



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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11 September 2023

Dear Social Housing Providers,

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

As part of the Government's response to the Coroner's report into the tragic and avoidable death of Awaab Ishak, we committed to publishing consolidated guidance on the health outcomes of damp and mould in the home. I am pleased to inform you that this guidance was published on 7 September: *"Guidance on understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home - For social and private rented landlords and other providers of residential accommodation."*

This new guidance clearly sets out the legal responsibilities of social and private sector landlords to their tenants and the serious health risks that damp and mould pose.

The Government is clear that damp and mould should not be dismissed as 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 all 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 impacts.

The Coroner's report into Awaab's death described a catalogue of failures and a housing provider that abdicated its responsibilities to the family and failed to take appropriate steps to remedy the situation. This was completely unacceptable. This guidance sets out to landlords the existing laws around damp and mould and the penalties for not complying with them.

I have always been clear that it is the duty of landlords to meet the standards reasonably expected by their tenants, and I know that the vast majority do their best to provide decent homes. I would urge you all to read this guidance and adopt the best practices that it sets out.

This guidance forms part of our wider work on improving standards in the rented sectors. This includes commitments to:

- introduce 'Awaab's Law' to set out new requirements for landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould in social homes. Following a consultation, we will bring these into force as soon as Parliamentary time allows;

- provide new powers for the Housing Ombudsman and change the law so that social housing residents can complain directly to the Ombudsman;
- review the Decent Homes Standard and apply it to private rented homes;
- introduce new professionalisation standards that will require senior housing staff to hold, or work towards, recognised housing management qualifications; and
- introduce the new Private Rented Property Portal and give all private tenants access to an Ombudsman if their landlord fails to resolve legitimate complaints.

Everyone deserves a safe and decent home to live in. It is all our responsibilities to work together to improve standards in the rented sector so that tragedies like the death of Awaab Ishak never happen again.

Yours, ever

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

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP
Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations