As long as asbestos is sealed or in good condition, it is not a problem. Asbestos is only dangerous when fibres are released into the air. But it can be dangerous if it is damaged or disturbed.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a natural mineral that is heat, fire and chemical resistant. That is why it was once often used in buildings and household goods (for example, ironing boards and oven gloves).

There are three main types of asbestos:
• Chrysotile (white)  • Amosite (brown)  • Crocidolite (blue)

However, you cannot tell if something contains asbestos just by appearance or colour.

Asbestos is found in lots of homes, but it is most likely to be present if your home was built between the 1950s and the early 1980s. Because of the risks explained below, asbestos is now banned and no longer used in new homes and products.

Asbestos is made up of fibres that can lodge deep in your lungs if breathed in. When high levels of fibres are breathed in, there is a risk of lung diseases, including cancer.

Where can you find asbestos?

Around the home asbestos may have been used in (not full list):

• Floor tiles  • Textured ceiling finishes (for example Artex)
• Water tanks  • Some plaster finishes and wall boards
• Sprayed coatings on pipes  • Internal window sill boards
• Gas fires  • Soffits, Fascias, Gutters and rainwater pipes
• Bath panels  • Inside electrical boards and fuses
• Artificial slate roofs
• Lining boards inside boiler or service cupboard doors
• Corrugated cement roofs (eg on sheds and garages)
• Lagging around pipes and hot water cylinders
What can South Essex Homes do?

South Essex Homes carry out various surveys on properties periodically to monitor and manage the condition of their properties. We will inform you of the survey results. The contractor carrying out these surveys is AC&MS Ltd.

AC&MS LTD has been appointed by South Essex Homes to carry out surveys at a number of properties within the borough. AC&MS LTD is one of the UK's leading UKAS-accredited asbestos consultancies who carry out surveys and provide specialist advice on all asbestos-related topics to a wide client base, throughout the UK and abroad.

If we find any asbestos which presents a risk, we will arrange for it to be sealed or removed as soon as possible by a License Asbestos Removal Contractor. Kershaws Contracting Services have been appointed by South Essex Homes.

All AC&MS and Kershaw's staff carry identification which should be viewed before letting anyone into your property. If you have any concerns you can always call the Contact Centre for verification.

There is no legal obligation to remove asbestos which is in good condition, but we will monitor its condition by regular inspections. Removing asbestos is disruptive and costly, so we try to do any necessary work on asbestos when homes are empty or at the same time as other major works are carried out.

Dos and Don’ts

If you are not sure whether something in your home contains asbestos, it is important that you do not damage or disturb it.

Always get our permission before you make any alterations to your home. We will then be able to visit and tell you if there is any asbestos present.

Do not damage or disturb asbestos in any way. If you do any DIY work in your home, never drill, cut, break, rub down or scrape asbestos and avoid using electric tools near it.

Do not remove asbestos panels to gain access to services.
Decorating your property where Asbestos Containing Materials have been identified

*Painting of Asbestos Materials* - No abrasive, sharp products or tools are to be used in the preparation of the affected surface.

*Wallpaper* - The existing wallpaper, where possible must remain in place. Loose or peeling areas may be re-stuck using a strong glue or wallpaper adhesive. The existing covering may be papered over. If the existing wallpaper covering is to be removed, the operation must be carried out ensuring that the asbestos material is not damaged. No sharp scrapers or tools should be used to remove the paper; the asbestos-containing materials must not be rubbed down under any circumstances. A “steamer” or hot soapy water may be used.

Surfaces that have not been previously wallpapered may be covered with a lining paper prior to the decorative wallpaper being applied. The material may be washed down using hot soapy water or sugar soap and a soft cloth. No scouring or scrubbing brushes to be used. Alternatively, the affected surface may be covered with a lining paper and painted.

*Tiling* - Where these are already in place, covering or partially covering an asbestos containing material, they must be left in place. These tiles may be covered over with an additional layer of tiles or carpets can be laid. Laminate flooring can be installed, if permission is granted by South Essex Homes.

*Fixing and wall hangings* - The fixing of picture hooks, nails and screws is not recommended. Adhesive backed hooks may be used and/or the proposed locations of pictures, shelves etc. will require altering.

If you have any other questions regarding asbestos, please contact our Asbestos Team by email asbestos@seh.southend.gov.uk or call 0800 833 160.

The Asbestos Team are based within our Property Services division and they co-ordinate surveys, arrange for any works required, deal with any concerns about asbestos and arrange awareness training for front line staff. Further information regarding management of asbestos and frequently asked questions can be obtained from: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos