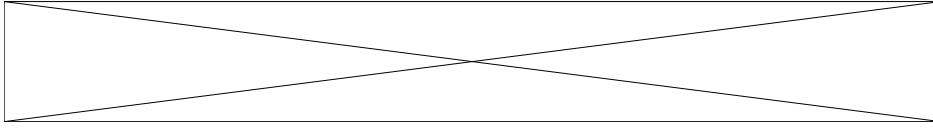


# ROCHDALE ONLINE



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## Nine out of 10 schools asbestos ridden

Reporter: Jan Harwood

Date online: 14/01/2009

Almost nine out of 10 school buildings in Rochdale contain asbestos.

Freedom of information figures show that 68 of Rochdale's 78 schools contain the deadly fibre.

Other figures reveal what appears to be a worrying shortage of staff employed by Councils to monitor the safety of asbestos in public buildings.

The majority of Councils do not employ any individuals to monitor the safety of asbestos in public buildings full time.

Despite the introduction of the Control of Asbestos Regulations two years ago in 2006 many Councils have not surveyed all of their properties to check for asbestos. Rochdale Council is one of few that has surveyed all of its buildings and regularly re-inspects potentially harmful materials.

"I am pleased to note that Rochdale Council is taking its responsibilities seriously; supported by an excellent, fully qualified staff," said MP Paul Rowen. "Other councils should follow this example.

"It is inexcusable that some Councils have not taken their obligations seriously, leading to potentially many people being at risk of a dangerous, debilitating and ultimately often fatal disease."

Jason Addy, co-ordinator of Rochdale's Save Spodden Valley campaign said: "We welcome our MP Paul Rowen's work to investigate this important matter. Lack of enforcement and regulation of existing laws to protect people from the deadly effects of asbestos is an issue that the Save Spodden Valley campaign has been raising for some time."

It is believed that the asbestos in Rochdale's schools is well covered and is not dangerous but Paul Rowen has said that the figures are 'a huge cause for concern'.

"I will be raising this at the next meeting of the Parliamentary All-Party Group on Asbestos as it's clear that we need to lobby for a national audit and look at solutions to this ongoing problem," said Mr Rowen. "I know that the only way the Government currently handles this problem is by demolishing schools and building new ones and on current progress this problem, unless tackled urgently, could be with us for decades to come."

Jason Addy commented: "Asbestos in schools is a huge issue whose science is directly related to the Spodden valley issue. The need for air monitoring is important. Without such analysis then any reassurances about asbestos safety can be meaningless."

Rochdale's Parliamentary Candidate Simon Danczuk welcomed his rival's stance, claiming that Mr Rowen had been dismissive of the issue of asbestos in schools when it was raised last year. "It is encouraging to see Mr Rowen's initial complacency give way to genuine concern," he said. "I am pleased to see our MP starting to come round to mainstream opinion and taking the views of asbestos campaigning groups and the teaching trade unions more seriously."

He added his belief that Mr Rowen had a serious responsibility to challenge ignorant views on the deadly affects of asbestos and work with the teaching trade unions to ensure that safety is paramount.

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Interesting to see the links to articles on Cyril Smith on the right. He is the real elephant in the room here. Paul Rowen talks about the dangerous risk that asbestos poses to the public and then defends Cyril for saying that the public are not at risk from asbestos. This is the politics of idiocy. Paul Rowen cannot ride two horses and sit in two camps at the same time.

By MattBaker @ 14/01/2009 15:42:01

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