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I can't thank Thompsons Solicitors enough for their hard work and commitment to my case.”

John, asbestosis client



John's story

John was exposed to asbestos while working as a plumber for two Merseyside contracting firms during the 1960s and 1970s. Despite the dangers of asbestos being well known at the time, John was not provided with any protective equipment by his employer. While the companies John worked for had ceased to exist, Thompsons Solicitors tracked down the insurers of John's previous employers and negotiated a settlement for John with the right to claim again if his condition deteriorates or if he develops an asbestos-related cancer.

Welcome to Asbestos News

More lives are lost each year in the UK to asbestos-related diseases than to road traffic accidents. The UK has among the highest rates of mesothelioma in the world; already there have been approximately 60,000 lives lost to this devastating disease.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) estimates that there are over 5,000 deaths resulting from asbestos-related disease every year in the UK; a harrowing figure that is expected to continue increasing annually.

Despite being banned for use in the UK over a decade ago, the threat to life posed by the asbestos already in place – in workplaces, schools and other public buildings – remains a harsh reality.

Thompsons was responsible for the first case that established the right to compensation for asbestos diseases, and we have run or been involved in every test case since.

We remain committed to raising awareness of the dangers of and to ensuring our expert knowledge of this specialist area of law is available to anyone affected by asbestos disease.

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To visit Thompsons' mesothelioma campaign page, visit www.thompsons.law.co.uk/meso or scan this QR code



Unite launches campaign to raise awareness of the danger of asbestos

Unite the Union launched a new campaign earlier this year to help educate workers and members of the public about the dangers of asbestos exposure.

New guidance will be issued to safety reps on how to avoid exposure to asbestos at work, and support will be provided to members and families diagnosed with asbestos disease.

“Thompsons is proud to work closely with Unite Legal Services to support members and their families who have suffered the devastating effects of asbestos disease. Unite’s campaign is vital to continue raising awareness about the dangers of asbestos, to protect workers from the risk of exposure and to drive up workplace safety standards.”

Asbestos use was finally banned from the UK in 1999, but remains present in the buildings of many private and public sector workplaces.

“In the UK alone we have already witnessed the tragedy of 60,000 deaths from mesothelioma and a further 90,000 people are expected to die from the effects of past asbestos exposure,” said Head of asbestos litigation at Thompsons Solicitors, Ian McFall.



Why it’s vital to maintain the mesothelioma exemption from LASPO

In May 2012, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) became law. This wide-ranging piece of legislation included important clauses which changed the law to prevent successful claimants, for example in a personal injury case, from recovering the full costs of their case from the insurance company of the losing side.

However, contrary to the government’s wishes - and of great importance to mesothelioma claimants – a hard fought campaign by the Forum of Asbestos Victim Support Groups and others forced an amendment to the legislation which exempted mesothelioma claims from the LASPO reforms

Thompsons, who work closely with mesothelioma sufferers, were not surprised when government then argued that the exemption should be removed, leaving mesothelioma victims with the burden of having to pay up to 25% of their compensation in legal fees. A government consultation on the exemption, carried out in cahoots with the insurance industry, concluded that the exemption should be withdrawn.

We supported a legal challenge of the government’s consultation which demonstrated that it was flawed and the decision unlawful. The exemption for mesothelioma claims from LASPO was retained.

However, at the dawn of a new government, many of the same Conservatives who were so intent in overturning protections to mesothelioma victims are still in power. In 2014 Shailesh Vara MP, the justice minister responsible for courts fees, said¹ that he saw no reason why mesothelioma cases should be treated differently to any other type of injury claim. Mr Vara was re-appointed to this role after the general election and there is no indication that he has changed his stance.

For the government to renew its efforts to amend LASPO to the detriment of mesothelioma claimants and the financial benefit of insurers would be a direct betrayal of those dying from the disease. It would also represent an abdication of the government’s duty to support a legal system that should afford access to justice for innocent victims, not work against them. Thompsons is committed to continuing our unrivalled reputation for combining legal expertise and our campaigning experience to protect and advance the rights of all asbestos victims and their families.

¹ <http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/practice/vara-backs-laspo-to-apply-to-mesothelioma-claims/5039636.fullarticle>

Mesothelioma compensation secured for joiner's family

Thompsons secured substantial compensation for the family of Norman Rees, a Lancashire man who died from mesothelioma.

Norman was exposed to asbestos for more than two decades between 1963 and 1985 while working as a maintenance joiner at a transport depot in Blackpool.

Despite the dangers of asbestos being well-known to his employers, they failed to provide him with any form of protection or advice about his risks of exposure.

Throughout his life, Norman had been very fit but in 2011 tests revealed asbestos scarring on his lungs. He was diagnosed a year later with mesothelioma.

After receiving the diagnosis, Norman got in contact with Thompsons and met specialist asbestos disease solicitor, Steven Dickens, to discuss a case for damages.

Together, Steven and the team at Thompsons worked with Norman's family to prepare a detailed history of his exposure to asbestos and were successful in the claim against his former employer:

"Compensation doesn't change the fact that my father died from a disease caused by going out to work so he could earn a living and provide for us. However, thanks to Thompsons my mother now has financial security and some peace of mind," said Norman's son, David.

"Thompsons were fantastic throughout, offering an excellent legal service and solid support to our family."

Steven Dickens, Norman's solicitor, said:

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The terrible legacy of asbestos disease in the UK is set to continue for decades. Norman, like so many other workers, should never have been exposed to asbestos and certainly not without his employer warning of the dangers or providing proper protection.”

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Securing protection for the future

Thompsons supported a carpenter from Norfolk who developed lung disease in a case to secure compensation from the two employers responsible for exposing him to asbestos.

The 74-year-old man was first exposed to asbestos when he worked as an apprentice at a building firm in Berkshire aged just 16. He was employed there for more than 30 years, cutting sheets of asbestos used under the eaves on roofs. He would often end up covered in asbestos dust.

He was later exposed to asbestos between 1987 and 2005 while working as a school caretaker, where he came into contact with old asbestos insulation in the school boiler room.

After visiting the doctor with breathing complaints, the gentleman was dealt the blow of being diagnosed with pleural thickening. He contacted Thompsons for advice about how he could bring his former employers to account.

He said: "I've had to slow down a lot as a result of my condition. I used to have no problem at all going for long walks with my friends and family, but now the breathlessness makes it very difficult.

"I'm told by my doctors that there's a chance my condition will worsen and I may go on to develop other asbestos-related health problems. It's been a real blow, but Thompsons took care to ensure that my compensation could be increased if the



worst should happen in the future, which gives my family and myself greater peace of mind."

Monique Medd from Thompsons, said: "My client was failed by the only two employers he ever worked with, both of whom were negligent by exposing him to asbestos.

"Although his condition is currently stable, the expert medical evidence obtained shows that there is a risk of serious deterioration in his health in the future, including an increased risk of developing the fatal asbestos disease, mesothelioma.

"We secured him immediate compensation as well as protecting his position for the future with a court order; which means that if the worse happens and his health deteriorates due to asbestos-related disease, then his case can be reopened to claim further damages."

standing up for you

Ministry of Defence brought to book over asbestos exposure

A former dockyard worker, who contracted a disabling lung disease after being exposed to asbestos, has secured compensation from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) with the help of Thompsons' expert industrial disease solicitors.

Plymouth resident, Alan Jones, was employed as a health physics monitor at Chatham Royal Dockyard in Kent between 1969 and 1979, where he was responsible for monitoring radiation levels on board nuclear submarines.

Pipes on submarines were covered with asbestos lagging. When the lagging was removed, renewed asbestos dust was released in reactor compartments and corridors where Alan frequently worked.

Despite the dangers of asbestos being well known at the time, the MoD failed to provide any form of protection to prevent workers from inhaling asbestos dust.

Alan developed diffuse pleural thickening, a condition that causes breathlessness. Knowing that his condition carried with it an increased risk of developing fatal asbestos disease, he sought legal support from Thompsons.

Following extensive investigations, we secured a five-figure compensation payment for Alan, with the provision that he can reopen the claim at any time in the future to obtain further compensation should his condition worsen due to asbestos-related disease.

Mr Jones said: "I become breathless very quickly, which limits the things I can do. While I can still walk and go out, I have to go at my own pace and take regular breaks just to catch my breath. What is really worrying is not knowing if my condition will get worse.

"The most frustrating thing is that I wouldn't be suffering like this if the MoD had given me protection or some sort of warning about the dangers of asbestos. I don't think that's much to expect from any employer, let alone one the size of the MoD. I am very grateful to Thompsons Solicitors for their expertise and doing their utmost for me."

At Thompsons Solicitors, we have a dedicated team of experts who deal exclusively with compensation claims for asbestos related diseases.

Thompsons has unrivalled experience in this complex area of law. We brought the first ever successful case for asbestos disease in the UK in the House of Lords and have been involved in ground breaking asbestos compensation cases ever since.

We have dealt with thousands of claims and achieved substantial levels of compensation for our mesothelioma clients, and done so with empathy and compassion.

Our formidable reputation means we will fight hard for the maximum compensation in the shortest possible time for both individuals and their families. We are proud of the fact that we only ever act for individuals – never for employers and never for the insurance industry.

If you would like more information about advice and support groups for those affected by mesothelioma, please visit our campaign page.

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Get in touch

If you or someone you know may be suffering from an asbestos-related illness. Please complete this form to receive a call back from an expert solicitor, or call us on 0800 0 224 224.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Mobile number: _____

Email address: _____

Please tick the box if you would like a copy of our free guide to making an asbestos compensation claim: Yes No

