



Oadby & Wigston

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing & Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Please ask for: Anne Court
Direct Line: 0116 257 2602
Email: Anne.Court1@oadby-wigston.gov.uk

Your Ref:
Our Ref:

01 December 2022

Dear Minister

HOUSING STANDARDS IN RENTED PROPERTIES IN ENGLAND

Thank you for your letter of the 19 November and the Authority of course echoes the condolences to the family of Awaab Ishak.

As requested in your letter please find below the data that was requested:

- **Supply the department with an assessment of damp and mould issues affecting privately rented properties in your area, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards;**

The Authority has seen an increase in the prevalence of damp and mould cases reported to us within the requested reporting period, for which there could be a number of reasons such as energy cost increases and increased officer capacity resulting in more engagement with residents.

The majority of the cases reported are low scoring, category 2 hazards when assessed using the HHSRS system. The Authority is proactive in engaging with landlords and tenants to address issues informally in order to minimise stress on the tenant and in order to avoid tenants becoming victims of retaliatory eviction.

Between 01.01.2019 and 28.11.2022 the Authority received 45 cases relating to damp and mould complaints which accounts for approximately 10% of the total Housing related complaints over the same reporting period.

- **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.**

- Further advice and guidance to landlords and tenants to drive forward the understanding of the need for ventilation.

- Further publication of support available to residents to try and support residents to sufficiently heat their homes during these challenging times.
- Publish guidance for tenants regarding their rights and what their landlord is required to provide.
- Proactive inspections of properties, which will be achieved through our Selective Licensing Scheme and review of HMOs within the Borough.
- Continued engagement with landlords and tenants using a staged enforcement approach to address any issues within properties.

• How many damp and mould hazards you have remediated, compared to your assessment of the prevalence of these hazards;

2019 – 9 cases reported, 3 remediated
2020 – 5 cases reported, 0 remediated
2021 – 15 cases reported, 8 remediated
2022 – 16 cases reported, 12 remediated

* Cases where the damp and mould has not been remediated is typically either due to complainants either already leaving the property and not wishing to engage further or they do not wish to engage with the Authority at all through the fear of retaliatory eviction*

• How many times you have taken enforcement action to remedy damp and mould hazards and the form this has taken

01.01.2019 – 28.11.2022 – 0

• How many civil penalty notices have been issued in relation to non-compliance with enforcement action over damp and mould hazards;

01.01.2019 – 28.11.2022 - 0

• How many prosecutions have been successfully pursued in relation to damp and mould hazards.

01.01.2019 – 28.11.2022 - 0

The Authority has not taken formal action due to damp and mould as we have been successful in working informally with landlords to take action to resolve damp and mould within their properties

In relation to your enquiry about how the Authority prioritises the enforcement of housing standards, I can confirm that the Authority introduced a Selective Licensing Scheme in 2020 in part of the Borough which will allow the Authority to inspect over 700 properties over the term of the scheme. At the same time it introduced a dedicated private sector housing team to concentrate on issues within the private rented sector and the delivery of the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) projects being operated by BEIS.

A by-product of the scheme is that it has enabled the Authority to engage with all registered landlords included within the scheme and over 100 estate agents across Leicestershire through the creation of a Landlords Forum and publication of information via the Private Sector News (see copy attached for information). You will note our November newsletter had a dedicated article on identifying and managing damp and mould within a property following the news regarding Awaab, to try and raise awareness and provide further guidance and support.

In addition, the private sector housing team have been supporting our housing department to structure a bid for Social Housing Decarbonisation funding (SHDF) to further improve our stock and is currently reviewing its Empty Homes Strategy and establishing a dedicated Houses in Multiple Occupancy Policy.

The Authority has actively engaged with your department's consultation and sounding boards in relation to the new Decent Homes Standards and have advocated for the need for mandatory licencing as a solution to housing standards issues. The authority also has a robust damp assessment procedure as can be seen in the attached guidance document.

I trust that the above information is sufficient in advance of the full response requested by 27 January 2023.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Court". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Anne Court
Chief Executive

enc