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Over the past few weeks this paper has done an absolutely fantastic job reporting on the issues surrounding the fatal asbestos-related condition Mesothelioma. Where the Messenger has led other media outlets have followed, raising awareness of the condition and the problems that have traditionally blighted victims in securing compensation.

Mesothelioma is a horrible and sadly fatal condition borne from the exposure to asbestos. Given our local industrial and shipbuilding heritage it is of little surprise that Medway is reported to have such a high level of Meso deaths per annum. However it is important to stress that Medway is defined as a hotspot based on the percentage of population who die from Meso rather than the action number of deaths; statistics I received this week in reply to a parliamentary question confirm that since 2006 104 people died of Meso but in Surrey 229 people died. Surrey PCT serves a higher population therefore the percentage is lower thus Medway is a hotspot not Surrey.

Nevertheless action on ensuring that those suffering from this condition receive compensation should be a priority. A paper by Kent University Law Lecturer Alan McKenna notes that "Mesothelioma claims have generated far more case law than other asbestos conditions". This is true and it is clear that insurers and lawyers have equal culpability in delaying the settlement of compensation claims simply by ending up in court arguing with each other. The person that loses is the one with Meso who will as a result probably die before the claim is settled and without financial security for his family.

The Government promised to look into speeding up claims but in truth there has been little progress; although a Tracing Office has been established to help find insurance companies and a substantial increase in payments via the DWP has been approved. However much more needs to be done. I have applied to the Speaker for a debate on this issue which will at the very least raise the issue up the government agenda. It is time the sufferer was put at the heart of our compensation system – the lawyers and insurers can fight it out separately.