



“The most important thing in illness is never to lose heart”



Helping you cope with mesothelioma

# About this booklet

We're sorry this has happened to you, but there are people who can help and things we can do.

There are good people ready to give you, your family and friends support.

Yes, there will be tough times ahead, but you've worked hard all your life and have earned the right to good care and to still enjoy some very precious times too.

This booklet aims to give you, your family and your friends some important information about your disease and the medical, financial and emotional help available; and it is a stepping stone to a lot more information, people and services you can call on when you are ready.



“Helping people  
is at the heart of  
what we do”

For more help and support visit: [www.nationalasbestos.co.uk](http://www.nationalasbestos.co.uk)

“All I need is for someone to talk me through things in a way that I can understand”



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# What is Mesothelioma?

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Mesothelioma is an incurable cancer that affects the lining of the lungs. Less commonly it can affect the lining of the abdomen and heart.

When the cancer develops in the chest it occurs in the pleura. This is a thin lining that covers the inside of the rib cage and the outside of the lungs.

## What causes Mesothelioma?

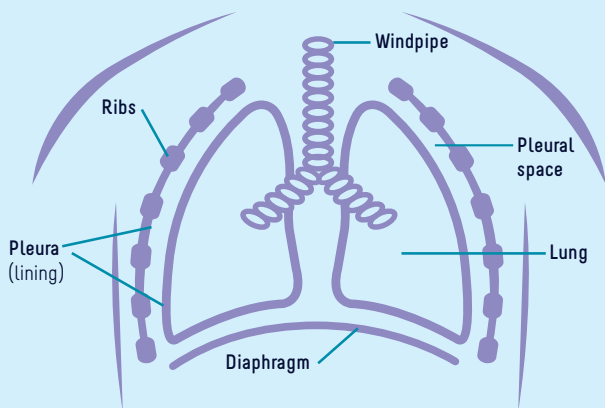
Nearly all mesotheliomas are caused by exposure to asbestos dust. The disease and symptoms present many years after the asbestos exposure occurred.

Asbestos is a fibrous material that was widely used for its fire resistant and insulating properties until the 1980s. The use of asbestos is now banned in the UK and there are strict guidelines about its removal.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- Feeling breathless
- Chest pain
- Coughing
- Weight loss
- Tiredness
- Heavy sweating
- Loss of appetite



# What are the treatments?

Each person is different, so it is important that you discuss these treatments with specialists. As with any treatment the potential benefits must be balanced against the risks and side-effects.

The focus of treatment is to attempt to stop the progress of the disease and, wherever possible, prolong survival and improve outcomes. The emphasis is on giving you quality time in familiar and well-loved surroundings with family and friends.

**Pleural Tap or Thoracocentesis:** relieves breathlessness caused by a build up of fluid in the space (called the pleural cavity) between the lungs and the rib cage. The extra fluid is caused by the tumour. The procedure is carried out under local anaesthetic and the fluid is drained from the chest using a simple needle or small tube.

**Pleurodesis:** if patients continue to develop fluid in the pleural cavity doctors often insert a medical talcum powder into the chest via a chest drain (a small tube) or thoracoscopy. Although this may sound odd, this is a well prescribed procedure which can prevent fluid build up.

**Chemotherapy:** a course of drugs is used to kill cancer cells and slow their growth.

**Surgery:** the role of surgery in mesothelioma is controversial. Although some centres do offer surgical debulking (the removal of as much of the tumour as possible) no clinical trials have shown any clear benefits.

**Radiotherapy:** cancer cells are destroyed using high-energy X-rays. This helps with symptoms and supports other treatments to stop potential spreading.

**Palliative care:** is very important. It will be available immediately and throughout your treatment. Palliative care provides a wide range of pain relief, offers a comprehensive choice of psychological support and assists with breathlessness via a range of techniques, such as meditation, counselling techniques or, occasionally, oxygen therapy if it can be of benefit.

You may want to speak to your consultant, specialist nurse or a mesothelioma focused organisation about current clinical trials, which occur from time to time.



**“ I’ve had fantastic help  
and I can now put things  
into perspective ”**

For more help and support visit: [www.nationalasbestos.co.uk](http://www.nationalasbestos.co.uk)



“ I got the practical and emotional support I needed to keep on top of things ”

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# Don't go it alone.

There are lots of wonderful people who can help physically, financially, emotionally and spiritually. They can deal with your immediate needs and prepare you and your loved-ones for the future.

Tell your GP about your diagnosis. They can assist with any health and emotional worries and also offer support to loved-ones and carers.

Talk to the local respiratory specialist nurses about mesothelioma, its care and treatments.

Contact your local hospice for advice about palliative treatments, controlling symptoms and emotional support.

Ask your loved-ones to contact your council's social services department about a carer's assessment. They may be able to offer practical assistance in your home as well as financial support and benefits. There are also private care organisations that can assist.

It's important that your wishes for the future are recorded in a will. It's a way of making a difficult time easier for friends and family by giving them certainty and telling them how you would like them to honour and remember your life.

Whether it's practical help, care or someone to talk to who knows what it's like, we can put you in touch with some amazing charities and organisations who are ready to help.

Maggie's Centres

Mesothelioma UK

Macmillan Cancer Support

The British Lung Foundation

Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation

Cancer Research UK

Carers Trust

Carers UK

Veterans UK

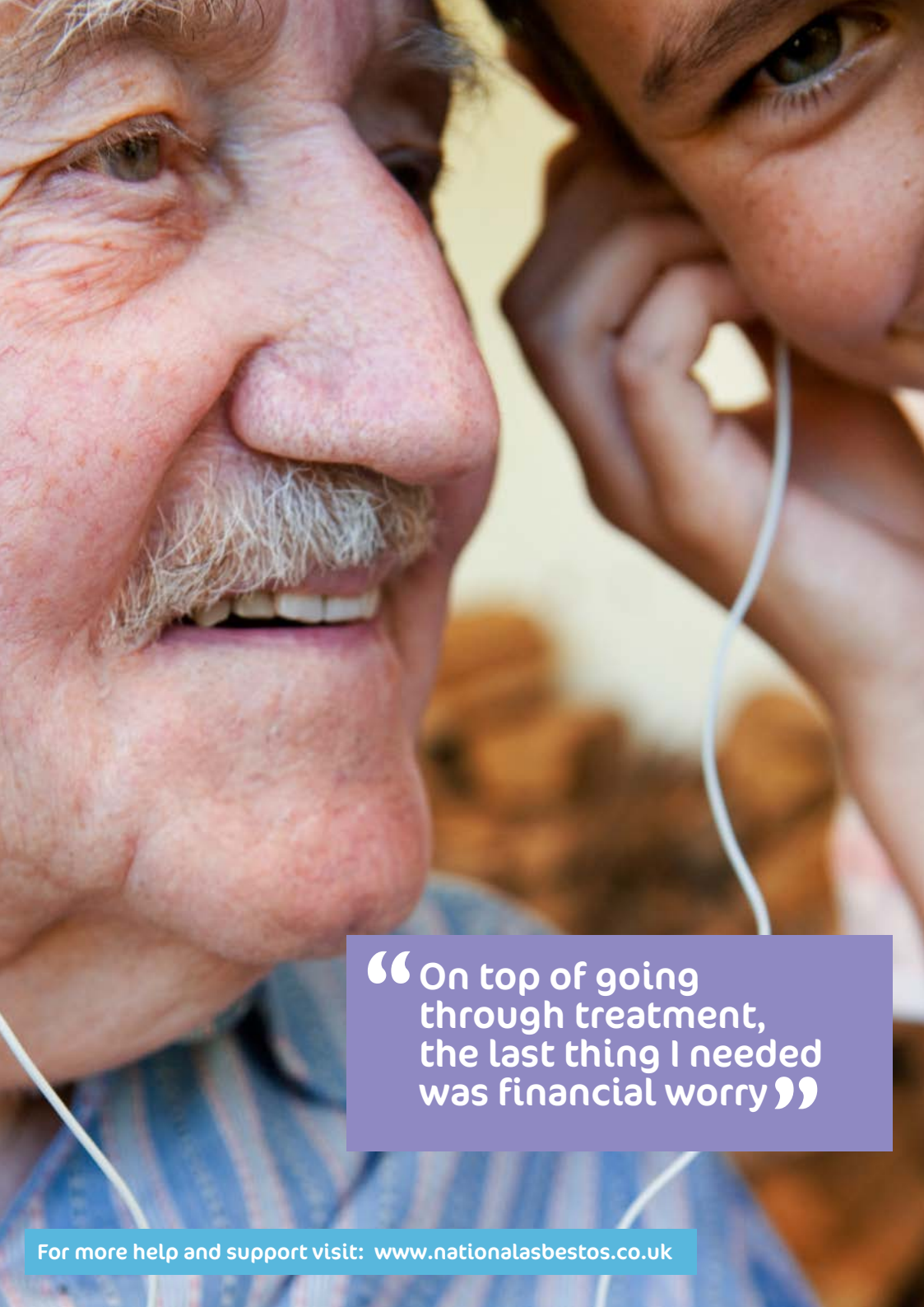
SSFA

Age UK



“ It’s good to talk to someone who knows what we’re going through ”

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“ On top of going through treatment, the last thing I needed was financial worry ”

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# Financial Assistance

After working hard all your life, accepting financial assistance and benefits can make a person feel ill at ease.

But you have earned the right to financial support and it will help at a time when you don't need to add money to your worries.

**We can investigate your eligibility and apply for important benefits available to people who have been exposed to asbestos, such as:**

- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), which helps people who are ill or disabled from an accident or disease caused by work.
- Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 could help some people if their ex employer no longer exists.
- Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment covers a person who was exposed to asbestos in the UK, where no payment has been made for a civil claim or under the 1979 Act.
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) are there to assist those with long term ill health.
- Attendance Allowance helps pay for personal care for those aged 65 or over.
- Carer's Allowance for family or friends looking after you.
- War Pensions Scheme is for people exposed to asbestos during military service.

# Compensation

Mesothelioma sufferers may be able to take legal action to claim compensation for exposure to asbestos. This isn't about blame or a claims culture. It's about what is right.

You have worked hard all of your life and you are owed financial peace of mind so you can meet your own needs now and prepare for your family's future.

## What should happen:

It is very important to work with a solicitor experienced in mesothelioma cases. A specialist solicitor will shoulder the burden and let you and your family focus on your time together.

One of the most important aspects is to ensure that a solicitor records your evidence into a witness statement as soon as possible. This ensures evidence is preserved.

Whenever possible the solicitor should visit and talk to you in the comfort of your own home or in a familiar place.

There is a specialist Mesothelioma Fast Track court procedure for these claims. Once a claim has begun the court asks why judgment should not be given. If there is no credible defence judgment will be given and you will be awarded £50,000 as an interim payment (payment on account).

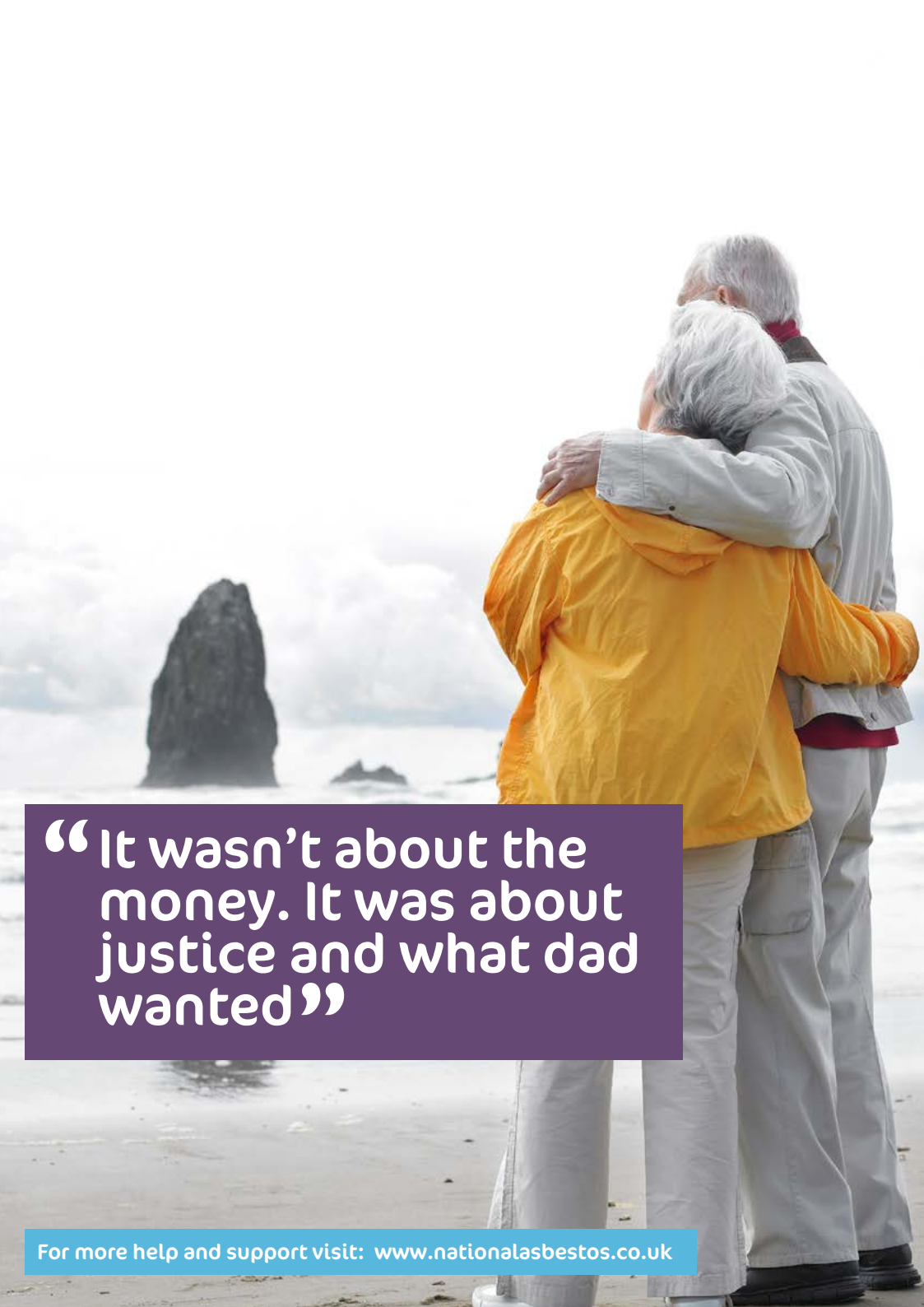
The Mesothelioma Act 2014 assists people diagnosed with mesothelioma after July 25, 2012. The Government scheme was set up to pay damages when former employers and insurance companies cannot be found. If victims show that legally they would have had a good case they will receive 100% of the average compensation award for civil claims made.

The solicitor will also handle separate claims for government benefits including Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit, which is more than £600 per month.

Also, you may be entitled to a lump sum payment from the government under the Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979. This is payable where the companies are not trading, and it can be a significant amount which is paid quickly by the government.

For more information about compensation claims contact The National Asbestos Helpline.

**Helpline:** 0808 274 9184 **Email:** [enquiries@nationalasbestos.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@nationalasbestos.co.uk) **Website:** [www.nationalasbestos.co.uk](http://www.nationalasbestos.co.uk)



**“It wasn’t about the money. It was about justice and what dad wanted”**

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We are proud supporters of

*maggie's*

Maggie's offers practical, emotional and social support to people with cancer and their family and friends. Maggie Keswick Jencks Cancer Caring Centres Trust (Maggie's) is a registered charity, No. SC024414



Association of Respiratory  
Nurse Specialists

For more information about compensation claims contact  
**The National Asbestos Helpline.**

**Freephone 0808 274 9185**



**National  
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Helpline**

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