

From: The Minister

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Our ref: AQW 47335 /22-27
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Michelle McIlveen MLA
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont

Dear Michelle

AQW 47335/22-27 – INFORMATION TO BE PLACED IN THE ASSEMBLY LIBRARY

Due to the volume of information provided to answer AQW 47335/ 22-27, I have arranged for the detail attached at Annex A to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Yours Sincerely,



This issue is an operational matter for Northern Ireland Housing Executive, they have advised me as follows:

“(i) When the Housing Executive receives a complaint; including those about damp and mould; a formal 2-step complaints process is initiated. The details of the complaints process is detailed below:-

NIHE Complaints Process Summary

Stage One Complaint

- *The complainant is contacted to confirm receipt of their complaint submission and to agree issues of complaint.*
- *An acknowledgement is issued within 3 working days.*
- *The relevant investigation will be undertaken.*
- *A response is provided within 10 working days.*
- *If there is a delay in a response being issued, updates are provided accordingly.*
- *The response is approved by the Area Manager or a relevant Manager.*
- *If the customer is satisfied, the complaint is closed.*
- *If dissatisfied, the customer may escalate to Stage Two of the complaints process within 3 months of receiving the response. This signposting is detailed in their First Stage response.*

Stage Two Complaint

- *An acknowledgement is issued by the Customer Excellence Team and allocated to a Complaints Officer.*

- *The Complaints Officer will confirm receipt of the complaint and introduce themselves as a point of contact.*
- *The Complaints Officer will schedule a case conference with the relevant Central Policy Team.*
- *Issues of complaint will be agreed and an acknowledgement letter confirming these will be issued within 3 working days.*
- *Investigations with the relevant policy team will commence; this may include an onsite inspection.*
- *A full response is provided within 20 working days.*
- *If there is a delay, updates are provided.*
- *The response is approved by the Chief Executive or the relevant Director.*
- *This is the final stage within the organisation's complaints process.*

If the customer remains dissatisfied, they will be advised how to contact the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The Housing Executive has published a leaflet for customers available on the Housing Executive website. The [How to make a complaint](#) leaflet outlines how to make a complaint and explains the process.

(ii) The Housing Executive's complaints process aligns with the general expectations outlined in guidance associated with Awaab's Law in England. Tenants are encouraged to use their landlord's formal complaints procedure as the primary route to resolution.

Government guidance for tenants in England states that landlords should clearly set out:

- *How a complaint can be made;*
- *The steps involved in the process; and*

- *Where tenants can access support, including mediation or dispute resolution.*

Tenants who remain dissatisfied after completing their landlord's complaints process may refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman."

Regulation of Registered Housing Associations

In January 2024, my Department issued formal damp and mould guidance to all social housing providers, setting out clear expectations on preventing, identifying, assessing, and resolving damp and mould. This includes the expectation that RHAs should engage with tenants to raise awareness of damp and mould issues, to highlight the health risks, explain how to identify issues and encourage them to report concerns as soon as possible. RHAs should ensure tenants know how to report damp and mould problems, what steps the Association will take, when it will be completed and how to complain if they are not satisfied with the response. RHAs should ensure tenants are provided with information and advice on damp and mould issues via multiple means of communication (e.g. social media, leaflets, face to face, etc.) with guidance provided in accessible formats (e.g. easy-read, braille) and in alternative languages, wherever possible. In addition, tenants should be involved in the review of any literature on damp and mould prior to publication.

My Department does not hold information on the steps taken by individual Registered Housing Associations (RHAs) in how they respond to complaints specifically related to damp and mould. In line with the guidance referred to above, RHAs are expected to robustly manage all cases of damp and mould and have appropriate complaints policies and

procedures in place which are made available to tenants. This should align with the general expectations outlined in guidance associated with Awaab's Law in England.

My Department undertakes annual surveys to ensure that the RHAs are dealing appropriately with any reported cases of damp and mould. The latest survey results, covering the 2024/25 reporting year, indicate that RHA Boards are provided with adequate assurance that the RHAs are managing this area of work effectively.