



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Telephone: Ely (01353) 665555

www.eastcambs.gov.uk

[REDACTED]

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities

This matter is being dealt with by:

Telephone: 01353 665555

My Ref:

Your ref

1st December 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Housing Standards in Rented Properties in England

In response to your communication dated 19th November 2022 East Cambridgeshire District Council recognises the requirement to prioritise the assessment and improvement of housing conditions for all occupiers but in particular in relation to private and social tenants. The Council acknowledges the direction to have particular regard to high scoring (band D and E) category 2 damp and mould hazards in the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) enforcement guidance and this will be communicated to officers responsible for the enforcement of these hazards.

In previous years we have seen an increase in enquiries about damp and mould in homes during the winter period and it is anticipated that this will increase more so this year, as tenants reduce their use of heating systems resulting from the increased cost of living and energy bills.

Information on how to make a complaint if tenants feel their landlord is not satisfactorily addressing repairs is available on the Housing Information for Landlords and Tenants page of our website <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/housing/private-housing-accreditation> where there is also a link to a condensation and mould information leaflet.

https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/housing/condensation_information_leaflet_english_version_19190.pdf Translated copies are also available. This information will be updated this winter to ensure it remains current and easily accessible for all.

All complaints about housing conditions, either in the private or the social sector, are responded to by officers qualified to undertake housing inspections using the HHSRS. Cases are triaged and practical advice given if relating to isolated areas of damp and mould.

When receiving a report of damp and mould we ask for photographs where possible, particularly if the extent of the damp and mould is widespread or within in a number of rooms. Officers regularly carry out inspections of properties where there is damp and mould, but the requirement for an inspection is judged on a case by case basis.

With respect to RSL properties if we receive reports that unsatisfactory progress is being made with respect to a tenant's direct complaint to their RSL about damp and mould, contact is made with the RSL to request details of actions taken or proposed. Failure of the RSL to satisfactorily respond to the Council results in an inspection being undertaken.

Depending on findings within any rented property officers will either agree practical measures that the tenant can take, with a review period agreed, or the private or social landlord will be advised of the remedial work required. The form of action taken is with regard to the HHSRS Enforcement Guidance and is supported by East Cambridgeshire's Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2022.

In 2021 a Housing Stock Modelling exercise was undertaken for this District, the results of which have informed the adoption of updates to our Housing Renewal Policy and the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy which, following consultation, were approved in November 2022. The Stock Modelling exercise has already helped to develop a focussed intervention approach to improve housing, an example being targeting the promotion of the government grant funding to improve the energy efficiency within homes, to an area of the District identified as having a higher prevalence of homes with poorer levels of energy efficiency.

The grant assistance is open to both qualifying owner occupiers and tenants. This is part of the successful Sustainable Warmth bid allocation funding from the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) made by the Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership consisting of all Cambridgeshire Councils and Cambs County Council. Using the Stock Model data approximately 800 homes in East Cambridgeshire were initially targeted with direct mailing, and a similar exercise is being run in 2 other villages within the District, that were identified as having a higher than average number of hard to heat homes. The grant scheme is however available throughout the District and is being publicised generally through our website and social media campaigns.

The interrogation of the Stock Model data will continue to assist in our understanding of the main risks of hazards within homes, thereby tackling potentially poorer housing in areas where it is more likely to occur and on a more risk-based approach.

Moving forward, as a result of the adoption of the updated Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and the potential for greater use of financial penalties, the LA will be reviewing its resource requirements in the next financial year, to further our proactive work in identifying and addressing poor quality housing.

I hope you find this initial response helpful. Additional data on damp and mould investigations within East Cambridgeshire will be provided prior to the 27th January 2023 deadline.