



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Paul McLennan MSP,
Minister for Housing
By email only

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Email: localgov.committee@parliament.scot

23 June 2023

Dear Paul,

Damp and mould

Thank you very much for giving evidence to the Committee on damp and mould in the rented homes last month.

Housing to 2040 commits the Scottish Government, amongst other things, to ensuring that people have safe and good quality homes. To meet that ambition it is clear that further work is required in relation to the issue of damp and mould.

In reflecting on the evidence it took over the two sessions it held on this issue, there were a number of points that the Committee wishes to highlight and ensure that you take into account as you look at this issue.

In the first instance, the Committee reflects that it continues to be difficult to establish the extent of this problem in Scotland when data collection on this issue remains limited. We note that you highlighted the publication of the Scottish Household Survey in 2024 based on data collection from 2022. We hope that this might give a clearer indication of the extent of the problem and we look forward to considering it, but in the meantime we would invite you to consider how data collection, and its reporting, could be improved.

Fundamentally though, there needs to be more urgency in progressing the building of new homes to avoid people having to live in poor quality homes beset by damp and mould. The Committee will be pursuing this issue with you throughout the session.

In the meantime, some tenants continue to live in damp and mouldy homes. More must be done to ensure that where repairs are required in relation to damp and mould landlords undertake these repairs timeously, applying remedies that treat the

source of the problem rather than being simply cosmetic. We recognise the challenges of applying a blanket timescale for repairs that might encourage a culture of more cosmetic repairs, but at the same time tenants should not be left in a position of having to live with damp and mould for prolonged periods that will inevitably impact their health. We also welcome your consideration as to how we can ensure that landlords undertake more regular checks of their rental properties to ensure that cases of damp and mould can be identified, and treated, before the problem becomes more significant.

Homes must meet the requirements of the tolerable standard. We explored the legislative definition of the tolerable standard with you in the evidence session and in particular the absence of any specific reference to dampness caused by condensation and mould. We would again ask you to reflect on whether there would be any benefit in amending the definition to include reference to condensation and mould.

Ensuring that existing homes are maintained and new homes are built at affordable rent levels is an immense challenge for social landlords. As we have done before, we ask you to consider how social landlords can be better supported to deliver on these competing agendas.

The Committee was disappointed to hear that tenants are still frequently blamed for creating the damp and mould affecting their homes. The Committee encourages the Scottish Government to endeavour to change that cultural perception as it works closely with key stakeholders in the private and social housing sector on this issue.

A key driver of damp and mould last winter was the inability of tenants to heat their homes in the context of the cost crisis. The support provided to tenants through the fuel insecurity fund was vital and the Scottish Government's commitment to provide more funding next year is welcomed by the Committee. Nonetheless, the Committee invites the Scottish Government to consider other ways in which tenants can be supported to enable them to heat their homes.

More generally the Committee would welcome the Scottish Government's reflections on how private tenants' awareness and understanding of tribunal process could be improved, so as to improve access to it. Likewise, the Committee would welcome the Scottish Government's thoughts on compensation being made available to tenants where their homes have been subject to damp and mould.

We note the work of the Scottish Housing Regulator with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Chartered Institute of Housing and ALACHO on the identification and promotion of good practice in the management of mould and dampness. The Committee would welcome your reflections on how the Scottish Government can contribute to that process.

Finally, we ask that you keep the Committee updated on progress toward an all housing tenure standard, as set out in Housing to 2040.

The Committee expects to return to this issue at the very least on an annual basis and will be writing to you on a 6 monthly basis for updates.

I would be grateful of a response by **28 July**.

I look forward to your response and to continuing to work with you on this issue for the remainder of this session.

Yours sincerely,

Ariane Burgess

Convener, Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee