

# Enfield INDEPENDENT

## **Haringey mum suffers ceiling collapse and bed bugs**

By Simon Allin

A mum has criticised Haringey Council's housing arm after part of her ceiling nearly fell on her and she suffered a bed bug infestation that left her needing therapy.

Robyn McDermott, who lives in Wordsworth Parade, Harringay, said she "almost had a mental breakdown" after waking up with bug bites and seeing one of the insects crawling on her baby.

The mother of two said she had been plagued by the bugs for a year and suffers "really bad allergic reactions" to their bites.

But she claimed the council's housing arm, Homes for Haringey, only agreed to move her family out so it could tackle the problem after she sent pictures of "massive hives" on her skin.

Ms McDermott, who teaches at a school in Enfield, said: "It has caused me really bad anxiety. I have been pushed to taking therapy. I don't feel comfortable in my own home."

She said she had reported mushrooms growing on the ceiling to the council in August – but although her email was acknowledged, no action was taken.

A week later, Ms McDermott said she went to the bathroom in the middle of the night with her two-month-old baby and the ceiling "caved in".

"A massive chunk of the ceiling almost fell on us," she said. "It took them until October to complete that job. They left us in the flat, and I could hear my upstairs neighbour."

Ms McDermott said the problems with the bed bugs had been going on for a year and affected her during her pregnancy. She tried to get rid of the bugs twice, but they came back after a few weeks.

She said the council eventually moved her family into a hotel for a week while it tried to deal with the infestation, but the bugs soon returned.

“The problem went away for a few weeks, and then it would come back,” she said. “It is affecting the whole block. The council were refusing for months to treat the whole block – they only treated a few flats. That’s why the issue is still continuing.”

Ms McDermott said she had been “reduced to tears” by the infestation and found it “extremely embarrassing”, meaning she had not wanted to invite friends or family to her flat when the coronavirus lockdown rules were less strict.

She hopes the council will move her family to more suitable accommodation.

Homes for Haringey said that plans were made to fix the ceiling when the problem was reported.

After it collapsed, it was treated as an emergency and work was carried out to make the ceiling safe.

The housing arm added that there were some delays to replacing the ceiling and decorations while it waited for a round of insecticide treatment to clear the bed bugs to take place.

Homes for Haringey said its initial treatment of the bugs appeared successful. When they reappeared, it carried out follow-up treatments to Ms McDermott’s home and additional flats.

Cllr Emine Ibrahim, Haringey Council’s cabinet member for housing and estate renewal, said: “Homes for Haringey have been working with Ms McDermott and her neighbours to solve these matters and understand it has been a really difficult time.

"We are sorry for the distress this has caused her.

“As soon as the ceiling became an emergency, Homes for Haringey acted immediately to ensure everything was safe.

"The bed bug infestation was wider than Homes for Haringey anticipated, and we are aware that residents are concerned about contractors being in their home at this time, which also affected the speed that works could be carried out.

“We understand that Ms McDermott wants to move, but there is a national housing crisis and there are thousands on the waiting list for a new property.

"Homes for Haringey will continue to work with Ms McDermott to resolve her issues as quickly as possible.”