
Damp & Mould

Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 19 September 2023

Lead director/officer: Chris Burgin / Sean Atterbury

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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1. Summary

Housing Scrutiny Commission will receive a presentation at the meeting on 19th September from the Assistant City Mayor for Education & Housing setting out a summary of progress in relation to work being undertaken involving damp and mould across Housing stock and the private rented sector.

2. Recommended actions

Housing Scrutiny Commission are invited to:

- Comment on the achievements and progress made in relation to the work involving damp and mould and to seek any further clarification needed on any areas.

3. Detailed report

The Council has always pro-actively responded to and remediated reports of damp and mould. However, since the coroner's report confirming the tragic death of Awaab Ishak was as a result of living in a property with damp and mould, awareness has heightened and so have the reports coming through to The Council, particularly for the Housing Division.

The Council are taking the concerns seriously due to the medical evidence clearly demonstrating the dangers posed by living in areas with a presence of damp and mould. This presentation sets out the positive actions undertaken thus far, and those which are pending.

All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that the homes they let are fit for habitation, for social landlords, this is the Homes Act 2018, and for the Private Rented Sector (PRS), this is the Housing Act 2004.

The stance taken by The Council is to support tenants and residents as opposed to blaming, much the same as Housing Ombudsman's stance. It is appreciated that those living in social or rented accommodation are more likely to be living in overcrowded conditions or in properties with poor energy performance ratings which is more likely to lead to damp and mould. Coupled with the cost of living crisis, we are in a perfect storm for damp and mould. Hence the necessity to evaluate how we can further support tenants and residents.

A study in 2021 indicated that around 4% of properties in social housing had a presence of damp. The Council currently has 4.6% of all properties reporting a potential damp issue

(it is important to factor that 40% of reports indicate no remedial work required). The same study indicated that nationally, 11% of the private rented sector had a presence of damp, however, this has not been seen within The Council's stock of private rented properties, where there are around 100 reports from the 40,000 properties.

It was decided earlier in the year that The Council required a strategic damp and mould board, this was set up and included the following service areas:

- Housing
- Neighbourhood and Environmental Services
- Public Health
- Estates and Building Services (EBS)
- Delivery, Communications and Political Governance

The strategic objectives set out were as follows:

- Understand the impact on Housing, PRS and EBS
- Understand health impacts
- Resource and respond
- Understand associated costs
- Develop advice and communications plan
- Improve occupier health and conditions of stock within the city

Specifically within the Housing Division, we have completed over 1,200 damp inspections since November 2022 which has resulted in around 700 repairs being raised, 500 of those have been completed.

To ensure the long-term effectiveness of damp repairs, The Council has been embracing new products and technologies, such as damp resistant paints, humidity tracking extractor fans and insulated plasterboards and external cladding.

The PRS have invested funding to train their staff in undertaking EPC inspections and have been working on improving the website with updated guidance and a more streamlined reporting process.

EBS have continued their investment within the owner occupier sector which targets those most in need based on their annual income and the EPC rating of their property. Some of the improvements offered are:

- Boiler installations
- Solar panels
- External wall insulation

There have been some significant challenges in sufficiently meeting the growing demand, some of these are as follows:

- Recruitment
- Funding
- Collecting accurate data (particularly in the PRS)
- Cost of living crisis
- Government scrutiny

- Disrepair claims

Despite the continued challenges, we are ensuring adequate resources are available to prevent the presence of damp and mould across the city.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

None

6.2 Legal implications

None

6.3 Equalities implications

None