

Appendix a – All Members Briefing – Damp & Mould

Housing Leeds, New Process for Reporting Damp & Mould – Members Briefing

Housing Leeds have been reviewing processes relating to damp and mould in council owned homes since the Housing Ombudsman Service publishing their report, 'Focus on Damp and Mould'. This work is the highest priority for the service. Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, and the coroner's verdict that he died as a direct result of exposure to excessive mould in his council home, further focus has been placed on making improvements in this area.

As a result of increased concern caused by media exposure relating to damp and mould, combined with the onset of the cold winter months and the impact of the financial/energy crisis on tenants heating their homes, we are currently experiencing a high volume of enquiries in relation to damp and mould. In some cases we are receiving multiple enquires from a number of sources for the same address which is leading to an additional strain on resource with multiple officers dealing with the same issue. Over the last 6 weeks we have seen an increase of 120% in cases.

To ensure that we can prioritise the most urgent cases for our customers and ensure that any health hazards are removed in a timely manner, we now have a dedicated team who are dealing with Damp and Mould reports in council homes.

Please direct tenants to this process wherever possible as it provides the quickest way for us to record, assess and deal with their report and also an opportunity for us to offer practical self-help advice for some of the less urgent cases:

The most efficient way quickest way for tenants to contact the team is via email at D&Mteam@leeds.gov.uk The team will make sure that we identify and promptly deal with any health and safety issues and take appropriate action to deal with the problem. Tenants who aren't able to email should continue to report issues in the usual way (through the telephone Contact Centre or face to face at any of the Face to Face HUBs).

Tenants should include the following information:

- Name
- Address
- A telephone contact number
- A brief description of the problem
- Photographs of the problem

The team will assess the report and aim to call back within 5 working days to agree next steps.

See also the Councils Damp & Mould advice leaflet which accompanies this briefing note. Please share this with tenants who raise concerns about damp and mould. The Council will take steps to identify causation and deal with any defects however the leaflet sets out practical advice on how to reduce the risk of damp and mould in the home. It includes a reminder that wiping down condensation regularly and treating the early signs of mould growth with a readily available fungicidal/mould spray, is the best way to prevent it spreading and becoming a hazard.

We appreciate your help on this matter during these challenging times

Thank you

Damp and mould advice

Thank you to everyone who has reported damp and mould issues directly to our new **Damp and Mould team**. As a council we are committed to making sure that our homes are safe and free from damp and mould. Contacting the team directly is the quickest way for these issues to be assessed and prioritised. Sending photographs to the team is a perfect way to show us what problems you are experiencing. [Visit our website for guidance on reporting damp and mould issues](#).

In some instances, our team have come across mould growth in homes because of condensation. This can often be easily treated before it becomes a more serious issue. Wiping down condensation on windows and other surfaces helps reduce the chances of mould growth. If you notice any mould growth, then wipe it down straight away with a fungicidal/mould removal spray. These are available in most supermarkets and household stores. **Don't use bleach as this won't kill the mould.**

You can help reduce damp and mould in your home by allowing air to circulate freely:

- Make sure vents and air bricks are not obstructed
- Open windows in kitchens and bathrooms when cooking and showering
- Use extractor fans if you have them
- Open trickle vents on windows
- Where possible, don't place furniture against outside walls; leave a gap between furniture and walls to allow air circulation
- When cooking, put lids on pans to reduce steam

Further advice is available from [Shelter](#) and in our [damp and mould advice leaflet](#).

Wiping away mould and condensation **doesn't mean that we won't inspect your home** if you think there is a problem. We can still check to see if there are any repair issues that are contributing to the problem. Wiping away mould and condensation means that **any potentially hazardous mould is removed**, and it **prevents a small problem becoming a bigger and more costly one to resolve**.

We understand the impact that the cost-of-living crisis is having on tenants and their families. We have a limited supply of mould sprays which are available to tenants free of charge. If you would like us to supply you one of these sprays, please email us at D&Mteam@Leeds.gov.uk.