

# ASBESTOS IN YOUR HOME

Winchester City Council has produced this leaflet to give its tenants advice and information about the possible presence of asbestos in and around their homes. Its content gives general information about asbestos, where it can be found and addresses some of the most frequently asked questions.

## COUNCIL POLICY

**We are constantly updating our asbestos records. In this way we are able to:**

- Confirm the exact locations of asbestos containing materials;
- Identify the type of asbestos present (if any);
- Monitor the condition of the material and manage it appropriately.



## WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring silicate material which is mined from the earth, and was used extensively in the construction industry from the 1950's to the 1990's in both domestic and commercial buildings. The use of it in building materials and products peaked in the 1970's, but has since been prohibited. There were three different types of asbestos used in the building products, often known as blue, brown and white asbestos, which were phased out at different times.

### Why may Asbestos be a Problem?

Some Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) may become damaged (due to its location), and can then release fibres into the air. These fibres are a potential health risk to those in close proximity. People who have worked on asbestos for many years as part of their job, or have washed the dusty clothing of those who worked with asbestos are most likely to be affected, although Regulations now ensure suitable precautions are now in place.



## WHERE WAS IT USED?

Many thousands of different asbestos products were produced over the years, and these products can be found in a great variety of locations in domestic properties, from within the fuse board, in boiler cupboards, to the external soffits. Some of the products and locations are detailed below:

- In domestic premises asbestos was commonly used in the manufacture of soffits, gutters and down pipes;
- It was also used as a roofing material for garages and garden sheds;
- It has been used in a wide variety of other building materials such as: decorative coatings; plastic floors tiles; water tanks; roofing felts; and ropes around gas fires;
- The use of asbestos in the above products decreased greatly in the mid-1980s, and in 1999 all products were banned, although generally only floor tiles and decorative coating ACMs were used in the 1990's;
- In the Winchester City Council housing stock no asbestos has been found in cavity wall insulation or loft insulation to date, although some disused asbestos cement water tanks were left in lofts, and these present no health risk.

## HOW CAN I IDENTIFY PRODUCTS OR MATERIALS CONTAINING ASBESTOS?

It is not easy to tell whether a product contains asbestos, as modern asbestos – free materials often look similar, remember it is usually the older products that contain asbestos. Unless you are experienced in these matters it is very unlikely that you will be able to identify a product that contains asbestos. The best way to have a material confirmed as an asbestos product or asbestos free product is to get it sampled, which is carried out by a professional contractor on behalf of WCC. If you have any concerns please contact the Customer Service Centre.

## WHAT PRECAUTIONS SHOULD I TAKE WHEN DOING DIY IN THE HOME?

As some materials may contain asbestos, extra care should be taken when undertaking any DIY. Before you start you should firstly remember that as part of your tenancy agreements conditions, you must get approval to undertake the works from the Housing Tenancy Team. You need to contact the Housing Tenancy Team in writing and explain the works you intend to undertake. A Surveyor in the Property Services Team will then review the proposed works. You will not normally be given permission to work on any part of the property which has asbestos containing materials present which may be disturbed. General painting and redecoration will not require approval.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This section contains a list of some of the questions on asbestos, which are commonly asked by tenants of Winchester City Council.

### **Q. Just how dangerous is asbestos?**

A. Asbestos products in the home only become a health risk where they are made of friable material and have been damaged. If any boxing or materials in the boiler cupboard in the home become damaged you should report this through to the Housing Service at Winchester City Council.

### **Q. Are old asbestos products more dangerous?**

A. Most of the asbestos products which are still in the home are considered old, as the use of them started to decline in the 1980s, and they were banned in 1999. As a general rule external products that are exposed to the elements are more likely to deteriorate with age, making fibre release more likely. Although this will not create a health risk as the product is on the outside of the building – any fibres will disperse in the air. Different materials contain different amount of asbestos fibres (decorative coatings will not usually have more than 5%), so the key issue therefore is the condition and type of material. If the material is in good condition and is left alone, it does not present a health risk. Bonded asbestos materials such as thermoplastic tiles, asbestos cement gutters, downpipes, water tanks and corrugated roof sheets, are far less breakable than insulation board, and may not release fibres when disturbed.

### **Q. Should all asbestos be removed from buildings?**

A. It is recommended by the Health and Safety Executive that if an ACM is undamaged and is unlikely to be disturbed it should be left in place (the HSE website is detailed at the back of this leaflet). As an extra precaution the material may be sealed or encapsulated (but would also be labelled to aid identification). Where it is identified due to a change in circumstances that an ACM is likely to be damaged then it would be sensible to remove

it. It should be stressed that there is no legal obligation to remove the ACM. The Control of Asbestos Regulations give landlords a duty to manage ACM's in communal areas.

**Q. I think I have asbestos in my property. Are there any special precautions I should take?**

A. Winchester City Council is responsible for most elements on or in your property. Most of the asbestos containing materials are likely to be asbestos cement products and are likely to be outdoors so there is unlikely to be any risk of exposure to asbestos fibres. ACMs found internally in good condition and unlikely to get disturbed should be left in place. Decorative coatings on ceilings from time to time get damage by water leaks and needs repairing. This may require patch repair or over-boarding by the Council's maintenance contractor.

**Q. The paint on my asbestos soffit boards is flaking. What is the best way to renovate and redecorate them?**

A. Winchester City Council is responsible for this external element of the property and has in the past painted asbestos cement soffits. In some locations this paint is now flaking off the soffits and is unsightly, however, there is no health risk from this water based paint. The soffits will be worked on by the Councils contractors as part of the 5 yearly planned maintenance programme to external areas.

**Q. How should I clean my asbestos cement corrugated roof?**

A. Again, Winchester City Council is responsible for this element. Any necessary remedial actions will be carried out during the 5 yearly planned maintenance programme.

**Q. I live in a block of Council-owned flats where asbestos has been used in construction. Whose responsibility is it to deal with the asbestos?**

A. The management of asbestos in the building is the responsibility of the building owner, in this case Winchester City Council.

Q. What requirement is there for the landlord to inform tenants of the presence of asbestos in the property?

A. The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 do not specify a legal requirement for landlords to inform tenants of the presence of asbestos or to remove undamaged ACMs in rented accommodation. However, Winchester City Council is committed to providing relevant information to tenants, which is available on the Keystone Asbestos Register. In the near future we will start to provide information to new tenants moving into empty properties. All tenants can request information on their property, however, some of this information will be obtained from other similar properties (predictive).

## FOR YOUR HOUSEHOLDS SAFETY PLEASE REMEMBER:

- Avoid disturbing or damaging asbestos materials;
- Asbestos material in good condition is not a health risk and it is recommended by the HSE to leave in situ;
- If you suspect you have damaged or deteriorating asbestos containing materials in your home then please contact the Customer Service Centre.



## CENTRE FOR ADVICE. YOU CAN HELP US BY:

Reporting any disrepair to the fabric of the building to us on 01962 840 222 as quickly as possible. The sooner we are advised the quicker we can assess the situation and take any remedial action if it is considered necessary.

## FURTHER ADVICE

Should you intend carrying out any DIY in your home, over and above normal redecoration, if you have any doubts as to whether there is any ACMs in your home contact the Customer Service Centre on 01962 840 222 for advice.

The Health and Safety Executive website has more information on asbestos which may be of interest to you at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

If you have any particular needs which affect how you are able to use or be involved in our services or how you would like to receive information for example:

translation	interpreters
braille	audio tape
large print	sign language

Contact the Customer Service Centre

**01962 840 222**

**[customerservice@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@winchester.gov.uk)**

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