Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Guidance to Housing residents on the control of legionella bacteria in domestic water systems

Domestic hot and cold water systems can provide an environment where legionella bacteria may grow. This can cause ‘Legionnaires’ Disease’ - a potentially serious form of pneumonia, together with other less severe health conditions. These are all caused by inhalation of very small droplets (aerosol) of contaminated water containing legionella bacteria. With a few simple controls however, the risk of ill health is extremely low.

This advice sheet gives some simple tips for residents to follow to assist the control of legionella bacteria.

Most importantly, make sure that:
• Hot water in the system remains hot
• Cold water is kept cold
• The water is kept circulated

In particular, it is important that you:
• Do not interfere with the settings on your boiler or hot water system. The hot water should be set so that the water is heated up to 60°C.

Tell us on 0300 555 8283 or at www.dudley.gov.uk/housing (click on report a repair) if:
• The cold water is still running warm after you have initially run off any water which may have accumulated in the pipes. It should not be above 20oC.
• There are any problems, debris or discolouration in the water.
• The boiler or hot water tank is not working properly, particularly if the water is not coming out of the taps at a sufficiently high temperature. It should come out at a temperature of 50°C after it has run for a minute at the latest.

If you have a shower in your property:
• If it is used only occasionally then flush it through by running it for at least two minutes every week. Keep out of the way whilst this is being done as far as possible.
• Clean the shower head periodically, de-scale and disinfect it. This should be done at least once every six months.

Where a property is left vacant for any time, e.g. over the summer holidays, make sure that when it is occupied again both hot and cold water systems are flushed thorough by running all outlets for at least two minutes.

It is ultimately Dudley Council’s responsibility as your landlord to ensure precautions are in place to effectively control the risks from legionella bacteria in water systems, however, residents also have an important part to play in controlling risk by taking the simple precautions outlined above.