

Acknowledgement

Your Ref: 19th November 2022
Our Ref: PSER GB021122



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

*Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing & Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations*

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

4th Floor, Fry Building
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09th December 2022

HOUSING STANDARDS IN RENTED PROPERTIES IN ENGLAND

In response to your letter dated 19th November 2022, you requested that we initially:

- Provide the data covering our last three 12 monthly reporting periods for privately rented properties in our area:
- Set out how we are prioritising enforcement of housing standards more generally in our authority, across all tenures, including what plans you have to ensure adequate enforcement capacity to drive up standards in the private rented sector and any other initial information we can provide.

Lambeth Council's Private Sector Enforcement and Regulations (PSER) Team firmly commits to and believes that tenants have a right to a home that is fit for human habitation and free from hazards that could harm their health or safety. As such we have outlined our approach to tackling damp and mould and other hazards in our Tenants Charter under our decent home banner.

Our initial response to the questions raised are set out below as follows:

1.0 Number of cases we receive per annum and the breakdown of action taken.

Financial Year	Damp & Mould Cases	Actions Taken
2019/20	108	485
2020/21	116	547
2021/22	91	310
2022/23	49	213
Total	364	1,555



2.0 How do we currently tackle damp and mould issues both proactively and when reported?

When damp and mould is reported to the service this is allocated to a case officer if this is a privately rented property. If this is a RSL property, we then refer the complainant to the RSL and advise of the process as indicated [Dealing with problems in rented properties | Lambeth Council](#)

What our website says: [Damp and mould | Lambeth Council](#)

Lambeth's PSER team has information on how to deal with damp and mould in properties. This is outlined in a 3-stage process:

- **Stage 1 - Stop mould from becoming a problem:** steps that can be taken to prevent damp & mould and links to organisations that can assist with rights and responsibilities as well as information on different types of damp.
- **Stage 2 - Ask your landlord for help:** if stage 1 does not solve the issue we recommend that the tenant writes to the landlord outlining the problem and what has been done to date to try and resolve the issue, as well as a link to a template that provides a guide as to how to draft the letter to the landlord.
- **Stage 3 - Get Help:** If the landlord does not do anything about the issue, the PSER team will then visit the property and assess the issue; subsequently, it may be possible that legal action is taken to force the landlord to remedy the issue. The action taken will depend on the type of problem found but if conditions are a risk to health, it is likely that a formal notice will be issued to the landlord.
 - a. Proactive plans: we have reviewed our Damp and Mould cases and will share regular updates on progress of the respective cases. Over the last 3 years we have had over 360 cases where a series of actions have been taken.
 - b. When officers visit properties to undertake inspections unrelated to Damp and Mould - such as HMO licensing visits - if officers identify Damp and Mould, they will proactively request that the Landlord takes steps to resolve the issue in a timely manner and will also advise the tenants of the actions taken (if appropriate).

3.0 How we intend to ramp up housing standards:

- **Action Plan, Headline Risks, Identify Partners**
 - a. Proactive engagement: with landlords to declare to us what they are doing to prevent Damp & Mould.
 - b. Enforcement: Work that was done to resolve Damp and Mould issues in the Private Rented Sector
 - c. Review of our communication: updating websites where possible to have a seamless process for reporting Damp and Mould issues in Lambeth.
 - d. Work we have undertaken with RSLs: e.g., the Council had to intervene where 3 RSLs who manage properties within the St. Martins Estate in Lambeth, were required to undertake a significant work programme in a timely manner. We



were able to demonstrate successful collaborative working arrangements and assisted by undertaking compliance checks prior to works being signed off by the RSLs

- e. Explore new APP: Currently, cases are not logged in a manner where Damp and Mould cases can be readily identifiable. Going forward, we intend to log visits to record Damp and Mould issues, to allow for efficiencies and capturing the actions post inspections to allow effective reporting for more detailed oversight.
- f. Proactively engage with landlords: For those on our records to prompt them to undertake proactive inspections. We will advise them to keep a record of inspections and inform Lambeth Council, upon request on the details of the inspections. Where required, Landlords should undertake the required work to remove any cases of Damp and Mould identified.
- g. Increase deployable capacity: Consideration to redesigning our enforcement team to focus on the Damp & Mould work stream and engage with the Landlord Forum, to undertake a more joined-up and coordinated approach to better respond to Damp and Mould issues. Also reminding them that we are here to help and will provide assistance and guidance in the best way possible.

4.0 Steps taken to prioritise improvement of housing standards

- a. Joint work with RSLs and other Housing providers in Lambeth.
- b. Joint work with our internal Housing Teams in relation to tenants in temporary accommodations.
- c. Continue to undertake Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessments to identify hazards at it relates to damp and mould.
- d. More information to residents on support to combat the cost-of-living crisis. As tenants may choose not to heat homes due to cost which will have an impact on this issue and potentially see a rise in reports of Damp and Mould.

5.0 In the detailed report due by January 23, we will provide further information and:

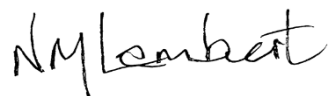
- a. Have particular regard to high scoring (bands D and E) category 2 damp and mould hazards, as outlined in the HHSRS enforcement guidance: housing conditions¹
- b. Supply the department with an assessment of damp and mould issues affecting privately rented properties in your area, including the prevalence of categories 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards; and
- c. Supply the department with an assessment of action you have identified that may need to be taken in relation to damp and mould issues affecting privately rented properties in your area.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-enforcement-guidance-housing-conditions>



I hope that the above information provides an adequate level of assurance as to how Lambeth Council is addressing Damp & Mould issues in our borough, please feel free to contact me directly if you require any further clarification

Yours sincerely,



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