

Private Sector Housing Service

**Damp and Mould guidance on the interpretation of the 'Housing
enforcement and charging policy 2017'**

Winter 2023/2024

Introduction

This guidance has been prepared in response to a directive from the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) on 7th September 2023 requiring all local authorities to publish a plan setting out how they will prioritise addressing the issues of damp and mould in the private rented sector (PRS).

The purpose of this publication is to provide an overview of the Private Sector Housing Service's (PSHS) approach to its statutory obligations in relation to damp and mould in PRS homes.

Scope

This guidance covers PSHS plan for securing compliance with regulatory requirements in relation to cases of damp and mould in PRS homes and measures that they will consider to protect tenants health, safety and wellbeing in this regard.

Dealing with damp and mould

Damp and mould in PRS homes is already a key health hazard that is regulated where necessary by PSHS in their ordinary course of business. The unprecedented cost of living crisis has caused many tenants in the PRS to suffer increased fuel poverty, with energy bill costs severely impacting their ability to mitigate mould growth through adequate heating of the household. This has a direct impact on the risk of mould in a home, particularly when combined with other building deficiencies.

The PSHS aim to ensure that all actions to deal with damp and mould will be undertaken in a fair, equitable and consistent manner having regard to relevant and current guidance on damp and mould and in accordance with the 'enforcement and charging policy 2017'. Further, we will look to ensure other relevant services are brought in to assist tenants where appropriate and that customers receive a 'one-Council' approach to tackling damp and mould.

Action plan

The PSHS already prioritise all cases based on their risk to health. This means that the worst cases will be investigated as a matter of urgency whilst lower risk cases will be investigated as our resources permit. This is the case for all hazards, not merely damp and mould growth. Multiple factors are considered when determining the priority a case should be given, such as; nature of disrepair, age of property, facilities in the house, occupancy factors, health vulnerabilities of occupying tenants etc.

Service requests will all be triaged and logged, with each case being fully investigated and dealt with by the PSHS. Customers can expect to be contacted to discuss the damp and mould growth and other relevant information as part of the triage process.

Mould growth, particularly from condensation can be a complex issue to investigate, diagnose and determine the necessary remedial action required to resolve. Investigations and remedial action therefore may take a number of weeks before an improvement in the property is seen.

All investigations and actions undertaken by PSHS will be on the basis of full cooperation from the tenant with the process and the advice provided.

PSHS will seek to resolve damp and mould proportionate to risk, in a number of ways as follows:

- Advice, education and support in managing mould growth to all tenants contacting PSHS
- Relevant agency and partner referrals for further support
- Provision of damp and mould literature
- Provision of damp and mould cleaning kits and humidity monitors
- Liaison with landlords to address damp and mould (where landlords are legally responsible and committed to act promptly and professionally)
- Formal enforcement (where landlords are legally responsible but fail to act)
- Consider providing alternate measures to mitigate risks to health

Complaints

We aim to provide an effective, timely and quality service in-line with the City Council's 'Complaints Guide and Procedure'. This details how a complaint will be investigated and what the Council will do if you are not happy with the result of any investigation.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of your dealings with the Private Sector Housing Team there are a number of ways you can make a complaint to us:

- Phone Customer Services on 01902 551 155
- Complete the council's complaints form
- Complete the council's complaints e-form via www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/contact-us/customer-feedback
- Email us at customerfeedback@wolverhampton.gov.uk
- In person at the Civic Centre
- Write to our Complaints Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1RL
- Ask a friend, a relative, advocate or anyone to contact us your behalf

Review

This document will be reviewed periodically as appropriate and in line with further Government instruction and Ministry guidance.