**Template letter – effect of housing conditions on respiratory health**

The following text is suggested as an aid when writing to a patient’s local authority, landlord or housing association regarding housing conditions which are affecting a patient’s respiratory health.

It is strongly suggested that specific information about the patient’s symptoms and situation be added. Paragraphs can be removed if desired.

I am writing to you to inform you of this child’s asthma and request that you take the appropriate action as a matter of urgency to see that this child is placed in housing that poses no further risk to their health.

Asthma is the most common long-term medical condition in children in the UK, with around 1 in 11 children and young people living with asthma. The UK has one of the highest prevalence, emergency admission and death rates for childhood asthma in Europe. Outcomes are worse for children and young people living in the most deprived areas. The NHS spends around £1 billion a year treating and caring for people with asthma.

The health impact of the air within our homes and schools needs to be taken seriously as a significant source of ill health. Social deprivation and poor housing quality are strongly associated with asthma morbidity. Persistent exposure to mould and damp have been shown to increase the likelihood of an asthma attack.

The tragic death of Awaab Ishak in 2020, eight days after his second birthday, has been recorded by the senior coroner, Joanne Kearsley, as a direct result of black mould in the flat he lived in. Kearsley has published a section 28 coroner’s report for the prevention of future deaths which has gone to government ministers.

Outside air pollution is also a contributory factor in exacerbating the symptoms of asthma. A recent landmark case ruled that traffic-derived air pollution not only contributes to incident asthma but also triggers fatal asthma attacks. The highest traffic-related air pollution is within 150 metres of a main road, so children and young people (CYP) with asthma should be placed in houses more than 150 metres away from main roads.

As a housing association or landlord, you have a legal duty of care under the Housing Act 2004, to ensure that the housing you provide is safe and free from hazards that pose a threat to the health of your tenants.

I would like also like to draw your attention to the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 [https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/34/enacted](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.legislation.gov.uk%2Fukpga%2F2018%2F34%2Fenacted&data=05%7C01%7Cisabel.kerrison%40nhs.net%7Cab71620de8c845f573f208dad20b1db4%7C37c354b285b047f5b22207b48d774ee3%7C0%7C0%7C638053242420428183%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=nA0UcpO%2BZNuc352Fx%2F23Bd1uI6Sjpu%2B%2FxQKlav2S8w4%3D&reserved=0)

The Act applies to the social and private rented sectors and makes it clear that landlords must ensure that their property, including any common parts of the building, is fit for human habitation at the beginning of the tenancy and throughout.

To achieve that, landlords are obliged to ensure that their property is free of hazards which are so serious that the dwelling is not reasonably suitable for occupation in that condition. We hope that you will take this responsibility seriously, as many landlords do. We petition to ask you to place the health of this child at the forefront of your decision making and place them in housing that is:

• Free from mould and damp

• Of a sufficient distance from busy roads with heavy traffic (at least 150 metres)

Your urgent action into this matter is greatly appreciated.