

Update on LBC response to damp and mould

Context

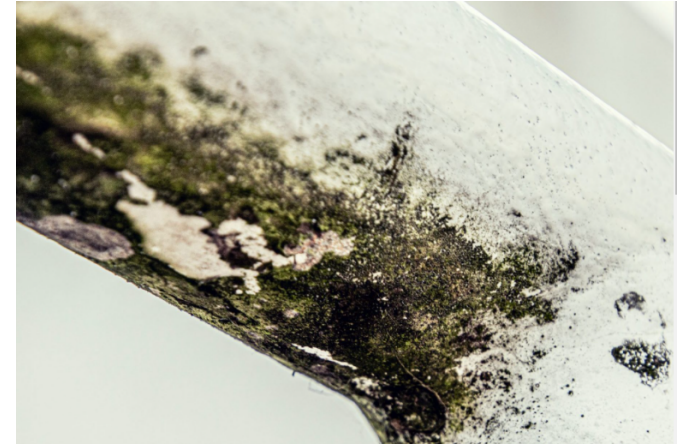
October 2021 and February 2023 Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report on Damp & Mould.

November 2022- a coroner rules that the death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak was due to prolonged exposure to damp and mould in his home.

February 2023- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announces Awaab's Law

September 2023 – Government issues guidance on Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home. The guidance sets out the relevant legislation and standards as well as the expected steps and processes required to ensure a proactive approach is undertaken.

September 2023 – Updated letter from SoS to remind councils that the new guidance was issued and that wider reforms will also follow, including requirements for staffing to hold housing qualifications and increased powers for the housing ombudsman



Summary of Guidance from the Government

In September 2023, updated guidance, published jointly by Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and UK Health Security Agency was released. The requirements are summarised below.

Landlords must meet 5 legal Standards:

- **The Housing Act 2004** – All homes must be free from “category 1 level” hazard as assessed by HHSRS
- **The Environmental Protection Act 1990**
- **The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 – Homes must be fit to live in.**
- **Decent Homes Standard.**
- **The Energy Efficiency Regulations 2015 (EPC Band E)**

Landlords must ensure:

- All measures have been taken to minimise the risk of damp and mould.
- Regularly inspect properties and have a programme of regular maintenance
- clear processes in place for both tenants and other professionals, both internal staff and external contractors, to report any concerns.
- If a report of damp and mould is made, landlords should establish and undertake appropriate remedial work within a documented timeline. Legislation to impose a common timeline is expected
- tenants with vulnerabilities are not left living with damp and mould.
- Complains, claims and rehousing are dealt with reasonably

Our approach to assessing damp and mould

As it stands today, of the 13 recommendations, Croydon already comply with 7, are already in the process of complying with a further 5 with 3 nearing completion.

- Croydon have a clear process for reporting Damp and mould and responding with urgency and sensitivity. Additional actions to tighten process where required
- Croydon have clear processes with internal and external staff to support the reporting of Damp and Mould. There is a single point of contact through the damp and mould team for professionals.
- Croydon have a clear process of what will happen as a result of a damp and mould report with our 4 stage process
- Croydon's 3 and 6 month check ensures treatment has been effective, and that damp and mould have not reappeared
- Croydon's new Voids and Lettable standards process (including the checking of ventilation and heating ensures the properties are not let with damp and mould. Croydon will also carry out a damp and mould check in any property that have suffered previously before the property is re-let

Our approach to assessing damp and mould

Government Recommendation	Status
having clear processes for tenants to report damp and mould, which are easy for tenants to understand and use, with provision for individuals who may face barriers to reporting damp and mould. See above 'Responding with urgency and sensitivity and taking tenants' needs into consideration'	Complete
having clear processes for other professionals (both internal staff and external contractors) to report concerns regarding damp and mould in a tenant's property. In particular, we recommend that there is a single point of contact for professionals to notify landlords of concerns they have for tenants' health so that this information can be acted upon urgently. Landlords should not delay action to await medical evidence or opinion - medical evidence is not a requirement for action, and damp and mould should always be addressed promptly to protect tenant health	Complete
having a system which enables landlords to maintain up-to-date records on housing conditions and reports of damp and mould, including those made through informal channels, and any resulting investigatory or remediation action	In Progress
having a system which makes it clear what will happen as a result of a damp and mould report, for example, when tenants may expect to be contacted following a report, an explanation that a home inspection may be required, and details of how to complain if something goes wrong	Complete
having a policy on how data from damp and mould reports is collected, stored and shared within the landlord organisation and with other professionals, if applicable	In Progress
setting timescales to assess damp and mould and carry out remedial work, and reviewing these periodically	In Progress
having a system that includes a means to follow up and check that treatment has been effective, and that damp and mould have not reappeared	Complete
having a system that triggers a review of the property and further remedial work, if the follow up found that treatment was unsuccessful, and damp and mould reappeared	Complete
having a system which includes checks in between tenancies. This should include checking ventilation and heating systems are working effectively, and that signs of damp and mould are not apparent (see above 'Internal and external checks' in 'Identifying the root causes of damp and mould')	Complete
all processes should be reviewed periodically, and events and problems learned from	Complete
all staff and external contractors should be aware of any relevant damp and mould policies and procedures	In Progress
any tenant-facing policies and processes should be accessible, have clear messaging, avoid attributing blame to tenants and encourage landlords and tenants to work together to improve the condition of the home. Landlords should make guidance available in different languages and different formats to accommodate other needs where possible (see above 'Responding with urgency and sensitivity, and taking tenants' needs into consideration')	In Progress
landlords may wish to consult with tenants and with maintenance and other housing professionals when developing and/or reviewing relevant strategies, policies and processes, and establishing what an effective system for dealing with damp and mould looks like	In Progress

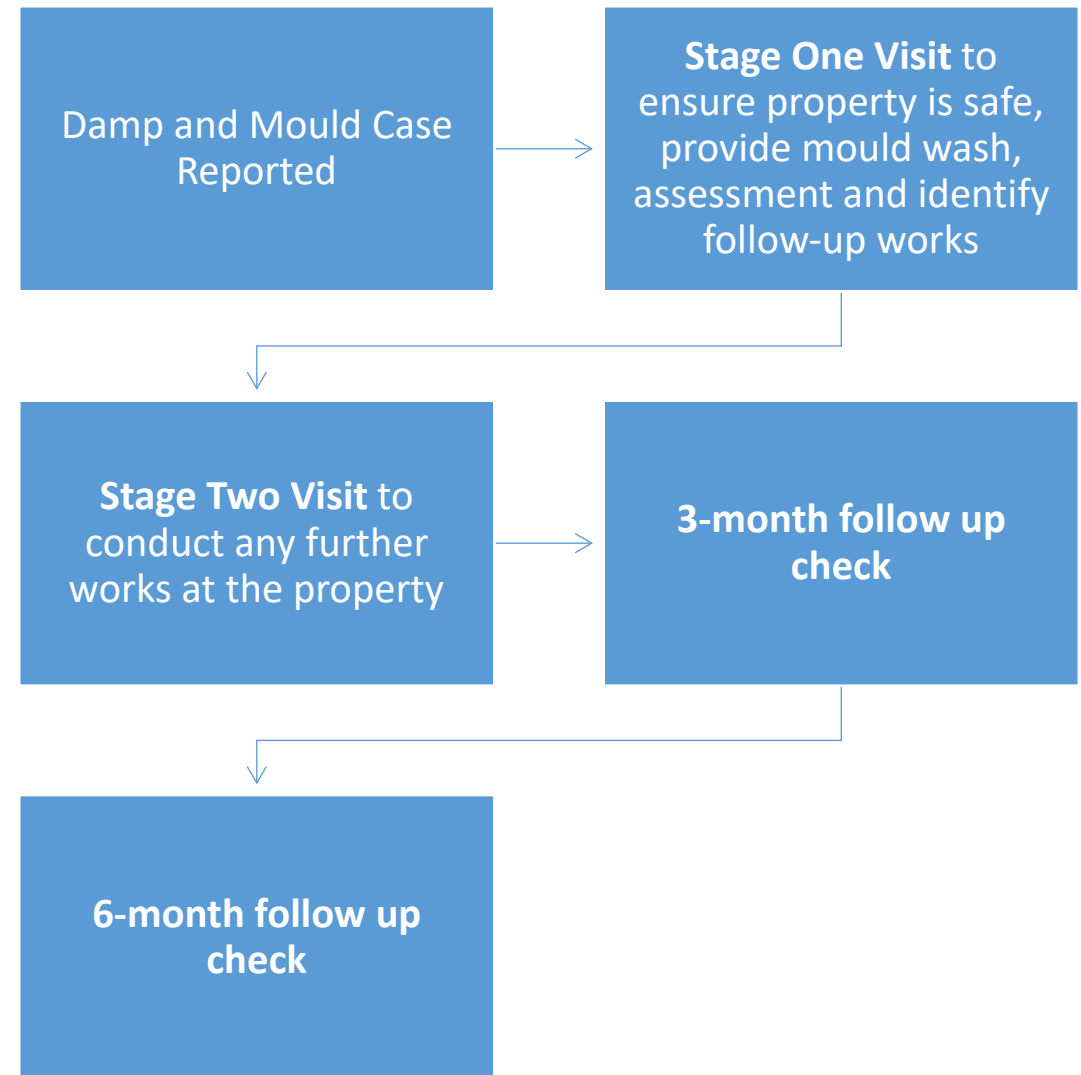
Our 4 stage approach to addressing damp and mould

Created a specialist Damp and Mould team led by a Damp & Mould Manager and increased our number of contractors and Surveyors

Commissioned the support of an Damp & Mould Specialist to support staff and enable culture change in how Damp and Mould cases are viewed.

Used vulnerability information and local knowledge to target Damp and Mould visits and prioritise vulnerable tenants.

As of 31 March 2023, over a 1000 Damp & Mould visits have been completed.



Current Quarterly performance

- 280 cases reports of Damp and Mould received in the last quarter (July-sept inclusive)
- 258 jobs raised
- 40 jobs completed within the 6 day timeline
- 11 HHSRS Cats 1 complete within 24 hours
- 143 Inspections carried out in last quarter

Damp and Mould Contact details

- For residents, representative, Councillors emails

Dampandmould@Croydon.gov.uk

- Internal council staff emails

D&Minternalenquires@Croydon.gov.uk

- Specialist Contractor and Surveyors emails

DandMContractors@Croydon.gov.uk