

Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Services

DIRECTORATE UPDATE

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

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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

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