

POVERTY & COST OF LIVING  
CRISES – PUBLIC HEALTH  
EMERGENCY

WHERE PUBLIC HEALTH MEETS PUBLIC LAW

# HOUSING

UK HOUSING STOCK

DAMP/MOULD/LEAKS

RENT 'CAPS' /RENT RISES/ REIT INVESTMENT /HOUSING BENEFIT

RECENT CORONERS' INQUESTS - CONCLUSIONS

INVESTMENT + COMMITMENT REQUIRED

# FUEL POVERTY

Interacts with :

COLD/DAMP HOUSING

MENTAL HEALTH/ ANXIETY/ DAILY LIVING CONDITIONS

VENTILATION – DIFFICULT TO COMPLY WITH VENTILATION REQUIREMENTS  
IN POORLY DESIGNED ACCOMMODATION with HIGH FUEL COSTS

LONG TERM SOLUTIONS – REQUIRES INVESTMENT  
INNOVATION + COMMITMENT/ PREVENTATIVE ENGINEERING +  
MANAGEMENT

# UK housing stock - Mould /damp/leaks

‘Mouldy homes – a ‘national disgrace’

FOI - 5,838 complaints made to  
Housing Ombudsman about  
leaks /mould/damp

3915 - about HA

1861 - sites provided by or on behalf of  
local councils

Nearly 3 million homes in UK estimated  
to have damp / mould /leaks - problems

Including HA /Social housing /private  
rental / military accommodation / privately  
owned

- UK - Oldest housing stock in Europe
- one of the oldest housing stocks in the world
- In February 2023 interim chief of Rochdale Borough Housing said nearly 15% of their homes had ‘problems with damp’ - 1800/12500 properties
- Legal Position : mix of landlord & tenant duties – ‘covenants’ – contractual undertakings by tenants in tenancy agreements – include responsibility to properly ventilate & maintain minimum heating but if that is being done and damp & mould are present then that issue is structural and the responsibility of the landlord - as LL have legal duty to ensure property is fit for human habitation – tenants have the legal right to take legal action for damage to health and belongings ...but private tenants can be evicted for ‘no fault’ under (E&W) shorthold tenancy regime so care must be taken when any public adviser refers to mould /damp issue /topic so that the public are not misled as to their legal rights in the ‘real world’
- Proper funding required to go to local authorities so they can meet their statutory duties.....
- Edicts are being issued by current government ministers without the extra funding required to make measures like fixing mould & damp within strict time limits
- Local authorities then seek to raise council rents – raising expectations from tenants legitimately asking for a higher quality service
- Government allowing councils to increase rents by almost twice as much as usual because inflation at 40 year high and interest rates are affecting loans taken out by councils to finance estate regenerations schemes

# Housing + building retrofitting

to address mould /damp with its pernicious effects on health and mental health

(echoing the words of the **CMO** (with Ofwat and Environmental Agency as applied to sewage in waterways):

‘ serious public health risk’

‘Increasing rather than decreasing problem’

‘Requires **investment** / preventative engineering/better [building] management/innovation **and commitment**’

# 'Retrofitting' – be careful what you wish for ...

- New Zealand – AKL & WGN cities built nestling into 'native bush'
- 'Leaky building' syndrome/ 'Toxic Building' syndrome – luxury flat / property developments – 'modern cladding' trapped mould/fungal spores between cladding and building – said mould & spores immediately spread & quickly 'colonised' the crevices/cuffs/edges of buildings and exposed any occupants to breathing in 'toxic mould'
- Engineering has to be suitable for building and environment and be well planned – that is expensive / requires investment + commitment
- Tenants should not have hopes raised that solutions exist that can be quickly implemented