

Access Legal Calls For More Help For Asbestos Disease Victims



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Author: [Access Legal](#)

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Access Legal, consumer legal services provider from Shoosmiths, is calling for more to be done to help victims of mesothelioma, as it believes that not enough is being done to help sufferers of fatal asbestos-related diseases.

Access Legal wants to see more done to help victims of mesothelioma, an asbestos-linked cancer common in builders, plumbers, joiners, and teachers.

The call comes in the midst of a Health & Safety Executive awareness-raising campaign aimed at those workers most at risk. Sara Hunt, associate and asbestos specialist at Access legal from [Shoosmiths](#), said: "With some people already hit by this creeping disease, and with many others potentially at risk, not a lot seems to be getting done.

"There are calls for government funding for a national centre for asbestos related diseases, and a 24,000-signature petition was presented to 10 Downing Street last year, but there's been little positive reaction."

Hunt also believes Alimta - a drug that extends the life expectancy of mesothelioma sufferers - should remain available on the NHS. In 2007 the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) said the drug was not cost effective. However, following successful lobbying that decision was overturned, and Alimta was made available on the NHS. Now, that decision in turn is being challenged.

Hunt said: "If that challenge succeeds, sufferers will no longer have NHS access to Alimta.

"Malignant mesothelioma is an aggressive cancer, and sufferers often have a very short life expectancy. Is it right to deny them access to a drug that may extend their life?"

Asbestos was used extensively as a building, insulating and fireproof material, particularly from the 1950s to 1980s. People exposed as long ago as 40 years might only now be developing asbestos-related conditions.

Asbestos remains in around 500,000 UK buildings, with people exposed when asbestos is disturbed and asbestos fibres become airborne. It can also be disturbed

by pushing drawing pins into walls, and it is thought a single drawing pin can release 6,000 fibres. Mesothelioma can be caused by exposure to just one fibre.

Teaching unions are campaigning for asbestos to be removed from schools, after figures revealed 228 teachers died from asbestos-related diseases between 1991 and 2005.

Mesothelioma affects the lining of the lungs and is a fatal illness. It is one of the least researched of the UK's top 20 cancers, despite claiming more than 2,000 lives each year in the UK. It is believed this figure will continue to rise, peaking in 2015.

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Notes to Editors
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For further information please contact:

Alastair Gray
PR & Communications Manager
Shoosmiths
7th Floor
125 Colmore Row
Birmingham
B3 3SH
08700 864096
www.access-legal.co.uk

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