

Briefing Note

Title: CAT1 Hazards in Private Rented Housing

Date: 13th September 2021

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**Intended
Audience:**

Internal ☐

Partner organisation ☐

Public ☒

Confidential ☐

Purpose

To provide comment on the 'BRE Client Report – BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for City of Wolverhampton Council October 2017', assertion that 21% of private rented properties have a cat 1 hazard.

To provide information as to how Private Sector Housing regulate the private rented sector.

BRE Report Findings

In 2016 the City Council commissioned the Building Research Establishment to undertake a series of desktop modelling exercises on the housing within the City of Wolverhampton. This modelling was based on a variety of data sources including Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings, and the English Housing Survey 2012. This data is nearly 10 years out of date.

An aim of the report was to highlight CAT1 hazards in the City, which is likely to have resulted in the way the data was reported.

Using EPC statistical information meant that the CAT1 hazards mostly related to excess cold in private rented accommodation, trip hazards were also included. How trip hazards can be guessed without visiting a property is an unanswered question.

Private rented properties in Wolverhampton compare favourably when pitched against other regional properties however this is not the case nationally.

Nobody knows the number of CAT 1 hazards in the City. To find this information would require an inspection of every property in the City by a qualified officer, this is not feasible for many reasons including, resources, costs, access to homes, time etc.

Large Scale Surveying of Housing within Wolverhampton.

The only way to get accurate and up to date information about the prevalence of HHSRS Cat 1 hazards in the housing in Wolverhampton is to undertake physical surveys of a suitable sample of those houses. This is not possible as we do not have the legal powers or the resources to do so. Most of the work that the Private Sector Housing Service undertakes is in response to complaints,

where the tenant provides access. The Service does proactively inspect approximately 50 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) each year in relation to their licensing.

City of Wolverhampton Private Sector Housing Complaint Statistics

Historically the case management system that was used by the Private Sector Housing Service had been configured poorly making it difficult to produce meaningful statistics. Previously reported statistical information cannot be replicated and therefore there is no confidence in any data prior to April 2021.

Prior to April 2021 incoming complaints were categorised, A = priority response and B = none priority. This does not equate directly to HHSRS Cat 1 hazards, the priorities will include other matters. The last three years statistics are provided below together with this year 'so far':

Year	A Priority	B Priority	Total	% CAT A
2018 – 2019	218	214	432	50
2019 – 2020	201	312	513	40
2020 – 2021	126	208	334	37
	CAT 1	OTHER		%CAT 1
April 2021 – to date	25	133	158	16

The above table correctly depicts the number of HHSRS Cat 1 hazard complaints received. The percentage is 16% of complaints received being CAT1 rather than the erroneous 37%-50% shown by previous three years data.

It is reasonable to assume that in 2021 - 2022 that the Private Sector Housing Service will be expected to receive circa 60 HHSRS Cat 1 hazard complaints from the 19,443 private rented houses in Wolverhampton.

Does this mean there are very few housing problems in Wolverhampton?

Absolutely not. Private Sector Housing are a reactive service, only responding to complaints that are received. There are rogue landlords who use underhand tactics to stop tenant complaining. There are tenants who do not necessarily know how to complain, especially those new to the country and where English is not their first language.

All houses will have elements that need repair or improvement from time to time, some of which would create a HHSRS Cat 1 hazard. The real issue for Private Sector Housing is where those repairs or improvements are not carried out in an appropriate time scale or at all, these are the matters that the Private Sector Housing Service receive complaints about.

Private Sector Housing

The introduction of effective strategic planning and operational management has created a strong foundation to move forwards. The team has a mix of committed, experienced housing officers and newer staff that have the potential to develop with the service.

The initial focus is on ensuring that 'business as usual' is delivered robustly, expediently and efficiently, this will provide reassurance that the service is delivering its core objectives of addressing poor housing and the poor treatment of tenants.

Private Sector Housing is now delivering a good service, it is in a process of constant improvement in the goal to become an excellent delivering service. The ongoing improvements will allow the City Council to make significant improvements to the private rented housing stock and the lives of the tenants occupying the properties in Wolverhampton.