

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP

Prime Minister

10 Downing Street

London SW1A 2AA

By email: ministerial.correspondence@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

28 July 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

RE: Urgent action on asbestos

On behalf of the [National Asbestos Taskforce](#), may I congratulate you on becoming Prime Minister. We wish you every success in addressing the many challenges facing the country.

Asbestos is the UK's number one occupational killer. Unfortunately, as a nation we have the highest asbestos-related death rates in the world, as well as some of the worst health and safety practices. Your predecessor, Sir Keir Starmer, stated that asbestos is an "awful, awful killer" and that government must do "whatever we need to do to reduce that risk". Unfortunately, his government, like those before, did nothing.

Make no mistake: this is another national scandal, to be added to Hillsborough, Grenfell, the contaminated blood and postmaster scandals. The taskforce was established to campaign for the removal of asbestos from UK buildings by implementing the recommendations of the Work and Pensions Committee in 2022.

When your office passes this letter on to the HSE, you and we will get a reply that suggests (1) asbestos is safer in-situ if managed correctly, and (2) deaths are a legacy of our industrial past. Neither of these statements are true.

The HSE will tell you that there are roughly 5,000 asbestos-related deaths per year. Their own research evidence suggests that deaths may be as high as 20,000 per year. Over a five-year period, that would be equivalent to the population of Makerfield.

Increasing numbers of young people and women are dying from 'environmental exposure' in schools, hospitals and in the home. It is a big problem which successive governments have chosen to kick down the road and onto the fly-tip of problems for future generations to deal with. At some point, all asbestos will need to be removed. In the meantime, many thousands will die.

We implore you and your government to do something about this. Beginning with radical reform of the HSE and implementation of the Work and Pensions committee's recommendations.

We would be pleased to provide more information and meet with your officials to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Morrin, ResPublica – *Secretariat for the National Asbestos Taskforce*

Chris Emmett, Chair of the National Asbestos Taskforce

Sarah Lyons, National Education Union (NEU)

Professor Daniel Murphy, PREDICT-Meso Mesothelioma research consortium

Derek Maylor, Chair of Merseyside Asbestos Victims Support Group

Jamie McGovern, Communication Workers Union

Charles Pickles, Founder of Airtight on Asbestos

John Richards, Asbestos Information CIC

Richard Blunt, Campaigner

Saranjit Kaur, Campaigner

Dr. Gill Reed, Researcher

Steve Sadley, ARCA

Liz Darlison, CEO of Mesothelioma UK

On behalf of the National Asbestos Taskforce

About the National Asbestos Taskforce

The National Asbestos Taskforce is a new coalition of industry bodies, trade unions, charities and campaign groups. The taskforce is dedicated to eradicating asbestos from the UK built environment.