



Jenny Gibson – Asset and Health & Safety Manager for Cambridge City Council explains how she manages Asbestos with Micad’s Web-Based Client focussed Management System. The system has performed a pivotal role in the Council’s Asbestos management process for the past 5 years. The housing stock has been subject to percentage stock surveys and is constantly being updated and serviced through initiatives such as ‘better homes for the future’ meaning Asbestos management procedures and the need for an accurate up to date Asbestos register is a must.

How were Asbestos risks managed prior to Micad being introduced?

My post as Asset and Health & Safety Manager was created in 2004 to assess and manage property risks within the Council. This coincided with the last main changes to the Control of Asbestos Regulations. There was a database register but this was a limited MS Access database that had several limitations in terms of key functionality and the ability to provide access to a wide range of stakeholders including the Council’s Asbestos consultants. It was identified at this early stage that the existing software was a weakness in the Council’s attempt to demonstrate Asbestos compliance.

How did you come to use Micad and how was it populated with Survey information?

At the same as tendering the selection of an independent Asbestos consultant, we evaluated and took advice on a number of independent software systems. When Micad was presented to us it was clear that the product was advanced with functionality built around the client need and not that of the Asbestos consultant, as so many in the marketplace are. Being entirely web-based, it solved the ‘dissemination of information headache’ and it had several reporting and data management tools that other systems simply couldn’t offer us. Micad is also an independent software house and this gave us great comfort knowing that our data was being managed professionally by IT specialists that were not connected to a surveying company. Based on this we commissioned Micad.

Micad were able to import our entire property portfolio from our Asset management system, meaning the core asset register was in place ahead of our planned Asbestos surveys being conducted by our newly appointed consultants; Thames Laboratories. Population of the system including all the survey data took a year which was in line with our proposed programme.

How was the implementation managed and were there any specific problems?

Set-up of the Micad system was easy as we opted for Micad to host the system. This provides on-line support

and upgrade benefits and with no aggravation for me or additional cost when updates are required. The software set-up took only 5 days from instructing Micad. At this point we set about designing with Micad some specific report templates that met the Council’s operational needs. We also worked with Micad to develop some flood fill tools that would enable our data set to be populated faster and with more accuracy. We did consider transferring our old records but after an initial assessment of their validity we decided a new system populated with fragmented data was not going to work for us.

Within the Council there was a distinct lack of knowledge regarding the Asbestos Regulations at that time. We then, with the help of our Asbestos Consultant designed an Asbestos Awareness / Micad Training course that was rolled out across the Council’s staff to those that were identified as needing it. This included senior managers with a responsibility for instructing works to the trade staff that were most likely to come across Asbestos in the workplace. This went a long way towards satisfying the current requirements of Regulation 10, CAR2006.

How easy it was it for your Asbestos consultants to use Micad?

Thames Laboratories had used the Micad system elsewhere, so they were competent in the use of the system. The setting-up of external consultants and contractors to remotely access the Councils system is straightforward and Micad assisted with this process. From the Council’s perspective, it was imperative to ensure that the consultant was competent in the use of the system. I would recommend that training is a must for surveying companies not familiar with Micad and we have recently insisted on this where a new consultant has been engaged on our ‘better homes for the future’ programme - a project run by colleagues.

In addition to the main survey programme, we undertake approximately 150 Asbestos surveys a year on our void properties. This data is added to the Micad register and further improves our data set. Our external maintenance

contractor and their Asbestos sub-consultant also upload all Refurbishment and Demolition (R&D) survey information and have been trained in the use of the system. This inclusive process ensures the Asbestos information is updated at each stage of the lifecycle of each property archetype.

How has the system furthered the Asbestos management process?

This is difficult to say as Micad has improved the process in so many ways compared to our previous system. The system is now the central hub for all Asbestos records, not just register information but air clearance certificates, PDF survey reports, management plans, sample analysis and much more. Most importantly, it is a live representation of the current situation as remediation and re-inspection works all feed into the system on an on-going basis. The management process has benefited from the standardisation of archetype survey reports, presenting more reliable and accurate data through the use of Micad's sample QA tool and lower re-inspection costs with the use of the Mass Update Re-inspection Tool. There are more benefits but I have highlighted those which are most important to us.

How is Asbestos survey information updated and reported in the system?

The Asbestos survey information is added to the system remotely by the Asbestos consultant including any associated UKAS based reports and certificates that they produce. We then have an archetype building report which is run off for a property and encompasses all the survey information for that premises type. This is especially desirable where a combination of several different historical surveys and removal works have taken place. Again, it allows us to report and inform our tenants and contractors the real time picture in a standard format that they will recognise. Being web-based the consultants can work on the system from their chosen location so long as we have registered them to do so.

How do you disseminate the information to those that need it most?

This process is easy for us now. Before Micad, we were working from a system with access limited to only a few. Getting information to our own trade staff and external contractors was extremely problematic and labour intensive. With Micad being entirely web-based, the exchange and flow of data is simple and effective resulting in information getting to those that need it most in an easy-to-use format.

At the Council we have taken this a step further and created two interfaces with our in house DLO system. Asbestos data from Micad is now seamlessly integrated with this system so that when maintenance work is

commissioned, the Asbestos register information is supplied direct to the operatives as part of their work instructions.

What advice would you give to other Local Authorities who have fragmented Asbestos records?

In my role as Property Health & Safety Manager it was clear that Asbestos Management was one of the biggest risks to the Council. Asbestos is present in a high percentage of our property stock and non-compliance with CAR2006 invites the risk of prosecution, fines and more importantly potential exposure to our tenants, staff and contractors.

Fragmented Asbestos records in some cases can be more dangerous than no records at all, as you could be instructing people to work in areas where the records are inaccurate or out of date. The long term focus for compliance therefore needs to be through continual assessment and the development of an accurate Asbestos register for the properties deemed to be a risk. Central to this for most medium to large portfolios, will be a need for an Asbestos database of some kind. For us it was important to have an independent system that was focussed on client needs. Micad has proved itself admirably in fulfilling this requirement. The data records that a Local Authority gains over a period of time are a big capital investment as a 10% stock survey can often cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. Keeping this investment safe and up-to-date is therefore arguably just as important.

What are the 3 most notable benefits of managing Asbestos using Micad?

1. Simplicity & Flexibility – we had our own simplified interface and report outputs designed based on our needs
2. Multi-user Management Tool - Centralised control with all the functionality you could ever need as a client, with the added benefit of access to certain parts of the system to all those that need it
3. Hosted solution works well. We get prompt unlimited on-line support which removes the hassle factor

And your final comments?

Local Authorities often have a silo approach to managing key risks across the organisation. Micad has enabled us to cross-pollinate our approach to encompass all areas of how people may interact with Asbestos. Consequently Micad is now at the core of our Asbestos management success and associated Asbestos management procedures. For Local Authorities clients that are serious about taking control and implementing robust Asbestos management procedures, it is a system that would serve them well.

