

Mansfield District Council's initial response to the Request from the Secretary of State with regards to the Housing Standards in Rented Properties in England.

A full response to be provided by 27 January 2022.

Dampness and Mould Issues throughout the district.

In order to better understand the condition of private sector stock in the district, Mansfield commissioned the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to carry out a modelled stock condition survey for the private sector in 2020. At that time, the survey estimated there were approximately 8978 properties in the private rented sector. Of these properties 1952 (21.6%) were found to have at least one category 1 hazard present. The survey did not specifically identify the prevalence of dampness and mould growth throughout the district however; the council have taken a number of proactive approaches to addressing hazards, including dampness and mould growth as detailed below.

Proactive Approach to Dampness and Mould Growth

The council were successful with a bid to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy to fund a project which would target enforcement action towards privately rented properties being rented out with an EPC of F or G. 166 properties were identified and enforcement taken against landlords resulting in the majority of properties that were targeted EPC's being improved.

Successful bids have also been made for the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Schemes Phases 1A, 1B, 2 and Phase 3 providing grants to low income homeowners and private tenants for insulation measures including external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation and loft insulation. To date 135 properties in the private sector have received assistance with a combined spend of £1,350,000. The grants will continue to be offered to households on a low income until April 2023.

The council operates a private landlord forum in partnership with neighbouring districts, which is regularly attended by over 40 private landlords. Recent topics presented at forums to landlords include measures to reduce condensation dampness in properties and how Mansfield landlords can apply for Green Homes Grants.

Plan to prioritise addressing the issues of mould and damp for privately rented properties.

Enforcement of Dampness and Mould Growth cases issues

Mansfield District Council's Enforcement Policy states when the Council will take enforcement action after identifying Category 1 and Category 2 hazards.

Throughout the previous three years complaints regarding the condition of the private rented sector have been investigated by the Private Sector Housing team. When taking complaints of disrepair Mansfield do not routinely record the types of hazards that the complainant wishes to report or that the officer has identified whilst on inspections. There have been 486 complaints regarding disrepair that have been received over the previous 3 calendar years.

It is proposed that the 486 complaints records will be reviewed to determine whether dampness and mould was a particular issue and how the complaint was then resolved. This exercise is ongoing and detailed data, which will be included in the full response. We are looking to procure a case management system shortly and the ability to refine hazard data further will be prioritised.

The addresses where dampness and mould growth have been reported will be mapped so that area based initiatives can be introduced. These will include targeted proactive enforcement action, grant assistance and advice leaflets giving the occupants practical steps to prevent the prevalence of damp and mould in their homes, along with providing information on grants and measures their landlords should be taking to help ensure their home is free from dampness and mould growth.

Currently the Private Sector Housing team attend planned cost of living road shows throughout the winter period across priority areas in the district giving advice to not only private tenants but also partner organisations.

The service have also provided training and awareness raising sessions to our colleagues in Children's Services as part of a family homeless prevention pilot. These sessions included referral pathways for our partner agencies to refer any cases of disrepair, including dampness and mould growth, to the team in a timely manner.

Training

All staff involved with the enforcement of standards in the private rented sector have received competency training on the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Refresher training is arranged on an ongoing basis for officers on dampness and mould growth to ensure all staff are able to identify causes of dampness and remedial measures to reduce prevalence or remove the dampness completely. Refresher sessions are held with the council's social housing repair team also and include the use of damp reading equipment and awareness of hazard categorisation.

Further information to be provided by 27 January 2022

Many thanks

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. J.', is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp.

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