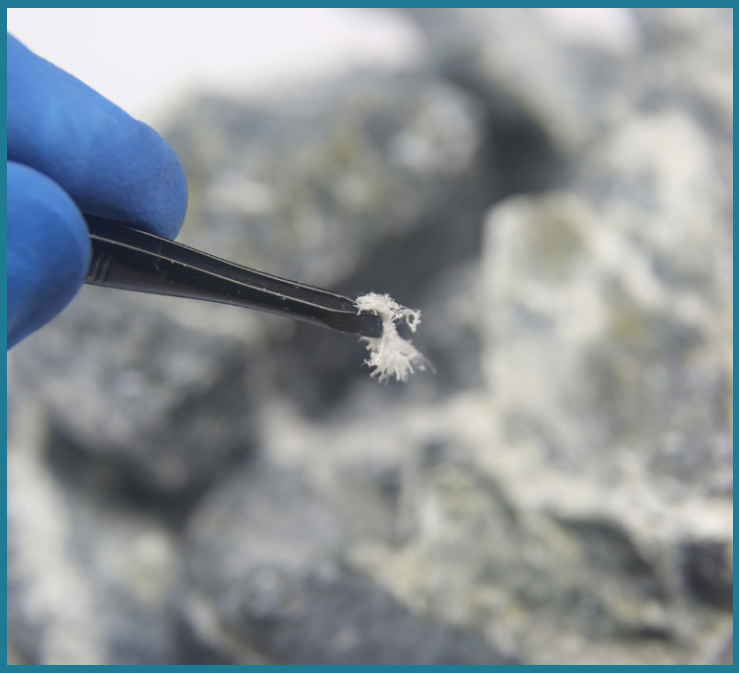
Asbestos Safety

Keeping you and your family safe in your home



Ashford Borough Council

What is Asbestos and why was it used?

Asbestos is a natural occurring mineral which can be found in rocks all over the world. Asbestos fibres are strong and flexible with excellent fire proofing and insulating qualities, hence why they were commonly added to building materials.

Most homes built between 1930s and 1990s feature some building products with ACMs (Asbestos Containing Materials).

Its use in the construction industry was finally banned in the UK in 1999. So if your home was built after this date it is very unlikely to contain asbestos.

The three types of asbestos which were used in the UK are crocidolite (blue asbestos), amosite (brown asbestos) and chrysotile (white asbestos). It is not possible to tell whether a material contains asbestos by simply looking at it.

Is asbestos in my home safe?

DIY work can result in brief but high levels of exposure and potentially further ongoing exposure over time.

If ACMs (Asbestos Containing Materials) are in good condition and positioned where they will not be disturbed or damaged, then it is safer to leave them where they are and ensure the risks are managed.

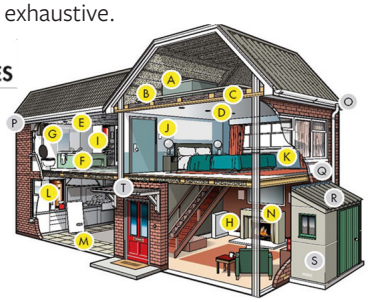
The greatest risk arises when ACMs are sawn, drilled, sanded or scrubbed causing the release of fibres. Asbestos fibres released during these activities cannot be seen with the naked eye. DIY work can result in brief but high levels of exposure that can put your family at risk.

Why is asbestos a health risk?

If breathed in, asbestos fibres can remain in the lungs for a substantial amount of time and cause long term health problems, such as thickening of the lung lining which causes breathing difficulties, or serious diseases such as lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis.

Where might I find asbestos in my home?

Asbestos in your home is most likely to be found in old vinyl floor tiles or in textured coatings (Artex or similar). However, it may also be found in other parts of your home as shown below. The list here is by no means exhaustive.



Inside

- **A.** Asbestos cement water tank
- **B.** Pipe lagging
- **C.** Loose fill insulation
- **D.** Textured decorative coating e.g. Artex
- **E.** AIB ceiling tiles
- **F.** AIB bath panel
- **G.** Toilet seat and cistern
- **H.** AIB behind fuse box
- **I.** AIB airing cupboard or insulation to H/W cylinder
- **J.** AIB partition wall
- **K.** AIB interior window panel
- **L.** AIB around boiler
- **M.** Vinyl floor tiles
- **N.** AIB behind fire

Outside

- **O.** Gutters and Asbestos cement downpipes
- **P.** Soffits – AIB or asbestos cement
- **Q.** AIB exterior window panel
- **R.** Asbestos cement roof
- **S.** Asbestos cement panels
- **T.** Roofing felt

AIB: Asbestos Insulating Board

Source: **www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/building.htm**

Modern loft or cavity insulation is a man-made fibre and unlikely to contain asbestos, however there may be asbestos debris in some loft spaces originating from old water tanks or flues.

What is Ashford Borough Council doing about asbestos in my home?

We are committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all our residents, visitors, contractors and staff, by identifying and managing the risks of asbestos materials in our buildings.

We are doing this by:

- Collating information through surveys, testing and regular re-inspections, to determine the presence, type and condition of asbestos. These works will be carried out by licensed and UKAS accredited consultants.
- Recording all asbestos information on our Asbestos Database as part of ABC's comprehensive management plan and complying with HSE requirements.
- Assessing and managing the risk from materials containing asbestos in all of our properties.
- Providing information, when asked, about the condition and location of materials containing asbestos to anyone who could be exposed to them.
- Ensuring all our repair operatives are fully trained and equipped to carry our repairs and maintenance work safely without disturbing ACMs
- Checking the asbestos database to identify any ACMs prior to undertaking any planned maintenance in your home.
- Removing or encapsulating ACMs identified in poor condition. These works will be carried out by licensed and UKAS accredited contractors.

Encapsulating can be a safer alternative especially if the asbestos is only slightly damaged or cannot be removed. The procedure involves treating the asbestos with a sealant that forms a protective layer between the material and indoor environment. This ensures wear-and-tear won't cause microfibers to be released into the air.

Generally if the asbestos is in good condition and is not likely to be disturbed or damaged when worked on or near, then its best left in place. This is in line with current Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines.

What safety measures can I take when carrying out DIY in my home?

Check if the repair is your responsibility first, this can be found in the 'Keeping your home in good condition' section of this Handbook.

Always...

- ✓ Allow access for us to carry out surveys to identify asbestos and if necessary, removal by licensed contractors.
- ✓ Obtain permission from your Housing Officer before you undertake any DIY (you should not carry out any alterations or improvements to your home, other than cleaning or basic decorating).
- ✓ Take every precaution to avoid damaging building materials as they may contain asbestos.
- ✓ Contact the Housing Compliance Team if you believe you have damaged or discovered asbestos that may be a health risk.

Never...

- X Remove materials that may contain asbestos or dispose in the dustbin or skips.
- X Saw, sand or drill holes in any material that contains asbestos.
- X Remove old floor tiles, linoleum or the glue affixing them.
- X Dust, sweep or vacuum debris that you think may contain asbestos.
- X Try to scrape, sand down or remove textured coatings from walls and ceilings.
- X Jet wash or clean down asbestos cement roofing materials such as corrugated garage or shed roofs.

What about appliances and household items that may contain asbestos?

Very old items such as cookers, ironing board pads, fire blankets and oven gloves may contain asbestos. If you are planning to dispose of any of these items and think they may contain asbestos, please contact the Housing Compliance Team for advice.

Should I worry if I have asbestos in my home?

There's no need to panic – it's unlikely to be a danger to your health as long as it's undamaged, or hasn't been disturbed. If it has, contact the Housing Compliance Team, who will advise on appropriate action.

Textured Coatings (Artex or similar)

Homes constructed prior to year 2000 may contain asbestos in textured coatings. The quantity of asbestos in Artex is relatively low but you should never sand down, scrape, remove or plaster over without seeking professional advice.

Cement Roof Sheets

Some older sheds or garages may have corrugated roof sheets made of asbestos cement. Asbestos cement is very durable and roof sheets can remain in place, if in good condition.

Vinyl Floor Tiles

Floor tiles and the adhesive used may contain a relatively low amount of asbestos in homes constructed before 1980. They can also remain in place if undamaged or undisturbed.

How do I get more information on asbestos in my home?

You can request a copy of the asbestos survey for your home, identifying the presence of ACMs.

Leaseholders will need to arrange and pay for their own asbestos survey and removal if necessary, by an approved and licensed contractor.

HSE Health & Safety Executive

If you require further information and advice please visit the Health & Safety Executive's website: **www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos**.

Always provide access to maintenance and service contractors.

Report all faults and repairs immediately to:

housing.compliance@ashford.gov.uk

01233 331111