



AGENDA FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are summoned to Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on, **13 March 2023 at 7.30 pm.**

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Despatched : 3 March 2023

Membership

Councillor Jason Jackson (Chair)
Councillor Marian Spall (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Valerie Bossman-Quarshie
Councillor Ilkay Cinko-Oner
Councillor Mick Gilgunn
Councillor Benali Hamdache
Councillor Michael O'Sullivan
Councillor Rosaline Ogunro
Dean Donaghey (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)
Rose Marie McDonald (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)

Substitute Members

Councillor Jilani Chowdhury
Councillor Phil Graham
Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong
Councillor Ben Mackmurdie

Quorum is 4 Councillors

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A. Formal Matters

Page

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declaration of Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest*** in an item of business:

- if it is not yet on the council's register, you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent;
- you may **choose** to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is already in the register in the interests of openness and transparency.

In both the above cases, you **must** leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If you have a **personal** interest in an item of business **and** you intend to speak or vote on the item you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent but you **may** participate in the discussion and vote on the item.

***(a) Employment, etc** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

(b) Sponsorship - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of your expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of your election; including from a trade union.

(c) Contracts - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between you or your partner (or a body in which one of you has a beneficial interest) and the council.

(d) Land - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.

(e) Licences - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.

(f) Corporate tenancies - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which you or your partner have a beneficial interest.

(g) Securities - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

This applies to **all** members present at the meeting.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting
5. Chair's Report
6. External Attendees (if any)

1 - 8

7. Order of Business

8. Public Questions

For members of the public to ask questions relating to any subject on the meeting agenda under Procedure Rule 70.5. Alternatively, the Chair may opt to accept questions from the public during the discussion on each agenda item.

9. External Attendees (if any)

B. Items for Decision/Discussion

Page

1. Major Scrutiny Review: Strategic Review of Overcrowding in Islington-
Planning department

2. Overcrowding and Housing Allocations 9 - 14

3. Fibre Broadband Roll out programme - report 15 - 22

4. Draft overcrowding questionnaires to partners of Islington Council and to
residents on the housing register who are living in overcrowded
conditions. 23 - 32

5. Social Housing (Regulation) Bill 33 - 36

6. Tenant Charters Report 37 - 38

7. Damp and Mould 39 - 88

8. Work Programme 2022/23 89 - 90

C. Urgent non-exempt items (if any)

Any non- exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgent by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

D. Exclusion of press and public

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the remaining items on the agenda, any of them are likely to involve the disclosure of exempt or confidential information within the terms of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Constitution and, if so, whether to exclude the press and public during discussion thereof.

E. **Confidential/exempt items**

Page

F. **Urgent exempt items (if any)**

Any exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

The next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee will be on 9 May 2023

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London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 2 February 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 2 February 2023 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Jackson (Chair), Bossman-Quarshie, Cinko-Oner, Gilgunn, Hamdache, O'Sullivan and Ogunro

Councillor Jason Jackson in the Chair

29 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**

Apologies were received from Councillor Spall.

30 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**

There were no declarations of substitute members.

31 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

32 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

33 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)**

Meeting was informed that officers will be facilitating a site visit to view void properties, that this will be an opportunity for members to have a better understanding of the whole process.

Chair advised that having attended a housing conference on Regeneration a few days ago which was very enlightening, it was reassuring to note that Islington Council is taking a lead in that area.

Meeting was informed that questions received from a co-optee unable to attend the meeting in relation to Peabody's development at the Former Holloway Prison site will be forwarded to relevant Executive Member and officers to respond.

34 **EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (IF ANY) (Item 6)**

None

35 **ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 7)**

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

36 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 8)**

37 **EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (IF ANY) (Item 9)**

38 **DAMP AND MOULD - PRESENTATION (Item B1)**

- Committee received a presentation from Matt West , Assistant Director – Housing Property Services on the Council’s response to Damp and Mould issues within its housing stock and the following issues were highlighted –
- In terms of definition, the director advised that damp is a case where there is excessive moisture in a building, whilst condensation is moisture in the air forming on cold surfaces and in the case of mould which is harmful and hazardous which is fungus growth on surfaces thrives on food and moisture.
- Meeting was advised of the importance of identifying the causes of damp in order to address it and includes repairs, building design, overcrowding and fuel poverty.
- Director advised that in the last 3 years, the Service has received over 4510 requests for inspections in 3661 properties (13%), that 95% of in which have been resolved in one or two visits and 5% have required more than two visits.
- Presently there are 20 on going live legal cases about damp and mould, that data does suggest damp cases exist in all wards and property types with some estates experiencing higher incidents and notably fewer cases in communally heated estates.
- Members were advised that the Council is ensuring that it is easy to report incidents of damp and mould, that there is now in place a dedicated phone line, that priority is given to vulnerable cases where damp keeps returning or tenants have particular vulnerability. Also all cases are logged and cannot be untracked until survey works and a three month check have been completed,
- Director informed the meeting that although not a solution in the long run, priority is given to mould wash so as to remove any risk of it spreading.
- The Director highlighted other support such as its links with support for fuel poverty by providing advice or signposting residents to available council support, it also ensures that its Capital works programme consider damp as part of its programme and that it ensures the heat map highlights multiple properties in the same block so we can check on other residents.
- On revisiting cases where damp and mould have been reported in the last 3years, the Council is offering a visit to every property, that it uses a mix of data to assess the risk of each case and are visiting the worst cases first. Basis.
- The Service made 150 contacts with its residents in January of which 22 have been resolved and in the month of February, it will embark on bulk call to all cases.
- Training has been provided for all people who enter properties to recognise and report it, that the Council’s approach is being designed with a range of partners, that it will be creating a way to share information and flag concerns.

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 2 February 2023

- Meeting was advised that there is a recognition that damp and mould is more wider and complex than just repairs, that the council is now being proactive around supporting residents with heat poverty, the need to increase housing supply and ensuring that support is available for vulnerable tenants.
- Meeting was advised of the various Capital Works, that several schemes were either already underway or completed, for example with the Andover, several pilot schemes had been completed regarding the programme of insulating cold surfaces and improving ventilation. Similarly in Girdlestone, roof improvements have been carried out, asbestos has been removed and water supply has been improved with works around the drainage been carried out.
- In the case of street properties, meeting was advised of (SHDF) Social Housing Decarbonisation fund which has been used to carry out insulation work improving EPC rating through insulation and window improvements.
- As part of Council's efforts to address damp and mould, meeting was advised that the Service will be undertaking annual housing audits, an opportunity for officers to check a range of issues with residents ,collecting information to help run services suited for tenants needs and to receive direct feedback from every home, that it is important through the audit, officers pick up issues with homes that cannot or would not report incidents using existing means.
- Members were advised that due to the high profile cases reported in the press, there has been high levels of demand, that the Council is struggling to bring in additional surveyors as this is a national issue.
- The Executive Member for Housing and Communities reiterated systems are in place, that all damp and mould cases will be tracked and speedy resolved, reminding the public that any incidents should be reported to the Housing Direct on 0207 5275406 or Freephone number 0800 6943344 or email - dampandmould@Islington.gov.uk or the Executive Member Cllr Una O'Halloran.
- Members were advised that both techniques training and systems are being reviewed by HQN/UCL and industry experts, that it will be using UCL NZC data to look at possible overall costs or investment and consider the use of automated tracking systems going forward.
- In response to a question on how many disrepair cases are yet to be settled legally by the Council, The Assistant Director advised that information will be circulated to Committee members.
- On the involvement of the Housing Ombudsman, the meeting was advised that the Council is responding to their request, that the Council is given it a high priority and that Committee will be updated in due course.
- In response to an enquiry on whether Council had plans to clear gutters annually as it remains one of the causes of damp and mould, the Director acknowledged that there is a programme to address this issue, noting that the Service needs to be more proactive around this issue.
- The Director acknowledged that the Council will be considering further technology to identify damp and mould in properties acknowledging the use of infra red cameras and hydrometer to assess the level of dampness. Meeting was also advised that the service is looking at other diagnostic

technology as part of the ongoing review of technology being used, noting that the use of H Vacuum units in buildings as it tolerates the building atmosphere as it keeps the temperature at medium.

- Meeting was reminded that the focus should be around preventive measures rather than repairs and that the suggestion that residents should open windows and their heating on is not practicable especially during this period of high energy costs.
- With regard how RSL's manage damp and mould, meeting was advised that the Council shares its damp framework with them to ensure that they are being proactive. Meeting was also advised that the Director, the Executive Member and the 2 Members of Parliament (MP) had met recently met 2 leading Housing Association to discuss the issue among other subjects such as performances and strategic alignment so as to hold them to account.
- The Executive Member reiterated that resident with issues of damp and mould who require a survey should contact Housing Direct on 0207 527 5400 or the freephone number of 0800 694 3344 or email directly to dampandmould@islington.gov.uk.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted

That Officers will provide information regarding the pending live cases

39

VOIDS AND PERFORMANCE - PRESENTATION (Item B2)

Committee received a presentation from Matt West, Assistant Director – Housing Property Services on how the Council manages its void properties and the processes involved and the following issues were highlighted –

- In terms of delivery, meeting was advised that keys received, left items are itemised by Housing Management Teams, survey is carried out, the clearance of lumber goods, works are carried out by contractors or In House repair officers, then it is put through the Choice Based Lettings/Viewing Process Works completed and Certificate and Quality check.
- In terms of performance meeting was advised that in January the number of voids in progress is 172, that the average days to clear lumber on a yearly basis is improving noting the difficulty in the last few years when performance was low due to covid and the transfer of some street properties in house.
- Meeting was advised of the high numbers of voids, approximately 1000 in 2022-2023 compared to 750 in 2021-2022) due to the increased works required in the voids, Fire risk assessment (FRA) to be undertaken and asbestos surveys
- In addition, there have been more vulnerable allocations which have required last minute adaptations and works, also the loss of white goods and recycling supplier and meter changes have caused delays
- Director advised that the Service is currently looking at new contractors regarding supply of meters and that a new supplier is now in place for white goods supplier.

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 2 February 2023

- Meeting was advised that the Service is reviewing its end to end process, to ensure that it hands over repairs and sign up residents as quick as possible.
- In terms of the Buy back Scheme, Council is purchasing ex right to buy properties which is to be used for temporary accommodation, that additional 130 properties have been acquired for homeless families to remain in the borough rather than using private sector rental.
- Members were advised of the increased pressure on Voids section to bring voids up to standard, furnished and supplied with white goods but this has been very challenging as these properties have been out of council's control and management for quite a while and will require surveys and additional resources.
- In response to a question, meeting was advised that a void is a property that is designated as empty at the end of the tenancy and this could be when a council tenant receives an eviction notice or tenant dies and the property returned to the Council which will then be reserviced and a new tenancy commences with a new tenant.
- An empty property is a case where either the tenant is not living in the property because they are in care or hospital, that this is not a tenancy management issue to resolve. Meeting was informed that in some cases maybe due to the tenant's capacity a decision about the tenancy cannot be taken and will only be taken by the tenant or resolved by the courts involvement and this can take a long period unfortunately.
- Meeting was advised of succession cases, when a tenant dies and someone remains in the property seeking to take over the tenancy, that this will require further investigation to ascertain if they are relatives.
- The Director acknowledged that presently there are a number of succession cases under investigative, noting that there is a need to improve the performance in this area.
- To date there are 215 empty properties which are not classified as void, 66 of which are with the Council's legal services for possession, 37 cases are with investigation because possible fraudulent concerns and 25 are open cases which have been awarded discretionary succession.
- On the number of empty properties or voids in Housing Association and what influence the Council has, the Director advised of an Housing Association forum which meets every 2 weeks where these issues are raised, reminding the meeting that the Chair has requested 5 of the big Housing Associations be invited to the Committee at a future meeting, an opportunity for members to scrutinise their activities.
- On the suggestion to retrofit void properties, the Director welcomed the suggestion but reminded meeting that in light of the pressure on the Housing Register, the priority is to put the property back into use and make it available to another tenant.
- With regards concerns that properties on estates were being used as Airbnb by absentee council tenants, meeting was asked to report it to Housing Fraud on 0207 5277432, or email, housing.fraud@islington.gov.uk and officers will investigate . The Executive Member noted that going forward with housing officers doing annual visit it is hoped that this issue will be addressed. In addition to the above, the Director noted that with the proposed housing

audit checks, this will include a cross referencing with credit checks and the electoral register.

The Chair thanked the Director, acknowledging that in light of the pressures on the housing register it is important to investigate further on void and empty properties as families are in need of council housing and prevent fraudulent activities.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

40

QUARTERLY HOUSING PERFORMANCE (Q2 2022/23) (Item B3)

Committee received the above report. Councillor O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Communities and the Assistant Director responded to some of the issues raised in the report. The following issues were highlighted-

- Meeting was advised that in terms of the number of people sleeping rough in Islington the council has rehoused almost 200 people over the last 12 months, and that only 3 people are sleeping rough on Islington streets tonight. These three people have been offered accommodation and support, but at the moment these people have refused the offers of accommodation and support. These people are not local to Islington, but the council wishes to end rough sleeping. Members were reminded that data from the GLA shows that over 1700 people are sleeping on the streets in the last quarter.
- On the rent arrears, meeting was advised that the Council is owed £8m, with an average £1,017 per tenant and that the Council is supporting tenants - look at Ian's response
- In terms of council homes, 153 homes will be delivered this year, that conditions are very challenging in light of Brexit affecting skilled workers and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine affecting supply chain.
- On the number of affordable new homes, a member requested that the inclusion of shared ownership and social rented in the data being reported was misleading and should in future be separated.
- With regards accessibility to the Council's hardship funds and whether it was only restricted to residents in council housing stock, meeting was advised that funds are available for residents living in Islington.
- The Director acknowledged that building new homes is a challenge, that all efforts to lobby the government to address how Council's borrow money and restricting the Council's right to buy receipts.
- On the issue of rent arrears, meeting was advised of an average of £1,017.17, a total of £8.7m from, that about 8,453 out of the 26,000 + households are in some form of rent arrears.
- The Director noted that most of these arrears are a result of the welfare reform which has had a huge impact on our residents due to the introduction of the universal credit.
- Meeting was advised that as noted in the report and the Council's aim to build social rented homes, there is a place for shared ownership and that in the last year 586 Council rented homes and only 24 shared owned properties.

- On the resident satisfaction surveys meeting was advised that this is related to capital works and not first time fixes, that officers are considering a better way of reporting measures, that the use of independent company rather than that carried out by the Contractor.
- The Hardship funds is not managed by the Housing Department but Corporate Resources , that it is accessible to all that reside in Islington and not solely for Council tenants

41 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME CONSULTATION DISCUSSION (Item B4)

Islington's Director Housing Needs and Strategy informed the meeting that a report on the draft allocation scheme was considered at the Executive meeting on 12 January, that it is now out for public consultation till 17 March.

- As community leaders, Members are encouraged to invite the wider community to be involved, that 76% of residents on the council's Housing Register and residents of Islington Council and 86% of Partner agencies are in favour of the changes to the scheme.
- On the question regarding the new generation scheme and whether anyone whose parents own properties would be part of the scheme, the Director advised that nothing has been agreed and welcome all feedback.
- On the household total income figures provided, meeting was advised that these are from the GLA threshold used for low cost home ownership and intermediate rental scheme.
- Meeting was advised that the online consultation exercise is an opportunity for all to participate, that all feedback is welcomed, it is not guaranteed that all areas subject to the consultation framework will be incorporated in the final scheme, that it will be an open and transparent process

RESOLVED:

That the draft report on the allocation scheme be noted

42 TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES (Item B5)

Islington's Director Housing Needs and Strategy informed the meeting that the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TMS) is a requirement of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) that all social landlords have to collect and report on -

- That measures are based around a series of themes important to tenants and have been introduced to demonstrate the individual performance of landlords to their tenants and to allow RSH to compare performances between landlords.
- Consultation was carried out in March 2022, that the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard sets out the reporting requirements for TMS and was published in 2022.
- Landlords are required to collect and report on 22 metrics across 5 themes of which 10 will be measured by landlords through their performance indicators and 12 will be measured by an annual tenant perception survey.

- The Tenant Satisfaction measures does not apply to leaseholders and that landlords will need to start data collection in April 2023, that landlords with 1,000 or more homes will send first years worth 2023/24 of tenant satisfaction measures results to the RSH in summer 2024.
- The Director advised that TMS will be considered by Committee in its quarterly performance report.
- In response to a question on if Housing Associations TMS could be made available for comparison with those of the Council, the Director advised that in the future, it will be published on the government website, that at the moment landlords will have to volunteer to allow Housemark which is a benchmark club. Members were reminded that Islington's Satisfaction measure is presently 65% up from 60% which is still below the national average is 79%, that there is room for improvement going forward.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

43 ISLINGTON BROADBAND (Item B6)

Islington's Director Housing Needs and Strategy informed the meeting that Council has entered into wayleave agreement with two providers and negotiations continue with BT Openreach and GNetwork

The work programme set up for the next 2 years and details will be made available at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

44 WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23 (Item B7)

The Chair informed the meeting that committee will be taking evidence from Islington Planning Service regarding its policy and process on addressing overcrowding within Islington.

RESOLVED:

That Islington Planning Service be invited to the meeting in March to give evidence/presentation on its process and policy to address overcrowding in Islington homes.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

CHAIR



Homes and Neighbourhoods
Islington Council
222 Upper Street N1 1XR

Report of: Ian Swift, Director of Housing Needs and Strategy

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13th March 2023

Overcrowding and Housing Allocations

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Note the content of the briefing and the actions taken to understand and respond to levels of overcrowding in the borough.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Islington has significant levels of housing need in the borough. This may include where households have no stable home or where the accommodation, they occupy is unsuitable for their needs. There are two keyways in which these levels of need are seen by the Housing Service, through applications to the authority as homeless or at risk of homelessness and through applications to join the housing register.
3. Overcrowding is one of the areas of housing need that is observed in both the homelessness and housing register pathways.
4. This report describes current levels of known housing need as captured through the housing register and homelessness and illustrates the place of overcrowding within that need. It also updates on activity to respond to overcrowding.

Housing need and overcrowding in Islington

5. The number of households in housing need in Islington can be described by considering the number of households who are being assisted because

they are homeless or at risk of homelessness and by reflecting on the broader numbers on the housing register.

- There are currently 976 homeless households living in temporary accommodation provided by Islington Council. The data below shows the level of households living in temporary accommodation at the end of each financial year.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| March 2022 | 848 |
| March 2021 | 922 |
| March 2020 | 749 |
| March 2019 | 791 |
| March 2018 | 745 |
| March 2017 | 806 |
| March 2016 | 941 |
| March 2015 | 920 |
| March 2014 | 1004 |
| March 2013 | 1008 |

- In 2022/23 current trends suggest approximately **4,056** homeless approaches by year end with an average monthly approach of **338** new households.
- Those approaching as homeless largely do so because they have lost available accommodation either as a result of being excluded by family or friends or being evicted from the private rented sector or due to Domestic Abuse. There are however a portion of households who approach because their current accommodation is unreasonable to continue to occupy. Legally this is a high threshold and so it is a smaller group than those who have lost their home. Amongst this group are a small number who are extremely overcrowded and as result can no longer remain in their current home.
- A better picture of levels of overcrowding however is seen when viewing the profile of households on the council's housing register. There are two categories of overcrowding recognised on the register – overcrowding and severely overcrowded households with higher priority.
- Table 2 below shows the number of overcrowded households on the register broken down by overcrowding and bedroom need. This illustrates the high overall numbers on the register and the range of bedroom sizes required.

Table 2:

| Severely Overcrowded households' numbers | Size of home required |
|--|-----------------------|
| 0 | 1 bedroom |
| 62 | 2 bedrooms |
| 124 | 3 bedrooms |
| 201 | 4 bedrooms |
| 105 | 5 bedrooms |
| 35 | 6 bedrooms |

| | |
|----|-------------|
| 21 | 7+ bedrooms |
|----|-------------|

| Overcrowded households' numbers | Size of home required |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 494 | 1 bedroom |
| 830 | 2 bedrooms |
| 841 | 3 bedrooms |
| 172 | 4 bedrooms |
| 17 | 5 bedrooms |
| 4 | 6 bedrooms |
| 0 | 7 bedrooms |

11. The number of households on the housing register who are currently overcrowded is **2,909**. Of these **4** meet the criteria for statutory overcrowding, **551** are severely overcrowded and the remainder are in moderate overcrowding.
12. Over time the number on the register have fluctuated and the levels of overcrowding can also be seen to fluctuate. Table 3 and 4 below show the changes in those on the housing register over time and the changes over time in terms of overcrowding. Both are a snapshot position at the start of each financial year.

Table 3: number of households on the housing register

| | |
|------------|--------|
| April 2022 | 15,402 |
| April 2021 | 14,530 |
| April 2020 | 14,164 |
| April 2019 | 14,567 |
| April 2018 | 14,469 |
| April 2017 | 18,033 |
| April 2016 | 20,733 |

Table 4:

Number of overcrowded households on the housing register over the last 7 years

| | |
|------|------|
| 2022 | 2909 |
| 2021 | 2772 |
| 2020 | 2216 |
| 2019 | 1378 |
| 2018 | 2978 |
| 2017 | 3432 |
| 2016 | 5175 |

- 13 This shows levels of overcrowding have appeared to rise markedly since the beginning of the covid 19 pandemic, or perhaps more accurately, the numbers of overcrowded households who have decided to register for a social housing move have risen.

- 14 There are of course higher levels of overcrowding in the wider community which are not seen in these statistics because some overcrowded households do not or cannot join the housing register (for example those subject to immigration controls). The scale of this overcrowding may come out in the census statistics once these are released.
- 15 Cost of living issues and the broader housing crisis are likely to also impact on this issue. The availability of homes at the more affordable end of the private sector is reducing significantly in the last 2 years and reports show that the homes available are up to 17% more expensive. In this context it is likely some households on benefits or low incomes will rent smaller homes that they can afford within local housing allowance levels and this will contribute to rising overcrowding levels.

Responding to overcrowding

- 16 The Housing Scrutiny Committee received a series of presentations during 2022/2023 which illustrated the work taking place within the council to address the issues of overcrowding in Islington.
- 17 The efforts to reduce void Islington Council properties will make some contribution to meeting overall housing need and this will make a small contribution to reducing the numbers experiencing overcrowding.
- 18 Within the council housing stock there is focused work underway through the Rightsizing and Under-Occupation work. This aims to address levels of under occupation in the council stock and by association support the response to overcrowding. The action focusses on a number of areas illustrated below:
 - Moves through the housing register – currently under-occupying and applicants on the Housing Register are awarded the highest priority for a transfer as an incentive for them to give up large properties and they have to bid for properties of their preferred choice. Successful bids are based on the date they have registered. Significant individual support is required to assist under occupiers to bid. There are currently over **676** under occupying tenants registered for a move.
 - Identifying under occupiers - There are more under-occupiers in the stock who are not registered for housing and who may be reluctant to consider a move. They may however also be struggling with bills and the layout of larger homes as they get older. Work is underway to identify these residents and through the Housing Management Services area teams and through a variety of publicity and campaigns.
 - Mobility options available include the Pan London mobility scheme for those fleeing violence which support tenants of London boroughs to move to another home in a different borough, Seaside and Country Homes and mutual

exchange options such as Homeswapper, Homefinder to assist people over the age of 55, and House Exchange.

19. The number of social housings lets has declined year on year Table 5. In 2021/2022 only **1022** council and housing association homes were let through the register. Table 6 below shows the breakdown by bedroom size.

Table 5: Lettings per year

| Lettings per year | Year |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1022 | 2022 |
| 1089 | 2021 |
| 1186 | 2020 |
| 1105 | 2019 |

Table 6: Lettings 2021/22 broken down by bed size

| | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Studio | 36 |
| 1 bedroom | 462 |
| 2 bedrooms | 357 |
| 3 bedrooms | 134 |
| 4 bedrooms | 24 |
| 5 bedrooms and larger | 9 |

- 19 Covid 19 undoubtedly impacted on the number of social homes that were relet and delayed some new build schemes, however it is unlikely any significant increase in social lettings will be seen in 2023.

- 20 Alternative responses, beyond the provision of a social home will be necessary to address this challenge. This might include measures to alleviate the impacts of overcrowding as well as looking alternative housing solutions, though this is challenging in the current market

to wait for any of that to start taking steps to establish compliance systems and processes. It is also a good opportunity to consider Islington Council's current performance management model to see whether it could be further enhanced to respond to the new, more muscular, approach of the Regulator.

Financial Implications

There are no known financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications associated with this report.

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Homes and Neighbourhoods

Islington Council

222 Upper Street N1 1XR

Report of: Ian Swift, Director of Housing Needs and Strategy

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13th March 2023

Islington Fibre Broadband

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Note the content of the briefing report and to critically appraise the work conducted to date and the planned work of the service.

Introduction

To deliver Islington Labour's manifesto commitment ensuring all estates and Islington Council Street properties in the borough have access to high speed, cheap broadband, Islington Broadband is a partnership between the Homes and Neighbourhoods service and full-fibre broadband providers to offer faster, more reliable internet services to our 36,000 council homes as well as non-residential housing assets such as community centres and concierge offices.

Update on programme delivery

Since the first overview provided to Members in February (postponed from the Autumn meeting), this document provides an update on the installation programme as of the 1st of March 2023.

There are currently over 400 live connections available to council street properties in Clerkenwell because of the wayleave being signed with Hyperoptic, Community Fibre have 60 live connections at Spriggs and Barratt House with a further 400 coming online by May 2023, Circa 700 units have been surveyed and are waiting to be built and a further 5000 units allocated for survey The pipeline for go live properties is set out in Appendix 1 with further information to be made available as the programme gathers pace.

Programme overview

The Broadband Delivery Team have been working with two providers – Community Fibre and Hyperoptic on their Phase 1 programmes. Commencing in the south of the borough, each provider's build does depend on their existing infrastructure and local capacity and so the programmes remain indicative until the surveying stage is reached and the provider's installation teams are able to mobilise. In this way estates not previously included in the Phase 1 programme in the Tufnell Park Ward - Brecknock Road, York Way and Elthorne Estates are also being surveyed at present by Community Fibre.

The delivery team has made sure that the providers are linked in with our Tenant Management Organisations at first survey stages (Gambier, Stafford Cripps and Wenlake to date) and they continue to provide tight oversight of the programme through the surveying, design and sign off stages. There has also been significant liaison between VCS (Voluntary & Community Sector), IMAX (Income Maximisation) and other internal stakeholders to ensure that maximum community value is achieved as ISPs (Internet Service Providers) rollout their infrastructure across the borough.

G-Network

G-Network have been visible on streets across the borough and residents, especially those in street properties, are keen to connect to their services. Wayleave negotiations are now complete, and the final draft of the wayleave is with G-Network for internal approval before it is signed and returned to Islington Council. We expect this document imminently and have had regular mobilisation meetings in anticipation of rollout works starting straight away.

BT Openreach

Our Expression of Interest exercise was carried out in early 2022 which set out our requirements of working on our estates, installing equipment in our buildings, and providing community value to the borough. Since then, operational meetings with BT Openreach commenced in September 2022, but have been since suspended as, despite cordial and open discussions during our meetings, their Openreach team returned the master wayleave, which is now a working document with the other two ISPs, stating that they were unwilling to commit to any social value delivery, wanted to council to obtain all statutory permissions on their behalf and removed the obligation to cover the council's reasonable costs in facilitating the rollout.

We continue negotiations and are strengthening our position through sharing information with other London local authorities and Central London Forward¹.

Community benefits

Our colleagues in Inclusive Economy & Jobs Community Partnerships and Local Economies teams have been introduced to Community Fibre and Hyperoptic to develop and take forward initiatives including connections with schools to explore suitable training and support,

¹ <https://centrallondonforward.gov.uk/>

development of careers events for employment hubs later in the year, dissemination of affordable product and discounted tariff scheme and support for local businesses.

We have also secured free connections and services for our community centres, reception centres and other community assets which will start to come online in the next few weeks and months as the programme progresses.

The Steering Group will continue monitor how these benefits are realised over the course of the programme with the expectation that the providers will report progress. The next meeting has been scheduled for April 2023.

Reporting

Now that the working relationships, ways of working and information sharing are better established between the council and the providers we are in the process of setting up monitoring systems to provide stakeholders and with more readily available progress reports.

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Spring 2023 connection status

Live connections available / Works on site / Works due for scheduling / Surveys received for review and sign off by council / Survey scheduled / underway

| Ward | Block | Postcode | Connections / narrative |
|---------|--------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| Bunhill | KESTREL HOUSE | EC1V 8EL | 106 live in April |
| Bunhill | PEREGRINE HOUSE | EC1V 7PR | 211 live in April |
| Bunhill | LAGONIER HOUSE | EC1V 3TJ | No connection timetable provided |
| Bunhill | PERCIVAL ST ESTATE | EC1V 0AG | Hyperoptic Phase 1 ¹ |
| Bunhill | PLEYDELL ESTATE | EC1V 3SN | No connection timetable provided |
| Bunhill | REDBRICK ESTATE | EC1V 3QL | No connection timetable provided |
| Bunhill | THE TRIANGLE | EC1V 0AR | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| Bunhill | WENLAKE ESTATE | EC1V 3PX | No connection timetable provided |
| Bunhill | CHADWORTH HOUSE | EC1V 3RQ | No connection timetable provided |
| Bunhill | GAMBIER ESTATE | EC1V 8EH | 115 live in May |
| Bunhill | ST LUKES ESTATE | EC1V 3SR | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| Bunhill | STAFFORD CRIPPS | EC1V 9ES | No connection timetable provided |
| Bunhill | FARRIERS HOUSE | EC1Y 8TD | No connection timetable provided |

¹ Hyperoptic put forward these properties as their indicative phase 1 in the Autumn but have since not progressed.

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| Bunhill | COLTASH COURT | EC1V 8TD | No connection timetable provided |
| Bunhill | BANNER ESTATE | EC1Y 8NQ | No connection timetable provided |
| Clerkenwell | ALBEMARLE MANSIONS | EC1V 4JB | No connection timetable provided |
| Laycock | BARRATT HOUSE ESTATE | N1 2AH | 22 live connections |
| St Peter's and Canalside | FALCON COURT | N1 8EY | No connection timetable provided |
| St Peter's and Canalside | LANGDON COURT | EC1V 1LH | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Peter's and Canalside | KINGS SQUARE | EC1V 8BA | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Peter's and Canalside | JESSOP COURT | N1 8LG | No connection timetable provided |
| St Peter's and Canalside | BOREAS WALK | N1 8DX | No connection timetable provided |
| St Peter's and Canalside | CLUSE COURT | EC1V 3RB | No connection timetable provided |
| St Peter's and Canalside | COLINSDALE | N1 8DZ | No connection timetable provided |
| St Mary's and St James' | PLEASANT PLACE ESTATE | N1 2BS | No connection timetable provided |
| St Mary's and St James' | SPRIGGS HOUSE ESTATE | N1 2AJ | 38 live connections |
| St Mary's and St James' | TYNDALE MANSIONS ESTATE | N1 2XG | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | HIGHBURY MANSIONS ESTATE | N1 2XF | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | HAWES STREET | N1 2UU | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | 273 UPPER STREET | N1 2UA | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | WAKELIN HOUSE ESTATE | N1 2EF | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | SEBBON STREET | N1 2EH | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | HALTON ROAD | N1 2EN | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | HUME COURT | N1 2EQ | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | DEVONSHIRE HOUSE | N1 2BE | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | BAMPTON HOUSE | N1 2BP | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | CARLETON HOUSE | N1 2BQ | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | ASTEYS ROW | N1 2DA | Hyperoptic Phase 1 |
| St Mary's and St James' | BARING COURT | N1 3DR | No connection timetable provided |
| St Mary's and St James' | CUMMINGS ESTATE | N1 8QA | No connection timetable provided |
| St Mary's and St James' | SHEPERTON ROAD | N1 3DH | No connection timetable provided |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| St Mary's and St James' | ARBON COURT | N1 7AP | No connection timetable provided |
| Finsbury Park | HOOD COURT | N7 6QS | No connection timetable provided |
| Holloway | CAMDEN ESTATE | N7 9PZ | No connection timetable provided |
| Hillrise | HILLRISE MANSIONS ESTATE | N19 3PU | No connection timetable provided |
| Hillrise | HILLSIDE ESTATE | N19 3UX | No connection timetable provided |
| Hillrise | HIGHCROFT ESTATE | N19 3AH | No connection timetable provided |
| Hillrise | HORNSEY RISE ESTATE | N19 3DU | No connection timetable provided |
| Hillrise | NEW ORLEANS ESTATE | N19 3UE | No connection timetable provided |
| Hillrise | REDWOOD COURT | N19 3SN | No connection timetable provided |
| Hillrise | LEYDEN MANSIONS ESTATE | N19 3AW | No connection timetable provided |
| Hillrise | ELTHORNE ESTATE | N19 4AF | No connection timetable provided |
| Tufnell Park | HOLBROOKE COURT ESTATE | N7 0BF | No connection timetable provided |
| Tufnell Park | TUFNELL PARK ESTATE | N7 0PG | No connection timetable provided |
| Tufnell Park | TANSLEY CLO ESTATE | N7 0HP | No connection timetable provided |
| Tufnell Park | BRECKNOCK MANSIONS ESTATE | N19 5AS | No connection timetable provided |
| Tufnell Park | WILFRED FIENBURGH COURT | N7 0EX | No connection timetable provided |
| Tufnell Park | DAREN COURT | N7 0EN | No connection timetable provided |
| Tufnell Park | HILLDROP ESTATE | N7 0QT | No connection timetable provided |
| Tollington | HOLLY PARK ESTATE | N4 4BW | No connection timetable provided |



Homes and Neighbourhoods
Islington Council
222 Upper Street N1 1XR

Report of: Ian Swift, Director of Housing Needs and Strategy

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13th March 2023

Draft overcrowding questionnaires to partners of Islington Council and to residents on the housing register who are living in overcrowded conditions.

Recommendations

This report is to provide the Housing Scrutiny Committee with information on the proposed questionnaires which will be issued to partners of Islington Council and households who are living in overcrowded conditions and are on the housing register seeking alternative accommodation.

It would be appreciated if the Housing Scrutiny Committee could please comment on the proposed questionnaires before they are issued to partners and residents who are living in overcrowded conditions.

Background

The Housing Scrutiny Committee commenced an in depth scrutiny of overcrowding during 2022. Since this in-depth scrutiny commenced the Housing Scrutiny committee has received evidence, presentation and information's from the following:

- Environmental Health services
- The New Build services
- The Housing Needs service
- The council's Housing Management Service

- Housing Associations
- Property services during the Damp and Mould enquiry
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Islington Law Centre
- The Planning Department

The next stage of this in-depth scrutiny is to undertake two surveys one for all of Islington Council's partners and the second questionnaire is to all households on the housing register seeking alternative accommodation due to overcrowding.

Appendix one attached to this report is the questionnaire to partners of Islington Council and asks 10 open ended and challenging questions which will assist the council's housing scrutiny into overcrowding and the council's future work in this area.

Appendix two attached to this report is the draft questionnaire will be issued to all households on the housing register who are living in overcrowded conditions. This survey has been produced in partnership with the University College London. It is hoped this survey will assist the council's future work in this area and develop new ways of working.

The results of both questionnaires will be analysed independently of the Homes and Neighbourhoods service to enable a transparent approach to be adopted and also ensure this independence will form a critical challenge to the council's existing and proposed work in this area.

It is hoped the results of these surveys along with the final report will be presented to the May 2023 Housing Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The results of these surveys will provide valuable information and allow new ways of working to be developed by Islington Council and partners.

Financial Implications

There are no known financial implications associated with this report

Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications associated with this report

Islington Council and the University College London Overcrowding survey

- To be completed by one member of the household on behalf of the whole household
- To be sent to residents on the housing register currently living in overcrowded conditions via email or by post

INTRODUCTION

There has never been more demand for rented accommodation in Islington. We have learnt from previous surveys that living in overcrowded accommodation is an important issue for Islington residents. We are reviewing the allocation policy and how we can make things easier for residents living in overcrowding. We would therefore like your help to understand better the impacts of overcrowding for you and your household, and your opinions on what actions the council should consider.

The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete. Your responses are anonymous and will be stored securely by the Council. The anonymous survey responses will only be seen by the staff conducting this survey and those involved in any future programs. Any identifiable information that you share with us, such as your name or contact details, will be stored separately from your survey responses and only used if you have specified that you would like to be contacted again. Your participation in this survey is voluntary; responding indicates that you are consenting to take part.

If you have any questions about this survey or would like a follow up conversation to discuss any issue in more detail, please contact _____

1. The effects of living in an overcrowded home

People find living in overcrowded homes affects them in different ways. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Living in an overcrowded home affects *me* in the following ways...

| | Strongly agree | Agree | No opinion | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Not applicable |
|---|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| It makes me feel anxious | | | | | | |
| It makes me feel depressed | | | | | | |
| It affects my breathing (worsens asthma, COPD) | | | | | | |
| It disrupts my sleep (I get less sleep or it's more disturbed) | | | | | | |
| It makes it difficult for me to work | | | | | | |
| It makes it difficult for me to study | | | | | | |
| It makes it difficult for us to keep our home clean | | | | | | |
| It makes it difficult for me to take part in social activities (e.g. having family or friends around) | | | | | | |

Living in an overcrowded home affects others *in my household* in the following ways

| | Strongly agree | Agree | No opinion | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Not applicable |
|--|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| It makes one or more of my household feel anxious | | | | | | |
| It makes one or more of my household feel depressed | | | | | | |
| It affects one or more of my household breathing (worsens asthma, COPD) | | | | | | |
| It disrupts one or more of my household sleep (get less sleep or it's more disturbed) | | | | | | |
| It makes it difficult for one or more of my household to work | | | | | | |
| It makes it difficult for one or more of my household to study | | | | | | |
| It makes it difficult for one or more of my household to play | | | | | | |
| It makes it difficult for one or more of my household to take part in social activities (e.g. having family or friends around) | | | | | | |

Overcrowding may affect you in other ways. Please use the box below to write any additional impacts not listed above or comment on the impacts of overcrowding on your own or on your household's health and wellbeing

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

2. Aside from the number of people in the house, what has made the experience better?

| | Yes | No | Not applicable |
|---|-----|----|----------------|
| Access to outside space e.g parks so we spend time somewhere other than at home | | | |
| Access to other places for children to play and learn, e.g. children's centres | | | |
| Being close to family/friends/work | | | |

Please use the box below to write any additional factors that have made the experience better:

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

3. Aside from the number of people in the house, what has made the experience worse?

| | Yes | No | Not applicable |
|--|-----|----|----------------|
| We can't use all the rooms in my home because of damp/mould | | | |
| Drying clothes indoors further reduces usable space in my home | | | |
| We can't use all the rooms in my home because some rooms are too cold in winter | | | |
| We can't use all the rooms in my home because some rooms need repairs | | | |
| We are reluctant to use outside space near my home because of crime/anti-social behaviour nearby | | | |

Please use the box below to write any additional factors that have made the experience worse:

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

4. What should the council consider doing?

The council are looking into different ways to make it easier to manage household overcrowding as, sadly, the wait for larger homes is very long.

In order to help the council understand what residents want, please indicate which of the following you think the council should investigate for Islington. [NB Not all these options will be feasible for Islington residents – your answers to this question will help the council prioritise what they investigate further.]

| | Should be a priority | Could be acceptable | Not suitable for us | Already been offered/used by us |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Making life easier without moving house | | | | |
| Providing free or low-cost storage facilities nearby | | | | |
| Home design advice to maximise usable space | | | | |
| Advice on space saving furniture | | | | |
| Prioritising repairs for overcrowded homes | | | | |
| Improving outdoor space attached to your home | | | | |
| Opportunities to use communal space , for household jobs (e.g. drying clothes) | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Opportunities to use communal space , for study, play, socialising | | | | |
| Strategies involving some or all of your household relocating to a different home | | | | |
| Moving adult children into their own home | | | | |
| Home swap within Islington | | | | |
| Home swap outside of Islington | | | | |

Please add any comments, views on those listed above or suggestions for other strategies.

5. About you

The information you provide us with will be used to improve our services and ensure that we have a range of responses from across our communities. These are standard questions we ask but if you do not wish to answer, that's fine. The information which you provide on this form will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

How many adults (i.e. over 18 years old) live in your household? _____

How many children live in your household? _____

For each child, give their age and gender

| | Age | Gender |
|---------|-----|--------|
| Child 1 | | |
| Child 2 | | |
| Child 3 | | |
| Child 4 | | |
| Child 5 | | |
| Child 6 | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

How many bedrooms do you have? _____

What type of dwelling do you live in? studio flat/bedsit flat house

Does your home have an outdoor space which you and your family can use?

Yes No

[Consider branching questions to find out more about the outdoor space type]

How long have you been on the housing register?

What best describes your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender

- Nonbinary
- Prefer not to say

What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-49
- 50-64
- 65+

Do you consider yourself to be disabled or have a long-term illness (e.g. cancer diabetes, mental health condition)?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
- If you answered yes, what is your disability? _____

What is your ethnicity? <<Give options as in other council surveys>>

6. Further input

The council would like to talk to residents in your situation to learn more. If you or one of your household that is over 18 years old would be prepared to talk about your experience, please let us know below:

I would be prepared to take part in a

- 30 min 1-1 telephone discussion
- 1 hour group discussion in person
- 1 hour group discussion online

Email: phone:

THANK YOU

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

We value your opinions, and your voice will contribute to important insight that will guide how we design our services. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, or want to better understand how your data are being used, please contact _____

If you would like to find out more information on housing services, please visit: _____

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How can Islington Council improve data collection so that the true extent of overcrowding in Islington is known? Please provide comments

How can Islington Council improve interventions which can be targeted to the people and areas most in need? Please comment

How can Islington Council and other social landlords build and acquire homes of all sizes, affordable at or close to Local Housing Allowance rates, including family-sized homes? Please comment

How can Islington Council tackle the racial inequalities that are systemic in overcrowding in Islington? Please comment

How can Islington Council improve options for helping people who, across all tenures, live in homes that are not the right size for their household, including those who could downsize? Please comment.

How can Islington Council collect and publish data on downsizing outcomes as a result of new building, particularly where smaller units are intended for use by under-occupiers; Please comment

How can Islington Council do more to help improve overall affordability and standards in respect of privately rented homes, so that more families can be housed securely in the PRS? Please comment

How can Islington Council improve access to and awareness of discretionary housing payments for those who need additional support? Please comment?

How can Islington Council improve the outcomes for people who are living in Overcrowded conditions? Please comment

What should Islington Council do next to address overcrowding? Please comment

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Homes and Neighbourhoods
Islington Council
222 Upper Street N1 1XR

Report of: Ian Swift, Director of Housing Needs and Strategy

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13th March 2023

Social Housing (Regulation) Bill

Recommendation

This report is to provide the Housing Scrutiny Committee with information on the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill which will be introduced and to ensure the council is publicly accountable, honest, and transparent when improving the quality of services to tenants across Islington.

Background

Since June 2022 the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill has been making its way through the parliamentary process, introduced into the House of Lords in June and received its third reading at the end of October. It is now being considered by the Commons before receiving Royal Assent.

The Bill, trailed in the Social Housing White Paper in 2020, has two very notable focus areas. These are: fundamental reform to the remit and powers of the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) – from reactive to proactive regulation; and a focus on Health and Safety matters including tenant empowerment.

Health and safety regulation for social housing is broadly contained within the 'consumer standards', these apply to Islington Council in the same manner as Housing Associations – there won't be any special treatment.

The argument for reform in these focus areas was well made at the time. The Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Regulation Review 2021-22 outlined examples of interventions on consumer regulation. It showed a marked increase in the number of regulatory referrals (up 10% - to 653- year on year) as well as the

proportion of referrals being escalated to the Consumer Regulation Panel (increased from 40% to 46% year on year).

Of the eight findings of breach to the consumer standard, five were local authorities. Interestingly all five were as a result of self-referrals to the regulator, which shows, at least in those authorities, an appreciation of responsibility for compliance as well as a culture of openness. On the flip side, this also could be interpreted by some to mean local authorities are performing less well than Housing Associations, accounting for a disproportionate number of regulatory breaches. Since the end of the Consumer Regulation Review's period, Local Authority regulatory notices have continued to be published and consumer compliance issues are likely further to come under the spotlight following the Regulator of Social Housing's new proactive approach to regulation. The Regulator of Social Housing has encouraged Local Authorities to prepare for the shift to a more muscular regulatory approach.

Social housing health and safety is in the spotlight. The Regulator's new powers will be a key reform that ministers will surely hold up to show they are seeking to address the sector-wide issues. The recent issues in Rochdale and the way the Government directly intervened brings this into sharp focus.

Elected Members are also aware of the special investigation currently being conducted by the Housing Ombudsman at Islington Council relating to Damp and Mould.

Currently the Regulator of Social Housing will only investigate a potential breach if there is a referral regarding non-compliance, either a self-referral or from an interested party, such as a tenant, charity or local politician. Furthermore, the Regulator of Social Housing will only investigate if the failure is to the serious detriment of tenants or potential tenants. The 'serious detriment' hurdle is to be removed by the Bill, which lowers the bar for Regulator for Social Housing's investigations. The Bill proposes that the Regulator for Social Housing obtain more wide-reaching powers to seek assurance from Local Authorities on standards compliance. The new approach to proactive regulation will require upfront information from landlords which the Regulator will likely assess against the new tenant satisfaction reports to corroborate the landlord's evidence (The Housing Scrutiny Committee received a report on Tenancy Satisfaction Measures at the 2nd of February 2023, meeting). Furthermore, in a show of even more muscularity, more recent amendments from the House of Lords have included a duty on the Regulator to implement a plan for regular and one-off inspections of Local Authorities and Housing Associations.

Housing Associations have a head start on Islington Council in more proactive regulatory style, as Islington Council have not been subject to In Depth Assessments (IDAs) as well as being organisations which are – as their name suggests - more concentrated and specialised on delivery of social housing. However, irrespective of the model used to inform the Regulator, establishing compliance with any new regulatory aspects will, put most obviously, simply require Islington Council to be certain that it is complying with the current standards. That might sound trite but how does Islington Council satisfy itself that it is complying with the standards? For

Housing Associations there is typically a Board of Directors with strategic oversight. For Islington Council the governance model will differ. Islington Council has the this meeting the Housing Scrutiny Committee, the Executive meeting, Full Council and other Scrutiny Committee's. Good governance, as always, is key to getting this right.

Overwhelmingly the regulatory notices published by the Regulator of Social Housing relating to local authorities have concerned the Homes Standard regarding health and safety matters relating to electrical, gas, water, asbestos and fire safety. Often this was where the local authorities had not completed the requisite inspections on a scale that amounted to a potential serious detriment to tenants.

With those breaches in mind, which are probably much more widespread than the number of regulatory notices suggest, an important aspect of the Bill that Islington Council will need to address is appointing a health and safety lead. This person is responsible for monitoring Islington Council's compliance with health and safety requirements relating to the health and safety of the tenants of Islington Council.

We expect further information from the RSH this year on a direction of travel. There is no reason for Islington Council to wait for any of that to start taking steps to establish compliance systems and processes. It is also a good opportunity to consider Islington Council's current performance management model to see whether it could be further enhanced to respond to the new, more muscular, approach of the Regulator.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The TSMs are grouped into 5 themes: keeping properties in good repair; maintaining building safety; respectful and helpful engagement; complaints handling; responsible neighbourhood management.

| Keeping properties in good repair | Maintaining building safety | Respectful and helpful engagement | Complaints handling | Responsible neighbourhood management |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| TP02: Satisfaction with repairs | TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe | TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them | TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints | TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained |
| TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair | BS01: Gas safety checks | TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them | CH01: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord ³ | TP11: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods |
| TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well-maintained | BS02: Fire safety checks | TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect | CH02: Complaints responded to within Complaint | TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour |

| | | | Handling Code timescales | |
|--|------------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| RP01: Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard | BS03: Asbestos safety checks | | | NM01: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord ⁴ |
| RP02: Repairs ⁵ completed within target timescale | BS04: Water safety checks | | | |
| | BS05: Lift safety checks | | | |

The Housing Scrutiny Committee will be receiving regular performance reports on the above Tenancy Satisfaction Measures to ensure we are accountable to our residents and the council becomes the best Housing service in the country.

Financial Implications

There are no known financial implications associated with the Tenancy Satisfaction Measures.

Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications associated with the Tenancy Satisfaction Measures.

Glossary

The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill: together with Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Act 2022, represents part of the government's response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy of June 2017. It follows a 2018 green paper on social housing and accompanying call for evidence on social housing regulation, and a 2020 social housing white paper. The Bill is currently at Report stage (18th October 2022) in the House of Lords. <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3177>

The Regulator of Social Housing: an independent body tasked to focus on regulating the social housing sector at an organisational level. It can receive referrals from tenants, registered providers of social housing and other sources relating to its standards on homes, neighbourhood and community, tenancy or tenant empowerment and involvement. The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill includes new powers for the Regulator of Social Housing intended to bring more focus on how consumer issues are regulated in the sector.

The Housing Ombudsman: investigates and resolves individual complaints made by tenants, shared owners, and leaseholders about their landlords. The Ombudsman and Regulator are required to cooperate with each other.



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Tenants Charter – Final version

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- Note the content of the Tenants Charter below which will be piloted during 2023 and reviewed during 2023/2024 with all 26,000 tenants of Islington Council.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The Islington Council Tenants Charter is focused on strengthening the relationship between residents and Islington Council and embodies all the great work happening across Islington to create positive relationships with residents. It also challenges Islington Council to go further – presenting an opportunity for us to take the lead in accountability and customer oversight.
2. By adopting this 10 point charter, Islington Council commits to:
 - Stronger relationships – Islington Council will treat all residents with respect in all our interactions. Relationships between residents and Islington Council will be based on openness, honesty, and transparency. We will build a stronger two-way relationship with you to build a fairer and more resident focused housing service.
 - Delivering excellent customer services and experiences – We will be easy to deal with and resolve your enquiries and keep to our promises. We will strive to continuously improve our services and will be fair, inclusive and value diversity.

- Effective communication – Residents will receive clear, accessible, and timely information from Islington Council on the issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how Islington Council is working to address problems in their area, and information about performance on key issues and Tenant Satisfaction Measures. We will also tell you what we have done with your feedback and suggestions for improving services and how we learn from complaints
- Listening to and truly understanding your priorities – We will be prepared to change our services to meet your specific needs and take your feedback and suggestions for improvement seriously. The Voice and influence from residents will be sought and valued and this information will be used to inform decisions and working practices. Every individual resident will feel listened to by Islington Council on the issues that matter to them and can speak without fear. We will involve you in decision making about your home and neighbourhood. We will offer you a “menu” of engagement to allow you to engage with us in a way that suits you. It is essential that residents can dip in and out of engaging with us and that they are able to participate in a variety of ways that suit their individual circumstance and lifestyles, and their varying degrees of time and personal commitment.
- Being accountable to residents – Collectively, residents will work in partnership with Islington Council to independently scrutinise and hold Islington Council to account for the decisions that affect the quality of their homes and services. We will publish clear services standards that will allow residents to hold us to account, including our Anti-Social Behaviour work
- Delivering good quality homes– Residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well-managed. We are building new affordable rented homes to be proud of and will keep your local area, clean, green, and safe.
- Resident oversight and reporting of progress against the charter – this will give residents a stronger role in holding Islington Council to account.
- Giving residents a stronger collective voice – Issues that are uncovered from resident’s feedback can be referred to the Housing Scrutiny Committee for closer examination, so that action is taken where appropriate to protect residents’ rights and interests. This will be enhanced with two tenant representatives attending the Housing Scrutiny Committee.
- Supporting people - We will provide support to improve well-being and independence.
- When things go wrong – Residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints, and seeking redress. Residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

Financial Implications

There are no known financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications associated with this report.

Homes and Neighbourhoods

Islington Council

222 Upper Street N1 1XR

**Report of: Rebecca Nicholson Head of Integrated Services and Ian Swift
Director of Housing Needs and Strategy**

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13th March 2023

Damp, condensation, and mould programme

Progress Report February 2023

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. This report aims to provide the Housing Scrutiny Committee with information and progress made to date on the damp, condensation and mould programme that was established in November 2022.
- 1.2. Officers encourage the Housing Scrutiny Committee to appraise this work and make suggestions of how the council's work in this critical area can be improved.

2. Synopsis

- 2.1. This report details the context of damp and mould in Islington and the wider statutory frameworks we are working within.

- 2.2. It also outlines the broader engagement activity with residents and partners to strengthen communication and transparency, and to ensure accountability and improve the quality of services provided to residents.
- 2.3. As part of the council's commitment to be transparent the report details the 2021/2022 cases where the Housing Ombudsman found maladministration in the complaints for damp and mould, which led to a special investigation into our handling of damp and mould complaints.
- 2.4. A programme overview is provided and describes the approach, activity to date, learning and challenges, a section on upcoming work is also included. The overview includes:
- Background
 - Encourage our tenants to raise concerns
 - Learning from complaints to ensure we place the residents at the heart of the service provision, and we provide a service to every resident as if this service were being provided to an important member of our own family
 - Islington's damp and mould five-point plan
 - Strategic and operational response
 - Urgent response
 - Tenancy and property audit
 - Taskforce casework board
 - Alternative housing provision for tenants living with damp and mould in their homes
 - Housing Ombudsman investigation
 - Partnership work and whole systems approach
 - Draft Housing Allocations Policy
 - Communication and engagement strategies with residents
 - Training
 - Data-led and using technology to support approach
 - Benchmarking and sharing good practice
 - Service demand and investment
 - Improvement works and installations
 - Challenges
 - Upcoming activity
 - Conclusion

3. Background

- 3.1. The fundamental role of Islington Council is to provide tenants with safe homes to live in. This includes effectively and promptly resolving issues in homes which pose a danger to health and wellbeing, including damp and/ or mould. If damp and mould are left untreated for long periods, health problems can be serious or, in extreme cases, fatal.

Most social homes in Islington are of good quality: almost 7 out of ten tenants say they are happy with the homes and services Islington Council provides. But where issues with damp or mould do arise, it is imperative that they are taken seriously. Islington Council want to make sure we understand the prevalence of these issues across our stock and take steps to resolve the root cause of the problem and prevent it occurring again as far as possible. This report provides an overview how we are dealing with damp and mould in a way which is proactive, understanding of our tenants' experiences, and most importantly effective in resolving the underlying issue.

3.2. The best way for Islington Council to prevent problems with damp and mould developing and potentially harming tenants' wellbeing is to take a proactive approach to identifying any issues across their stock. Islington Council will draw insight from as many sources as possible to identify instances of damp and mould and the causes. This may involve looking beyond stock condition or stock investment surveys as a sole mechanism for identifying issues not reported by tenants. For example, as part of an annual home visit programme, Islington Council will check annually for damp and mould in all rooms, and it is a good opportunity to talk to our tenants and ask about any specific concerns they may have.

3.3. **Encourage our tenants to raise concerns**

3.3.1. Alongside proactive work from staff, Islington Council will encourage our tenants to report problems as soon as possible. Islington Council will share information with tenants explaining the risks of living in a home with damp and mould, how to identify and report these issues, what steps Islington Council will take when reported and when it will be completed. Islington Council will have a simple way for tenants to report damp and mould problems and to complain if they are not satisfied with our response.

3.3.2. Islington Council will also ensure our communications reach as many tenants as possible. Complaint procedures will be clearly explained to our tenants and details for the Housing Ombudsman Services will be added in our tenant communications. This will require a combination of a range of communication methods, such as: emails/ texts directly to tenants; leaflets and resident newsletters; information at community events or drop-in sessions, videos on digital channels, and social media as well as translation services where required. However, a significant barrier can be lack of trust; if tenants have reported issues or experienced delays in repairs previously, they may not trust that any future problems they report will be dealt with effectively. In such cases Islington Council can only rebuild trust by delivering a good service and resolving issues like damp and mould quickly and effectively. Islington Council will not be complacent.

3.3.3. Islington Council will respond to instances of damp and mould promptly, with compassion for the impact on tenants' wellbeing, and with a focus on dealing with the issue and preventing it from reoccurring.

3.4. Learning from complaints

- 3.4.1. Islington Council will ensure we learn from complaints and other sources of resident feedback, to continually improve our performance. This is particularly important for issues like damp and mould where problems are likely to reappear if not appropriately resolved. Islington Council will ensure we have a rolling process to review complaints, assess what went wrong, and as a result make changes where needed to policies, procedures, and staff behaviour.
- 3.5. Islington Council is a landlord to over 36,000 Islington households, managing over 25,200 tenanted and 10,000 leaseholder properties, with 700 freeholder properties, with estimates that over 40% are sub-let.
- 3.6. Our stock condition varies with buildings that predate 1920. There was a growth of building construction post the Second World War and into the early 1980's.
- 3.7. We have new build schemes. and cyclical and major work programmes on estates, "The council carries out an assessment on each estate block every seven to ten years to understand what works will need to be done to ensure that the external and communal areas of the building remain in good order. This work could include repairs or replacements of roofs, windows, brickwork, and external and communal decorations."¹
- 3.8. As a landlord to over 40% of Islington's population who live in social housing, we know that in some of our properties damp and mould is present and, in many cases, a recurring issue that we need to tackle with a zero-tolerance approach to interventions.
- 3.9. The council also has an important statutory and strategic duty to work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords who also own over 17,000 properties in Islington and many of these properties due to the age, design etc also suffer from Damp and Mould.
- 3.10. Between January 2020 and December 2022 3,563 Islington Council properties have made one or more reports of damp and mould. This represents 14% of Islington Council's managed properties considerably higher than the 3% reported for all social housing in England.
- 3.11. In the Housing Ombudsman's 2021 Spotlight report: damp and mould – it is not lifestyle² states that in the English Housing Survey 2019 to 2020: headline report "Social housing compared to the private rented sector: According to the 2019-20 English Housing Survey, serious condensation and mould problems were present in at least one room in

¹ <https://www.islington.gov.uk/housing/repairs-and-estate-management/major-works-and-improvements/improvement-works>

² <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Spotlight-report-Damp-and-mould-final.pdf>

133,000 (3%) social sector homes and 192,000 (5%) of homes lacked thermal comfort. Homes built between 1981 and 1990 were most likely to fail the decent homes standard for thermal comfort. Although damp and mould are not specifically mentioned in relation to private rented sector (PRS) properties, the survey does note that the PRS had the highest proportion of non-decent homes (23%, 1.1 million). In comparison, the social housing sector had the lowest proportion of non-decent homes (12%, 504,000).”

- 3.12. In response to the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report we produced a project summary report. (Appendix 1)
- 3.13. About one in 20 homes let by social landlords in England have damp and mould problems, [a study by the Regulator of Social Housing reveals](#).
- 3.14. However, some landlords could strengthen their approach. The regulator estimates that less than 0.2% of social housing has major damp and mould problems, 1-2% contains serious problems, and a further 3-4% has ‘notable damp and mould’.
- 3.15. According to the regulator: “The vast majority of people living in social housing have homes that are free from damp and mould. However, living with damp and mould can have a serious impact on tenants’ health and wellbeing.”
- 3.16. [A separate study by the Housing Ombudsman](#) found that just 35% of social landlords in England have damp and mould policies, including processes for identifying and responding to reports from tenants. A further 12% said they were in the process of implementing one.
- 3.17. The ombudsman recorded a 77% rise in the number of enquiries and complaints it received from residents about damp and mould in 2021/22, taking the figure to 3,530. To date, there have been 3,969 enquiries and complaints this year.
- 3.18. Furthermore, the housing department in Islington Council outlined in their Housing Strategy: A home for all 2021-2026 “Our strategic programmes set out to tackle damp problems and improve the energy efficiency of our buildings.”³
- 3.19. The council is also preparing for the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill⁴ which will enact a set of measures to improve standards for people living in social housing. It sets out a new regulatory framework for the consumer regulation of social housing to strengthen the accountability of landlords for providing safe homes, quality services and treating residents with respect. The Housing Scrutiny Committee considered the Tenancy

³ https://www.islington.gov.uk/~/_media/sharepoint-lists/public-records/housing/publicity/publicconsultation/20202021/20210310drafthousingstrategyahomeforall1.pdf

⁴ <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3177>

Satisfaction Measures which will be introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing at the February 2023 Housing Scrutiny Committee meeting. The 13th of March Housing Scrutiny Committee will also consider a report on the Regulation of Social Housing.

- 3.20. On 17th November 2020, the Charter for Social Housing Residents: social housing white paper⁵ was published and updated in 22nd January 2021, which “sets out the actions the Government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong...[and] what every social housing resident should be able to expect”.

The key themes of the paper are:

- **To be safe in your home.** We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
- **To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
- **To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- **To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its board. The Government will provide access to help, if you want it, for you to learn new skills to ensure your landlord listens.
- **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,** with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- **To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

The Government will “work with the Regulator of Social Housing (“the regulator”) to create a strong, proactive consumer regulatory regime” and “requires that social rented homes are maintained by landlords to at least the quality set out by the Government’s Decent Homes Standard.”

- 3.21. The Decent Homes Standard⁶ was updated in 2006 to reflect the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The definition of a decent home is to meet the following:

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

- It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- It is in a reasonable state of repair
- It has modern facilities and services
- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

3.22. What is damp, condensation and mould

3.22.1. Damp is excessive water in properties the source can vary but excess water can lead to damage to the property and risk of harm to the residents. Condensation is water droplets from moisture laden air forming on cold surfaces. Mould forms in persistently wet environments either from leaks or condensation it forms dark or multi-coloured spots and sometimes mushrooms. Mould sheds spores to reproduce and these can be harmful to health where there are excessive concentrations.

3.22.2. Examples of root causes of damp, condensation, and mould

- A repair – Internal or external leaks accelerates damp and mould issues
- Building design - Cold bridging and lack of insulation.
- Service failure - demands of service, process gaps or difficulty resolving root cause of damp, turnover of staff, lack of ownership.
- Overcrowding e.g. Lack of space and high levels of respiration
- Cost of living and fuel poverty e.g. Inability to afford to adequately heat the home leading to lots of cold surfaces for condensation to form.
- Poor thermal efficiency.
- Inadequate ventilation e.g., Property does not have adequate ventilation or tenant is unable to manage ventilation due to disability, mental health or capacity, or security fears and cost.

3.23. In 2022/2023 the council also engaged in wider resident and partnership activity including:

3.23.1. **Creating a Tenants Charter (Appendix 2) and Tenant Empowerment framework (Appendix 3)** that will help address damp and mould through empowering and strengthening the relationship between tenants and Islington Council.

3.23.2. **Islington Housing Association Partnership Agreement** produced a Housing Association Partnership agreement with our Registered Social Landlords. This is to link housing association providers in Islington and Islington Council in partnership to facilitate local delivery on key strategic themes. This partnership agreement also

provides corporate leadership as a strategic housing authority in delivering the 'Islington Housing Strategy.' (Appendix 4)

- 3.23.3. **Private Rented Sector Charter created** to provide a high quality, low carbon, affordable and sustainable offer so that Islington's residents have an excellent choice of quality homes in clean, safe, and vibrant neighbourhoods and landlords meet their obligations to their tenants. Its key objectives are: Improve Property and Management Standards, Increase Opportunities within the Sector for Low Income Households, and Improve Communication across the Sector. (Appendix 5)
- 3.23.4. During the final quarter of 2022 the council conducted 22 community drop-in sessions across Islington to discuss the cost-of-living crisis, the District Heating consultation, mould and damp, financial inclusion etc and over 4,700 tenants and leaseholders were invited to these drop-in sessions. These community drop-in sessions were attended by officers and Directors in the Homes and Neighbourhood service.
- 3.24. In November 2022 Islington Council accelerated its response to damp and mould in the wake of the tragic death of Awaab Ishak due to damp and mould in his family's home. Awaab died in December 2020. The coroner's verdict published on the 16th of November 2022 concluded that Awaab had died from prolonged exposure to mould in his home environment.
- 3.25. Two serious cases of damp and mould in Islington Council managed properties were publicised in the national media on the 27th of November 2022 and advocated by housing activist Kwajo Tweneboa.
- 3.25.1. Property one: The household was contacted on Sunday the 27th of November 2022, and the issue of a leaking room was rectified later that same week.
- 3.25.2. Property two: The household was contacted on Sunday the 27th of November 2022; temporary accommodation was offered, and the tenants were moved two days after the report in the national media. We are in regular weekly contact with the household to find suitable property for their permanent move. The family have since been offered 2 x 4-bedroom properties; both have been refused by the household.
- 3.26. The Government has tabled amendments to the Social Housing Regulation Bill to introduce 'Awaab's Law,' which will require landlords to fix reported health hazards within specified timeframes.⁷ This will be subject to a separate consultation with Local Housing Authorities and Housing Associations later this year.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-deliver-awaabs-law>

3.27. **Housing Ombudsman (HO)**

3.28. The Housing Ombudsman found four cases of maladministration in our response to damp and mould complaints between 2021/22, which has led to a special investigation into our handling of damp and mould complaints. The investigation will run for six months from January 2023. Below outlines the detail of these four cases:

3.28.1. **Case 1:**

Outcome: There was **maladministration** in the landlord's handling of the reports of damp and leaks **in the communal area (hallway)** of the property, and **service failure** in its response to the subsequent formal complaint.

The complaint: The resident has described a continued roof leak, affecting the communal hallway, following repairs. The resident stated that this has resulted in the inner wall in the communal hallway of the property being damp which they consider needs treating. The resident states that every time it rains, the leak worsens. The resident states that despite their attempts to raise their concerns with the landlord that they go unaddressed.

Action taken: Compensation paid

Write to the resident, copying in the Ombudsman, setting out the actions that the landlord will now take to identify and repair any outstanding roof leak, and address the damp wall (in the communal hallway). It should provide a time limit for these actions to be completed, which should be no later than 12 weeks from the date of this report.

Wrote to resident on 22 October 2021 confirming compensation was paid and confirming an appointment arranged for 1 November 2021 to identify any outstanding works.

HO response: The landlord dealt appropriately with the reports of a roof leak in March and October 2019. There is no indication of the resident raising concerns about any outstanding works to a damp wall at these times. Some errors were made with booking appointments following on from the March 2020 report, but the landlord has appropriately apologised for these and offered compensation. However, there was a lack of communication about the March 2020 repair, and this third attempt at rectifying the roof leak did not resolve it. The matter remains outstanding to date (Sep 21). In addition, the resident's concerns about damp from August 2020 were not appropriately addressed in a reasonable period, which the formal complaint response did not identify or resolve. Again, this issue remains outstanding (as of Sep 21).

3.28.2. **Case 2:**

Outcome: There was **maladministration** by the landlord in respect of the complaint about how the landlord handled the residents reports of repairs needed in the

property, primarily to address damp and mould, and a repair to the immersion heater.

The complaint:

The resident complains about how the landlord handled their reports of repairs needed in the property, primarily to address damp and mould, and a repair to the immersion heater.

Action taken: Compensation paid.

The landlord to offer to meet with, or arrange a telephone call with, the resident and any relevant support person, to discuss the current situation including the options for decanting the resident so that repairs can be completed. The landlord to report back to the Ombudsman and the resident with its action plan, to ensure that repairs are completed within a reasonable time, within six weeks of the date of this Order.

The landlord to re-consider whether an electrical safety test is required given the surveyor's recommendation of 6 November 2019 and the landlord to confirm to the resident and the Ombudsman its position in relation to this with any reasons within six weeks of the date of this Order.

HO response: There is evidence that repairs were reported by the resident on 28 October 2019 and have not been satisfactorily completed to date (a period of two years). There were periods where the delay was not due to any failure by the landlord, that is:

- a. A short delay following the cancellation of the appointment of 20 March 2020 while the resident was self-isolating.
- b. A short delay following the no access appointment of 3 August 2020.

While it is acknowledged that the landlord acted appropriately in acknowledging its shortcomings and offering compensation, the compensation was not proportionate to the distress and inconvenience cause to the resident by the delays in the repairs and it was not in accordance with its own compensation guidance. In addition, the landlord failed to follow up its offer during the mediation process and has confirmed that the works remain outstanding to date.

There were significant delays in the landlord completing repairs in the property. This caused considerable distress and inconvenience to the resident who informed the resident that they were sleeping in the living room and suffered from ill health. The landlord took some steps to put things right during the Ombudsman's mediation process by offering to complete the works and offering compensation. However, the compensation was not proportionate to the distress caused to the resident and the landlord failed to follow up this offer by completing the repairs for several months after the offer was made.

3.28.3.

Case 3:

Outcome: There was **maladministration** in the landlord's handling of the resident's report of damp and mould in their property.

The complaint: The complaint is about the landlord's handling of the resident's report of damp and mould in their property.

Action taken: Compensation paid. A meeting was held between the Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) team and the Repairs service to review learning and processes regarding the sharing of information. As a result of this meeting, we have identified issues relating to a lack of clarity regarding TMO and council repairs obligations and the handover of works. A further meeting has been arranged between the TMO team and the Housing Repairs Service Manager on 21/06 to review TMO/council repairs processes and to put a written process in place to support staff.

HO response: The landlord has acknowledged significant service failure and provided redress for those failures on 6 April 2021. However, since that date, the landlord has failed to carry out the necessary repairs to the balcony of the neighbouring flat and remains in breach of its repairing obligations.

3.28.4.

Case 4

Outcome:

- a. **Maladministration** in respect of the landlord's handling of persistent damp and mould issues at the property.
- b. No maladministration in respect of the landlord's handling of various other repairs to the property.
- c. **Service failure** in respect of the landlord's complaint handling.

The complaint:

- a. The landlord's handling of persistent damp and mould issues at the property;
- b. The landlord's handling of various other repairs to the property;
- c. The landlord's complaint handling.

HO response: The landlord failed to implement a surveyor's recommendation to complete mould treatment works within an appropriate timescale. No evidence was seen to show the works were ever completed and an avoidable delay of around 17 months appears to have occurred. The resident experienced distress and inconvenience during this time.

In relation to the other reported repairs, the landlord demonstrated a high level of engagement throughout the timeline. Multiple reported issues were considered over several surveyor's reports. No evidence was seen to show the landlord failed to

respond appropriately to any reported issues. Nor to show it failed to respond to any repairs it was obliged to rectify in line with the tenancy conditions.

The landlord's stage one response included information which had been superseded. Because the information it relied on was no longer correct, the landlord missed an opportunity to address any issues with its handling of the damp and mould through its complaints process. It also treated the resident unfairly by declining to fully investigate based on the incorrect information.

3.29. Learning outcomes from review of these cases were:

- 3.29.1. Complex case call overs should prevent the delays in resolving case
- 3.29.2. Formation of team to case manage complex works will improve communications
- 3.29.3. Regular call over of leak actions to prevent delays and escalate access or other delays
- 3.29.4. Moving mould wash to beginning of process would remove nuisance while repairs and investigation underway
- 3.29.5. Improved diagnostic training
- 3.29.6. All staff trained to improve empathy and safeguarding
- 3.29.7. Tenancy visits would now pick up distress and recommend options such as decant or support
- 3.29.8. Increasing use of landlord's access powers to ensure compliance with orders and abatement of nuisance

4. Damp, condensation, and mould programme overview

4.1. Five-point plan

- 4.1.1. Reviewing all damp and mould cases from the last three years - contacting tenants to make sure issues are resolved, and taking more action if needed
- 4.1.2. Investing an extra £1million every year for a new damp and mould action team, including specialist surveyors and more funding for ventilation and insulation
- 4.1.3. Training non-specialist staff - for example staff carrying out gas compliance checks - to identify damp and mould when visiting homes
- 4.1.4. Managing a dedicated line for calls from council tenants concerned about damp and mould, so the council can book a survey and tackle the damp

4.1.5. Working more closely with other local partner agencies to give joined-up help and support to residents including finance, housing needs, medical conditions and repairs

4.2. Strategic and operational response

4.2.1. Designed framework in collaboration with partnership services setting out our approach to damp condensation and mould and communicating our zero-tolerance approach to interventions. Partnership services include: housing services (property services, housing needs, tenancy services, customer services, rehousing), strategy Children's Social Services, Children's Early Help services (Bright Start), Children Looked After services, Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership Board, Adult Social Care, Environmental Health, Partners for Islington (PFI provider), Legal services, Energy Services, NHS (community matron, CYP services, designated doctor for safeguarding, complaints services leads, Public Health, corporate communications, and commissioned construction services.

The framework (Appendix 6) sets out three categories to respond to this approach:

- **Urgent** – immediate response
- **Tenancy and property audit** – proactive interventions
- **Every Visit Counts** – comprehensive approach

4.2.2. In November 2022 and January 2023, we held two partnership roundtable meetings. Attendees include leads from: housing services (property services, housing needs, tenancy services, customer services, rehousing), strategy Children's Social Services, Children's Early Help services (Bright Start), Children Looked After services, Islington Safeguarding Children's Board, Adult Social Care, Environmental Health, Partners for Islington (PFI provider), Legal services, Energy Services, NHS (community matron, CYP services, designated doctor for safeguarding, complaints services leads, Public Health, corporate communications, Hospital's, GP's and commissioned construction services. The below outlines what was discussed.

- Discussed draft Damp, Condensation and Mould Framework, how we intend to approach the programme
- Designing a referral framework for all partners to make direct referrals to Islington Council's Homes and Neighbourhood service relating to Damp and Mould for all Islington Council managed properties, Housing Association homes, and private rented sector properties.
- Discussion on identifying vulnerabilities, support needs and how to share information. To be data-led and informed through a combination of datasets. NHS shared expert advice on health factors that can be adversely affected by damp and mould.

- Sharing good practice and existing tools to identify risk and processes. Coordinating services to support programme e.g., safeguarding board
- Sharing feedback on experience of referral pathways, what would make them better and opportunities to notice damp and mould in properties.
- Shared recent discussions with other housing providers and benchmarking.
- Discussed active review underway of related complaints and Member Enquires.
- Highlighted equality, diversity, and inclusion – ensuring we engage in an appropriate way relevant to the resident and household, and their experiences.
- Seeing an increase in reports of damp and mould.
- Opportunities and challenges for temporary accommodation and rehousing.
- Monitoring communications and reports of damp and mould.

4.2.3. Adopting and communicating our zero tolerance to damp and mould interventions. Directors and programme leads have attended various meetings across council services, partnership boards and local authority joint meetings to share this message and briefings on the programme. Meetings include:

- **Islington Housing Association Group meetings.** This meeting is for all Islington housing association providers to discuss relevant updates and issues.
- **Action Learning Group London Councils** Corporate Director for Housing attended forum to share best practice and work in development across LA landlords.
- **Islington’s Housing Scrutiny Committee**
- **Housing ‘drop-in’ evening session to all elected Councillors** this included officers from property and tenancy services and all departments and provided ward Councillors with information on work underway on damp and mould and an opportunity to ask questions and highlight casework.
- Housing Directors for Westminster, Camden, Haringey, Barnet, Enfield, and Islington met to discuss a sub-regional approach to damp and mould and a special meeting has been arranged to focus on damp and mould on the 20th of February 2023.
- **London Councils Chief Executives group** meeting on damp and mould including landlord obligations, legal advice, public and environmental health.

- Damp and mould presented at **Housing Service Improvement Board**, which is a wider improvement board with all Housing managers. Framework, Tenancy and Property Audit tool, update on activities and One View demo. Housing Quality Network officers attended Board and provided feedback on approach and documents as our critical friend.
- **Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership Board**, Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership (ISCP) is a multi-agency body responsible for ensuring that agencies work well together to safeguard and protect children and young people from harm and improve their welfare and well-being.

4.3. Urgent response

- 4.3.1. Review of all live and historic cases of reported damp and mould since January 2020 – December 2022 to ensure proper diagnosis and remediation has been conducted - 4510 reports for 3472 properties. To guide this work, we are using a Power BI dashboard that is pulling data from various sources: Housing Property Services, tenancy services and complaints, to identify priority and risk of cases and buildings. It provides a single view of damp and mould reports which is directing the proactive telephone calls.

This work continues: Internal staff have contacted the top 100 cases with the highest risk, and we have commissioned an external company, Kwest, to telephone call the existing households. Since 6th February 2023, when Kwest began, they have made 532 calls, contacting 190 households of which 124 households report to still experience an issue with damp and mould.

The qualitative feedback suggests there have been recurring problems with mould with the issues returning following previous works, as well as ongoing works already known to the team, of which there are 114 outstanding work orders raised. Kwest have reduced the number of calls they are carrying out to ensure the current levels of work can be managed and completed accordingly. The visualisations in this dashboard will help with upcoming activity for proactive programme of targeted interventions to whole buildings to identify issues in other properties that have not reported e.g., where buildings have a high number of reports of damp and mould. The dashboard continues to be refined and we are currently working with our Information Governance team to match Adult Social Care and Children's Social Services data.

- 4.3.2. Receiving and procuring support from experts on our approach and activity, including Housing Quality Network, Kwest, damp and mould and building specialist and UCL (University College London).
- 4.3.3. Partnership engagement and joint working to critically review current processes and share experiences with households living with damp, condensation, and mould in

their homes. This includes agreeing to joint approaches, how to use data better, building relationships and opportunities to work together to identify hidden issues and unknown cases of damp and mould.

- 4.3.4. Reviewing resources, staffing and equipment to put in place appropriate action to treat damp and mould, identifying improvements, and training requirements and areas for investment.
- 4.3.5. Improving systems to effectively track cases through from reporting to resolution.
- 4.3.6. Updating our processes and policies and taking a person-centred approach.
- 4.3.7. Damp and mould awareness, customer care and technical training is being delivered.
- 4.3.8. All properties are now checked for Damp and Mould during the mutual exchange and transfer processes and action taken where necessary.
- 4.3.9. Considering the Housing Ombudsman findings, the council has re-organised the customer complaints and the elected members enquiries teams. Therefore, from the 1st of March 2023, the Homes and Neighbourhoods service will have one single team addressing all stage One complaints and responding to all elected members enquiries. This team will be managed within the Housing Operations service. Combing the Property Services complaints and members enquiry team within the existing team located in the Housing Operations service will provide a resident focussed seamless service offer.
- 4.3.10. Islington Council has also organised a “Meet the Housing Ombudsman” event for the 30th of March 2023. Publicity material will be delivered with the Rent Increase letters to all Islington Council tenants promoting this event. This event although hosted by Islington Council will be led by the Housing Ombudsman
- 4.3.11. The council have also appointed the Housing Quality Network to act as a critical friend in this area of the council’s work.

4.4. Tenancy and property audit

- 4.4.1. Building a programme of annual visits to tenants' households which enables officers to effectively identify and report damp and mould in properties, working with social services to understand known support needs prior to visit, identify occupancy levels, any potential housing fraud activity, tenants requiring financial support, communication needs and preferences, and wider health and wellbeing. These visits will commence in March 2023, and ensure all Islington Council tenants are visited in their home by the Housing Operations service.

- 4.4.2. Designing a Tenancy Audit and Property Condition assessment form based on benchmarking and feedback from housing staff and our partners. Have received feedback from Housing, social services, NHS, Public Health, Environmental Health:
- Make the form shorter and visit more effective through sharing information and pre-populating fields with known information prior to visit.
 - Working with social services to ensure we ask appropriate questions that are not intrusive, triggering or asking the household to re-share their experiences or information unnecessarily.
 - Making the process digital that can update existing databases, robust referral processes and using tools to support this e.g., digital forms and tablets.
 - Pilot the visit to understand time, response, and process. Using the information captured to support residents, understand disproportionality, improve process and services.

4.5. **Taskforce casework board**

- 4.5.1. As set out in the Terms of Reference, leads from relevant services meeting twice a week to discuss high priority cases related to damp and mould, providing an overview, setting actions and tracking progress.
- 4.5.2. At the time of this report, the board has 102 cases within its remit, although these are at various stages.
- 4.5.3. In respect of the two highest profile cases, one has now been fully resolved to the satisfaction of the resident. A second family remains in temporary accommodation, pending a move to a suitable alternative home.
- 4.5.4. There are currently 31 current legal cases, which are at various stages of the legal process.
- 4.5.5. Of 16 open Stage 2 complaints relating to damp and mould, 8 have now been resolved to the satisfaction of residents, subject to a 3-month check. Of the remaining 8 cases, 6 have remedial work scheduled, with a further 2 cases are likely to be escalated to access injunction.
- 4.5.6. Of 14 Housing Ombudsman cases within the boards remit, 6 have now been resolved to the satisfaction of residents, with works in progress and/or arranged in the remaining 8 cases.
- 4.5.7. The remaining 39 cases are closed, but the learning from these is informing the current work of the casework board. A full review of these closed cases will also inform future Council policy and process where appropriate.

4.6. Alternative housing provision for tenants living with damp and mould in their homes

- 4.6.1. Housing Property Services, tenancy services and re-housing leads drafting new process for allocating properties.
- 4.6.2. Identifying challenges and opportunities based on current damp and mould reports and surveys within the context of re-housing demand, priority of risk and the housing Allocations Policy.

4.7. Housing Ombudsman investigation

- 4.7.1. We have met with the Chief Executive of the Housing Ombudsman and other senior officers to discuss the investigation process.
- 4.7.2. An overview document with a chronology of activity, learning so far, planned activity and a supporting appendix, with relevant documents, to outline context and evidence our damp and mould programme has been submitted to the Housing Ombudsman.
- 4.7.3. The investigation is underway.

4.8. Partnership work and whole systems approach

- 4.8.1. Partnership engagement and joint working to critically review current processes and share experiences with households living with damp, condensation, and mould in their homes. This includes agreeing to joint approaches, how to use data better, building relationships and opportunities to work together to identify hidden issues and unknown cases of damp and mould.
- 4.8.2. Services include leads from: housing services (property services, housing needs, tenancy services, customer services, rehousing), strategy Children's Social Services, Children's Early Help services (Bright Start), Children Looked After services, Islington Safeguarding Children's Board, Adult Social Care, Environmental Health, Partners for Islington (PFI provider), Legal services, Energy Services, NHS (community matron, CYP services, designated doctor for safeguarding, complaints services leads, Public Health, corporate communications, and commissioned construction services.
- 4.8.3. Establishing forums and boards that bring services in Islington together has been hugely beneficial. We have designed and all signed up to a framework, discussed and shared learning from our experiences working with each other and supporting residents. It has also facilitated useful discussions on how to share information better and design pathways to report damp and mould and access services more effectively.

4.9. **Draft Housing Allocations Policy** – on **20th January 2023** opened for consultation for 8 weeks ending on the 17th of March 2023. Additions to Policy related to damp and mould:

- **“Welfare category A** is an award of **150 points** which may be awarded to applicants whose welfare needs are so severe that the protection of vulnerable adults or children is only possible in a permanent home and where the present housing circumstances could deteriorate to such an extent as to place household members, particularly children, at risk or in need of residential care unless permanent housing is offered. These points should only be awarded where housing or the domestic situation severely affects the welfare of the applicant. In general, this very high award will rarely be made. If too many households receive this high award, it will slow down the rehousing of the most vulnerable people. Examples of this include Where a property is declared unfit for habitation or has a category 1 hazard due to damp and mould, as confirmed by the Public Protection team, or Islington Diagnostic Surveyors and which has a severe impact on the household.”
- **“Welfare Category B** is an award of **80 points** and may be awarded in the following serious circumstances: The applicant is living in such insanitary conditions that their welfare is prejudiced, and there are no remedies available to improve the conditions including where there is damp and mould.”
- **“Welfare Category C** is an award of **40 points** may be awarded to applicants whose welfare needs are moderate and comparable to the following: The applicant is living in such conditions that their welfare is prejudiced for example, where there is mould and condensation and limited remedies are available, to resolve the issue.”

As at the 25th of February 2023, 70.7% of residents agree with the proposed changes to the housing allocations scheme changes and 21% of people do not agree with the proposed changes with 8% having no views. In addition to this 6.1% of partners do not agree with the proposed housing allocations scheme changes.

4.10. **Communication and engagement strategies with residents**

- 4.10.1. The community drop-in sessions as mentioned previously in this report.
- 4.10.2. We have reviewed and updated our website and updated our damp and mould leaflet to empower and support residents to report Damp and Mould and to ensure the council provides a service to its residents that is the best in the country.
- 4.10.3. Dedicated email and telephone option to report damp and mould have been set up.
- 4.10.4. We have translation services available when tenants first language is not English to ensure are addressing the needs of all our residents.

4.10.5. Engagement with residents has been more productive and actions more targeted and focussed on getting the best possible outcome for the household experiencing damp and mould.

4.11. **Training**

4.11.1. Damp and mould awareness training delivered to Housing Direct (call centre) and Customer Services (Housing Property Services Complaints Team). In 2023 this training will be rolled out to wider housing services i.e., Housing Needs and Tenancy.

4.11.2. Painter and decorators & LBI (London Borough of Islington) Contractors: Looking at causes of damp and mould, hazards, processes to remove using MGC products & guidelines. How to prevent reoccurrence. Emphasis on not blaming the residents' lifestyle

4.11.3. Repairs Co-ordinators, Customer Service Team, Team Leaders & Chargehands: How to identify diverse types of damp and mould. How it spreads, health impacts, how to remove. Emphasis on not blaming the residents' lifestyle. Look at useful questions to ask the residents on the phone

4.11.4. Void Surveyors: Damp: Condensation, damp, and mould – causes, cures, and the courts | Housing Quality Network (hqnetwork.co.uk)

4.11.5. Surveying Team: Online Training a Diagnostic Approach to Understanding Condensation and Mould.

4.11.6. In the process of commissioning building and damp and mould expert to provide training for both technical and general staff.

4.11.7. Customer care and positive conversations training will be delivered in March 2023.

4.11.8. Temporary and permanent rehousing. We are ensuring tenancy, rehousing and property services are joined up in their communication with households who are being moved due to damp and mould.

4.12. **Data-led and using technology to support approach**

4.12.1. We quickly established a Power BI dashboard within the first week of accelerating our response to damp and mould.

4.12.2. This allowed us to pull together and automate the reporting of data that is held on separate Housing databases.

- 4.12.3. It has helped understand contacts being made to different services, household composition, vulnerabilities, overcrowding and support needs of tenants.
- 4.12.4. As a single view of cases, we can use Power BI's functionality to calculate priority and risk, as well as visualise what buildings have a higher number of reports, which helps our understanding of blocks that have inherent structural issues that can be contributing to damp, condensation, and mould.
- 4.12.5. We will also use this as we roll out our programme of activity, targeting buildings to reach residents who may be experiencing damp and mould in their homes but not reporting it.
- 4.12.6. It has also reinforced the importance of crucial information capture and governance, making sure we think long term about recording data in the appropriate place, against the relevant system code and capturing what is important to track activities and outcomes.

4.13. **Benchmarking and sharing good practice**

- 4.13.1. We are learning a lot from our colleague from different local authorities, housing providers and associations. We are sharing our approaches, challenges, and what technology we are using/piloting.

5. **Service demand and investment**

- 5.1.1. The numbers outlined below show the increase in demand for Damp and Mould Surveys:

2023: **1041 (first 1 and a half months)**
 2022: **3658**
 2021: **3187**
 2020: **2473**
 2019: **2702**
 2018: **3090**

- 5.1.2. This increased demand has impacted services including legal, tenancy, complaints, and temporary accommodation. We let approximately 1000 properties a year, 50% of this stock is studio or one beds. The number of family sized properties is significantly less, and we rely on temporary accommodation for urgent decants.
- 5.1.3. The total cost for temporary accommodation for Mould/Damp for January is £39,363.56.
- 5.1.4. We have had an additional £1million funding every year and this year it will go towards additional staff, technical protective equipment, and external expert support to critically review the service and deliver training.

5.1.5. **Improvement works and installations**

- Agreed installing/upgrades:
 - Positive Input Ventilation system (PIV): **24**
 - New insulation to walls/ceilings: **15**
- Previous 12 months:
 - Positive Input Ventilation system (PIV): **6**
 - New insulation to walls/ceilings: **2**

5.2. **Challenges**

- 5.2.1. **Increased reports and service demand.** We are responding to this challenge by all front-line staff are being trained through a trauma informed approach and all front-line staff are having training on identifying damp and mould. We wish to walk in the shoes of our residents. Also, by, improving referral pathways, improving information sharing and working with partners, identifying opportunities for early interventions, and sourcing external expert advice to critically review our approach and services.
- 5.2.2. **Recruitment of surveyors.** We are responding to this challenge by upskilling existing surveyors and improving processes, continuous recruitment activity and discussing with other local authorities and housing providers to gather learning on their approach to this challenge.
- 5.2.3. **Sourcing damp and mould treatment.** We are responding to this challenge by liaising directly with our suppliers on the products they provide us and them providing our teams with training on best practice in applying the treatment.
- 5.2.4. **Adapting existing databases to support activity.** We are responding to this challenge by using other tools like Power BI to extract data and making changes to codes to reflect activity, and the referral framework from all statutory partners to prioritise our work.
- 5.2.5. **Financial pressures.** We are responding to this challenge through investing £1 million and redirecting strategic staff to support the management of our response.
- 5.2.6. **Number of available properties for permanent moves.** We are responding to this challenge by redesigning processes and exploring new ways to manage void stock.
- 5.2.7. **Access to properties.** We are responding to this challenge by establishing casework board to discuss cases and how best to contact tenants. We are also updating our Access Procedure.

6.Upcoming activity

- 6.1. **Meet the Housing Ombudsman 30th March 2023 Council Chamber:** Islington Council has volunteered to host a meet the Housing Ombudsman event to allow the Housing Ombudsman to explain to the tenants of Islington Council the work of the Housing Ombudsman and to allow tenants to ask questions directly to the Chief Executive of the Housing Ombudsman. Please note Islington Council is the first London Council to participate in this work.
- 6.2. Meeting and training plan developed to wider staffing group, which includes housing officers and social services, on HHSRS category 1 and category 2 health hazards.
- 6.3. A special meeting has been arranged Housing Directors for Westminster, Camden, Haringey, Barnet, Enfield, and Islington to focus on damp and mould.
- 6.4. Policy and procedure designed and signed off for alternative housing provision for tenants living with damp and mould.
- 6.5. Revised Access Procedure signed off and in place.
- 6.6. Housing Property Service training schedule continues.
- 6.7. Recruitment to additional Housing Property Services staff including surveyors.
- 6.8. Continue to develop research project with UCL. Scope for project: Academic input and review of damp techniques and processes to ensure the most up to date and rigorous systems are adopted. Reusing Net Zero Carbon data to prepare funding/investment bids targeting damp and Net Zero Carbon.
- 6.9. Tenancy and Property Audit and programme of annual visits process finalised and ready to begin pilot.
- 6.10. Every Visit Counts process is implemented.
- 6.11. Customer care and positive conversations training begins.
- 6.12. Housing Allocations Policy consultation concludes.
- 6.13. Technique's training and systems being reviewed by HQN/UCL and industry experts. (TBC April Target for UCL and Board set up).
- 6.14. Piloting the use of automated tracking systems and equipment.
- 6.15. Housing Ombudsman investigation concludes.

- 6.16. Incorporating the Environmental Health response to damp and mould in the private rented sector into the Damp Condensation and Mould Delivery Programme

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This report sets out the importance of taking a proactive, resident focused approach to dealing with damp and mould. Key elements of an effective approach include:
 - 7.1.1. Undertake proactive assessments of stock condition, taking a data-informed, risk-based approach to prioritise focus on properties particularly susceptible to damp and mould.
 - 7.1.2. Train all staff to identify and respond to damp and mould – see every home visit as an opportunity to identify issues.
 - 7.1.3. Encourage tenants to report damp and mould – share communications on the risks of living with damp and mould and make sure tenants have clear, simple methods of reporting relevant issues.
 - 7.1.4. Respond promptly to reports of damp and mould.
 - 7.1.5. Undertake an assessment of the property to identify the root cause of the issue – staff must be adequately trained and have the correct equipment for this.
 - 7.1.6. Treat the problem – the response will vary depending on severity, but always focus on resolving the root cause. This can include giving tenants sensitive advice on how to minimise the build-up of excess moisture and reduce the risk of condensation, without blaming the issue on lifestyle factors.
 - 7.1.7. Follow up – check that steps taken have resolved the issue. If not, take further action until the issue is resolved.
 - 7.1.8. Record all actions taken and ensure this data can be linked through to other information about the property, the household and previous repair works.
 - 7.1.9. If the case escalates to a complaint or disrepair claim, continue taking all possible steps to resolve the issue.
 - 7.1.10. Learn from past cases – improve processes where needed and consider which property types may need further proactive work to prevent damp and mould. Throughout all stages there must be clear, prompt communication with tenants, a focus on skills and professionalism, and a customer focused organisational culture.

8. Appendix

1. Project Evaluation Report – Housing Ombudsman Report
2. Tenants Charter
3. Tenant Empowerment framework
4. Islington Housing Association Partnership Agreement
5. Private Rented Sector Charter
6. Damp, condensation, and mould framework

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Meeting of: Housing Management Team

Date: 11 November 2022

Completion of project summary in response to Housing Ombudsman report ‘Spotlight on damp and mould – it’s not lifestyle’

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. This report summarises the keys actions completed as part of the project to review our service response to damp and mould against the recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman in its report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To review and comment on the detail set out in this report of the work carried out by the housing repairs service in response to the ombudsman recommendations.
- 2.2. To approve the completion of project.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Housing Ombudsman report was published in October 2021. A project team was set up within Housing Property Services to consider the content of the report and its recommendations in early 2022. A summary of the action plan and milestones for the project was considered by Housing Management Team in March 2023. HMT asked that a further report be drafted on completion of the project and submitted to HMT advising of the actions resulting from the project.
- 3.2. The Ombudsman report is split into four broad categories, and these are used to report back to HMT on the actions taken to ensure the service provided to Islington

tenants has taken account of the Ombudsman's recommendations.

3.3. **Category 1 – Reactive to Proactive**

3.3.1. Review of the existing Damp and Mould procedure

The procedure has been reviewed with input from the Diagnostic Surveying team and oversight from the wider damp and mould project team. The review has confirmed the existing procedure is essentially compliant with the Ombudsman's key recommendations. Main developments resulting from review include reviewing the existing damp survey completed by diagnostic surveyors, introducing a new post damp work survey to gather resident feedback following completion of the repair job and delivering a programme of estate-based resident engagement events on the issue of damp and mould.

3.3.2. Developing a data driven proactive approach to identifying damp cases

Extensive analysis of Oneserve data has been completed. The data reviewed covers reports of damp and mould by residents alongside completions of routine mould removal tasks carried out by repair operatives over the previous four years 2018-2021. This has helped identify the blocks on estates which have the highest instances of reports of damp and mould. This analysis is being used to help target further resident engagement on estates which are listed as having higher rates of reported instances of damp and mould in residents' homes.

3.3.3. Review of Mutual Exchange process and link to damp cases

A small group of staff from Property Services, Housing Strategy, Housing Needs and Homes and Communities have used this opportunity to carry out a wider review of the existing mutual exchange procedure. This incorporates recommendations from the Ombudsman linked to damp and mould. Updates for Property Services have been agreed and Housing Strategy team are currently finalising updates for the other areas of housing prior to relaunch.

3.3.4. Focus on resolution of damp and mould cases during void period

The issue of damp and mould is being considered as part of the wider review of the existing void standard. Checks have been carried out of the new tenant sign up pack which has confirmed that new tenants are advised about the issue of damp and how to prevent mould and condensation in the home with links to the existing webpages and video on the council website. The voids team and the legal team meet fortnightly to discuss outstanding cases for resolutions and will discuss if there has been any previous history of damp.

Connections are also being made with the existing net zero carbon Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund projects to explore how current voids within the scope of the projects can be included so works are done to help improve the insulation and energy efficiency of these properties which should help to reduce the risks of

damp and mould. It is confirmed all net zero carbon works must take account of damp and mould under the PAS 2035 regulations.

3.4. **Category 2 – Inferring blame to taking responsibility**

3.4.1. Review of our communications to residents on damp cases

Discussions have taken place with Housing Direct and Customer Services team to reinforce the communication and language standards linked to the handling of reports of damp and mould. The service is very confident terms such as 'lifestyle' are not used when liaising with customers because of previous work in this area. Customer services team manager ensuring consistently empathetic response given to complaints received linked to damp and mould. Follow up damp surveys are arranged as standard alongside reinforcement of signposting to other services that can support e.g., SHINE and housing needs. In addition, we have undertaken further resident communication campaigns on the issue of reporting damp and mould and the support that is available through recent articles in the Housing Matters quarterly mailout and also within the housing sections of Islington Life. We are currently speaking with Communications about running similar campaigns using electronic noticeboards on estates.

3.4.2. Review of staff training

Diagnostic surveyors, Void Surveyors Direct Works Team Leaders and Chargehands and members of the Customer Services team and Housing Direct team are attending training sessions on damp and mould delivered by a specialist mould treatment supplier. The Surveyors are also attending more in-depth training delivered by Housing Quality Network and Property Care Association. The specialist mould treatment supplier has delivered a trade specific training course to relevant repair operatives that attend damp and mould jobs as reminder for the correct use and application of mould treatments. All training sessions reinforce the customer care aspects of the response to these reports including details on the correct language and approach to be used. All electricians are receiving training in maintaining storage heaters and repairing faulty control systems.

3.5. **Category 3 – Disrepair claims and resolution**

3.5.1. Embed new pre-action protocol and consider 3rd party surveyors use

Existing compliance with this recommendation has been confirmed. The council's legal department are using the new pre-action protocol and the practice management procedures have been reviewed to improve the management of legal cases. The council has had the ability to use 3rd party surveyors when needed for legal cases and this practice has been in place for over the past five years.

3.5.2. Process to proactively share survey results and agreed actions with residents

Previously the repairs service would issue copies of completed damp surveys on request from residents. In order to improve our service offer and meet the expectations of the ombudsman the damp survey template has been reviewed. As part of this review the survey has been simplified and made more resident friendly whilst ensuring the key technical details needed from the survey are retained. A process is being implemented to forward completed damp surveys to the resident without the need for them to make this request. Checks has also been made to ensure residents are informed about the next steps for their job as part of the damp survey appointment.

3.5.3. Review of process followed when residents need to be moved

There are already established process for the management of major works transfer requests and there are regular meetings taking place between key managers in both Property Services and Homes and Communities to discuss active cases.

3.6. **Section 4 – Complaints to learning culture**

3.6.1. Process in place to gather and implement learning from complaints

There are already established processes in place to review complaints and extract learning. Further work has been undertaken to strengthen this further focussed on damp and mould related complaints. Monthly detailed reviews of complaints received linked to damp and mould will be undertaken and any learning points will be discussed within the service. Ways of engaging with residents to assist with reviews of learning are also being explored currently.

4. Conclusion and reasons for the decision

4.1. Following the review by the repairs service of its response to reports from residents of damp and mould in their home in line with the detailed recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman, we are confident that the service complies with the recommendations made.

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The Islington Council Tenants Charter is focused on strengthening the relationship between residents and Islington Council and embodies all the great work happening across Islington to create positive relationships with Customers. It also challenges Islington Council to go further – presenting an opportunity for us to take the lead in accountability and customer oversight.

By adopting this charter, Islington Council commits to:

Stronger relationships – Islington Council will treat all residents with respect in all our interactions. Relationships between residents and Islington Council will be based on openness, honesty, and transparency. We will build a stronger two-way relationship with you to build a fairer and more resident focused housing service.

Delivering excellent customer services and experiences – We will be easy to deal with and resolve your enquiries and keep to our promises. We will strive to continuously improve our services and will be fair, inclusive and value diversity.

Effective communication – Residents will receive clear, accessible, and timely information from Islington Council on the issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how Islington Council is working to address problems in their area, and information about performance on key issues and Tenant Satisfaction Measures

We will also tell you what we have done with your feedback and suggestions for improving services and how we learn from complaints

Listening to and truly understanding your priorities – We will be prepared to change our services to meet your specific needs and take your feedback and suggestions for improvement seriously

Voice and influence – Views from residents will be sought and valued and this information will be used to inform decisions and working practices. Every individual resident will feel listened to by Islington Council on the issues that matter to them and can speak without fear. We will involve you in decision making about your home and neighbourhood. We will offer you a “menu” of engagement to allow you to engage with us in a way that suits you. It is essential that residents can dip in and out of engaging with us and that they are able to participate in a variety of ways that suit their individual circumstance and lifestyles, and their varying degrees of time and personal commitment.

Being accountable to residents – Collectively, residents will work in partnership with Islington Council to independently scrutinise and hold Islington Council to account for the decisions that affect the quality of their homes and services. We will publish clear services standards that will allow residents to hold us to account

Delivering good quality homes – Residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well-managed. We are building new affordable rented homes to be proud of and will keep your local area, clean, green, and safe.

Resident oversight and reporting of progress against the charter – this will give residents a stronger role in holding Islington Council to account.

Giving residents a stronger collective voice – Issues that are uncovered from resident’s feedback can be referred to the Housing Scrutiny Committee for closer examination, so that action is taken where appropriate to protect residents’ rights and interests. This will be enhanced with two tenant representatives attending the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

Supporting people - We will provide support to improve well-being and independence.

When things go wrong – Residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints, and seeking redress. Residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

Tenant Empowerment

It's quite simple – we need to know what you think of the services we offer and how we deliver them. If you think we're doing well at something, we need to know so we can keep doing it. If you think we're not good enough, we need to know so that we can improve. By working TOGETHER, we will strive to become the best that we can be!

Throughout Spring of 2023, we wish to run the Big Conversation, a large-scale consultation aimed at finding out:

- How you want us to deliver services to you in the future
- The standard of service we should be looking to deliver
- How you want us to engage, work together and involve you in improving our services

We wish to hear from tenants and residents and the feedback will be used to shape our new service offer.

Who can get involved?

Any of our customers can get involved!

Why should I get involved?

If you are passionate about your home and community, why not have your say? We will use all feedback and input to improve our services and make changes based on our customers' views.

How much time does it take?

It can take as much or as little time as you like. Happy to answer a quick survey? That may take 10 minutes. Want to get involved in the Service Review Panel? That could take around 6 hours over a 2/3 month period.

What's in it for me?

We know your time is precious, so we promise to make your involvement worthwhile. By getting involved, you will have access to free training, experience, and the opportunity to develop new skills to enhance your CV. There will be plenty of opportunities to meet with like-minded tenants and employees from across Islington Council. You will also get the satisfaction of helping to improve Islington for the benefit of yourself and others.

What if I change my mind?

We understand that circumstances change, and it might become difficult for you to become involved in engagement exercises. We appreciate your time however much of it you can give us.

Valuing equality and diversity

We value equality and diversity and we would welcome views and engagement from residents from all walks of life and backgrounds to ensure we capture feedback that represents the breadth and depth of our communities.

How can I find out more?

Prefer to speak to somebody first? Why not contact our Engagement Team via email at engagement@islington.gov.uk by telephone 07802804261 or fill in our online form here.

Get Involved - Register your interest

Please fill out the below form and one of our team will get back to you as soon as possible

First Name *

Last Name *

Email Address *

Phone Number

Please let us know what areas of Islington you might be interested in getting involved with? (e.g Repairs, community investment etc.) *

Islington's Housing Providers' Partnership

The purpose of the partnership agreement is to link housing association providers in Islington and Islington Council in partnership to facilitate local delivery on key strategic themes. This partnership agreement also provides corporate leadership as a strategic housing authority in delivering the 'Islington Housing Strategy'

The housing crisis takes many forms, and the challenges we face in Islington need solutions that fit our own local circumstances. Rough sleeping and homelessness are the most visible and damning indication of the crisis we face. But there are many other aspects, including the barriers facing young people trying to set up their first home, older people looking for better choices to help them stay living independently, families wanting somewhere stable to put down roots but living on short term tenancies in the private rented sector.

The housing crisis is as serious as it has ever been and the economic, social and environmental landscape remains unstable and unpredictable, due to the COVID pandemic, austerity measures introduced by central Government and the cost of living crisis. In such an environment the pressure on Islington Council and housing association partners is profound, and effective joint partnership working is crucial to make sure people in the Islington communities receive the housing and support they need.

Islington Council and our housing association partners share a strong common vision and purpose to provide much-needed affordable housing, prevent homelessness, and provide the highest standards of management for the maintenance and management of our homes.

The following table helps to demonstrate the areas Islington Council and our housing association partners have a successful partnership arrangement already in place and this partnership agreement will help to further advance this partnership work:

| Partnership arrangements in place in Islington with our housing association partners |
|---|
| Housing Strategy |
| Building new homes |
| Homeless duties |
| Re-housing households in housing need from the housing register |
| Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour |
| Fire risk and fire safety |
| Supporting people |
| Refugee resettlement |

For effective partnership working, Islington Council and our housing association partners need a better understanding of each other's businesses, and the operating environment in which both are working. Therefore, the Islington Housing Association Partnership Agreement between the council and Housing Association partners identifies safe, decent and affordable housing as our priority – homes to fit the needs

and aspirations of current and future residents. This vision is intended to sketch out our ambitions, and to give a framework for more detailed partnership work to follow.

Although public strategic agreements are not essential, they can be very helpful in focusing partners on shared objectives and setting out delivery expectations. Hence, why this partnership agreement is important. The partnership's objectives contained within this agreement align with those of the individual organisations that form part of it. Housing Association partners would also be welcomed to attend and be represented at the council's strategic forum i.e., Children's and Adults Safeguarding Forums.

It is equally important that housing association executives are visible in Islington. This means having regular meetings with the council leader, the executive member for housing, the chief executive and the corporate director of homes and neighbourhoods. Visibility also means that the housing association chief executive intervenes personally, proactively, and effectively where things go seriously wrong – in terms of either development or local housing management. This intervention would provide demonstrable evidence to local councillors and the local media that the association is taking local issues seriously, fosters trust and helps to ensure that the 'brand reputation' of the association is maintained with the council. Housing Association representatives would also be welcomed to attend the Housing Scrutiny Committee to help to demonstrate a transparent partnership framework.

We would want to ensure the following frameworks are adopted by all partners

- Ensure vital services for tenants and leaseholders in Islington are easy to access, and responsive to residents' individual circumstances.
- To ensure a consistent level of capital investment and asset management into homes in Islington.
- As part of being locally accountable, to be able to provide transparent and measurable information at borough level about levels of service and investment.
- Work with all partners to ensure the needs of vulnerable and multiple complex needs residents are addressed with statutory agencies.
- Promoting local employment opportunities and investing in the local economy of Islington
- Promoting higher management standards, following national best practice and shared learning.

This partnership agreement is a statement on how Islington Council and its housing association partners can work in partnership to improve residents' individual and community well being

We know we can't do this alone, and some of these issues could need a twenty-year effort to really resolve. But we know we will only succeed with the help, support and commitment of local communities, and housing associations.

Housing plays a central part in people's lives. We all need and deserve a safe, decent and affordable home to provide the stable foundation for everything else that we want to achieve for ourselves and our families, a home that gives us the secure,

warm, dry haven we all need. When we fail to provide that, the impacts on individuals and society as a whole can be severe and long lasting, as we see all too clearly in our work to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

To give our children the best start in life, we know that good housing with room for families to grow, and access to green spaces to play, helps to give kids the healthy and stable start that sees them starting school ready to learn, and better placed to do well as they progress. Our economic future depends on keeping and attracting the people who will make Islington a place of ideas and invention, a modern economy that draws in investment, visitors and talent. We need our housing offer to be an affordable and attractive one – to provide an excellent quality of life, connected to education and employment, in neighbourhoods all across Islington that our future generations will want to make their home.

Over 17,500 properties in Islington are home to housing association residents, and we have 48 housing association partners who provide homes and neighbourhoods for a significant proportion of Islington's residents. It is therefore clearly important that the Council and housing associations work in partnership to deliver the best housing outcomes we can for our residents and communities.

For many of us, the right home can enable us to live healthier, more independent lives for longer than would otherwise be possible. Health inequalities within Islington are often reinforced by poor quality housing, which we need to address if we are to achieve our ambitions to deliver a radical upgrade in the health of Islington residents. Providing specialist supported housing will be an important contribution, but well-designed mainstream homes need to be at the heart of our approach. These need to be homes Islington residents can afford – our aspirations for inclusive growth, bringing the benefits of economic development to everyone in Islington, will be frustrated if the cost of finding the right home in the right place is out of reach for too many of us. That includes the cost of keeping homes warm – quality, modern, properly insulated and energy efficient homes are cheaper to run as well as helping reduce carbon emissions and being better suited to deal with our changing climate.

All partnerships need to be underpinned by a common understanding and common purpose. No one partner has all the answers to everything and people need to follow as well as lead, therefore, this partnership agreement sets out a challenging partnership arrangement going forward.

A driver for change is focused on listening to the residents who live in affordable housing in Islington and acting effectively where their concerns are greatest. We wish to ensure through this partnership agreement to enable residents having sufficient information on performance data, complaints are dealt with effectively; and that resident engagement and scrutiny measures are made more effective. The Council shares those concerns and believes that if these issues are addressed, it will provide the platform for wider community wellbeing outcomes the Council and its partners are seeking to deliver

This is why our ambition to be a world leader in delivering new net zero carbon homes alongside finding ways to accelerate retrofitting of our existing homes is so important.

OUR PARTNERSHIP VISION IS:

- ISLINGTON COUNCIL WISHES TO BE SEEN AS THE BEST COUNCIL IN ENGLAND AND TO ACHIEVE THIS A STRONG AND EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP IS REQUIRED WITH OUR HOUSING ASSOCIATION PARTNERS.
- THAT OUR EXISTING HOMES RECEIVE THE INVESTMENT THEY NEED TO MEET AND EXCEED MODERN REQUIREMENTS FOR THEIR BUILDING SAFETY, SECURITY, WARMTH AND PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY. THIS INCLUDES RETROFITTING OUR EXISTING HOMES TO MEET OUR AMBITIONS FOR NET ZERO CARBON HOMES
- ENSURE ALL PROPERTIES ARE FREE FROM MOULD AND DAMP
- WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COUNCIL TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES RESIDENTS FACE WITH THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS
- THOSE HOMES WILL BE PART OF NEIGHBOURHOODS OF CHOICE, CONNECTED TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE, AND OFFERING AN EXCELLENT QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY
- ALL PARTNERS ARE CONFIDENT THAT OUR HOMES WILL BE WELL MANAGED AND SAFE, DECENT AND AFFORDABLE
- PEOPLE IN HOUSING NEED, HOMELESS OR AT RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS CAN QUICKLY ACCESS SOCIAL HOUSING OR OTHER AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS SO THEY CAN RETAIN THEIR PLACE IN ISLINGTON
- THAT NO-ONE WILL NEED TO SLEEP ROUGH IN ISLINGTON
- WE CONSISTENTLY DELIVER THE RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACES, PROVIDING THE NUMBER AND MIX OF NEW HOMES FOR THE FUTURE NEEDS OF ISLINGTON
- THE NEW HOMES WE BUILD ENHANCE THE CHOICE, AFFORDABILITY, QUALITY AND VARIETY OF HOUSING AVAILABLE IN NEIGHBOURHOODS, AND ARE ACCOMPANIED BY SOCIAL AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE RESIDENTS NEED AND THE EXISTING COMMUNITY TO THRIVE, INCLUDING SCHOOLS, HEALTH FACILITIES AND GREEN SPACES
- THAT THE QUALITY AND DESIGN OF NEW HOMES MEANS WE CAN BETTER MATCH THE HOUSING SUPPLY TO THE FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS AND INCOMES OF ALL OF ISLINGTON'S RESIDENTS
- WE AIM TO ENSURE THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN ISLINGTON IS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION
- WE WILL BENCHMARK ACROSS THE PARTNERSHIP TO DRIVE SERVICE IMPROVMENTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF RESIDENTS

- WE WILL AIM TO BE IN THE TOP QUARTILE FOR ALL NATIONAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS PUBLISHED BY THE REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING
- ALL PARTNERS TO CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORK
- LISTEN AND RESPECT RESIDENTS' VIEWS. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY RESPOND TO THESE VIEWS
- RESPECT DIVERSITY AND PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL SECTIONS OF SOCIETY
- BE TRANSPARENT AND HONEST WITH EVERYONE
- RESPOND TO ELECTED MEMBER AND MP ENQUIRIES WITHIN 10 WORKING DAYS
- OPENLY SHARE BEST PRACTICE OR LEARNING INSIGHTS/EXAMPLES ACROSS THE LOCAL PARTNERSHIP
- IMPROVE RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT IN ORDER TO EMPOWER RESIDENTS
- WE WILL WORK TOGETHER TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS.
- PARTICIPATE IN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES TO ENSURE THAT THIS OFFER ALSO INCLUDES THOSE DISPLACED BY WAR AND NEEDING SANCTUARY.
- WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COUNCIL TO DEVELOP HOUSING FIRST ACROSS ISLINGTON
- WORK IN PARTNERSHIP TO DEVELOP BEST PRACTICE IN FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT AND BUILDING SAFETY
- CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HOUSING STRATEGY AND THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY
- COMMIT TO MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL VULNERABLE TENANTS
- WORK IN PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER THE COUNCIL'S CARE VALUES
- ENSURE 100% OF NEW BUILD LETTINGS AND 95% OF SUBSEQUENT LETTINGS ARE ALLOCATED THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP NOMINATIONS AGREEMENT.

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Islington Council's Private Rented Sector Charter

Private Rented Sector – Vision

We believe that everyone deserves to have a home that is safe, well maintained and well managed. Islington's Private Rented Sector will provide a high quality, low carbon, affordable and sustainable offer so that Islington's residents have a good choice of quality homes in clean, safe, and vibrant neighbourhoods and landlords meet their obligations to their tenants.

Objective 1: Improve Property and Management Standards

Target and focus intervention and proactive enforcement on the very worst properties, landlords and agents and improvement of neighbourhoods. Work collaboratively across the council and with partners to improve standards.

Objective 2: Increase Opportunities within the Sector for Low Income Households

Narrow the quality gap between the lower end and that of the middle and higher end of the market so that people on lower incomes have greater access and more choice.

Objective 3: Improve Communication across the Sector

Raising awareness of landlord, agent, and tenant responsibilities; sharing good practice and an enhanced role for the relevant professional bodies will help ensure standards continue to be met at all levels of the market.

Islington Council wishes to promote the following principles as part of this Charter:

1. Homes for people and not profit

Islington Council will promote the following framework:

- Work within the planning system to promote all new residential developments delivers the maximum possible amount of social housing (particularly on council land), including the maximum amount of genuinely affordable homes at social rents that are possible, and publish breakdowns of the different kinds of housing being built.
- Purchase as much of Islington's former council homes (on the market) as possible to urgently meet housing need.
- Commit to an ambitious and sustainable programme of council house building.
- Publish breakdowns on types of housing being built (social vs other kinds of affordable), and share them with all residents and partners

- Improve the quality, accessibility, and safety of temporary accommodation, and work only with temporary accommodation providers that provide decent, habitable, and warm homes. Work with all partners and residents to develop an action plan for improving temporary accommodation standards, including how to resource the plan
- Ensure people with disabilities can stay in temporary accommodation until all adaptations are finished on their new home
- Continue to support the Mayor of London's call for the introduction of rent controls, to keep rents as affordable as possible
- Work towards ending automatic evictions for rent arrears and abolish no-fault evictions
- Empower and work in partnership with Private Rented Sector tenants.

2. Hold landlords accountable

Islington Council will promote the following framework:

- Extend the landlord licensing scheme as much as possible to ensure local people can enjoy safe, decent, secure homes, whoever their landlord is, and continue to lobby Central Government to allow the Council to extend further
- Publish data to demonstrate how the council is acting against landlords on issues such as disrepair and minimum energy efficiency standards
- Have an enforcement policy which sets out that inspections and fines will be used as a deterrent against landlords who don't not provide safe and decent accommodation.

3. Work with, and support, renters

Islington Council will promote the following framework:

- Regularly meet with the NRLA, the LRU, Renters' Rights London, Acorn, and other tenant groups and private rented sector landlords as appropriate and commit to an ongoing culture of transparency and accessibility.
- Work in partnership with the NRLA, the LRU, Renters' Rights London, Acorn, private landlords and private sector tenants to expand public awareness of renters' rights.
- Ensure Islington Council's housing advice, assistance and support is clear and easy to access. Translate and work with BAME charities to reach as many people as possible.
- Promote independent advice and assistance through Shelter, Islington Law Centre, and community based advice agencies.
- Support will be provided via in person interviews, Teams and Zoom meetings, email, telephone and online advice, assistance, and support.
- Promote the right for private rented sector tenants to have pets, to make reasonable alterations to a property, and introduce a four month notice period for landlords.

- Work to create a national register of landlords, a legally binding decent homes standard, and examine schemes to make tenancy deposits more portable.
- The council will work with private rented sector tenants to introduce this new renters' charter and a new decent homes standard across Islington.
- Work in partnership with private renters and private rented sector landlords across Islington to actively reduce the incidence of Anti-Social Behaviour in our neighbourhoods, in order to improve the quality of life for all residents.

4. No borders in housing

Islington Council will promote the following framework:

- Pledge that there will be no collaboration between their work enforcing housing standards and the Home Office or Border Force.

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Framework for damp, condensation and mould

Introduction

In response to the tragic death of Awaab Ishak due to damp and mould in his family's home, this framework has been created to help all services providing support and repairs to Islington residents with damp and mould issues and concerns. It has been agreed across Islington housing providers, social care services and health partners.

The framework's intention is to:

- Make services accessible, inclusive and responsive to issues related to damp and mould.
- Meet our statutory responsibilities and duty of care to residents.
- Enable all services to clearly report, risk assess and deliver an appropriate response to damp and mould in council properties, ensuring health factors, household make-up and property conditions are considered in this response.
- Build a robust system that improves the way all services manage risk and improves living conditions.
- Highlight and address the investment needs of the stock and suitably prioritise this against other priorities in the business plan.

It seeks to do this by:

- Establishing a data-led and informed process for reviewing existing and reporting new damp and mould cases for residents and all services.
- Identifying where and how damp and mould is reported and triaged for resolution, co-producing this with Islington housing providers, social care services and health partners.
- Putting mechanisms in place to identify contributing factors where damp and mould impact residents:
 - Causes of damp and mould in properties including, weather tightness, leaks, insulation, heating, structural thermal performance and ventilation.
 - Where damp and mould could exacerbate young children/vulnerable persons who have a pre-existing medical condition (asthma, emphysema, etc.) and/or make them more susceptible to illness.
 - Where household overcrowding is a contributing factor.
- Applying a longer-term solution for early identification and an Every Visit Counts approach, which will include a reporting and audit process, training and equipment to tackle causes of damp and mould.

Underlying principles:

- There are no excuses, and we will adopt best practice to damp and mould interventions.
- To co-produce an approach to tackling damp and mould and improving living conditions.

- The framework can help with compliance to meet the Decent Homes Standard¹, Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) operating guidance: housing inspections and assessment of hazards² and the duty of care through the services we provide to residents who live in our properties.
- The design of the framework acknowledges that there needs to be a staged approach to implementation, not only an immediate response to the issues related to mould and damp, but also building a sustainable proactive system that enables early identification and holistic support provision. These stages may run in parallel with each other as they are established.
- It recognises that this cannot be done all at once requiring collaboration, investment of resources and an on-going review process to ensure it is meeting the needs of residents and that services are enabled to carry out this work.
- The framework sets out three categories to respond to this approach:
 - **Urgent** – immediate response
 - **Every Visit Counts** – holistic approach
 - **Tenancy and property audit** – proactive interventions
- There will be an action plan that accompanies this framework.

Urgent

Accelerating our response to damp and mould, this category will review the existing data held on reports of damp and mould, drawing together information from services in “one view”, to effectively prioritise households that have reported damp and mould, repeated visits, risk factors and property conditions.

End-to-end processes will be put in place to ensure the management and review of cases have the appropriate response and that robust and meaningful outcomes are delivered, recorded, and tracked. Outcomes may vary, dependent on the level of intervention, but coordination and collaboration across all services is needed to mitigate the risk of bottlenecks or increased service pressures.

Training will be delivered to officers to provide support and confidence and enable a provision of high-level customer care to residents, as well as providing clarity on processes and responsibility.

Communication channels established for our residents and partner agencies to improve the accessibility of reporting damp and mould and the availability of support services, which gives residents confidence in our services and to feel safe and secure to live in their homes.

Every Visit Counts

Building upon the Urgent category, Every Visit Counts will provide a holistic approach to identifying property conditions and support needs of residents for every officer who conducts home visits irrespective of the reason they are attending. Through delivering public services and as a landlord to 40% of Islington population, there is a duty of care we need to provide for residents to live safely, securely, and well in their homes. It is our responsibility to be

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/decent-homes-standard-review>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hhsrs-operating-guidance-housing-act-2004-guidance-about-inspections-and-assessment-of-hazards-given-under-section-9>

professionally curious and take ownership of reporting and tracking areas of intervention and support.

This will be enabled through training, resources, and accessible recording processes.

A policy and standard operating procedure will be embedded to achieve consistency, quality outputs, reporting standardisation and will reduce the risk of miscommunication across services.

Tenancy and Property Audit

Bolstering Every Visit Counts there will be a programme of annual visits to council owned properties. An inspection will be conducted, recording the general condition of the property, as well as occupancy levels, and visual identification of repairs or interventions needed. The visit will also provide the offer to residents of signposting to support available, helpful information and advice.

An accessible and mobile reporting process will be created, including referral pathways established jointly with services.

Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment:

- To provide a leadership role to share and promote best practice to other social and private housing landlords managing homes in the borough.
- To work with health, social care, and advocacy groups to improve their referrals to us to better understand where occupants' health or well-being is being affected by damp & mould
- Clear and attainable priorities and working in partnership.

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HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

16 MARCH 2023

- 1) Major Scrutiny Review: Strategic Review of Overcrowding in Islington- Planning department
- 2) Overcrowding and Housing Allocations
- 3) Fibre Broadband Roll out programme – report
- 4) Draft Overcrowding questionnaires to partners of Islington Council and to residents on the housing register
- 5) Social Housing (Regulation) Bill
- 6) Tenant Charters Report
- 7) Damp and Mould
- 8) Work Programme 2022/23

8 MAY 2023

- 1) Major Scrutiny Review: Strategic Review of Overcrowding in Islington -Draft Recommendations and Report
- 2) Housing Association liaison with five Housing Associations
- 3) Preparing for the end of PFI2 – 12 month report back
- 4) Communal Heating Mini-Review – 12 month report back
- 5) Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q3 2022/23)
- 6) Work Programme 2022/23

6 JUNE 2023

- 1) Major Scrutiny Review: Strategic Review of Overcrowding in Islington - Final Report
- 2) Membership, Terms of Reference and Dates of Meetings
- 3) Draft Work Programme 2023/24 and Potential Scrutiny Topics
- 4) Work Programme 2023/24

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