has been fined £160,000 after a 12-year-old boy slipped off a scaffold ladder on an inadequately guarded site.

On 6 May 2017, two boys were able to climb the rungs of a ladder within scaffolding erected by Westdale Services at Southville Flats in Cwmbran by placing their feet either side of a ladder guard that did not cover the rungs completely.

One boy climbed to the top platform of the scaffold and climbed the uppermost ladder to a height of approximately 10 metres.

The ladder slipped, causing him to lose his balance and fall to the ground. He sustained life-changing injuries requiring multiple operations.

The boy now has no bladder or bowel control and is only able to walk short distances due to being unstable on his feet.

The HSE's investigation found the security arrangements for preventing access to the scaffolding, especially by children from a nearby school, were inadequate.

Westdale Services Limited of Askern, Doncaster pleaded guilty to safety breaches and was fined £160,000 with costs of £22,310.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Michael Batt said: *"The death or injury of a child is particularly tragic and a lot of thought must go into securing construction sites."*

"Children do not perceive danger as adults do. The potential for unauthorised access to construction sites must be carefully risk assessed and effective controls put in place."

"This incident could have been prevented by removal of the ladder completely or installing an appropriately sized ladder guard to cover the full width of the rungs."

