

Damp and Mould Self Assessment and Policy

**To:**

Councillor Gerri Bird, Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness
20 June 2023

Report by:

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Wards affected:

ALL

Key Decision - No

1. Executive Summary

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 1.1 Acknowledge the self-assessment and subsequent action plan.
- 1.2 Approve the Council's Damp and Mould Policy that sets out the framework of activities and responsibilities in response to mould and damp reports and complaints.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Government released its Charter for social housing residents in January 2021, which features in the forthcoming social housing white paper.
- 2.2 The Housing Ombudsman published its Spotlight on Damp and Mould in October 2021.
- 2.3 In June 2022 the Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets formed a working group to prepare for an anticipated increase in damp,

condensation and Mould (DCM) issues due to the increase in energy costs and the overall cost of living crisis. The working group identified a series of actions that would help prepare for the increase of cases and enable staff to better support tenants.

- 2.3 In November 2022 the coroner's ruling on the sad case of the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale which led to the request from The Regulator for Social Housing for information from all social housing providers on how they deal with damp and mould cases. This information was submitted and a further review of our processes undertaken, which led to the formation of the dedicated team and email address condensation@cambridge.gov.uk. This has been published on our leaflets, website and social media to be used for reporting DCM issues.
- 2.4 In completing the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations from their spotlight report we recognized that it was important to develop a specific policy on managing damp and mould as the priority action.
- 2.5 Regular reporting to the Housing Scrutiny Committee and Executive Leadership team has been introduced. This includes an update on the proactive plans that are being delivered as well as the numbers of reactive cases that are being addressed.

3. Implications

a) Financial Implications

The work that has been undertaken to date is currently being managed within existing budgets.

b) Staffing Implications

The work that has been undertaken to date is currently being managed within existing staffing budgets.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed, we are looking into ways to support and empower our tenants and leaseholders to report issues related to DCM. Positive Impacts have

been identified under the protected characteristic Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, and Sex.

We understand that there are barriers to our tenants' ability to report problems related to DCM. In addition to the protected characteristics mentioned above, digital exclusion and lacking the knowledge of English Language could prevent our tenants from accessing our services. While Cambridge City Council provides interpretation services, it is usually the tenant who needs to report a repair to the council. Our housing officers and Tenancy support officers are playing an important role in delivering our messages to the tenants who are not able to access our services and organising translation and interpretation support where needed.

We have also intensified our messages to our tenants regarding DCM to raise awareness around the issue.

d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The policy, self-assessment and action plan has a Nil Impact when assessment is made with the Climate Change Rating Tool.

e) Procurement Implications

Currently being delivered through existing arrangements, whilst keeping briefed on any procurement frameworks that may be available for the Council to use should the need arise.

f) Community Safety Implications

Tenants and Leaseholders that experience DCM issues can undergo distress, disruption, even embarrassment, concerns about their health and well-being, especially mental health and the impact on any children. This policy should positively impact on our community's safety.

4. Consultation and communication considerations

We have consulted with other social housing providers in relation to their processes and policies. The policy and the self-assessment have been shared with stakeholders and elected tenants.

Following its approval, the policy will be published on the Council's website and social media and Open-Door updates will be used to publicise it.

5. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

[Housing Ombudsman Spotlight report on damp and mould \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

[RSH publishes implementation plan for new consumer regulation and launches pilot consumer inspection programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Cambridge City Council's Self-Assessment against Housing Ombudsman recommendations

Appendix 2 – Cambridge City Council's Self-Assessment Action Plan

Appendix 3 - Cambridge City Council's Damp and Mould Policy

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Lynn Bradley, Head of Housing Maintenance & Assets Tel: 01223 457831 Email: lynn.bradley@cambridge.gov.uk