

# Damp and Mould: Action taken in response to DLUHC/Secretary of State's Letters to LAs and RPs

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# Background



Death of Awaab Ishak (December 2020) confirmed as a result of severe respiratory conditions caused by prolonged exposure to mould in a Rochdale Boroughwide Housing flat.

Two letters sent by Secretary of State on 19 November requesting assessment and action across all tenures re: damp and mould from:

1. **Council CE's and leaders (PRS)** initial response provided on 30/11/22, full response by 27/01/23
2. **All other RPs including Tower Hamlets Homes (social rented)** – to respond to RSH by 19/12/22



# LA Initial Response provided 30/11/22



- Confirmed that request was received and that a full response will be provided by 27 January 2023.
- Confirmed that a working group has been set up to formulate a plan to further address these issues across all tenures in the borough - exploring how data on damp and mould issues can be used to improve operational practices and inform local policies.
- Confirmed that THH will provide information requested separately to RSH and partner RPs had been reminded to respond to RSH by 19 December 2022.
- Provided information on how we already tackle damp and mould issues in the PRS and in Temporary Accommodation.
- Confirmed that we anticipated no issues in providing a full response for 27 January.



# LA full response due on 27/01/23



## Concerned with private rent sector properties in the borough.

Relates to high scoring (bands D and E) category 2 damp and mould hazards, as per **'Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) enforcement guidance: housing conditions'** and should provide DLUHC with:

- An assessment of damp and mould issues affecting PRS properties in Tower Hamlets, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards; and
- An assessment of the action identified that may need to be taken in relation to damp and mould issues affecting PRS properties in Tower Hamlets; and
- The specific activity taken over the last three years to address damp and mould hazards in the PRS - covering the amount and nature of remediation and enforcement activities (Civil Penalty Notices and prosecutions; and
- The plans in place to prioritise the enforcement of housing standards more generally, **(across all tenures)**, with a **particular focus on how you will ensure adequate enforcement capacity to drive up standards in the PRS.**



# Final response will address:

- The number of damp and mould hazards that the council has remediated in the PRS compared to the council's assessment of the prevalence of these hazards.
- The number of times the council has taken enforcement action to remedy damp and mould hazards and the form this action has taken in the PRS.
- The number of civil penalty notices issued in relation to non-compliance with enforcement action over non-compliance over damp and mould issues.
- The number of successful prosecutions pursued in relation to damp and mould hazards in the PRS; and
- How the council prioritises enforcement of housing standards more generally **across all tenures** including plans to ensure that the council has adequate enforcement capacity to drive up standards in the PRS (setting out the plans in place)



# Damp and Mould Working Group



- Working group of senior council officers across all services including housing, public health and environmental health initiated in December 2022. Co-chaired by Director of Housing & Regeneration and Associate Director of Public Health.
- **Primary focus up to 27 January is to ensure a thorough and full response to DLUHC and SoS.**
- Response will provide assurance to DLUHC that the council is tackling these issues in the PRS as well as an opportunity to lobby for further resources and funding – as DLUHC intend to use this information to shape and inform future government policy.
- Working group will be considering how best to deliver activities post-response - its future governance and the resources available to support the working group.



# Tower Hamlets Homes



- Communications to residents on damp and mould has been an ongoing discussion at THH since the judgement of the Rochdale Coroners Court and a key feature of campaigns since the beginning of the autumn.
- Six damp and mould videos have been regularly scheduled on social media since 6 September. These have been paused while THH re-evaluate them all in light of the recent media coverage. In the meantime, THH's Comms Team has met with the council's Comms Team to plan a joint campaign in the New Year.
- THH provided their full response to the RSH on 19 December 2022. Response required information around THH's processes and procedures in dealing with damp and mould issues, and THH will be making changes to these.
- THH pick up on damp and mould issues via stock condition surveys and repair requests (repair requests are the main route).
- THH changed their repair designations last July to better distinguish damp and mould issues.





# Register Providers (THHF)



- Mayor Rahman sent correspondence to all THHF RPs (reminding them of their responsibilities to residents) with THHF's Chair confirming that information will be provided by the RPs to the RSH.
- THHF Registered Providers sent their responses by 19 December to the RSH and are reviewing services against the recommendations made in the Housing Ombudsman's October 2021 Spotlight Report on Damp and Mould.
- THHF's Asset Management sub-group had already identified damp and mould as a priority for its 2022-23 action plan. Members will be monitoring cases to enable benchmarking and sharing of best practice.
- These figures will be available for the council to keep a track on the incidence of damp and mould issues across borough RPs later on in the New Year.
- The THHF executive and sub-groups will be exploring ways to improve communications and the information, advice and guidance provided to their residents to help combat damp mould cases.

