

## **MPs pledge to be ‘button battery aware’ at Westminster launch of The Harper Lee Foundation**

This week, Members of Parliament from across the House of Commons pledged to become ‘button battery aware’ at the Westminster launch of The Harper Lee Foundation. The reception which took place on Tuesday 7 June, coincided with Child Safety Week (6-12 June) and gave MPs the opportunity to learn more about button and coin battery safety and hear about the work that the portable battery industry, charities, and the UK Government are doing together in order to raise awareness of the risks associated with swallowing these types of batteries and reduce the likelihood of these incidents occurring.

Button and coin cell batteries are small batteries that are used to power a range of everyday items including car key fobs, remote controls, and children’s toys. However, if swallowed, the larger coin cell batteries in particular can badly injure or kill a child. At the reception MPs signed the ‘button battery pledge’ which pledges to raise awareness of the risks associated with button and coin cell ingestion in local communities.

The event was sponsored by Stoke-on-Trent Central MP Jo Gideon, who is Chairman of the Harper Lee Foundation. The Foundation was established last year in response to the death of Harper-Lee Fanthorpe who passed away after swallowing one of these batteries at her home in Stoke on Trent. The charity works with Government, battery manufacturers, retailers, educators, charities and health professionals to reduce the risk to children of accidents and death from foreign body ingestion such as button and coin battery ingestion.

Commenting on the reception, Jo Gideon MP said: *“I was delighted to host this event in Parliament to raise the profile of the work of the Harper-Lee Foundation, so that communities across the United Kingdom will become more aware of the danger of button battery ingestion. My parliamentary colleagues were invited to sign a pledge to raise awareness in their constituencies so that we can avoid more tragic deaths and injuries from button battery and coin cell ingestion by children. This will be Harper-Lee’s legacy.”*

MPs and guests also heard from representatives from the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT), the UK’s leading child safety charity, who detailed the work that the charity is doing, alongside the British and Irish Portable Battery Association (BIPBA). MPs also received copies of educational materials that CAPT and BIPBA have produced, with the support of the Office for Product Safety and Standards, which outline where batteries can be found in the home and what to do in the event of ingestion.

Chris Speight from BIPBA commented: *“As an industry we are taking button and coin cell safety seriously. Through our work with partners such as CAPT and with the help of Government and groups like the Harper Lee Foundation, we are not just working hard to raise awareness of the risks associated with these types of batteries but we are working to reduce the number of ingestion incidents occurring.”*

*Ahead of Button Battery Awareness Day, this Sunday 12 June, we were very pleased to see so many MPs pledge to become button battery aware, and we hope that they take the message of battery safety back to their constituencies.”*

Katrina Phillips from CAPT also said: *“If a small child swallows a large powerful lithium coin cell battery, it can get stuck in their food pipe and corrode through tissue, causing life-changing injuries and even death. It was fantastic to see so many Members of Parliament take an interest in button battery safety and we hope they will raise awareness in their local constituencies. Too many parents still don’t know how important it is to keep things with easily accessible lithium coin cell batteries out of children’s reach and to act fast if they think their child may have swallowed one. Hopefully, through events like this, we will see an end to these terrible accidents.”*

For more information on button and coin cell safety please visit - <https://www.capt.org.uk/button-battery-safety>. More information on the Harper Lee Foundation can be found here - <https://harperleefoundation.org.uk/>.

**ENDS**

**Note for newsdesks:**

**About The Harper Lee Foundation**

The Harper-Lee Foundation (Registered Charity Number: 1196783) was set up to provide a lasting legacy following the death of Harper-Lee Fanthorpe. It works with government, manufacturers, retailers, educators, charities and health professionals to reduce the risk to children of accidents and death from foreign body ingestion such as button and coin battery ingestion. The Harper-Lee Foundation is looking to provide a single point of contact for agencies working on this agenda, to commission research, support educational campaigns and provide advice and support for families.

<https://harperleefoundation.org.uk/>

**About CAPT**

The Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) is the UK’s leading charity working to reduce the number of children and young people killed, disabled or seriously injured in accidents. It exists because accidents are a leading cause of death and serious injury for children and young people. CAPT’s priority is to undertake child accident prevention activities that reduce serious injury rates among all children and young people and, in particular, reduce the marked inequalities between richer and poorer children.

<https://www.capt.org.uk/>

**About BIPBA**

The British and Irish Portable Battery Association (BIPBA) represents major producers and manufacturers of portable consumer batteries in the UK and Ireland. Through the Association, members work to promote and enhance the sustainable and safe use of portable batteries that power the many electronic devices on which consumers rely across the UK and Ireland. To achieve this, it works with relevant Government Departments and

charities as well as other trade associations and organisations that share or contribute to the delivery of our goals.

<https://bipba.co.uk/>

### **About EPBA**

The European Portable Battery Association (EPBA) is the leading organisation representing the interests of primary and rechargeable portable battery manufacturers, those industries using portable batteries in their products and distributors of portable batteries active within the European Union, and beyond.

<https://www.epbaeurope.net/>