

Damp and Mould response to the Regulator of Social Housing Customer Summary

Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, this is a summary of our response to the letter that the Regulator of Social Housing sent to all housing providers on 22 November 2022. It sets out what we do and the systems we have in place to ensure that our homes are safe and free from hazardous levels of damp and mould.

LiveWest owns 39,498 properties of which we maintain 31,885 social and affordable homes.

Question 1 - 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:

We take a proactive approach to managing damp and mould. Central to this is ensuring that all our homes meet the expectations of the Home Standard and are Decent Homes compliant.

To understand the condition of our stock we undertake a survey of all new homes after 10 years and every 5 years thereafter. We do not clone or copy data and each home is individually assessed. As of 1 December 2022, we had completed 72% stock condition surveys in line with our programme. This is below our target as a reduced number of surveys took place for a period of 2 years during the Covid-19 pandemic. A catch-up plan is in place to return to full compliance with our survey standard by March 2025.

Question 2 - 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:

Local Authority HHSRS notices - As of 1 December 2022, we have no (0) live HHSRS notices from any of our Local Authority partners in the areas where we operate.

Category 1 Damp and Mould hazards - Five category 1 HHSRS hazards were reported during the 6-month period up to 1 December 2022. In all cases the risk had been mitigated or reduced.

Damp and mould repairs including category 2 hazards -

Over the past year we have undertaken over 5,250 stock condition surveys. Each of these includes a formal safety assessment. Through these assessments we have identified 2 'severe' damp and mould cases and 155 "moderate/slight" damp and cases.

In addition to reports through our stock condition surveys we also receive reports of damp and mould from customers and colleagues. On 1 December we had 669 outstanding repairs relating to water ingress, damp or mould. 78% of these repairs had been reported within the last 8 weeks. We take a customer centric approach to recording damp and mould reports from customers. As a result, we record all water ingress/damp and mould reports as a hazard without the need to first undertake an inspection as we believe this prioritises repairs and benefits our customers.

Question 3 - Given those findings, the action you are taking to remedy any issues and hazards, and ensure that your homes meet the Decent Homes Standard:

We are currently 99.9% Decent Homes compliant. We report on the number of homes failing the Decent Homes standard monthly to our Board.

Where a significant hazard (CAT 1) is identified our approach is to eliminate the hazard and return the property to decent homes compliance. To ensure customer safety is prioritised, we will initially carry out work to reduce the risk for example, by carrying out a mould wash to remove a mould hazard, and then follow up with remedial work to ensure that there is not further reoccurrence. Where it is not possible to reduce the hazard or risk in a timely way, customers may be offered a decant.

Our LiveWest Home Standard aims to ensure that all of our homes achieve a standard above Decent Homes compliance. Our standard was developed in conjunction with customers and will be delivered through substantial investment over the next 5 years. This includes a planned programme of work of more than £235 million including, £20 million for building and fire safety related works and £38 million to ensure all of our homes meet EPC C by 2028, two years ahead of the legislative requirements.

We understand that sometimes the inability for customers to heat their homes increases the risk of damp and mould. We annually invest more than £1.5m in our Tenancy Sustainment team and provide grant funding to support rent, food and utilities of over £800k. We employed a specialist Energy Advice officer to support customers with the enormous challenges facing them with rising energy bills.

Question 4 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:

All damp and mould repair reports are managed in line with our damp and mould policy and procedure.

Reports of damp and mould can be raised by customers or, their advocates. to our Customer Service Centre by telephone, email, social media messaging or our website. Reports can also be made to individual members of LiveWest staff when out on site.

All reports of damp and mould are assessed and last year we introduced a remote video tool to support more effective repairs identification and diagnostics. Our assessment considers the risk posed to the customer and recognises that damp and mould can have pose a greater risk to some groups of people including young children and those with respiratory illness.

All damp and mould repairs are managed in line with our repairs standards and procedure. We have a target completion time of 28 days for responsive work and 90 days for more major works. As a result of high repairs volume post pandemic, we have a current backlog of repairs work which can result in repairs extending beyond our 28 day target time.

We are committed to continually reviewing u processes and learning from best practice so that our ensure that all of our homes are safe and free from hazardous levels of damp and mould.