

**Report for:** Cabinet - 20 January 2026

**Item Number:** 10

**Title:** Adopting an updated Damp and Mould Policy

**Report authorised by:** Sara Sutton, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health

**Lead Officer:** Rachel Sharpe, Director of Housing

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Key

## 1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Haringey will address issues of damp, mould and condensation within the council's tenanted and leasehold housing stock.
- 1.2 This includes how the council complies with its legal responsibilities such as the timeframes to respond to damp and mould hazards introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and with the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations in 'The Spotlight on Damp and Mould' report.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval from Cabinet for adoption.

## 2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 We are building a fairer borough in Haringey – and everyone having a safe, warm, comfortable, affordable home is part of that mission.
- 2.2 No one should be living with damp and mould. It is a basic social injustice that we want to bring to an end.
- 2.3 We have set a zero-tolerance approach towards damp and mould. This policy, which we first introduced in 2023, is now being updated to reflect the introduction of Awaabs Law and new timescales for dealing with damp and mould. It sets out how we aim to provide and maintain dry, warm, healthy homes for our tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.4 The insights and experiences of our residents, particularly through the Resident Voice Board and the Council's Residents' Repairs and Maintenance Continuous Improvement Group have played a key role in shaping this policy. These resident groups ensure ongoing engagement and co-creation in our policies. I want to express my gratitude to these groups for their invaluable

input, which has helped this policy to better reflect the needs of our communities.

- 2.5 Across the borough, we are retrofitting and refurbishing council homes. Our Estate Renovation Plan will put more than £500m into home improvements over the next ten years – driving up the comfort and quality of our homes.
- 2.6 It will bring 100% of council homes in Haringey to Decent Homes standard by 2028 which will take the average council home from a C-grade energy rating to B-grade, cutting bills for thousands of residents. That means double glazing going in, new modern boilers, wall and loft insulation, new front and back doors and much more.
- 2.7 Eliminating damp and mould is essential to our mission to make our borough fairer and more equitable.

### **3. Recommendations**

That Cabinet

- 3.1 Approves the updated Damp and Mould Policy at Appendix 1, having had regard to the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 2, to come into effect from 3 February 2026.
- 3.2 Cabinet is recommended to delegate to the Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member for Housing and Planning any future changes to this policy required by changes to legal or regulatory requirements arising in the three-year period before the policy is due for review.

### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1 This newly drafted clear and accessible policy will outline the Council's approach to tenancy management for Council tenants and for their wider households. It will also help the Council meet the Social Housing Regulator's consumer standards, specifically the Tenancy Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

### **5. Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 The Council could treat all damp and mould cases via its existing repairs process and decide not to design and implement a damp and mould policy. We rejected this option since there is an expectation, from government and our residents that the Council, as a social housing landlord, will have a policy in place which sets out our approach to dealing with issues relating to damp and mould.

### **6. Background information**

6.1 Awaab Ishak was a two-year-old who tragically died in 2020 due to prolonged exposure to mould in his social housing. His death led to national outrage and a call for reform in housing standards. In the years since, there have been the following developments:

- In October 2021, the Housing Ombudsman published its 'Spotlight on Damp and Mould' report with its indictment of the way a number of social housing landlords have failed to listen to and effectively act upon reports of damp and mould in their homes.
- In November 2022, the Ombudsman requested councils to self-assess against the 26 recommendations made in the 'Spotlight' report. This was in light of the Coroner's report following the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak from respiratory condition caused by long term exposure to mould.
- In response to the coroner's report, the Minister for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities wrote to all providers of social housing regarding this issue and set out an expected response.
- In December 2022, as requested by the Social Housing Regulator, the Council provided an information return, outlining Haringey's position on damp and mould.
- The primary legislation for Awaab's Law was first introduced through the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#), and inserts (or in legal terms 'implies') into social housing tenancy agreements a term that requires social landlords to comply with the requirements that are set out in these Regulations.
- This means all social landlords must meet the requirements in the Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025. These regulations came into force from 27 October 2025. These regulations legally mandate social landlords to investigate and fix damp and mould hazards within set timeframes and address all emergency hazards within 24 hours.

6.6 In response to the above events, we reviewed all our processes and procedures relating to damp and mould to ensure they addressed the concerns raised by the Coroner and how our service measures against the 26 recommendations from the Ombudsman's report.

6.7 We also prepared a damp and mould policy for both tenants and leaseholders living in council homes including temporary accommodation to reflect the council's response to both government and our residents which was approved by the Council's Cabinet in April 2023. This policy now requires reviewing and updating to reflect the Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025 and the timeframes it mandates social landlords to investigate and fix damp and mould hazards coming into force.

6.8 Looking ahead, the Government are due to expand the list of Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards where they present a significant risk of harm covered by regulations that the social rented sector will be required to meet. The expansion of the regulations is due to take place in phases later

in 2026 and 2027. The Council will continue to monitor the regulations and prepare new policies or update existing ones to meet regulatory requirements as necessary.

## **Key provisions of the Damp and Mould Policy**

6.9 The overall aim of the policy is to provide a clear and transparent framework on the Council's approach to tackling damp and mould in accordance with our statutory obligations. This includes ensuring that our residents feel listened to and responded to effectively when experiencing issues of damp and mould.

6.10 The key objectives of the policy are to:

- provide and maintain dry, warm, healthy homes for our tenants and leaseholders.
- ensure that the fabric of our homes is protected from deteriorating and damage resulting from damp and condensation.
- ensure that tenants never feel blamed and are always treated with dignity and respect
- ensure every visit counts so all staff visiting a tenant's home are able to identify the early signs of damp and mould.
- reduce both landlord and tenants' cost associated with damp and mould.

6.11 The policy responds to the Ombudsman's spotlight report by setting out the steps the council will take in adopting a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould interventions at each stage of the process: being proactive in terms of identification, prevention and resolution. These actions include:

- adopting a data driven, risk-based approach to identifying cases of damp and mould, reducing an over reliance on residents to report issues.
- ensuring that our response to residents' reports of damp and mould are timely and reflect the urgency of the issue.
- reviewing 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, ensuring staff are sufficiently trained and have the appropriate skills and equipment to identify early signs of damp and mould and carry out their work effectively.
- addressing some of the root causes of damp and mould through targeted preventative maintenance measures.
- improving the energy efficiency of council homes.

6.12 The policy is structured round three clear stages to ensure that all council homes are free of damp and mould. These are as follows:

1. prevention: ensuring that homes are not susceptible to conditions leading to damp and mould, for example by ensuring that they are well heated and ventilated.
2. identification: ensuring that the Council, both via data analysis and stock condition surveys and by equipping officers, identifies cases of damp and mould, and that residents are able to report cases quickly, easily and confidently.
3. treatment: dealing with cases of damp and mould quickly and decisively, and prioritising the most severe cases.

- 6.13 The Policy confirms that the Repairs' Board will include monitoring of performance against measures set by Awaab's Law.
- 6.14 We will keep tenants updated throughout the process and provide information to them on how to keep safe. In addition, key performance indicators are reported and scrutinised by Housing Services Management Team, the Council's Housing Board, the Council's Housing Improvement Board chaired by the Chief Executive, Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel and the Residents Voice Board.

## **7 Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026 High level Strategic outcomes**

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report will support the Corporate Delivery Plan's theme 5, "Homes for the Future", and in particular its commitment to provide reliable, customer focused resident housing services and to undertake a full review of all policies relating to our tenants and leaseholders in our role as their landlord.
- 7.2 The recommendations in this report will also support the 2024-2029 Housing Strategy's second strategic objective, improving housing quality and resident services in the social housing sector, in particular commitments around transforming services to our tenants and leaseholders, and designing those services with them.

## **8 Carbon and Climate Change**

- 8.1 The recommendation to adopt this proposed new policy supports the Council's commitments in its 2021 Climate Action Plan to the delivery of homes that are healthy, comfortable, and affordable places to heat and power.

## **9 Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Director of Legal and Governance, Equalities)**

### **Finance**

- 9.1 The HRA business and financial plan factored in additional funding, over the past 2 years, in recognition of the need to tackle damp and mould in council dwellings.
- 9.2 The current 2026/27 budget/MTFS (in development) recognises the potential impact of Awaab's Law. If the adoption of this policy leads to further cost beyond that recognised, it will be met through existing resources.

### **Director of Legal & Governance**

The Director of Legal & Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments as follows:

- 9.3 The council has statutory responsibilities under s.11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, the Defective Premises Act 1972, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) introduced by the Housing Act 2004, (2006) and the Environmental Protection Act (1990) to ensure that properties are maintained and meet the Decent Homes Standards (2006) and that where appropriate properties are assessed and steps taken with a view to avoiding or minimising the risk of recurrence of damp and mould. The previous policy ensured the above legislation and guidance were implemented.
- 9.4 The current amendment to the policy is being made to ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations and implements the changes brought about by Awaab's law pursuant to The Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025, which came into force on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2025.
- 9.5 From 27 October 25, the Council must investigate and fix dangerous damp and mould within set time periods, as well as repair all emergency hazards within set time periods, which are set in the policy. In 2026, requirements will expand to apply to a wider range of hazards. In addition to damp and mould, the hazards Awaab's Law will extend to include excess cold and excess heat; falls; structural collapse; fire, electrical and explosions; and hygiene hazards. Then in 2027, the requirements of Awaab's Law will expand to the remaining hazards as defined by the HHSRS (excluding overcrowding). The full list of hazards can be found in schedule 1 to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005.
- 9.6 The Council's repairing obligations are also set out in its tenancy agreements and leases. Depending on the specific circumstances and the causes of damp or mould, where the council fails to comply with its statutory or contractual obligations, the tenant or lessee may have a right to take legal action for the damp and mould problems to be remedied and also possibly to claim compensation.
- 9.7 The Damp and Mould Policy sets out how the council intends to comply with its legal responsibilities and the Housing Ombudsman' recommendations in The Spotlight on Damp and Mould Report as well as implement the changes required by Awaab's law. It reflects the proactive approach that is required for tackling damp and mould and must be kept under review and updated if required, in response to any statutory, regulatory or best practice developments or guidance.
- 9.8 There is no legal obstacle preventing Cabinet from approving the recommendations in this report.

## **Procurement**

9.9 Strategic Procurement has been consulted on and notes the contents of this report. There are no immediate procurement implications arising from this decision. However, Strategic Procurement will provide full support in commissioning and procuring the necessary works, where appropriate to remediate damp and mould conditions as and when these are identified in accordance with the proposed policy.

## Equality

9.10 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

9.11 The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex, and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

9.12 Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

9.13 The policy considered here will apply to Council tenants. Haringey Council's tenant population shows the following characteristics compared to the wider borough population:

- a significantly higher proportion of young people (under 24) and older people (over 50).
- a significantly higher proportion of individuals who have a disability under the Equalities Act.
- a slightly higher proportion of individuals who report their gender identity as different from sex registered at birth.
- a significantly lower proportion of individuals who are married or in a registered civil partnership.
- a significantly higher proportion of individuals who identify as Muslim, and slightly higher proportion of individual who identify as Christian, Buddhist or another religion. This is countered by a significantly lower proportion of tenants who don't associate with any religion or identify as Jewish, Hindu or Sikh.
- a significantly higher proportion of individuals who identify as Black, and slightly higher proportion of individuals who identify as Asian or another ethnic group
- a significantly higher proportion of female individuals.
- a significantly lower proportion of individuals who report their sexual identity as something other than Straight or Heterosexual.

- a significantly higher proportion of individuals who are long-term unemployed.

9.14 A full analysis of the impact of the policy on people with protected characteristics is contained in the Equality Impact Assessment found at Appendix 2.

9.15 The policy makes the following changes which are likely to have the most positive impact on Haringey residents with the protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion and race because it does the following:

- Confirms that as soon as the Council's repairs team are aware of a damp and mould case, it will be categorised according to severity, with the most serious cases prioritised for immediate action.
- It also outlines three ways that tenants can report a problem with damp and mould either by reporting through an online form, emailing or phoning the Council. This could a positive impact on tenants who face barriers to reporting due to a disability.
- Confirms that that we aim to quickly identify homes that are suffering from damp and mould or are at risk, act quickly to remove the damp and mould, address its root causes and prevent it from reoccurring.
  - Recognises that not all residents will be equally able to access or respond to our information or advice on tackling damp and mould by confirming that all staff visiting council homes will be able to pick up signs of damp and mould and assist residents in reporting cases and accessing advise

## **10. Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1 — Damp and Mould Policy

Appendix 2 — Equality Impact Assessment of the Damp and Mould Policy

## **11 Background papers**

- **Haringey Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029:**

[https://new.haringey.gov.uk/sites/default/files/202405/haringey\\_housing\\_strategy\\_2024 - 2029.pdf](https://new.haringey.gov.uk/sites/default/files/202405/haringey_housing_strategy_2024 - 2029.pdf)

- **Housing Services Improvement Plan:**

<https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s138660/Appendix%201.pdf>