



---

# NOTICE OF MEETING

---

## HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2023 AT 3.00 PM

## COUNCIL CHAMBER - THE GUILDHALL, PORTSMOUTH

Telephone enquiries to Anna Martyn Tel 023 9283 4870

Email: [anna.martyn@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:anna.martyn@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

### **Public health guidance for staff and the public due to Winter coughs, colds and viruses, including Covid-19**

- Following the government announcement 'Living with Covid-19' made on 21 February 2022 and the end of universal free testing from 1 April 2022, attendees are no longer required to undertake any asymptomatic/ lateral flow test within 48 hours of the meeting; however, we still encourage attendees to follow the public health precautions we have followed over the last two years to protect themselves and others including vaccination and taking a lateral flow test should they wish.
- We strongly recommend that attendees should be double vaccinated and have received any boosters they are eligible for.
- If unwell we encourage you not to attend the meeting but to stay at home. Updated government guidance from 1 April 2022 advises people with a respiratory infection, a high temperature and who feel unwell, to stay at home and avoid contact with other people, until they feel well enough to resume normal activities and they no longer have a high temperature. From 1 April 2022, anyone with a positive Covid-19 test result is still being advised to follow this guidance for five days, which is the period when you are most infectious.
- We encourage all attendees to wear a face covering while moving around crowded areas of the Guildhall.
- Although not a legal requirement, attendees are strongly encouraged to keep a social distance and take opportunities to prevent the spread of infection by following the 'hands, face, space' and 'catch it, kill it, bin it' advice that protects us from coughs, colds and winter viruses, including Covid-19.
- Hand sanitiser is provided at the entrance and throughout the Guildhall. All attendees are encouraged to make use of hand sanitiser on entry to the Guildhall.
- Those not participating in the meeting and wish to view proceedings are encouraged to do so remotely via the livestream link.

---

## Membership

Councillor Kirsty Mellor (Chair)  
Councillor Raymond Dent (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Lewis Gosling

Councillor Graham Heaney  
Councillor Leo Madden  
Councillor Leonie Oliver

## **Standing Deputies**

Councillor Ryan Brent  
Councillor Jason Fazackarley  
Councillor George Fielding

Councillor George Madgwick  
Councillor Daniel Wemyss

---

(NB This Agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting.)

Please note that the agenda, minutes and non-exempt reports are available to view online on the Portsmouth City Council website: [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk)

## **AGENDA**

### **Apologies for absence**

### **Declarations of interest**

### **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 March 2023 (Pages 3 - 6)**

RECOMMENDED that the minutes of the meeting on 22 March 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

### **Review into damp and mould in social housing and private rented housing (Pages 7 - 44)**

To agree a scoping document for a review into damp and mould. Background information on the topic is attached below:

- Letter from Secretary of State on rented property standards
- Letter to CEOs of large registered providers
- Initial response to Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
- Local authority returns for damp and mould in private rented sector
- Registered Social Landlord damp and mould return
- PCC Housing staff bulletin
- Damp and mould leaflet for PCC tenants

Members of the public are now permitted to use both audio visual recording devices and social media during this meeting, on the understanding that it neither disrupts the meeting or records those stating explicitly that they do not wish to be recorded. Guidance on the use of devices at meetings open to the public is available on the Council's website and posters on the wall of the meeting's venue.

# Agenda Item 3

## HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel held in the Executive Meeting Room, Guildhall, on Wednesday 22 March 2023 at 3.30 pm

### Present

Councillor Kirsty Mellor (in the Chair)  
Graham Heaney  
Leo Madden  
Scott Payter-Harris

Resident Consortium representatives  
Maria Cole  
Sue Gordon  
Trevor Lovett

Andy Biddle - Director of Adult Care  
Ben Muller - Assistant Team Manager, Carers' Centre

Vicky Newman - Brunel Carers' Group

**1. Apologies (AI 1)**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 September 2022 (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2022 be agreed as a correct record.**

**4. Review into "Provision of respite/breaks for informal carers, particularly those who care for someone with dementia" (AI 4)**

Councillor Mellor welcomed those present and gave a brief introduction to the review. Social care has increasingly come under the spotlight and has never been more pressing than now so organisations must understand and collaborate with informal carers. There is growing recognition of their vital role along with awareness of the recruitment and retention of care staff nationally. The unpaid support of 11.5m informal carers saves £93m annually. Therefore, it was only fitting to commission a review. The local authority will be better equipped to deliver a strategy to support carers that goes beyond statutory obligations.

Members agreed to sign off the review, subject to the following amendments in the "Capacity and consent" paragraph in the Brunel Carers' Group section:

- After the sentence "If the cared for are deemed to have capacity they are asked to confirm if they wish to go into respite and they are entitled to refuse" add "The cared for can also sometimes refuse to accept other

carers coming into their home, which means informal carers do not have any respite at all."

- Replace "Interpreting what people say is important, for example, "home" for people with dementia is the most recent place they have lived in, which is what they mean when they say they want to go home, not their original home" with "Interpreting what people say is important, for example, "home" for people with dementia, when they say they want to go home, can be their most recent address, or where they lived when they were younger or where they lived with their spouse. It depends on the individual, their experiences and which parts of their memory are affected."

Members had already seen the amendments but Councillor Mellor read them out for transparency. She thanked Vicky Newman for suggesting them.

Councillor Mellor said it was very important to listen to the voice of carers. She thanked the Brunel Carers' Group and Solent Mind for their help and support for the review. She thanked Andy Biddle (Director of Adult Care), Clare Rachwal (Deputy Head of Service, Market Development & Community Engagement) and Ben Muller (Assistant Team Manager, Carers' Centre) for their support, including letting the panel attend the Carers Count event. She also thanked all panel members for taking part.

Vicky Newman, leader of the Brunel Carers' Group, thanked the panel for listening to the group. Councillor Mellor thanked the group for hosting the panel at what was a very insightful meeting.

In response to comments from Maria Cole about young carers, Andy Biddle said there was now a significant focus on them, for example, there had recently been a young carers' day. The approach has moved over time from managing risk to enabling young carers to have the same role in society as their peers. Vicky Newman, a former teacher, had raised the issues of young carers 25 years ago. Young carers as a review topic comes within the remit of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel.

Members discussed possible topics for the next review. Homelessness was suggested as there is often cross-over between housing and social care, which are both in the panel's remit. Health & Care Portsmouth are prioritising health care for the homeless as they have many complex issues like substance misuse and mental health, often end up in the Emergency Department and die earlier than the rest of the population.

Trevor Lovett said a couple of the Residents' Consortium meetings had covered homelessness. Councillor Payter-Harris advised the figure of 13 homeless people referred to when officers do a one-off sweep on a particular day and the actual number is probably much higher if the "hidden homeless" are included, for example, sofa surfers or people in refuges. The council has a lot of evidence about homelessness and its homeless working group meets monthly. A homelessness related review would be a sensible idea but the choice of topic would be for the panel to decide in the new municipal year.

The meeting concluded at 3.50 pm.

---

Councillor Kirsty Mellor  
Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 4



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

**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  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

19 November 2022

Dear Local Authority Chief Executive and council leaders,

## **HOUSING STANDARDS IN RENTED PROPERTIES IN ENGLAND**

The tragedy of Awaab Ishak, who died at two years old as a direct result of mould in his family home, has highlighted the urgent need to ensure a decent standard of properties for tenants in all sectors.

I know you will join me in mourning this avoidable loss. I also know, from previous experience, that councils and authorities across the country are already determined to improve housing standards. That is why I am confident you will all be as focussed as my department is on ensuring that no family ever has to experience such a tragedy again. In 21st century Britain, this should not be a high aspiration.

I have today written to social housing providers on this crucial matter. All of us – including my department – need to deliver our responsibility to people living in poor quality housing. That is why I am writing to you to request you do everything in your power to prioritise the improvement of housing conditions for the millions of private and social tenants, in line with existing duties in the Housing Act 2004. This becomes ever more urgent as we go into winter with a cost of living and energy crisis, which may exacerbate damp and mould conditions in some homes.

As you will be aware, local housing authorities have a duty under the Housing Act 2004 (“the Act”) to keep housing conditions in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken by them under the Act (section 3(1)).

### **Treating damp and mould seriously**

Having considered it necessary and urgent to ensure that, as we go into a challenging winter, damp and mould issues are being addressed, I now direct, under section 3(3) of the Act, that all local housing authorities in carrying out their duty to review housing conditions in their area must:

- have particular regard to high scoring (bands D and E) category 2 damp and mould hazards, as outlined in the guidance ‘Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) enforcement guidance: housing conditions<sup>1</sup>
- 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; and

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

- 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.

In addition, pursuant to your duties under section 3(3) of the Act, I would like you to provide the following data covering your last three 12 monthly reporting periods for privately rented properties in your area:

- how many damp and mould hazards you have remediated, compared to your assessment of the prevalence of these hazards;
- how many times you have taken enforcement action to remedy damp and mould hazards and the form this has taken;
- how many civil penalty notices have been issued in relation to non-compliance with enforcement action over damp and mould hazards; and
- how many prosecutions have been successfully pursued in relation to damp and mould hazards.

If you have not collected this information, please explain why.

Finally, I would also like you to set out how you are prioritising enforcement of housing standards more generally in your authority, across all tenures, including what plans you have to ensure adequate enforcement capacity to drive up standards in the private rented sector.

Alongside this, I have asked social housing providers to make an assessment of their properties and the Regulator of Social Housing will also be writing to them shortly on this matter.

I would like an initial response by the end of the month – this should set out how you are prioritising this work and any other initial information you can provide. I would then like the full response by 27 January at the latest. My officials will work with the Local Government Association and local authorities to agree the process and format for these responses in the coming days. Any questions in the meantime can be directed to [housingstandards@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:housingstandards@levellingup.gov.uk). My department will review these returns and may ask for further information. We may also periodically publish the responses, or a summary, to improve transparency on this important issue. I have focussed here largely on damp and mould to make quick progress on this important area during the winter months, but reserve the right to make further directions and requests in relation to wider standards in the near future as the department deems necessary.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the important work that you do in your local areas to improve housing standards for tenants. It is vital that we all learn from the events that led to the tragic death of Awaab, and my officials and I look forward to working collaboratively with you to improve standards for renters across the country and across all tenures.

With every good wish,



**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**  
**Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities**  
**Minister for Intergovernmental Relations**





22 November 2022

Dear Chief Executive

## Assurance on addressing risks relating to damp and mould in tenants' homes

The tragic case of Awaab Ishak, who died of a respiratory condition caused by mould in his home, has rightly focused attention on the responsibility of all registered providers – private and local authority – to ensure that the homes they provide are well-maintained and of a decent standard. It demonstrates the serious effects that having damp and mould in their homes can have on people's health and it has highlighted once again the importance of providers listening to their tenants' concerns, understanding their diverse needs, removing barriers to accessing services and responding promptly.

Damp and mould are potential hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System; failing to address them could lead to failure of the Decent Homes Standard and our Home Standard. All providers should have systems in place to ensure that their homes are free from hazardous levels of damp and mould, and to identify and deal with cases promptly and effectively.

As we move into winter, cases of damp and mould are likely to increase. We are therefore seeking assurance from all providers that they have a clear understanding and strong grip on damp and mould issues in their homes and are addressing risks to tenants' and residents' health. Where we consider providers are not meeting the standards, including the Decent Homes Standard, we will take appropriate action.

To inform this work, please provide:

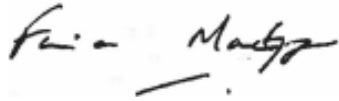
- Firstly, your approach to assessing the extent of damp and mould issues affecting your properties, including how you assess the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards
- Secondly, and in the context of that approach, your most recent assessment of the extent of damp and mould hazards in your homes, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards
- Thirdly, given those findings, the action you are taking to remedy any issues and hazards, and ensure that your homes meet the Decent Homes Standard
- Lastly, tell us how you ensure that individual damp and mould cases are identified and dealt with promptly and effectively when raised by tenants and residents

Explanations should be supported with recent data. If data are not available, this should be noted.

Submission of this information should be made through this MSForms survey <https://forms.office.com/r/ravGxEizWR> by 19 December 2022. We will review all the information provided and may request further information if necessary. Should you identify that your homes do not meet the relevant standards, you should self-refer immediately.

I look forward to receiving your data and working with you to improve conditions for tenants and residents – ensuring they are treated equitably and with respect, there are no barriers to reporting problems, and that their concerns are appropriately addressed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fiona MacGregor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Fiona MacGregor  
Chief Executive

**For and on behalf of Portsmouth City Council**

The following provides our initial response in relation to our duty as a local housing authority to your letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> November 2022, and your subsequent letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

We have also received a letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 from the Regulator for Social Housing which we will respond to in our capacity as a social housing landlord by 19<sup>th</sup> December as requested.

**Confirmation you have received and will pick up the request as outlined in the letter**

We can confirm that we have received the request and are compiling the required information.

**Set out how you are intending to prioritise addressing the issues of mould and damp for privately rented properties in your area, with specific reference to how you intend to meet the request set out above**

Portsmouth City Councils Housing Regulations team inspect properties in the Private Rented Sector both reactively and proactively. Where higher scoring hazards (Typically Bands A-E) are identified this is prioritised and appropriate action taken to ensure they are addressed in line with our enforcement policy.

Reactive cases are typically received directly from tenants themselves. Where the landlord has failed to resolve the matter informally, the tenant can seek support via the local authority to inspect the property and where appropriate take steps to ensure hazards are remediated.

All inspections of properties are recorded on our case management system (IDOX Uniform), from which we are able to extract data on the hazards identified and other measures of enforcement activity. We intend to use this data to populate our response to you for the deadline of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Portsmouth City Council regulates Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) through its mandatory licensing scheme. There are currently approximately 1,200 licensable HMO properties in Portsmouth which are required to hold a licence under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004, Part 2. The Council inspects these properties through the use of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) risk assessment, with each property receiving at least one assessment during the term of its licence which can be granted for up to 5 years. In addition to this assessment, Portsmouth City Council also publish a set of standards to be applied to all licensable HMOs to ensure the space and amenities of HMOs are safe for occupants.

Portsmouth City Council recently announced plans to extend licensing for HMOs in the city. A designation has now been made for the introduction of an additional licensing scheme to include all HMOs city wide (estimated to be up to 6,000 in total), which will come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023. The scheme will also include

converted blocks of flats that are of poor building standard where Building Regulations 1991 are not met, as defined through section 257 Housing Act 2004. The reason for the decision to introduce additional licensing is based on evidence which indicates that 32% of HMOs in the city have one or more Category 1 hazards under the HHSRS (compared with the EHS findings of 13% of privately rented properties having Category 1 hazards nationally). The introduction of this scheme will allow the Council to proactively assess a higher proportion of its private rented sector housing stock, with a view to addressing hazards and improving overall standards and management of these properties.

Portsmouth City Council's Private Rented Sector Strategy 2021-2026 [Private Rental Sector Strategy for Portsmouth 2021- 2026](#) provides detail on how the Council aims to both regulate and work with the sector to achieve positive outcomes for tenants and landlords. The strategy outlines the approach towards compliance in the sector, with the council supporting good landlords whilst taking decisive action against those bad landlords who flout or dismiss their responsibilities and put tenants at harm.

Another objective of the strategy is to provide Officers with the training needed to effectively regulate non-compliance in the sector. Between September 2022 and September 2024 all officers working in the Council's Housing Regulations team will be given the opportunity to complete a Level 5 Private Sector Housing qualification with the University of Middlesex. This training program will allow the Council to increase its enforcement activity within the sector against bad landlords. The team also undertake CPD, with a specific seminar on assessing and understanding Damp and Mould undertaken by the team earlier this year.

A number of non-enforcement activities also contribute toward the Council's approach to support both tenants and landlords. The Council employs a dedicated landlord and tenant support Officer who delivers workshops, produces educational materials, a quarterly landlord newsletter, operates a tenant group and updates our council's website with a view to assisting tenants and landlords. Many of these activities have been aimed at damp and mould within the home, with specific workshops and material being provided for tenants, especially where these issues are linked to fuel poverty, lifestyle, and cost of living. Through the Council's "Switched on Portsmouth" program tenants and landlords are able to seek out grants and other assistance to improve the thermal efficiency of their homes or provide assistance with the costs of heating. [Switched On Portsmouth - Save Energy. Save Money. Save Carbon.](#) In addition to these measures, Portsmouth City Council has also launched a mediation service aimed at helping landlords and tenants to maintain and improve tenancies. We also work alongside and signpost to partnership agencies, such as local tenancy advice service (Advice Portsmouth) and the local landlord association.

The Council's Private Sector Housing enforcement policy has recently been updated. [Additional Licensing of HMOs - Appendix 3 - Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#) This policy sets out the Council's aim to offers an opportunity to work informally with landlords, agents, owners, and service users, by

providing a range of information and guidance. In cases where there has been a complaint about a private rented property, and where it is the first contact about property standards, the service will normally notify responsible parties and/or will provide an inspection report outlining breaches in legal requirements. The purpose of an informal approach is to enable responsible landlords, agents, and owners to comply with regulatory requirements and agree to undertake the works required by the authority in a short timescale. The underlying aim of these communications is to establish good management practices from the outset that ensure compliance with regulatory requirements for property standards and that this approach continues through each subsequent tenancy.

All powers available to the private sector housing service are used when appropriate to do so as outlined in the Councils enforcement policy.

Enforcement action can be separated into 3 stages. Where there is non-compliance with legal requirements, after an informal approach has been made (stage one), formal action will be taken such as serving formal notices (Stage 2 enforcement) and punitive action for non-compliance such as prosecution or Civil Penalty Notices (Stage 3 enforcement).

However, where there are serious breaches in legal requirements, the authority will take a formal approach in the first instance and will move immediately to stages two and three. Formal action will also be considered in the first instance, where the landlord or owner has previous history of non-compliance with legal requirements or has previously been made aware of their legal responsibilities through letters and reports for other properties.

For category 1 hazards identified through the HSSRS, Officers have a duty to ensure these are remediated within a reasonable time period, using the approach outlined in the Councils enforcement policy. In cases of less serious hazards, known as category 2 hazards, the Council has a discretionary power to act. In some cases of high scoring or progressive category 2 hazards, Officers will insist on works being completed similarly to those category 1 hazards. Where hazards are deemed low scoring, or for example damp and mould is identified due to condensation rather than a property defect, advice and support will be given to the tenant. This may also include signposting to other services, such as the councils Energy services team, Housing Needs, Advice and Support team, or free tenant workshops run by the Landlord and tenant support officer on how to manage damp and mould.

**Any issues you envisage with completing the full response for 27 January and/or where further clarity from the department would be helpful.**

We currently do not envisage issues with providing this information for the deadline. We understand from your letter of 25<sup>th</sup> November that a response form will be circulated. Once we receive this, we will seek clarity, if we require this.

This page is intentionally left blank

# Local authority returns form: damp and mould in private rented properties

## Overview

### Why your views matter

We are requesting information on damp and mould in privately rented homes. Thank you for taking the time to respond.

### Introduction

This form is to collect information on damp and mould in privately rented homes from local authorities. It follows a [letter](#)

<[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1118877/SoS\\_letter\\_to\\_local\\_authority\\_chief\\_executive\\_and\\_council\\_le](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1118877/SoS_letter_to_local_authority_chief_executive_and_council_le) from the Secretary of State dated 19 November 2022.

Local authorities play a vital role in enforcing standards in the private rented sector, supporting tenants and tackling rogue landlords. The tragic death of Awaab Ishak has highlighted the importance of ensuring that tenants do not have to live with unsafe damp and mould in their homes.

The information provided through this form will enable us to better understand the issues surrounding damp and mould and will inform future on policy in this space, including how we support local authorities. We will also share this data with the LGA to inform their work. In collecting this data, we are aware that the figures over the pandemic period may not be representative of usual times, and this will be taken into account.

We also recognise that data collection systems and practices will vary from council to council, and that precise data may not be available for all of the questions listed below. Some questions have been marked as optional: however, where there is enough information available to allow a relatively robust estimate, we would welcome your support in providing as detailed a picture as possible.

We thank you very much in advance for your help to address this important issue.

If you have any queries, please email us at [housingstandards@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:housingstandards@levellingup.gov.uk)

### Details:

#### 1 Please provide the full name of your local authority:

Answer *(Required)*

**Portsmouth City Council**

#### 2 Please provide an email address of a named person we can contact with any further queries:

Answer *(Required)*

[Samuel.rickeard@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:Samuel.rickeard@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

[Clare.hardwick@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:Clare.hardwick@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

[Sally.Scattergood@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:Sally.Scattergood@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

#### 3 Approximately how many private rented sector properties are in your area currently?

Answer. Please provide a number. If you cannot answer, please write 'NA' *(Required)*

**24,000**

#### 4 What data sources do you normally use to inform your knowledge of the quality and condition of the privately rented stock in your area?

*(Required)*

Please select all that apply

- a) Stock condition survey
- b) Stock modelling
- c) Estimate based on contact with landlords/tenants
- d) Estimate based on general knowledge of local housing stock
- e) Housing census
- f) Other: e.g. licensing schemes(s), council tax, please provide details (below)

Answer (option - f)

**We have a number of sources of information regarding the PRS. This includes our current Mandatory HMO Licensing Scheme, our reactive property inspection findings, as well as working with stakeholders. We have a PRS governance board, we engage with the local university and students union, the local landlord association, and have set up a local tenant group consisting of over 80 local tenants to hear their views and experiences. We have also conducted several surveys with residents and landlords of the city to better understand the PRS, the property conditions, and the challenges stakeholders face. We also use other sources of local data such as Council Tax, Land Registry, Planning and building control, information from the local fire and rescue service, and deposit protection schemes. In 2020 we also commissioned some stock modelling with the BRE. We also use national data such as the ONS.**

5 Approximately what number of full-time equivalent (FTE) do you have in your housing enforcement team? In answering, please provide the number of all staff working on private rented sector standards, enforcement and licensing, including how many FTE Environmental Health Officers are carrying out enforcement, plus those that work in administrative and managerial roles, but not including legal resource. Also please do not include staff who only work on MEES. Where a staff member works on MEES alongside other housing enforcement, please include them in your FTE numbers.

Optional

11 FTE (1 Manager, 2 team leaders, 5.8 Housing Regulations officers, 1 landlord and tenant support officer, 1.2 Admin officers)

6 Do you run any Selective and/or Additional Licensing schemes in your area?

*(Required)*

Please select all that apply

- Selective  
 Additional  
 Neither

Portsmouth City Council have made an Additional Licensing Scheme designation which will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023.

7 If you do run any licensing schemes, approximately how many properties are covered by your scheme(s)? Please break down by each individual Selective/Additional licensing scheme

Optional

Portsmouth City Council currently operates a Mandatory Licensing Scheme, which covers 1200 HMO properties. A designation for a city wide Additional Licensing scheme has been made and will commence from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023. This scheme is estimated to cover 4800 HMO properties.

### Prevalence of damp and mould

The following questions relate to your assessment of damp and mould issues in your local authority area. If you are not able to provide a response to any of the following questions, please respond with 'n/a'.

8 Based on your assessment of damp and mould issues affecting private rented sector properties in your area, approximately what proportion do you currently estimate to have category 1 damp and mould hazards?

% *(Required)*

1%

9 What data sources do you normally use to come to the assessment provided in question 8?

*(Required)*

Please select all that apply

- a) Stock condition survey  
 b) Stock modelling  
 c) Estimate based on contact with landlords/tenants  
 d) Estimate based on general knowledge of local housing stock  
 e) Other e.g. licensing schemes(s), council tax etc.: (please specify below)

Other please specify

An estimate based on HHSRS assessment data carried out between 2019 - 2022 by the Housing Regulations team, where an average of 4% of the reactive HHSRS inspections, and 0.56% of the proactive HMO Licensing inspections identified Category 1 Damp & Mould hazards, and taking into account that this is a minority of the overall PRS in the city and comparing it to previous stock modelling undertaken by the BRE.

Comparing this to the English housing survey 2020-21 where it is estimated that 6.4% of PRS properties in the South East of England have damp present (either Cat 1 or Cat 2), that nationally 10% of pre-1919 properties or 9% of converted flats have damp present (which represent a large proportion of the PRS in Portsmouth), then an estimate of 1% Category 1 hazards appears a reasonable estimate.



**10** Based on your assessment of damp and mould issues affecting private rented sector properties in your area, approximately what proportion do you currently estimate to have category 2 damp and mould hazards?

% *(Required)*

**20%**

**11** What data sources do you normally use to come to the assessment provided in question 10?

*(Required)*

Please select only one item

- a) Stock condition survey
- b) Stock modelling
- c) Estimate based on contact with landlords/tenants
- d) Estimate based on general knowledge of local housing stock
- e) Other e.g. licensing schemes(s), council tax etc.: (please specify below)

Other please specify

**An estimate based on HHSRS assessment data carried out between 2019 - 2022 by the Housing Regulations team, where an average of 57% of the reactive HHSRS inspections, and 38% of the proactive HMO Licensing inspections identified Category 2 Damp & Mould hazards, and taking into account that this is not true sample of the overall PRS in the city (it is made up predominantly of properties where the tenant has contact us to complain about their living conditions, or licensed HMOs) and comparing it to previous stock modelling undertaken by the BRE.**

**Comparing this to the English housing survey 2020-21 where it is estimated that 6.4% of PRS properties in the South East of England have damp present (either Cat 1 or Cat 2), that nationally 10% of pre-1919 properties or 9% of converted flats have damp present (which represent a large proportion of the PRS in Portsmouth), then an estimate of 1% Category 1 hazards appears a reasonable estimate.**

**12** If you have not collected the information requested or are not able to provide information in this way, please can you tell us why? Please put n/a if you have provided the above data.

Answer *(Required)*

**N/A**

#### Enforcement Questions: complaints

The following questions relate to damp and mould complaints and inspections in your local authority area. If you are not able to provide a response to any of the following questions, please respond with 'n/a'.

**13** Please tell us what steps you take when you receive a complaint about damp and mould from a private rented sector tenant. Where relevant, please refer to or provide links to any enforcement policies you have in place (e.g. on enforcing category 2 hazards) and any guidance you might provide for tenants experiencing damp and mould issues.

Officers assessing properties in the Private Rented Sector do so through two approaches; a reactive approach responding to a complaint (service request) received concerning hazards in the home, and a proactive approach through mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMO) which is due to be expanded to a city wide additional licensing scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023.

Reactive complaints are often received directly from the tenant themselves, where the landlord has failed to resolve the matter the tenant can seek support via the local authority to inspect the property and where appropriate take steps to ensure hazards are remediated.

Officers will carry out inspections following a request for service from a tenant or referral from a partner or enforcement agency concerning unsatisfactory housing or overcrowded conditions. Tenants making requests for service will be asked to confirm that they have informed their Landlord of the disrepair and they have failed to act in a reasonable timescale. Inspections will take place where initial communications between this service and the landlord, agent or owner have not successfully resolved the issues for the customer.

There will be circumstances where an inspection may be undertaken in the first instance, for example where:

- there appears to be significant risks to the health and safety of occupiers and/or visitors

- the tenant or prospective occupier is vulnerable
- the issues are complex or involve neighbouring properties
- there is a poor history of compliance with legal requirements for housing conditions and/or management practices
- the property is empty

Where an inspection is undertaken, officers will assess compliance with all enforceable legal requirements, including a risk assessment under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and also licence conditions if applicable. This may involve referrals to other agencies or local authority service areas.

It is the council's aim to action requests for service promptly. Requests for service are typically received from:

- tenants/occupiers
- the general public
- property letting and managing agents
- referrals from other council services
- referrals from agencies

Details of the source of the service request will not be divulged when dealing with Landlords or agents.

The Housing Regulations team have a housing regulations officer "on duty" taking phone calls and emails regarding new complaints each day, who will speak to the complainant or referrer at the point of contact. They will book in an inspection appointment during this initial contact where it is identified as necessary, and will usually notify the relevant parties (tenant and landlord) of the inspection date, time and purpose (in accordance with section 239 of the Housing Act 2004). The inspection is undertaken as a HHSRS assessment, and any hazards identified are dealt with in accordance with the Private Sector Housing enforcement policy. This policy outlines that we will try to work with landlords or agents in our first interactions with them to educate them on their obligations, and deal with hazards informally through work schedules with clear timescales for compliance (which will be escalated to formal enforcement if not complied with). For landlords or agents that we have a history of interaction with regarding poor property conditions or management practices; or in situations where the property conditions are extremely poor, we will consider formal enforcement action in the first instance. The Council will take action where Category 1 hazards are identified, or higher scoring Category 2 hazards.

The Council's Private Sector Housing enforcement policy was recently updated, to include updates in legislation and give a clear view on the Council's approach regarding enforcement. The updated policy explains what steps Officers will take towards effective regulation and enforcement of the Private Rented Sector, including the use of Civil Penalty Notices and Prosecutions, and gives clarity on when a punitive approach will be taken by the team. [Appendix-3-Private-Sector-Housing-Enforcement-Policy-2022.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#)

Portsmouth City Council's Private Rented Sector Strategy 2021-2026 provides detail on how the Council aims to both regulate and work with the sector to achieve positive outcomes for tenants and landlords. The strategy outlines the approach towards compliance in the sector, with the council supporting good landlords whilst taking enforcement action against those bad landlords who flout or dismiss their responsibilities and put tenants at risk. [Private Rental Sector Strategy for Portsmouth 2021- 2026](#)

Several non-enforcement activities also contribute toward the Council's approach to support both tenants and landlords. The Council employs a dedicated landlord and tenant support Officer who, as part of their role, deliver workshops, produce educational materials, and operate a tenant group. We also provide information, advise and support through the council's website with a view to assisting tenants and landlords, and are in the process of reviewing and developing this further.

Many of these activities have been aimed at damp and mould within the home, with specific workshops and material being provided for tenants, especially where these issues are linked to fuel poverty, lifestyle and/ or cost of living. Through the Council's "Switched on Portsmouth" program, tenants and landlords are able to seek out grants and other financial incentives to improve the thermal efficiency of their homes or find assistance with the costs of heating.

All staff at the council are encouraged to make every contact count with members of the community, and recently launched an online tool to support people struggling with cost of living, which often contributes to the prevalence of damp and mould due to fuel poverty. This was recently recognized by the Local Government Association (LGA) who have published the format as an example of good practice [Portsmouth City Council: New cost of living tool for frontline staff and residents | Local Government Association](#)

- 14 Overall, how many complaints relating to housing standards have you received in the last three financial years that reference or relate to damp and mould issues in the private rented sector?

system, where keywords "damp" and "mould" have been found within the correspondence information or Officer notes. As a result, this can only be used as an indicator of complaints relating to damp and mould.

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**191**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**110**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**135**

**15** Of the complaints you received that reference damp and mould in the last three financial years, approximately how many resulted in inspections?

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**96**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**17**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**61**

**16** If you have not collected the information requested or are not able to provide information in this way, please can you tell us why? Please put n/a if you have provided the above data.

answer *(Required)*

**N/A**

#### Enforcement Questions: category 1 damp and mould hazards

The following questions ask for the number of category 1 damp and mould hazards identified broken down by inspections resulting from complaints, licensing, stock modelling and other reasons. If you are not able to provide a response to any of the following questions, please respond with 'n/a'.

**17** Approximately how many inspections have you undertaken overall in the last three financial years?

The below data is a combined figure of HHSRS assessments carried out on both licensed HMO properties and in response to complaints received of hazards present in the home. This includes inspections to check that required works have been completed, and inspections under Part 2 Housing Act 2004 to verify if a property is suitable to be used as a licensable HMO, and if any special conditions of the licence are required.

Portsmouth currently licenses 1200 HMOs through its mandatory licensing scheme, with approximately 80 per year of these requiring a visit prior to licence due to concerns of suitability, such as size of the property or availability of amenities, based on the requirement set out in our local HMO space and amenity standards document.

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**706**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**254**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**504**

**18** Thinking now ONLY about all of the inspections that you undertook as a result of complaints, approximately how many have identified a category 1 damp and mould hazard?

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**3**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**1**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**7**

**19** Thinking now ONLY about all the inspections that you undertook as a result of licensing, approximately how many have identified a category 1 damp and mould hazard?

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**2**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**0**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**0**

**20** Thinking now ONLY about all the inspections that you undertook as a result of stock modelling, approximately how many have identified a category 1 damp and mould hazard? **N/A**

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**21** Thinking now ONLY about all the inspections that you undertook for reasons other than complaints, licensing or stock modelling, approximately how many have identified a category 1 damp and mould hazard? **N/A**

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**22** If you have not collected the information requested above or are not able to provide information in this way, please can you tell us why? Please put n/a if you have provided the above data.

answer *(Required)*

**Portsmouth City Council carry out property inspections either in response to complaints received, or proactively through its mandatory licensing scheme (Additional licensing will be introduced on 01/09/2023. Inspections were not undertaken for the stock modelling exercise undertaken by the BRE for the city council in 2020, nor did that stock modelling specifically identify the prevalence of damp and mould hazards in properties (it looked at the prevalence of HHSRS hazards generically, as well as specifically excess cold).**

#### Enforcement Questions: category 2 damp and mould hazards

The following questions ask for the number of category 2 damp and mould hazards identified broken down by inspections resulting from complaints, licensing, stock modelling and other reasons. If you are not able to provide a response to any of the following questions, please respond with 'n/a'.

**23** Thinking now ONLY about all the inspections that you undertook as a result of complaints, approximately how many have identified a category 2 damp and mould hazard?

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**91**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**17**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**60**

**24** Thinking now ONLY about all the inspections that you undertook as a result of licensing, approximately how many have identified a category 2 damp and mould hazard?

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**98**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**35**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**66**

**25** Thinking now ONLY about all the inspections that you undertook as a result of stock modelling, approximately how many have identified a category 2 damp and mould hazard? **N/A**

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**26** Thinking now ONLY about all the inspections that you undertook for reasons other than complaints, licensing or stock modelling, approximately how many have identified a category 2 damp and mould hazard? **N/A**

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**27** If you have not collected the information requested above or are not able to provide information in this way, please can you tell us why? Please put n/a if you have provided the above data.

answer *(Required)*

**Portsmouth City Council carry out property inspection either in response to complaints received, or proactively through its mandatory licensing scheme. Inspections are not completed as a result of stock modelling or any other means.**

## Enforcement action

The following questions ask for figures on enforcement action taken in relation damp and mould hazards, including the number of improvement notices and civil penalty notices issued and the number of prosecutions. If you are not able to provide a response to any of the following questions, please respond with 'n/a'.

**28** Please provide the figures for all formal and informal enforcement action taken on damp and mould hazards:

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**2 Formal enforcement / 192 informal enforcement**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**3 Formal enforcement / 50 informal enforcement**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**7 Formal enforcement / 126 informal enforcement**

**29** Please provide the figures for improvement notices issued in relation to damp and mould hazards:

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**2**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**3**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**7**

**30** Please provide the figures for civil penalty notices issued in relation to damp and mould hazards:

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**0**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**0**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**0**

**31** Please provide the figures for prosecutions pursued in relation to damp and mould hazards:

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**0**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**0**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**0**

**32** Please provide the figures for successful prosecutions in relation to damp and mould hazards:

Answer - 2019/2020 *(Required)*

**0**

Answer - 2020/2021 *(Required)*

**0**

Answer - 2021/2022 *(Required)*

**0**

Wider context

**33** Please rank in priority order (1 - the highest impact / 6 - the least impact) how the following have had an impact on enforcement action relating to damp and mould in your area

	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) Capacity of your local authority. i.e. resource and funding hindering capacity to take enforcement action relating to damp and mould. <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Experience and expertise in the local authority. i.e. a lack of officers with experience, for example, experience pursuing prosecutions or expertise within the team including, for example, legal expertise. <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Strategic prioritisation of private rented sector enforcement. i.e. competing priorities leading to relatively lower prioritisation of enforcement action or proactively enforce. <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
d) The regulatory/ legal framework for enforcement activity. i.e. too much complexity in legislation. <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) Issues with gathering or providing evidence. i.e. tenants reluctant to provide statements or difficulties gathering the requisite evidence for issuing a fine or prosecuting. <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Limited data on the private rented stock. i.e. difficulties identifying private rented properties or insufficient resource to map out private rented stock. <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**34** Please say why you have ranked the items on question 31 in this orderIM

The current HHSRS framework results in damp and mould hazards typically scoring as low Category 2 hazards. Very few damp and mould hazards are scored as Category 1, or even high scoring category 2, and therefore often difficult to justify formal enforcement action.

We have limited data on the prevalence of damp and mould in the local PRS. Stock modelling and stock condition surveys are costly, have limitations on their accuracy, and as the PRS is a rapidly changing become outdated quickly. It would help to have visibility of where all of the PRS properties are in the city, as well as the landlords. Landlord registration would be helpful with this.

The majority of our inspections are reactive to service requests, or where we become alerted to a potential issue through other agencies, or on proactive inspection as a result of identifying issues with a specific landlord or building. There are many tenants who do not wish to access the support of the Housing regulations service because of fear of repercussions (eviction, increased rents etc).

There has been a high turnover of staff in recent years in the Housing Regulations team, who are relatively inexperienced regarding enforcement activity, which impacts the capacity to progress enforcement action at pace, without the need for



management support. However, the team are receiving Level 5 training through the University of Middlesex intended to improve this issue and in time Officers will have stronger knowledge and experience to confidently take enforcement action.

Less impact is felt locally regarding the prioritization of enforcement, with clear local policies outlining how formal enforcement action will take place. Whilst there are some complexities within the legal framework of Officers work, the team are supported by the internal Legal Services department who can provide support and advice. Generally, customers are willing to engage in the enforcement process to support their housing circumstances and make those responsible accountable, however there are situations where customers may fear retaliation from their landlord which can impact on enforcement activity.

- 35** Does the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) allow for an effective assessment of how serious and dangerous damp and mould is in people's homes?

*Please select only one item*

- Yes  
 No  
 Not sure

- 36** If not, what changes should be made to the HHSRS, to the system for categorising hazards or to enforcement powers under the Housing Act 2004?

The current HHSRS operating guidance is reflective of health data obtained before February 2006, and provides guidance towards the vulnerable age group based on statistical averages at the time. However, more recent data may suggest that further consideration should be given towards the spread of harm outcomes with the vulnerable age group (Class 1 - Class IV) which generally scores very low on average. In its current form, likelihood would need to be significantly increased to establish a category 1 or high category 2 hazard and thus become "actionable" in terms of enforcement.

Data obtained through the introduction of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards could be incorporated into the guidance as a consideration to increase likelihood of harm where a property fails to meet the standard, as poor thermal efficiency is known to contribute towards the prevalence of category 1 hazards regarding damp and mould and excess cold.

- 37** What other measures would help you to better prioritise addressing housing enforcement issues such as damp and mould?

The introduction of a landlord register, as currently being considered under government consultation through the Renters Reform Bill, would give further information to support proactive enforcement, which would over time effectively reduce demand on local services by focusing enforcement on the most non-compliant landlords. This visibility would also support tenants know who they are renting from and trusting to follow the law.

Portsmouth City Council regulates HMO's through its mandatory licensing scheme, which applies to all shared houses with 5 or more tenants forming 2 or more households. Council Officers will assess properties utilizing the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) risk assessment tool. In addition to this assessment, Portsmouth City Council also publish a set of standards to be applied to all licensable HMOs to ensure the space and amenity standards are appropriate and safe for occupants. These standards were recently updated to provide additional detail and clarity regarding the standards expected within HMOs, and how these will be applied.

The Council plans to extend its licensing scheme for HMOs, with

a recent designation being made for the introduction of a city wide additional licensing scheme. The scheme will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023. HMOs in the Portsmouth area are estimated to make up nearly 25% of local PRS so this scheme will ensure that a much higher proportion of the local PRS are being proactively inspected.

## **RSH - Assurance on addressing risks relating to damp and mould in tenants' homes**

### **1. Please provide your registered provider code**

- 00MR

### **2. Please provide your registered provider name**

- Portsmouth City Council

### **3. Please detail your approach to assessing the extent of damp and mould issues affecting your properties, including how you assess the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards**

As a social housing provider, we utilise our expertise to assess the priority of repairs that are needed in our tenants' homes. Where any health and safety issues are identified these will always be treated as a priority by PCC and our contractors. All repair requests are recorded on our repairs database to enable us to track and manage repairs in partnership with our contractors. Using this database, we can complete a key word search such as "damp/mould" to inform us of how many active repairs cases we have connected to damp and mould or how many reports of damp and mould we have had over a certain period.

This allows us to be able to identify trends in particular areas and deploy surveyors to inspect and assess if further investigation and/or remedial works are required. We also utilise our frontline staff and contractors to report issues on behalf of tenants if they identify individual issues or trends during their visits to tenants' homes. As a management team we also review complaints and disrepair claims to establish if there are any aspects of our repairs and maintenance service that need to be improved, including our response to damp and mould enquiries.

We undertake reviews of repairs data where damp and mould has been identified to inform the effectiveness of the Council's response to repair demands and highlight where future planned works maybe required to address ongoing issues.

We target analysis of the repairs data to identify those properties where the residents do not contact us frequently to report repairs and so condition surveys and tenancy visits are targeted to these properties to assess if there are any issues that we should be aware of, including damp and mould issues

Remote monitoring equipment (battery sensors) has been installed to a sample of property archetypes as part of a deep retrofit feasibility to measure Temperature (°C), Carbon Dioxide (CO2 ppm), Humidity (Relative Humidity %) and Volatile Organic Compounds (ppm) and to work with residents to better understand home

environments and how our residents and buildings interact. This monitoring will help the Council understand the work required to address issues raised and post completion monitoring will be undertaken to measure the effectiveness of the interventions undertaken.

**4. In the context of the approach detailed in Q3, please provide details of your most recent assessment of the extent of damp and mould hazards in your homes, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards**

- During the past 12 months there have been 371 surveyor visits to assess damp and mould issues as part of a repair request. Each case identified has been assessed by a surveyor and appropriate actions or repairs have been commenced or completed to rectify the situation for the residents concerned.
- Since 2021 there have been 10 stage one complaints received related to condensation and none have been escalated to stage two or escalated to the Ombudsman. There have been no disrepair claims and no record of paying out to any Council tenants regarding claims related to damp and/or mould or related to respiratory issues/ ill health.
- Our targeted stock condition surveys to pre-war acquired properties (dwellings purchased by the Council) has resulted in planned maintenance programmes being established to undertake a range of work to address defects including damp.
- The remote monitoring equipment work and data analysis to a targeted set of property types is ongoing over several heating seasons and no results are available at this time.
- Since September 2022 Council surveyors have referred 75+ residents to Leap and Switched On Portsmouth so that an Energy Advisor can advise on ways to maximise income and save energy, or provide assistance with the costs of heating
- Post occupation surveys and monitoring was undertaken at the Wilmcote House retrofit project. The project was the largest EnerPhit project in the UK to address poor heating levels, condensation, and mould issues. It demonstrated that the work undertaken has eliminated the original condensation and mould issues identified as well as creating a better affordable living environment requiring less heating demands.

**5. Given the findings of the assessment outlined in Q4, please outline the actions you are taking to remedy any issues and hazards, and ensure that your homes meet the Decent Homes Standard**

- Each case of damp and mould identified has been assessed by a surveyor and appropriate actions or repairs have been commenced or completed to rectify the situation for the tenant concerned.
- Planned maintenance programmes have been established to undertake a range of work to address defects including damp to pre-war acquired properties

- A damp and mould policy together with guidance for the teams is currently being refreshed and is planned to be published in the next six months to ensure that the Council are consistent regarding their approach and residents have visibility of what service to expect regarding damp and mould enquiries.
- Refresher training of all staff who undertake property visits is ongoing to ensure that they can correctly identify damp and mould issues and take the appropriate action.
- A retrofit feasibility is currently being undertaken to assess the viability of retrofitting properties technically and financially to achieve decarbonisation of the housing stock. A total of 29 sites have been chosen that include a mix of houses and blocks of flats as well as traditional and non-traditional construction representing a third of the housing stock type
- Staff and contractor core group briefings have been undertaken to refocus knowledge and understanding of damp and mould response to issues identified
- The Council asset management strategy and business plan is being reviewed by external consultants to identify strengths and weaknesses of the strategy and refresh the plans to address sector challenges

## **6. Please tell us how you ensure that individual damp and mould cases are identified and dealt with promptly and effectively when raised by tenants and residents**

### Damp and Mould enquiries from Residents

Typically, damp and mould demands are reported by residents themselves to the Council via the Repairs Support Team RST, although damp and mould may also be identified by Housing Management staff, surveyors, or contractors' staff during a property inspection, as part of the void process or during the course of another arranged property visit such as an unrelated repair or servicing appointment.

- Where a resident has reported damp or mould issues an appointment will be arranged for a Council surveyor to visit and inspect the property to assess and diagnose the cause of the issue.
- A repair request will be recorded on the Council repairs and maintenance database for all damp and mould enquiries raised, from which we are able to extract data to review damp and mould measures.
- The Council surveyor will inspect the property with the resident to investigate and assess the damp and mould issue highlighted; they will diagnose the cause that may include taking relative humidity readings, temperature readings, check the effectiveness of the heating and ventilation as well as inspect for any other building defects that may contribute to the damp and mould issue highlighted.
- The Council does not differentiate category 1 and 2 hazards, the council surveyor will arrange for any further follow-on repair work to be undertaken by

contractors or specialists to address any building and /or heating issues identified and prevent further occurrences of damp and mould regardless of the category.

- The Council surveyor will use the opportunity to also provide advice to the resident to manage their property to prevent damp and mould, as well as take the opportunity to discuss Leap and the city council's Switched-on Portsmouth options for referral if required so that an Energy Advisor can advise on ways to maximise income and save energy, or provide assistance with the costs of heating

A follow-on appointment will be arranged with the resident by a Council surveyor to monitor the effectiveness of the repair/s undertaken and/or advice/guidance and appropriate further actions will be taken where necessary.

### Referrals from staff and contractors

We make every tenant contact count, whether this is in person, by telephone, or in writing. All staff and contractors will observe and report any issues with the property during visits - this holistic approach includes safeguarding issues, hoarding, and any repair issues including damp and mould.

When properties are void or during the mutual exchange process, we check the condition of the property including the presence of mould, or the likelihood of it occurring.

When undertaking any planned maintenance project internal surveys will be undertaken to a sample of properties as part of the evaluation of the scheme, if damp and mould issues are identified then options will be assessed to incorporate measures to address the issues identified, this may include for example replacement windows or external wall insulation

### **Additional Information that can be added**

As a local authority landlord, we work to ensure that all our tenants' homes are maintained to a good standard and that we respond appropriately to all repairs and concerns raised by our tenants. We aim to tailor repairs around the individuals needs and requests where possible. In doing this we are confident that we have a good understanding of where there may be any issues with damp and mould and have actions in place to rectify the situation.

We review information that we provide to residents and are currently updating a damp and mould advice leaflet that is provided to residents and the information will also be updated on the Council website.

We publish via social media and the switched-on Portsmouth website updates on how residents can deal with damp, mould, and condensation and where they can seek help and advice.

The manager of the surveying team assesses the surveying response to damp and mould enquiries and the surveying team meet regularly to discuss and feedback

Our approach is to make every visit and resident contact count, this means every team or contractor visiting a property having a view of both the household and the property to identify any damp and mould issue and forwarding any issues to the Repairs Support team so that a surveyor can visit.

**7. Please provide the name of the person in your organisation that we can contact with further queries:**

- Meredydd Hughes
- Sally Scattergood

**8. Please provide the job title of the person provided in Q7.**

- Assistant Director of Buildings
- Assistant Director of Housing

**9. Please provide the email of the person provided in Q7.**

- [Meredydd.Hughes@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:Meredydd.Hughes@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)
- [Sally.Scattergood@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:Sally.Scattergood@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

**10. Please provide the phone number of the person provided in Q7.**

- 07837 235329
- 07306 029237

**11. Please confirm if you have uploaded additional document(s) to NROSH+**

- I have NOT uploaded any additional documents to NROSH+





# Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Services

DIRECTORATE UPDATE

From Director of Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Services, James Hill

09 December 2022  
10 min read

## Damp and mould social housing: Staff updates

### Awaab Ishak

Many of you will have read the findings of the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak, who sadly died in a social housing property in Rochdale in 2020.

The inquest examined the circumstances and concluded that Awaab's death was a result of prolonged mould exposure in the home, and that the provider, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, had not addressed the issues of damp and mould.

[Read the full report](#)

### Ombudsman's report

In October 2021 the [Housing Ombudsman](#) issued a written report, *Spotlight on: Damp and Mould - it's not lifestyle*, with a clear message that simply pointing to tenants' lifestyle choices isn't a sufficient response to the issues of damp and mould.

## **Read the full report**

### **Our response**

You may have seen [this article](#) from the Chartered Institute of Housing which captures very well the response of many to the situation and highlights the resources available to us from professional bodies like the CIH - please have a read through if you haven't done so already.

**We would encourage you to share useful information from your own networks and professional bodies which can help us all improve our knowledge and systems as we reflect on the circumstances leading to this tragic loss of life.**

Though we're confident in our ability to respond well to issues in the private sector and in our landlord function, we are not complacent. We will reflect on the lessons this case brings and we will engage fully with the government's review of this area of work.

The secretary of state has contacted all housing authorities asking urgently for a response as to how we regulate and support issues like this in the private rented sector. The social housing regulator has asked for similar assurance in respect of social housing landlords.

Overseeing our response is Sally Scattergood, assistant director of housing, and Meredydd Hughes, assistant director of building services.

**The initial response regarding private sector housing was provided on 30 November. A response for the social housing function is to be provided by 19 December.**

### **How we move forward**

We will keep you all updated. Please talk to your managers if you have identified any damp and mould that you're concerned about as you complete your property visits.

You will be aware that our approach is to make every visit and tenant contact count. This means keeping a full 360° view of both the household and the property to make sure that you are:

- identifying any repairs or issues with the property
- identifying any potential safeguarding concerns
- offering any appropriate tenancy advice or signposting tenants to the information that they may need

- asking tenants if there's anything else they need support with, at every point of contact

### **If you identify a damp or mould issue**

If you are in one of our tenants' homes and you identify a damp and mould issue, please call the **repairs support team** from the property to explain the issue - they are practised in assessing whether a surveyor needs to visit the property or if alternative advice is needed.

Where a surveyor is required, the team are able to schedule an appointment with the customer there and then.

If you are unable to make this call for any reason, please email the repairs support team the details of the property and tenant, explaining your concerns and including any photos of the affected areas in the property. This will help to inform the team's assessment.

We are also updating our leaflets and information on the web site so that residents can access this information directly.

**If you have any questions, please email**  
**[HNBScomms@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:HNBScomms@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)**

[Get this update sent to your own email address](#)

©2021 [Portsmouth City Council](#)  
[Don't want to receive this any more? Unsubscribe](#)


[Manage Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe to all](#)

This page is intentionally left blank



# CONDENSATION AND MOULD

**ADVICE FOR  
PORTSMOUTH CITY  
COUNCIL TENANTS**



**Homes in the UK can suffer from condensation and mould, especially in the winter. Daily tasks such as cooking, showering and drying clothes result in moisture being released into the air, which can lead to condensation and black mould growth. Mould toxicity can negatively impact both your physical and mental wellbeing.**

## **DAMP**

There are two types of damp that can lead to the growth of black mould within a home. Rising damp is caused by ground water moving up through the wall or floor. This can be caused by a lack of effective damp proof course. Penetrating damp is caused by leaking water. This is usually caused by a structural problem in the building such as faulty guttering, or it can be caused by internal leaks, like pipes under the sink. This type of damp may expand across walls or a ceiling horizontally.



## BLACK MOULD

Black mould is caused by a build-up of moisture. Left untreated this can spread from walls onto furniture, curtains and clothing. Black mould produces allergens, irritants, and sometimes toxic substances. Inhaling or touching mould spores may cause an allergic reaction such as sneezing, a runny nose, red eyes and a skin rash.



## CONDENSATION

Condensation is caused by moist air coming into contact with cold surfaces such as walls, windows and mirrors. It can also build up in places where there is little air movement, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Condensation can cause dampness and mould within your home which can create a distinctive musty smell.



# HOW TO REDUCE CONDE BLACK MOULD GROWTH

## MAINTAIN PROPER VENTILATION



Use extractor fans and trickle vents in your windows. These don't lose much heat so keep them uncovered.



Open windows for short periods in the morning to release moisture from your home.



If you're drying clothes indoors, make sure there are open windows to allow moisture to escape.



Allow soft furnishings, such as sofas, room to breathe by pulling them away from the wall and not overfilling your wardrobe.



# WARMING AND PREVENT CONDENSATION IN YOUR HOME

## HEAT YOUR HOME



Condensation is less likely to form if the temperature of your home is above 15°C.



However, it's recommended that rooms are kept at between 18-21°C to keep you warm and healthy.



Don't turn thermostatic radiator valves off, always keep them on a minimum frost setting.

## SWITCHED ON

PORTSMOUTH

If you're struggling to afford your heating, help is available. Visit our website at: [switchedonportsmouth.co.uk](http://switchedonportsmouth.co.uk) for energy saving advice or call our freephone number **0800 260 5907** to receive free energy and financial advice, as well as onward referrals into larger schemes.

# TRY TO KEEP YOUR MOISTURE LEVELS DOWN

**Most daily tasks will release moisture into the air.**

Activity	Litres of water vapour
Breathing – active adult	0.85 litres per day per person
Breathing – sleeping adult	0.3 litres per day per person
Cooking	Up to 3 litres per day
Washing clothes	0.5 litres per load
Drying clothes	5 litres per load
Showers and baths	1.5 litres per person
Washing dishes	Up to 1 litre per day
Un-flued gas heater	Up to 1 litre per hour of use

**Try the below tips to reduce moisture levels in your home to prevent condensation:**

**Dry clothes outside or in a vented tumble dryer where possible**

**Take shorter showers**

**Add cold water first when running a bath – this reduces steam by up to 90%**

**Keep a lid on pots and pans when cooking**

**Wipe windows daily with a squeegee**

## KEEP KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS CLEAN

Kitchens and bathrooms are hotspots for condensation and therefore, mould as well. Keep on top of your cleaning routine to prevent the build-up of black mould in these rooms.



## CONTACTING US ABOUT DAMP AND MOULD IN YOUR HOME

Reporting damp and mould to the council is the right thing to do, and the earliest this can be done, the easier it will be to resolve. Any signs of damp should be reported to the Housing repairs support team as soon as possible. This can be done by calling or emailing using the below details, or online on the Portsmouth City Council website via the 'maintaining and repairing your council property' web page.

If you notice black mould spots starting to appear, do not leave it. To remove the mould, first try buying a domestic mould and mildew remover from your local supermarket and cleaning the affected areas by carefully following the manufacturer's instructions.

If you have **extreme** black mould or the initial treatment is not effective, please contact the Housing repairs support team as this may be an indication of an underlying repair issue with your home and will need to be cleaned off and treated with fungicidal treatment. Do not try to remove with a brush or Hoover as this can lead to the mould spreading further round your home.

### HOUSING REPAIRS SUPPORT TEAM CONTACT DETAILS

 023 9284 1311

 [repairssupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:repairssupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT WITH  
YOUR ENERGY USE AND BILLS VISIT  
**SWITCHEDONPORTSMOUTH.COM**  
OR CALL **0800 260 5907**



You can get this information in large  
print, Braille, audio or in another  
language by calling 023 9284 1193