

# Report

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Report to:	<b>Housing and Technical Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>18 May 2011</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Progress Report on the Management of Asbestos within Council Houses and Related Common Areas</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an update on the progress being made on the management of asbestos within the Council housing stock and related common areas
- ◆ outline the next steps to be undertaken to ensure that the Resource continues to comply with current Asbestos Management legislation

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the content of this report, including the next actions outlined in section 5, be noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. Members will be aware from previous reports that Housing and Technical Resources is responsible for the management of asbestos in the common areas of the Council housing stock such as closes, bin shelters and sheltered housing common rooms.
- 3.2. The previous reports highlighted a number of key activities being undertaken to ensure that the Resource continues to meet its responsibilities in this key legislative area.
- 3.3. This report provides an update on these activities and the ongoing survey and inspection regime which the Resource has in place for the management of asbestos in Council houses and associated common areas.
- 3.4. The work being undertaken by the Resource in this area is legislative and applies to all public and private sector landlords and factors of common housing areas.
- 3.5. Our Asbestos Management Policy is based around the regular inspection of properties for any asbestos presence and subsequently risk assessing it based on the type of asbestos present and its condition and location. Where asbestos is identified action is taken to ensure the safety of the public and operatives. This will vary from immediate removal to leaving it in-situ if it is undisturbed and posing no risk.

#### **4. Progress to Date**

- 4.1. As detailed in the previous report all relevant officers have now been suitably trained on the management of asbestos and there are processes in place to ensure that, prior to works being undertaken, information on any asbestos present is passed to the contractors concerned.
- 4.2. The initial surveying and inspection of all common areas, as noted in the previous report, has now been concluded. The table below details the numbers undertaken.

<u>Property Type</u>	<u>Number of Surveys/Inspections Undertaken</u>
Multi storey blocks	21
Common block Surveys	767
Common block Inspections	1855
Sheltered housing common area Surveys	31
Internal house surveys due to HIP or major works	5146

- 4.3. Following the results from the above surveys/inspections, any asbestos identified as presenting a risk was either treated or removed under controlled conditions.

#### **5. Next Steps and Associated Proposals**

- 5.1. The results of the surveys and inspections noted at 4.2 above have now been recorded in the Resource's Asbestos Management System. The next step is to issue letters to all residents in blocks of flats with common areas informing them of the results of these surveys/inspections. Samples of the letters to be issued and examples of frequently asked questions are detailed in Appendices 1 and 2. This exercise requires to be undertaken on an ongoing basis following any surveys/inspections to ensure that the Resource meets its legislative obligations.
- 5.2. Cyclical inspection of all common areas will also take place to ensure that the condition of any asbestos previously identified remains safe. Residents will be advised on an ongoing basis as to any changes found in relation to asbestos and any actions required following the inspection. The frequency of inspections will be determined on a risk basis following on from the findings of the initial inspection and other information held in relation to the property construction type.
- 5.3. The surveying of properties involved in the Housing Investment Programme or any other major routine repair works will continue using a risk based approach. Information gathered from other surveys of similar properties of the same construction type will also be used where appropriate.
- 5.4. Where any remedial works are necessary to remove or treat asbestos in the common areas of blocks, charges for a share of the costs involved will be passed to owner-occupiers in accordance with their title deeds.

#### **6. Employee Implications**

- 6.1. There are no additional employee implications related to this work.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1. Budgetary provision of £1.76 m has been included in the HRA Capital Programme for 2011/12 to pay for all legislative compliance works including the Management of Asbestos.

## **8. Other Implications**

- 8.1. Failure to undertake the actions noted on section 5 of this report would result in the Council failing in its legislative duties with regards to asbestos management in its housing stock.

## **9. Equalities Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 9.2. There is no requirement to undertake any consultation in relation to the content of this report.

**Lindsay Freeland**  
**Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)**

15 April 2011

### **Link(s) to Council Objectives/Improvement Themes/Values**

- ◆ Improve the quality, access and availability of housing

### **Previous References**

- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources Committee, 1 April 2009
- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources Committee 12 November 2008

### **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council Policy for Management of Asbestos 1998

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Patrick Murphy, Head of Support Services

Ext: 4065 (Tel: 01698 454065)

E-mail: [patrick.j.murphy@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:patrick.j.murphy@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

**Sample letter to be issued where there is no asbestos found to be present in common areas**

Dear Resident

Subject: **Residential Common Areas Asbestos Appraisal**  
(Insert address)

South Lanarkshire Council has a duty under current legislation to manage asbestos in the common areas of residential properties. For this purpose we consider common areas to be any area over which residents do not have exclusive rights of occupation. In general, common areas relate to access halls and stairwells, drying areas, bin stores, common electrical supply cupboards and where applicable common lofts, boiler houses and storage areas. This list is for example only and is not considered comprehensive.

Following a recent inspection of the common areas of your block it has been confirmed that no asbestos containing materials have been detected in the surfaces to the common areas. It is important to note, however, that asbestos containing materials could have been used elsewhere within the building but pose no risk unless they are damaged or are disturbed.

The Council has put in place a management plan to monitor the condition of the common areas on a regular basis to ensure they are kept in a safe condition and do not pose any risk to residents. In order to support this management plan and to ensure people's safety, the Council is seeking residents support to the following policy:

- As usual if you identify any damage in a common area for example to wall finishes, ceilings or floor tiles including damage to any fittings such as handrails or lights which are fixed to the surface, then it is important that you contact the Council's Repairs Call Centre on 0303 123 1010 to allow the repair to be assessed.
- At present you cannot undertake any work in the common area, without the express consent of the Council. If you wish such permission please contact the Council's Repairs Call Centre on 0303 123 1010 for further information and advice. This includes any work to fix any decorative items or equipment to any surface, to carry out any decoration or to install any equipment or cabling, including contractors such as Sky or BT. This is to ensure that both Council contractors and residents stay within current legislation.

Attached is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) to help you understand what asbestos is and how it was used in construction. If you have any queries on any of the above please visit our Asbestos Information page at [southlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://southlanarkshire.gov.uk) or call the Council's Repairs Call Centre on 0303 123 1010.

The Council wishes to thank you for your cooperation and looks forward to working with you to keep residents safe.

Yours faithfully

**Executive Director**

**Sample letter to be issued where asbestos is found to be present in the common area of a block**

Dear Resident

Subject: **Residential Common Areas Asbestos Appraisal**  
(Insert address)

South Lanarkshire Council has a duty under current legislation to manage asbestos in the common areas of residential properties. For this purpose we consider common areas to be any area over which residents do not have exclusive rights of occupation. In general, common areas relate to access halls and stairwells, drying areas, bin stores, common electrical supply cupboards and where applicable common lofts, boiler houses and storage areas. This list is for example only and is not considered comprehensive.

Following a recent inspection of the common areas of your block it has been confirmed that asbestos containing materials were used in the construction of the common areas of your property. It is important to note that asbestos containing materials are safe unless they are damaged or are disturbed as a result of any work or other intrusive operation. The most recent inspection of your property has confirmed that these remain in a safe condition.

The Council has put in place a management plan to monitor the condition of these materials on a regular basis to ensure they are kept in a safe condition and do not pose any risk to residents. In order to support this management plan and to ensure people's safety, the Council is seeking residents support to the following policy:

- As usual if you identify any damage to a surface material in a common area such as wall finishes, ceilings or floor tiles or if you believe any of the materials have generally deteriorated including damage to any fittings such as handrails or lights which are fixed to the surface then it is important that you contact the Council's Repairs Call Centre on 0303 123 1010 to allow remedial action to be undertaken.
- At present you cannot undertake any work in the common area, without the express consent of the Council. If you wish such permission please contact the Council's Repairs Call Centre on 0303 123 1010. This includes any work to fix any decorative items or equipment to any surface, to carry out any decoration or to install any equipment or cabling, including contractors such as Sky or BT. This is to ensure that both Council contractors and residents stay within current legislation.

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Yours faithfully

**Executive Director**

## **Asbestos FAQ**

### **What is Asbestos?**

Asbestos is a natural mineral which is resistant to heat and fire, does not rot or burn and is not harmed by being exposed to weather. This made it a building material of choice between the 1950s and 1980s, with it being used heavily in many types of properties before its dangers came to light. With around 5.5 million buildings in the UK containing asbestos, most people are exposed to low amounts of asbestos present in the atmosphere with no ill effects; however the asbestos fibres and dust are potentially harmful if inhaled.

### **What are we doing?**

The council has an Asbestos Policy in place and we survey, assess and regularly inspect our properties to ensure asbestos is managed in a safe condition. These activities are part of our ongoing Asbestos Management Programme. With the information gathered from these surveys, we will know which of our properties contain asbestos and any future work we may have to undertake will continue to be risk assessed and carried out safely.

### **Is Asbestos dangerous?**

It is important to note that when asbestos is in good condition, it poses no health risks but it is potentially harmful if damaged.

### **Should I take precautions?**

- If you suspect that you have damaged surfaces within your common area, please contact the Council's Repairs Call Centre on 0303 123 1010
- Remember you need our permission before doing any alterations or work within the common areas or allowing contractors to carry out work on your behalf. If in any doubt, contact your local housing office.