

An Open Letter to Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer April 2020

Dear Chancellor,

I write to you in response to ResPublica's request which calls for the reform of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) approach to managing asbestos in UK schools and hospitals.

We at UKNAR fully support ResPublica's standpoint and urge the government not to forget the very significant long-term public health issues that exposure to deadly asbestos continues to present.

We remind you that around 80 percent of schools and 94 percent of NHS Trusts contain asbestos - and as a result, teachers and nurses, (making up a significant proportion of our dedicated front-line public sector staff), are 3 to 5 times more likely than average to develop terminal asbestos related cancer.

For very little cost we believe the government should invest in developing an intelligent prioritised and resourced plan to both manage and remove asbestos safely in schools and hospitals. However, we do not see how this can be done without a central asbestos register that shows the scope and scale of the issues and therefore a basis to prioritise.

Just like Covid19, good data and appropriately targeted action at the right time is necessary to save lives. UKNAR has developed the technology to do this cost effectively and inexpensively.

Additionally, we believe the current closure and reduced usage of schools could present an excellent opportunity in the coming weeks for many dutyholders to safely re-assess (with expert support) the presence and condition of the asbestos present in their buildings, which is one of their legal requirements.

We've recently lent our support to ResPublica's campaign *Airtight on Asbestos*, the aims of which include the implementation of a centralised national asbestos database. We agree with the think tank's approach and its overall view that the HSE's aversion to this solution bears no credibility, given the proof of concept we have created.

We all know that no action in this area will cost more lives, entirely unnecessarily, and at great social expense. In the pain of our current national crisis UKNAR believes there is a real opportunity for people to come together and to do some good in an area that has been forgotten and ignored for too long – we urge you to act now to save the lives of the nation's children, teachers and healthcare staff.

Thank you for your time - and for what we truly hope will be the careful consideration of our collective requests.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Paten

Co-Founder UKNAR – The UK National Asbestos Register