Dear Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/381)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 5 August 2021, reference K/21/381. Please accept our sincere apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

Your request read:

“Please could you answer the questions for the academic year of 2020/21.

1) How many complaints/reports from undergraduates regarding issues with their university accommodation (for example, but not limited to: halls, university owned accommodation) did your residential services or student living team receive over the requested period? Issues include but are not limited to: asbestos, mould, vermin/pests, broken heating systems, biocides, lead, carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products.

Please can you break down the response to Q1 into the date the issue was reported/complained about, the type of issue - as exampled above - that was reported/complained about and the date the issue was resolved (for example, if vermin was reported, what day did pest control contractors visit the accommodation to get rid of the pests).

2) How much money did your university pay in compensation which related to the accommodation complaints identified in Q1. How many of the accommodation complaints identified in Q1 were upheld?

3) If there is time under the act, please can you send me all the correspondence (likely, but not limited to, email from the student) - with all personal or potentially identifiable information redacted - sent to the residential services/accommodation manager complaining about the accommodation over the requested period. Can you limit this to complaints which resulted in compensation being paid out/awarded to the student.”

The University of Leeds holds this information.

**How many complaints/reports from undergraduates regarding issues with their university accommodation**

Please find the information we hold in respect of question one set out in the table below. Please note that the dates relate to when the issue was reported to the Residences office, and the date the matter was marked as resolved. This is not
necessarily the same as the date action was taken. For example, a leak may have been reported on the first of the month, a repair made the same day, but the matter not marked as resolved until one week later. This may have been in order to check that the repair held, or simply because it is not always possible to update the report immediately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Date of report</th>
<th>Date resolved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mould, pests</td>
<td>5 October 2020</td>
<td>9 October 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window leak, pests</td>
<td>23 October 2020</td>
<td>29 October 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condensation/mould</td>
<td>11 December 2020</td>
<td>17 December 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leak/burst pipe</td>
<td>5 February 2021</td>
<td>11 February 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room too warm</td>
<td>21 October 2020</td>
<td>19 January 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood resulting in damp smell</td>
<td>15 March 2021</td>
<td>23 March 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaking window leading to damp/smell</td>
<td>16 March 2021</td>
<td>18 March 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken (intermittent) boiler</td>
<td>26 April 2021</td>
<td>10 May 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mould and damp</td>
<td>10 May 2021</td>
<td>17 May 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pests</td>
<td>19 May 2021</td>
<td>25 May 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No running water</td>
<td>30 June 2021</td>
<td>2 July 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much money did your university pay in compensation which related to the accommodation complaints identified in Q1.
A total of £2,229.88 in compensatory payments was made in relation to the complaints identified above.

How many of the accommodation complaints identified in Q1 were upheld?
All of the complaints were investigated, with remedial action taken.

If there is time under the act, please can you send me all the correspondence (likely, but not limited to, email from the student) - with all personal or potentially identifiable information redacted- sent to the residential services/accommodation manager complaining about the accommodation over the requested period. Can you limit this to complaints which resulted in compensation being paid out/awarded to the student.
Please find below summaries of the correspondence received from students who made complaints, and later received compensatory payments. We are withholding full copies of correspondence under section 40(2) of the FOI Act. Section 40(2) sets out that information is exempt from disclosure if it is the personal data of someone other than the person making the request, and disclosure would: contravene the data protection principles; contravene an objection to processing; or if the data is exempt from the right of subject access. We consider that to provide copies of correspondence, even with redactions, would make it possible to identify students. Writing style is very individual, and when combined with the detailed explanations of the issue(s) being raised, we consider it very likely that students would be able to identify their own correspondence, and that their family and friends would similarly
be able to identify them. We are therefore satisfied that it is appropriate to provide summaries only.

**Leak/burst pipe**
A small amount of water on the bathroom floor was reported to maintenance and reception, who advised to put a towel on the floor. Rang several more times as the leak was getting worse and spreading to the carpet. Was told someone would come out to fix, but they didn’t. A plumber eventually arrived to fix the leak which was caused by a blocked pipe. Dehumidifier requested as the room smelt of damp and eventually supplied. Had to purchase carpet cleaning supplies as none were provided.

**Broken (intermittent) boiler**
There was no reliable access to hot water due to a broken boiler, affecting heating, taps and showers. Told to use showers in another building, and provided with electric radiators. This had happened before for a month between November and December 2020. Residential Services did make several attempts to fix the boiler and to bring in contractors, but the issue has been disruptive and we do not think that the rent we are paying has been reflective of our experience in the flat, and we’re paying for en-suite accommodation which we haven’t had access to. We are requesting a partial refund.

**Condensation/mould**
Damp began behind wardrobe and around window, and next to my desk. I tried wiping it off, but noticed that old damp seemed to have been painted over, which is a serious health risk. My room was cold and the floor was soaking wet. I had to throw away clothes and shoes which were damaged by the damp. There were mushrooms growing on the floor. I reported via the accommodation portal and someone did come out, but I was informed there was nowhere else I could stay. I was told to open windows and have a fan on, even though it was already cold. Eventually a vent was put in which seems to have helped, but I have recently noticed another damp patch around the window. The bathroom also has recurring damp on the ceiling. I have moved out but have been told to pay full rent for the time I was there plus an early leaving fee, but I think I should be compensated and reimbursed rather than being asked to pay more.

**Room too warm**
This complaint was primarily made verbally (in person on site). The correspondence we hold sets out arrangements for an air conditioning unit to be delivered to the room, and the negotiation of a compensatory payment (the value of which we are withholding under section 40(2) as it would allow the student to be identified), which was credited to the student’s accommodation account.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:
Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University’s response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Sincerely

Chloe Wilkins
Freedom of Information Officer
University of Leeds