

Written evidence submitted by Krystelle Grimmond [RSH 115]

Disrepair and request for inspection by Croydon Council's Environmental Health Team

I first contacted my local council on the Saturday 10th October 2020 via phone because I had a major leak in my flat that day. I tried to contact my housing association to send out emergency help but was hung up on by the operator. I then contacted my local council for emergency assistance because water was cascading down into the flat and into the electricals. I was told by the customer service assistant that because I am a Housing Association tenant that no one will come out and I should continue contacting my housing association until I am able to get in-touch with someone. This situation was very frightening for myself and my family because the water was at that time pouring into the electrics, causing sparks and outages. I then contacted my local fire service who visited and turned the electrics off for safety. I then retried my housing association and the fire person then spoke to the customer assistant and told them to send someone to the property and explained about the leak. Someone then visited that evening and try to restore the electricity in some parts of the home and shut off other parts. I am still currently living with only parts of my home with electricity and other parts not.

My first attempt to contact the Croydon Environmental Team was the following Monday after the leak. I contacted my HA because water was still pouring into the property, and I needed it to stop ASAP because of the damage it was causing. My HA told me that no one will come out until the 28th of October 2020 which would be about 2 1/2 weeks, which I felt would be too long. I contacted the Croydon Occupational Health Team who I was in contact with due to my mental health and disability. He advised me to contact the Croydon Environmental Team and request an urgent visit and gave me the number to call. I contacted them and was told that because I am housing association tenant the Croydon Environmental Team is not allowed to intervene. They told me that they can deal with private landlords and not social housing.

I relayed the response back the OH manager. He then told me to call back and ask to speak to a manager. I did so and was refused saying once again I am not a Council tenant or a private landlord tenant so they cannot intervene or inspect.

The OH manager then sent an email to Hyde's CEO and to manager at Croydon Council housing team on 19th Oct 2020.

I was then supported by the Croydon Social Service team due to my poor mental health and the effects the leak was causing me. They also tried to contact Croydon Environmental Team on 30th October 2020 but was told at the time that due to COVID there were no home visits.

On the 4th November the Social Service support worker escalated the matter to the Croydon Environmental Team manager. She then received a reply from an environmental officer who also copied me into the email explaining that we need to make a formal complaint to Housing Association; also due to lockdowns there is no home visits and that they will contact Hyde about works, but at that moment they were unable to take enforcement

actions. I then submitted a formal complaint to Hyde. I also contacted other organisations that I mentioned in the meeting such as the ombudsman, and the Housing Regulatory Service.

In February 2021 after the Social Service Team once again contacting Environmental health, a surveyor finally visited the property. He was very rushed and then came back and said that the reason for the mould and damp was due to condensation, overcrowding and poor ventilation. I and my sister tried to explain to him about the situation of the leak, but he was not listening, he then returned to the office and told the social service team this and Hyde about his report. This was untrue the mould and damp were caused by the leak and not due to condensation.

The support worker from the Social service team then contacted Hyde and requested a surveyor visit. This happened in June 2021. He done a detailed report of the property and identified that the levels of mould and damp was caused by leaks, blocked drains, rising damp, lack of maintenance to the outside of the property along with other things.

The support worker notified the Environmental Officer who visited about this. He then became upset and angry. He contacted me directly to say that I wasn't being honest, and I should send him a copy of the report. I did so. He once again was being rude and dismissive.

I have not been back in contact with the Environmental team after how I was spoken to and treated.

My neighbours have also contacted the Environmental team for help with their matters of disrepair but was refused. Just recently a friend of mine who is a private tenant was refused by the Croydon environmental team for inspection and intervention with her landlord and disrepair.

This is a vicious cycle of stress and neglect that tenants constantly go through just to live in safe homes. It is unfair.

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