



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**

*Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing & Communities*

*Minister for Intergovernmental Relations*

2 Marsham Street

London

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7 September 2023

Dear Local Authority Chief Executives and Council Leaders,

Thank you for your engagement over recent months as we work to improve standards for renters across the country.

Following the Coroner's report into the tragic and avoidable death of Awaab Ishak, I directed you on 19 November 2022 under section 3(3) of the Housing Act 2004 to set out your assessment of damp and mould hazards in private rented properties in your areas and the action you have taken to remediate them. As part of the Government's response to the Coroner's report, my Department also committed to publishing consolidated guidance, together with the Department for Health and Social Care, on the health outcomes of damp and mould in the home. I have today published your damp and mould assessment responses, together with a summary of our main findings. I have also published the consolidated guidance.

The Government is clear that damp and mould should not be dismissed as the result of a 'lifestyle choice' and that action to remove pervasive damp and mould must be taken by landlords. The guidance published today makes clear that it is the responsibility of landlords to identify the underlying causes of damp and mould - such as structural issues or inadequate ventilation - and to find long term solutions. The guidance also sets out how living in a home with damp and mould can significantly affect the physical and mental health of tenants, and outlines how people with certain health conditions, children and older adults are at greater risk of more severe health problems.

Where landlords fail to act, local authorities must hold them to account, including taking enforcement action where necessary. I am grateful for your feedback on the challenges you face in taking action to address damp and mould hazards in the private rented sector. We are considering this as we shape the Decent Homes Standard, which we intend to bring forward via legislation at the earliest opportunity that Parliamentary time allows.

Your returns showed a very significant variation in enforcement. There is inconsistent local monitoring and reporting of damp and mould hazards, and it is very concerning that some local authorities were unable to provide any estimates at all of damp and mould hazards in their areas. These are longstanding responsibilities of all local authorities. Enforcement action is too often informal and, where formal action is taken, this is not widespread enough. Just 13% of local authorities accounted for all the civil penalties issued in 2021-22 in relation to damp and mould hazards.

The current model of enforcement risks leaving tenants with insufficient assurance that their landlords are held to account for poor quality housing standards. The measures in the Renters (Reform) Bill will give tenants greater security in their homes and empower them to challenge poor quality conditions.

Local authorities have a crucial role to play in the success of our reforms, and your returns have shown that we still have work to do to deliver for tenants. I am therefore urging you to do everything you can to prioritise improving housing standards in your areas and to commit to providing your enforcement teams with the resources and tools they need to act now. To support you in this we will be making some additional money available to a selection of local authorities to be used for piloting measures to improve enforcement on damp and mould in PRS housing, whilst boosting the capability and capacity of enforcement teams in the areas of greatest need. This £10 million of funding is part of a combined DLUHC, DWP, and DHSC initiative. My officials will be in touch in due course regarding its allocation.

When my officials wrote to you on 25 November 2022 to clarify what was required in your initial and full responses, they asked you to set out a plan on how you will prioritise addressing the issues of damp and mould for private rented properties in your area. If you have not already done so, please publish these plans.

Your returns have helped us to develop our understanding of damp and mould in privately rented properties and it is vital that we continue to work to recognise the challenges in improving housing quality. To support this, I may in future request further data on damp and mould or other issues affecting private rented properties to help us continue our collective progress and updates on the enforcement action you are taking.

**With every good wish,**

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

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**  
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