

Report for: **Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel**

Date: 27 June 2023

Title: **Update on Damp and Mould**

Report

Authorised by: **David Joyce, Director of Housing, Regeneration and Planning**

Lead Officer:

Ward(s) affected: **All**

Report for Key/

Non-Key Decision: **Non-key**

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

This report gives an update on damp and mould following the Ombudsman's intervention at the end of 2022.

**2. Recommendations**

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny is recommended to note this report.

**3. Context**

**Regulatory**

i. **Housing Ombudsman [Spotlight on Damp and Mould](#) (Oct 2021)**

This report heavily criticised the way several social housing landlords have failed to listen to and effectively act upon reports from their tenants and leaseholders about incidents of damp and mould in their homes. The Ombudsman's report asks that social housing providers must adopt a zero-tolerance approach to tackling damp and mould. Landlords should also not use the 'lifestyle' of residents as a reason to dismiss reports of dampness and becoming more proactive in their approach when dealing with tenants' complaints about damp.

ii. **[Social Housing Regulation Bill](#)**

The Bill seeks to ensure all social housing residents are given a greater voice in how their homes are managed and that their complaints are listened to and dealt with effectively.

iii. **[The Coroner's Report for Awaab Ishak](#)**

In November 2022, following the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak, the coroner's report was published, which found that he died from a respiratory condition caused by long term exposure to mould in his social housing Rochdale home. Following this, social landlords were requested to self-assess against the 26 recommendations made in the Ombudsman's 'Spotlight' report, which includes having a dedicated damp and mould policy in place.

iv **[Council's response](#)**

In response to the above, Haringey Council established a cross council working group in November 2022 to ensure we had a more joined up approach to addressing damp and mould risks, with senior management representation from Housing, Customer Services and Corporate Feedback, Childrens, Adults, Environment, and our Corporate Support Services. This group has

been working to ensure we comply with our legal responsibilities, meet the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations in 'The Spotlight on Damp and Mould' report and respond to the Regulator of Social Housing's requests for information in November 2022 and in February 2023.

A specific update from the Councils private sector team has been included as part of this report as appendix 3.

#### 4. Data and assessment of damp and mould

##### I. Analysis of data

In response to the Regulator of Social Housing's request for information in November 2022, we initially analysed the following datasets to create a predictive data model of the most at-risk properties:

- Stock condition surveys where HHSRS damp and mould hazards had been identified.
- Reported repairs data over the last two years for properties where the job included damp and mould issues; properties where mould wash has been undertaken; properties where a repair for leaks, roofing and plumbing jobs had been reported.
- All open and closed disrepair cases, Ombudsman cases, Elected Members enquiries and complaints relating to damp and mould in assessing properties in the past year.
- Data on properties identified as having structural defects which could increase the chances of damp and mould.
- Properties where the EPC rating is below Band C as damp and mould is more likely to be prevalent in less energy efficient stock.
- Resident information including vulnerability flags relating to age and disability, family make up and potential overcrowding.

We took this worse-case scenario and risk-based approach to assessing damp and mould prevalence as we wanted to ensure we minimised the possibility of missing any cases that had not been reported recently.

##### ii Update on levels of category 1 cases of damp and mould (severe)

Our initial data analysis returned a figure of 64 possible damp and mould category 1 cases which would represent a high prevalence of category 1 cases of damp and mould in our housing stock. We began a programme of urgent visits to the properties identified by our predictive model, to carry out inspections, arrange urgent remedial works and take any other steps needed to ensure the safety of residents in these properties.

We have now visited and assessed 63 of the 64 properties identified as potential category 1 cases and can now confirm that only 10 of these were confirmed as category 1 cases by an HHSRS qualified surveyor, and these are all being actively managed with remedial works in progress. For the 1 property from the original 64 that we haven't been able to visit there are specific access issues that we are working to address.

We have also identified 6 additional category 1 cases that weren't included in our original submission, and we are actively managing these through the provision of remedial works.

##### II. Process of assessment

The HHSRS is a check of hazards someone's home that could affect their health. The assessment is carried out by a qualified Council officer. The council is obligated to act if serious problems are found.

This could include:

- informal negotiation with the landlord to improve the property.
- formal enforcement action against the landlord.

Damp and mould fall under the remit of HRS assessment. There are several routes into the Council to report damp and mould.

Once a report is made, it will be reviewed, and the tenant responded to within 5 working days. As per the damp and mould policy the below process will be adhered to:

**Category 1 (serious) hazards: -**

- In the most severe cases, a works order will be raised, and an emergency inspection will be carried out by a surveyor within one working day.
- We will aim to remove the immediate risk, where appropriate, through a damp a mould wash. This will ensure that the home does not pose a threat to the health of the household. Where the risk cannot be removed immediately because of the extent of the works required we will move residents out of their home immediately under our temporary moves policy if the location of the mould in their home poses a risk to their health. Household members' vulnerabilities will also be considered, for example if the household contains children or people with conditions making them particularly susceptible to illness following exposure to any mould.
- In all other cases, a works order will be raised, and an operative/surveyor will attend within five working days.
- Complete the works to property within 3 months (unless there is an exceptional reason why this cannot be achieved).
- An operative/surveyor will complete an inspection 3 months after works have been completed to ensure there are no further issues.

**Category 2 (moderate) hazards: -**

- All referrals relating to damp and mould will be reviewed and the tenant responded to within five working days.
- A works order will be raised, and an operative/surveyor will attend within five working days.
- The surveyor that has visited the property will agree an action plan with the resident including agreeing a schedule of works.
- Where it is appropriate, mould washes will be undertaken and dehumidifiers will be provided and advice given to the resident on how to reduce issues with damp and mould, while the cause of the damp is identified and rectified.
- Repairs will be undertaken within the target time scale as set out in our published repairs standards.
- We will keep these cases under review, and we will ask residents or their advocates to let us know if the damp and mould returns or gets worse.
- In the meantime, advice will be provided on how to reduce damp and mould.
- In circumstances where a serious Cat 2 hazard is identified and this is causing adverse effects to residents who are vulnerable for age and health related conditions, the Operational Director, Housing Service and Building Safety may decide or delegate this decision for a temporary decant to be offered.

**III. Challenges with the data**

There have been several challenges when collating and updating the data on damp and mould cases. HRS are currently using a spreadsheet format to record data and there is a requirement to acquire and implement a case management system that can help manage and monitor cases. The spreadsheet currently in use to record data is accessed by several people and the data is prone to corruption. A case management system would enable easier case management and cleaner data.

## 5. Ombudsman

- I. The Housing Ombudsman have been carrying out an investigation into our handling of damp and mould ombudsman cases and have requested two lots of documentation to assess our approach to damp and mould.
- ii. A key document we provided to them was our action plan tracking progress against the implementation of the 26 Ombudsman recommendations and this is included at Appendix A.
- iii. We are due to hear back from the Ombudsman on their draft report in June 23 and the report will include a further set of recommendations on how we can improve our approach to damp and mould.

## 6. Challenges

### I. Fuel Poverty

Rising energy/fuel costs, low incomes and energy inefficient homes are restricting peoples choices on how they spend their money. Some families are forced to choose between heating and eating.

Within Haringey 12.6% of Haringey households (approx. 13,000) live in Fuel Poverty, the 4th highest percentage in London and substantially above the London average (10.1%). Fuel poverty is concentrated in the centre of the borough, a disproportionate number will be social housing tenants. (Information from State of the Borough 2018)

When tenants do not heat their homes, this can contribute the perfect conditions for damp and mould.

### II. Overcrowding

When a property is overcrowded it has a major impact on creating conditions for damp and mould due to more people in a smaller space will create humidity and this in increases the likelihood of condensation.

### III. Previous asset management - Window replacement

Double glazing is an energy efficient way of regulating temperature in the home. Often ventilation is installed with double glazing as the windows can be 'too' efficient at keeping cold air out and hot air in. If that ventilation is not used correctly or is insufficient for the space this can create damp and mould within the property. In addition around 30% of Haringey social housing stock meets decent homes standards and as part of this cohort we have several homes that retain single pane glass windows – this is a another driver that creates condensation leading to damp and mould.

## 7. Policy and Process Changes

### I. Damp & Mould Policy

The Policy was approved by Cabinet in April 2023. The policy sets out both a response to government, and a guarantee to our residents. The policy covers Council responsibilities to tenants and leaseholders living in council homes and to residents living in temporary accommodation within our own stock and leased accommodation. The Council's responsibilities to private sector residents in Haringey is outside the scope of this policy. The policy can be found on the Council's Cabinet webpages here (page 321): [Damp and Mould Policy](#).

## II. Decant Policy

Decants will be offered to all households who live in a property assessed at Category 1 on HHRS. The policy sets out the offer and support Haringey Council will offer to secure tenants who are required to temporarily move out of their home to undertake planned essential repairs or improvements. Key points include:

- **All** decisions (> 2 weeks) now referred to Decants Panel
- Panel will also monitor **all** Decants & review as needed
- Tenants continue to pay rent & payment plans for perm address. Temporary address under **rent free license**.
- Temporary like-for-like decants offered in policy.
- Panel can only offer permanent **in limited circumstance**
- Tenants encouraged to make own arrangements with grant payment & expenses etc not in current policy
- Payments set out in separate schedule inc. subsistence to those without cooking facilities e.g., B&B

The Policy can be found on the Councils Website here: [Temporary Moves \(Decant policy\) March 2023 \(haringey.gov.uk\)](#) alongside the payments schedule: [Decant payments schedule - 14 March 2023 \(haringey.gov.uk\)](#)

## III. Damp and Mould hotline and email inbox

The hotline went live on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 23. It enables residents reporting damp and mould to come straight through to the Housing Repairs Service (HRS) where the information they provide will be triaged by trained members of staff and assigned to the correct resolution.

There is also a damp and mould inbox, managed by HRS, where residents and staff can send concerns about damp and mould.

## IV. Roll out of training / briefing sessions.

### **HHRS Training**

Training has already been undertaken within the repairs team in the past year, but additional training has been arranged to improve the diagnostic of damp and mould issues including HHSRS training for all team leaders and surveyors within the repairs and maintenance services.

Resource issues identified early in the journey – only one member of the workforce is qualified to carry out HHRS assessments. Training has been deployed and three cohorts of staff have been given HHRS training. There is also a recruitment drive to bring in temporary surveying resource to assist with assessments.

### **Briefing sessions for staff**

To roll out the new policy and process damp and mould briefings were carried out across different departments and services. More in-depth technical training was provided to the workforce within HRS who would be answering the calls on the damp and mould hotline.

## V. Communications

A communications and engagement plan has been developed with the communications team to ensure that key messages about damp and mould are

effectively communicated to residents. Our communications routes have been reviewed and refreshed. Some of the actions taken include:

- Writing to all potentially affected residents and asking them to get in touch regarding any damp and mould issues in their properties.
- The website has been updated so that residents wanting to raise a repair know there is a slightly different route for damp and mould.
- An article in the Home Zone newsletter, spring 2023.

**Use of appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Damp and Mould Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Draft Communications & Engagement Plan

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985** : Not applicable

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

No	Housing Ombudsman recommendations	April 2023 comments	DELIVERED / COMPLETED	IN PROGRESS	
	Chapter 1: From reactive to proactive		Key deliverable in place and date agreed	Key deliverable and target date	May 23 progress comments
1	Landlords should adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould interventions. Landlords should review their current strategy and consider whether their approach will achieve this.	A new Damp and Mould policy has been developed that clearly sets out adoption of a 'zero tolerance approach to damp and mould', drawing on the recommendations in the Ombudsman report. Further review and changes to the policy were made following Secretary of State and Regulator of Social Housing letters and the updated policy went to Council Cabinet and was signed off in April 23. The policy provides a summary of our work to establish a zero tolerance approach to damp and mould.	New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23).		Cabinet approved policy in April. Q2 and Q4 updates to Customer Core Group (CCG) on implementation of policy planned. Review of policy with CCG scheduled for March 24.
2	Landlords should consider whether they require an overall framework, or policy, to address damp and mould which would cover each area where the landlord may be required to act. This would include any proactive interventions, its approach to diagnosis, actions it considers appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication and aftercare.	Damp and Mould policy developed and signed off by Cabinet in April 23 and new damp and mould process has been developed to reflect our new approach. These documents summarise plans in place to ensure proactive preventative interventions, the approach to diagnosis, actions considered	New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23). New Damp and mould process map (COMPLETED April 23).		



## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

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		appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication, and aftercare.			
3	Landlords should review the accessibility and use of their systems for reporting repairs and making complaints to ‘find their silence’.	Our repairs programme and resident experiences programmes are reviewing the use of systems for reporting repairs and making complaints. In relation to damp and mould specifically, a damp and mould inbox has been set-up and cases reported are being either contacted and/or visited depending on the severity of the case reported. A dedicated phonenumber to respond to damp and mould enquiries has also been established to improve access to residents on this key issue. The predictive dashboard we created to assess damp and mould cases analysed a number of data sets including repairs booked, disrepair cases, complaints, member enquiries, vulnerabilities and EPC ratings to ensure we are reducing over-reliance on residents on reporting issues directly themselves.	<b>Predictive Power BI dashboard (COMPLETED Dec 22). Set up Damp and mould inbox (COMPLETED Jan 23). Damp and mould phone line and trained call answering staff (COMPLETED March 23).</b>	<b>Procure case management system with predictive capability (TBC - Mar 24)</b>	<b>Meetings with three potential providers of case management systems undertaken in April / May. Paper confirming preferred option being developed in May 24 and business case due for agreement by new Housing IT Board in June 24.</b>



## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

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4	Landlords should identify opportunities for extending the scope of their diagnosis within buildings, for example by examining neighbouring properties, to ensure the response early on is as effective as possible.	Our new policy makes the commitment that we will identify opportunities for extending the scope of their diagnosis within buildings, for example by examining neighbouring properties, to ensure the response early on is as effective as possible and is being picked up by surveyors as part of their inspections. Our Access process has also been recently reviewed and signed off by our Housing Board in April 23 (not directly linked to damp and mould project).	<b>New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23).</b>		
5	Landlords should implement a data driven, risk-based approach with respect to damp and mould. This will reduce over reliance on residents to report issues, help landlords identify hidden issues and support landlords to anticipate and prioritise interventions before a complaint or disrepair claim is made.	We have a wide range of data sets which we have used to analyse the extent of damp and mould issues affecting our properties. Since April 2021, a RICS registered practice has been undertaking stock condition surveys of our properties, which at the end of their commission will mean that 100% of our rented stock and blocks will have been surveyed. HHSRS hazards are identified when these surveys are undertaken.  The data sources we have used	<b>Establish Predictive Power BI dashboard (COMPLETED Dec 22).</b>	<b>Procure case management system with predictive capability (TBC - Mar 24)</b>	<b>(See above progress comment on case management system).</b>

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

No	Housing Ombudsman recommendations	April 2023 comments	DELIVERED / COMPLETED	IN PROGRESS	
		<p>include:</p> <p>§ Stock condition surveys where HHSRS damp and mould hazards have been identified.</p> <p>§ Reviewing reported repairs data over the last two years for properties where the job has included damp and mould issues; properties where mould wash has been undertaken; properties where a repair for leaks, roofing and plumbing jobs have been reported.</p> <p>§ We have included all open and closed disrepair cases, Ombudsman cases, Elected Members enquiries and complaints relating to damp and mould in assessing properties in the past year.</p> <p>§ We have included data on properties which have been identified as having structural defects which could increase the chances of damp and mould.</p> <p>§ Reviewing properties where the EPC rating is below Band C as damp and mould is more likely to be prevalent in less energy efficient stock.</p>			
		§ Resident information including			

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		<p>vulnerability flags relating to age and disability, family make up and potential overcrowding.</p> <p>We have analysed the aforementioned data to create a hierarchy of the most at-risk properties. We have undertaken desktop reviews for cases where the property has been visited by a surveyor in the past 3 months where a report or other information has enabled a HHSRS assessment to be completed.</p> <p>This methodology has been independently reviewed by a 3rd party to ensure that our approach is robust.</p>			
6	<p>Where properties are identified for future disposal or are within an area marked for regeneration, landlords should proactively satisfy themselves that residents do not receive a poorer standard of service or lower living conditions, that steps are taken to avoid homes degrading to an unacceptable condition and that they regularly engage and communicate with these residents.</p>	<p>Our new damp and mould policy specifically commits us to this recommendation. The Council also has an asset management strategy and area based regeneration strategies in place alongside associated plans, reporting mechanisms and resident engagement arrangements to ensure it maintains its statutory and legal duties to keep properties safe, warm and dry, whilst communicating and engaging</p>	<p>New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23).</p>	<p>Asset Management Strategy currently being reviewed as part of a wider process (Initial paper on scope of review produced in March 23).</p>	<p>Revised 23-24 programme and proposed 5 year plan being worked on and due by June 2023. (Wider piece of work not with damp and mould project).</p>

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

No	Housing Ombudsman recommendations	April 2023 comments	DELIVERED / COMPLETED	IN PROGRESS	
		with affected residents. (More information can be provided on the detail of this if required).			
7	Landlords should avoid taking actions that solely place the onus on the resident. They should evaluate what mitigations they can put in place to support residents in cases where structural interventions are not appropriate and satisfy themselves they are taking all reasonable steps.	<p>We are taking several proactive steps that avoid us solely placing the onus on the resident, and these vary depending on the severity of the issue. For Category 1 Failures:</p> <p>§ Where there is a category 1 failure in a property we will consider the individual circumstances of the household including any vulnerabilities when determining if residents should be decanted to alternative accommodation whilst the damp and mould issues are resolved.</p> <p>§ Dehumidifiers are being provided and advice given to the resident on how to reduce issues with damp and mould, while the cause of the damp is identified and rectified.</p> <p>§ The surveyor that has visited the property will agree an action plan with the resident including agreeing a schedule of works.</p> <p>§ We will aim to do a mould wash within 10 days or as soon as practically possible.</p>	<p><b>New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23). New Damp and mould process map (COMPLETED April 23). Updated Decant policy (COMPLETED Mar 23). Updated decant process map (COMPLETED Mar 23).</b></p>		

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		<p>§ Complete the works to property within 3 months (unless there is an exceptional reason why this cannot be achieved).</p> <p>§ Undertake an inspection 3 months after works have been completed to ensure no further issues.</p> <p>Category 2 Failures:</p> <p>§ Where it is appropriate mould washes will be undertaken and dehumidifiers will be provided.</p> <p>§ Works will be undertaken in line with Haringey’s published repairs standards.</p> <p>§ We will keep these cases under review and we will ask residents or their advocates to let us know if the damp and mould gets worse.</p> <p>§ In the meantime, advice will be provided on how to reduce damp and mould.</p> <p>Wider actions:</p> <p>§ The dashboard which has been developed as part of this work will be further developed going forward to enable proactive identification of potential category 1 and 2 failures.</p> <p>§ We are increasing our use of</p>			

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

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		<p>contractors to enable damp and mould cases to be addressed in shorter time periods. This includes issuing more jobs to existing supply-chain and procuring additional contractor resources.</p> <p>§ We are procuring specialist supply chain including consultants to resolve on -going damp issues in properties where the source of the damp is harder to identify.</p>			
8	Together with residents, landlords should review the information, materials and support provided to residents to ensure that these strike the right tone and are effective in helping residents to avoid damp and mould in their properties.	We have a proactive communications approach in place to ensure our residents have all the information they need about damp and mould issues, and reporting, through our website and other comms channels. We reviewed all of this information recently to ensure the right tone was used and to ensure effective guidance is being provided.	Damp and mould content updated on website (COMPLETED Dec 22). Press release and members statement (COMPLETED Dec 22). Policy reviewed with residents in March 2023 (COMPLETED Mar 23).	Damp and mould content included in Home Zone (Apr 23)	Damp and mould content was included in the Spring Home Zone and was published to residents in line with target date. Additional comms timelines set out in comms and engagement plan included.
9	Landlords should be more transparent with residents involved in mutual exchanges and make the most of every opportunity to identify and address	Staff visiting properties have been tasked with looking for and identifying damp and mould issues and reporting these back,	Updated home visit and vulnerability visit documents (COMPLETED Feb 23).		

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	damp and mould, including visits and void periods.	and our vulnerability visit approach and associated procedural documents have been updated to support this.			
10	Landlords should ensure their strategy for delivering net zero carbon homes considers and plans for how they can identify and respond to potential unintended consequences around damp and mould.	The Council has plans in place for retrofitting its housing stock which will help mitigate some issues linked to damp and mould, such as reducing heating demand and improving health benefits. Works will include insulation and replacement heating systems. The target is to bring all council housing stock from an average Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of a low Band C to Band B by 2035. The Council will be putting an appropriate ventilation strategy in place to ensure we mitigate the risk associated with retrofit, namely thermal bridging, of an increase in damp and mould.	New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23).	Asset Management Strategy and associated Energy plans currently being reviewed as part of a wider process (Initial paper on scope of review produced in March 23).	(See above comment re: 23-24 programme and proposed 5 year plan).
	<b>Chapter 2: From inferring blame to taking responsibility</b>				



## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

No	Housing Ombudsman recommendations	April 2023 comments	DELIVERED / COMPLETED	IN PROGRESS	
11	Landlords should review, alongside residents, their initial response to reports of damp and mould to ensure they avoid automatically apportioning blame or using language that leaves residents feeling blamed.	Our approach to responding to damp and mould has been reviewed and a new policy has been developed to ensure staff avoid automatically apportioning blame or using language that leaves residents feeling blamed. Once the new policy has been approved by Cabinet, further training for the new policy will be implemented, including training for all relevant staff, including relevant neighbourhood staff.	<b>New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23).</b>	<b>HHSRS training in progress for wider range of staff and other training in progress including Customer Service and Housing Management (May 23).</b>	<b>Wider face to face training programme being developed with Learning Development team and proposal to come back to damp and mould group for agreement (June 23).</b>
12	Landlords should consider their current approach to record keeping and satisfy themselves it is sufficiently accurate and robust. We would encourage landlords to go further and consider whether their record keeping systems and processes support a risk-based approach to damp and mould.	As set out above, a dashboard was developed to enable proactive identification of potential category 1 and 2 cases, and responses to these cases is being tracked and reported on a weekly basis. Alongside this we have been reviewing and improving our Damp and Mould process and are looking to introduce a Complex Case Management System in order to ensure we continue to strengthen our risk-based approach to damp and mould.	<b>Power BI dashboard (COMPLETED Dec 22). Damp and Mould tracker (COMPLETED Dec 22).</b>	<b>Procure case management system with predictive capability (TBC - Mar 24)</b>	<b>(See above progress comment on case management system).</b>

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

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13	Landlords should ensure that their responses to reports of damp and mould are timely and reflect the urgency of the issue.	The policy, procedure and process have been developed to ensure responses to damp and mould are timely and weekly reporting is in place to ensure damp and mould cases being identified are being effectively responded to.	<b>Damp and Mould tracker (COMPLETED Dec 22).</b>		
14	Landlords should review the number of missed appointments in relation to damp and mould cases and, depending on the outcome of any review, consider what steps may be required to reduce them.	Weekly reporting on damp and mould appointments / visits has now been established to track our progress in responding to damp and mould cases and will allow us to review our approach, including the number of missed appointments and other issues arising, as we proceed. (We also track and review right-first-time KPI for all repairs appointments).	<b>New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23). New Damp and mould process map (COMPLETED April 23). Weekly reporting in place (COMPLETED Jan 23).</b>		
15	Landlords should ensure that their staff, whether in-house or contractors, have the ability to identify and report early signs of damp and mould.	Increased training and equipment is being made available for staff to improve diagnostics and early rectification. This includes HHSRS training for all surveyors and team leaders and staff who visit properties.	<b>Initial training for surveyors with PRS team (COMPLETED Dec 22). Training for call handling staff and customer service staff (COMPLETED Mar 23).</b>	<b>HHSRS training in progress and other training in progress including Customer Service and Housing Management staff (May 23).</b>	<b>Wider face to face training programme being developed with Learning Development team and proposal to come back to damp and mould group</b>

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

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					for agreement (June 23).
16	Landlords should take steps to identify and resolve any skills gaps they may have, ensuring their staff and contractors have appropriate expertise to properly diagnose and respond to reports of damp and mould.	We recognise that we need more in-house qualified surveying resource and are currently working to recruit interim surveyors. We are also procuring specialist supply chain including consultants to resolve on-going damp issues in properties where the source of the damp is harder to identify.	Initial training for surveyors with PRS team (COMPLETED Dec 22). Training for call handling staff and customer service staff (COMPLETED Mar 23).	HHSRS training in progress and other training in progress including Customer Service and Housing Management staff (May 23). Recruitment of HHSRS qualified surveyors (May 23).	Reviewing external capacity to complement internal team (May / June 23)

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

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17	Landlords should ensure that they clearly and regularly communicate with their residents regarding actions taken or otherwise to resolve reports of damp and mould. Landlords should review and update any associated processes and policies accordingly.	A key part of the new damp and mould policy and procedure is that when surveyors visit a property they agree an action plan with the resident including agreeing a schedule of works. The newly reviewed and updated damp and mould process also sets out agreed follow-up steps, including post-inspection calls and visits.	<b>New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23). New Damp and mould process map (COMPLETED April 23).</b>		
18	Landlords must ensure there is effective internal communication between their teams and departments, and ensure that one individual or team has overall responsibility for ensuring complaints or reports are resolved, including follow up or aftercare	A Damp and Mould group has been established to help ensure there is effective internal communication between teams and departments. This group includes representation from the Corporate Feedback team who coordinate the responses to complaints relating to damp and mould. The new damp and mould process developed sets out the working arrangements and hand-offs between the different teams involved in the process. At the current time the Head of Repairs and the Disrepair Manager have responsibility for ensuring cases are resolved, including follow-up and aftercare, and this is intended to be the case until the	<b>Cross-council Damp and Mould group established (COMPLETED Nov 22). New damp and mould process established (COMPLETED April 23).</b>	<b>Complex cases team to be established by Repair programme (Date TBC)</b>	<b>Recruitment underway to repairs team given no. of complex repairs we are seeing within the business (May / June 23).</b>

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No	Housing Ombudsman recommendations	April 2023 comments	DELIVERED / COMPLETED	IN PROGRESS	
		Complex Repair manager is appointed.			
19	Landlords should ensure that their complaints policy is effective and in line with the Complaint Handling Code, with clear compensation and redress guidance. Remedies should be commensurate to the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident, whilst recognising that each case is individual and should be considered on its own merits.	The Haringey Council complaints policy is effective and is substantively in line with the Complaint Handling Code, with clear compensation and redress guidance. Remedies are commensurate to the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident, and we recognise that each case is individual and should be considered on its own merits. As the Housing Services (previously Homes for Haringey) merged back into the council in June 2022 some further work is being done to update our policies and processes in this area.	<b>Housing Complaints policy updated and understood to be consistent with Ombudsman guidance (COMPLETED Feb 23).</b>		
	<b>Chapter 3: From disrepair claims to resolution</b>				
20	Landlords need to ensure they can identify complex cases at an early stage, and have a strategy for keeping residents informed and effective resolution.	Our repairs programme is currently reviewing our approach to the management of complex cases, including category 1 and category 2 damp and mould cases, and is developing proposals around the establishment of a complex cases team and a case management system.		<b>Complex cases team to be established by Repair programme (Date TBC)</b>	<b>Recruitment underway to repairs team given no. of complex repairs we are seeing within the business (May / June 23).</b>

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

No	Housing Ombudsman recommendations	April 2023 comments	DELIVERED / COMPLETED	IN PROGRESS	
21	Landlords should identify where an independent, mutually agreed and suitably qualified surveyor should be used, share the outcomes of all surveys and inspections with residents to help them understand the findings and be clear on next steps. Landlords should then act on accepted survey recommendations in a timely manner.	Since April 2021, a RICS registered practice has been undertaking stock condition surveys of our properties, which at the end of their commission will mean that 100% of our rented stock and blocks will have been surveyed. The outcomes of surveys and inspections are shared with residents to help them understand the findings and be clear on next steps. We are reviewing our approach to ensure all survey recommendations, including those related to damp and mould, are acted upon in a timely manner. We are also procuring specialist supply chain including consultants to resolve on-going damp issues in properties where the source of the damp is harder to identify.	A RICS registered practice has been undertaking stock condition surveys of our properties (IN PLACE since April 2021).	Recruitment or procure additional surveying capacity (May / June 23)	Recruitment underway to repairs team given no. of complex repairs we are seeing within the business (May / June 23).
22	Where extensive works may be required, landlords should consider the individual circumstances of the household, including any vulnerabilities, and whether or not it is appropriate to move resident(s) out of their home at an early stage.	Where there is a category 1 failure in a property, we are considering the individual circumstances of the household including any vulnerabilities when determining if residents should be decanted to alternative accommodation whilst the damp and mould issues are resolved.	Updated Decant policy (COMPLETED March 23). Updated decant process (COMPLETED March 23).		

## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

No	Housing Ombudsman recommendations	April 2023 comments	DELIVERED / COMPLETED	IN PROGRESS	
23	Landlords should promote the benefits of their complaints process and the Ombudsman to their residents as an appropriate and effective route to resolving disputes.	Haringey Council's complaints policy and process are published on our website alongside information on the right to refer a case to the Housing Ombudsman and the benefits of doing so.	Housing Complaints policy updated and understood to be consistent with Ombudsman guidance (COMPLETED Feb 23).		
24	Landlords should continue to use the complaints procedure when the pre-action protocol has commenced and until legal proceedings have been issued to maximise the opportunities to resolve disputes outside of court. Landlords should ensure their approach is consistent with our jurisdiction guidance and their legal and complaint teams work together effectively where an issue is being pursued through the complaints process and protocol.	Housing Complaints policy reviewed in Feb 23 and understood to be consistent with Ombudsman guidance.	Housing Complaints policy updated and understood to be consistent with Ombudsman guidance (COMPLETED Feb 23).		
	<b>Chapter 4: From a complaints to a learning culture</b>				
25	Landlords should consider how best to share learning from complaints and the positive impact of changes made as a result within the organisation and externally. Systems should allow the landlord to analyse their complaints data effectively and identify themes, trends and learning opportunities.	Our Feedback and Complaints team carry out customer satisfaction surveys on our complaint handling process. The feedback received is monitored and reported to management with recommendations for improvements in our service. We provide training to all staff on effective complaint handling and why this is important to us at	Housing Complaints policy updated and understood to be consistent with Ombudsman guidance (COMPLETED Feb 23).		



## Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Action Plan – Updated May 2023

No	Housing Ombudsman recommendations	April 2023 comments	DELIVERED / COMPLETED	IN PROGRESS	
		<p>Haringey. From the feedback we receive from complaints, we share this with our service teams and work collaboratively to create better ways of working (and this includes themes, trends and learning opportunities).</p>			
26	<p>Landlords should ensure they treat residents reporting damp and mould with respect and empathy. The distress and inconvenience experienced by residents in this area is some of the most profound we have seen, and this needs to be reflected in the tone and approach of the complaint handling</p>	<p>Our approach to responding to damp and mould has been reviewed and a new policy has been developed to ensure all staff treat residents reporting damp and mould with respect and empathy, including complaints handling staff. We recognise the distress and inconvenience experienced by residents in this area and the current review work of our complaints team structure and processes will help ensure the appropriate tone and approach for complaints handling is embedded.</p>	<p><b>Updated Housing Complaints policy (COMPLETED Feb 23). New Damp and Mould policy (COMPLETED April 23). New Damp and mould process map (COMPLETED April 23).</b></p>		

# DRAFT Damp & Mould communications and engagement plan



## Objectives

- To ensure that our target audiences understand that we are taking this issue seriously
- To explain and discuss what we are doing to make things better
- To ensure tenants and leaseholders are aware of the services and support available to them and can hold us to account
- To raise awareness of the dedicated phone line and email amongst our internal and external audiences



## Target audience

- Tenants and leaseholders
- Housing staff
- Wider council staff
- Members
- Housing sector
- Other local authorities
- Central Government and agencies



## Key messaging principles

What we want our communications to be	Our method
Direct, honest and timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify clear messages appropriate for the audience</li> <li>• Simple language, simple packaging (even when the subject is complex)</li> <li>• Paint a realistic picture (good or bad)</li> <li>• No surprises – communicate early (especially with people directly affected by changes and decisions)</li> </ul>
Inclusive and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications will cater for different preferences and needs</li> <li>• Tell residents and leaseholders what they need to do and how we will support them</li> </ul>
Engaging and two-way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult people on decisions that affect them and be open to feedback</li> <li>• Create opportunities for people to help shape the direction of travel</li> </ul>
Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is not an excuse for 'spin'. It means that we need to keep reinforcing ie 'The Haringey Deal'</li> </ul>
Values-driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce and demonstrate our values: caring, collaborative, community-focused, courageous, creative</li> </ul>
Appropriate and relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure we use the right tone, style and channels in the right way</li> <li>• Tailor messages and information to the audience</li> <li>• Ensure we do not blame residents for damp and mould issues in their homes</li> </ul>



## Key messages

- The safety and well-being of our residents will always be our number one priority
- We are taking this very seriously and are pulling out all the stops to improve things quickly
- We are taking a series of actions to deliver significant improvements
- We have put in place a damp and mould action plan to identify cases of damp and mould in our homes and deal with them quickly and effectively
- We understand that a warm, safe and well-maintained home is a foundation that every individual and family should be able to expect
- We intend to do better – we are not just saying we will do better
- We now have a dedicated damp and mould reporting line for our council tenants
- If you have a problem with damp and mould and have not yet reported it to us, or we have not yet been in touch, you can phone us on 020 8489 5611
- If you prefer, you can email us [dampandmould@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:dampandmould@haringey.gov.uk) with your full address including the postcode, as well as your full name and a contact phone number



## What we've done so far – Homes for Haringey

Homes for Haringey produced a range of communications materials about damp and mould, including:

- Regular tweets with tips and guidance
- An article on how to prevent damp in the winter edition of Homes Zone, our tenants and leaseholders magazine
- A news story about damp and mould on the Homes for Haringey website, pointing residents to their webpages which offered advice, guidance and tips
- Features on damp and mould in the winter editions of the monthly e-newsletter to residents
- A video which offered advice on how to prevent damp and mould

How to prevent damp and mould

You will need

- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approved mould spray
- cleaning cloths



**Haringey**  
LONDON



# What we've done so far

After Homes for Haringey was brought back under the direct control of the council in June 2022, we have also produced a range of communications materials about damp and mould.

## Help with damp and mould in your home

We take damp and mould in resident's homes very seriously. [Find out what the council is doing to tackle damp and mould in council properties](#)

Whilst serious damp and mould can be harmful to health it is also important to remember that not all damp or mould is dangerous.

Damp and mould in homes can get worse in cold weather especially when homes fall below a certain temperature due to heating not being used or not being effective. If you are struggling with your energy costs, please see our [Haringey Here to Help webpages](#).

- [Definitions](#)
- [Reporting damp and mould in your home](#)
- [Help and advice](#)

We updated our damp and mould landing page in December with definitions, help and advice, and information on how report damp and mould.

All the pages on our website relating to housing include a link to the damp and mould landing page.



Feature providing damp and mould advice and promoting our dedicated helpline in Homes Zone Spring 2023 edition.



## Resident Engagement 1

- The policy lead who developed the damp and mould policy consulted the residents on our Customer Core Group in March 2023.
- The following feedback from residents was taken on board in the development of the final version of the policy:
  - Further emphasis on how we are addressing the 26 recommendations from the Ombudsman's report.
  - More detail and clarity around the process for responding to damp and mould cases and reducing response times for actioning cat 1 failures.
  - Including reference to role of the group being involved in any review of the policy.
  - Adopting a separate resident communications approach specifically for damp and mould.
  - Setting out KPIs / measures which are being used for monitoring performance.

## Resident Engagement 2

- The policy lead also provided the following feedback re: follow -up with the Customer Core Group:
- Agreed we would involve them in any review of the policy, and this is specifically mentioned in the document.
- They were keen to have sight of progress with implementation of the policy so maybe a mid -year update report to the group.
- They wanted clear and prominent communications to residents about how they can deal with damp and mould, the policy and what residents can expect from us in terms of a response.
- Also suggested residents be surveyed about their experiences of damp and mould and satisfaction with how the Council is dealing with – maybe pick up from res sat and complaints stats.

## Resident Engagement 3

In order to respond to the feedback provided by the Customer Core Group, our plan is:

- For a senior repairs representative to go back to the Customer Core Group at the mid-year point of 23/24 to provide an update on the implementation of the policy.
- A senior repairs representative will also do a follow-up session with the Customer Core Group at year end of 23/24 to provide an update on the implementation of the policy over the first year of it's life.
- At the same time, the policy lead will attend the customer core group to review the policy with them in line with the agreement made.
- As the Customer Core Group asked for a satisfaction survey to be delivered on damp and mould our proposal is to include a question on this in our 23/24 Tenant Satisfaction Survey.
- The residents on the group also asked for clear and prominent communications to residents about how they can deal with damp and mould, the policy and what residents can expect from us in terms of a response, and this is set out in the first section of this plan.

## Appendix 3

### BRIEFING

<b>Briefing for:</b>	Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Panel Members
<b>Title:</b>	Private Sector Housing Damp and Mould update
<b>Purpose of briefing:</b>	To provide an update on the response to damp and mould cases in the private rented sector
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Lynn Sellar
<b>Date:</b>	

#### 1. Describe the issue under consideration.

1.1 Following the outcome of the inquest into the tragic loss of Awaab Ishak as a direct result of mould in his family home, On the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2022, the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) wrote to all local authorities Private Sector Housing Services.

1.2 The communication from DLUHC was a written direction for all Local Authorities to utilise the powers provided to them under section 3(3) of the Housing Act 2004 in carrying out their duty to review housing conditions in their area.

1.3 Local Authorities private sector housing services were asked to undertake the following;

- Have particular regard to high scoring (bands D and E) category 2 damp and mould hazards, as outlined in the guidance 'Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) enforcement guidance: housing conditions'<sup>1</sup>
- supply the department with an assessment of damp and mould issues affecting privately rented properties in your area, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards; and
- Supply the department with an assessment of action you have identified that may need to be taken in relation to damp and mould issues affecting privately rented properties in your area.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-enforcement-guidancehousing-conditions>

1.4 The private sector housing team were in a position to respond positively to the request of DLUHC and have provided two updates on our actions to the Department since their initial contact on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

## **2. Background**

2.1 Local housing authorities have a duty under the Housing Act 2004 (“the Act”) to keep housing conditions in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken by them under the Act (section 3(1)).

2.2 There are many provisions made within the Housing Act 2004 for local authorities to achieve this review of housing conditions.

- The Housing Act 2004 under Part 1 makes provision for council officers to inspect property using a system known as The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS or rating system). The Housing Health and Safety Rating System is the Government’s approach to the evaluation of the potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings and has been in practice since it was introduced in 2006.
- In addition to Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004, Part 2 make provision for the Mandatory licensing of property rented as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) where they are occupied by 5 or more unrelated individuals. Also within Part 2 is the discretionary power for local authorities to extend the Mandatory licensing of HMO’s by introducing Additional HMO licensing schemes, which can include any HMO within a specified area of the Local Authority’s borough.
- Part 3 of the Act makes provision for further licensing under the form of selective licensing of private rented property. Such licensing depending on the circumstances may require authorisation from DLUHC to be allowed to proceed.
- All Licensing scheme must meet the legal criteria for their implementation and have a clear strategic approach and defined objectives in order for them to be considered and approved.

## **3. Delivering outcomes**

3.1 As highlighted, we are currently utilising the powers given under section 3(3) of the Housing Act 2004. As part of the utilisation of these powers we have since 2019 been reviewing, (see below) our housing conditions and as a result have been able to put these powers to use. This includes:

- a. Use of the part 1 powers to investigate complaints and ensure compliance of category 1 and 2 hazards (including damp and mould) with the use of the HHSRS.

This is carried out through a reactive complaints service for private sector housing tenants. Property inspection will be undertaken using HHSRS when necessary in order to assess hazards and take the appropriate enforcement actions. From November 2022 we have inspected any complaint made in regards of damp and mould in person and have where necessary used HHSRS to assess the severity of damp and mould in order for enforcement action to be taken against a landlord if required.

HHSRS is also used as part of the Property Licensing Compliance inspection regime.

- b. The Council since 2006 have undertaken the legal requirement to licence and inspect all Mandatory HMO property.

In 2019 the Council approved an Additional HMO Licensing scheme for the whole borough. Making it a legal requirement for the owner of any property rented as an HMO to obtain a licence from the council.

- c. DLUHC approved Haringey Council's application to designate 14 wards in the east of the borough as subject to selective property licensing. This became operational from 17th November 2022. This scheme covers an area that was identified as having high need due to poor housing conditions. This scheme alongside wider licensing conditions focuses on housing standards and improving energy efficiency (which directly and indirectly is related to preventing conditions known to affect damp and mould).

3.2 All Licenced HMO property in the borough must have a compliance inspection as part of the licence programme. This inspection regime is to check that property meets legal requirements. It is a proactive inspection programme and is therefore not reliant on tenants complaining about their housing conditions. This is an important element of property licensing as we know tenants often are in fear of complaining due to retaliation by a landlord, many tenants are often not aware of their rights to complain or just don't know that there is a council service available to support them when they have issues with a landlord. We are therefore in a position to identify deficiencies such as damp and mould that would usually go undetected.

3.3 The Selective Property Licensing scheme although in its infancy has had a good response from Landlords applying for Licence applications. Unlike HMO licensing Selective licensing does not require all property to be inspected however as our schemes main aim is to improve property condition, we are committed to inspecting 50% of the licences issued will received a in person inspection.

3.4 A pre-requisite of this scheme is to provide Energy Performance Certification for the property. A property with a non-complaint EPC will be required to have the energy performance of that property improved to the statutory minimum standard. Although poor energy efficiency is not the cause of all damp it can be a contributing factor when linked to excess cold.

#### 4. Outcomes Achieved.

##### 4.1 HMO Licencing outcomes from 27<sup>th</sup> May 2019 to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2023

- 4913 HMO Licensing applications received.
- 3186 Final Licences have been issued.
- 1500 HMO compliance Inspections have been undertaken.

##### 4.2 Selective Licensing outcomes from 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

- 8941 selective licences have been received.
- 3214 final licences have been issued.
- Compliance inspections have only just started for this scheme and are prioritised based on risk.