

**Homes and Neighbourhoods**

**Islington Council**

**222 Upper Street**

**N1 1XR**

**Report of: Matt West, Director of Housing Property Services**

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

# Damp, Condensation and Mould Programme Recommendations

## 1. Programme overview

- 1.1. It has been one year since the damp, condensation and programme was established.
- 1.2. Numbers of damp surveys over the past three years shows a steep increase in demand. Which put additional pressure on council services, resources and on the individuals and families living in homes with these conditions.
  - October 2021: 225 damp surveys
  - October 2022: 178 damp surveys
  - October 2023: 452 damp surveys
  - November 2021: 224 damp surveys
  - November 2022: 478 damp surveys
  - November 2023: 600 damp surveys

- December 2021: 185 damp surveys
- December 2022: 463 damp surveys
- December 2023: 282 damp surveys (up to 19<sup>th</sup> December)

1.2.1. We have increased the number of surveyors from four to eight.

1.2.2. In addition, we have procured additional contractors to support the treatment works.

1.2.3. The online reporting form is in the process of being updated so that residents are empowered to provide more information when reporting damp and mould and officers can assess and triage quickly and more accurately.

1.2.4. The Repairs Policy has been revised and updated and includes damp, condensation and mould. This is due to go through governance and signed off early 2024.

1.2.5. The Major Works Transfer procedure has been updated. This procedure explains the process for agreeing temporary or permanent moves of tenants when there are works that need to be carried out in their homes. The procedure also sets out where tenants are eligible for compensation and a Home Loss payment.

1.2.6. Enhanced and clarified damp and mould process that ensures all completed damp and mould work is subjected to a formal review to establish how successful the intervention has been.

1.2.7. The One View dashboard has influenced a new operational dashboard, it allowed us to communicate to a wide audience the overview of damp and mould in Islington bringing together the power of joining datasets, enabled prioritising risk and highlighted gaps.

1.2.8. Based on the One View dashboard, a new damp and mould dashboard is in the process of being created to track live damp and mould cases. This dashboard will improve operational and strategic oversight.

1.2.9. The Housing Ombudsman has commended the programme and recognised the dedicated work of all involved: "The landlord's actions to improve its response to damp and mould should result in improvement in residents' experience, and some should also have wider impact, improving the response to repairs more generally."

1.2.10. Tenancy and property visits pilot has been hugely beneficial in identifying damp and mould in homes, their root causes and other repairs issues that could lead to damp and mould. A total of 521 households was involved in the pilot. Among them, we attempted visits to 331 homes. During these visits, 155 households answered the door, and 110 of them granted us access to their residences. 50 homes had visible damp and mould which were referred to the Repairs team.

- 1.2.11. The Partnership referral form was initially piloted with Andover Medical Practice and will be extended out other medical practices and services.
- 1.2.12. As part of preparing for winter there is a programme of proactively testing the performance of boilers and communal heating, and have began to install remote monitoring devices that help identify the increase in humidity in a property so that the Repairs team can proactively prevent damp, condensation and mould in homes.
- 1.2.13. An extensive training programme is in place, with damp and mould awareness briefings and updates included in inductions and meetings
- 1.2.14. Since January 2023 the High Profile Damp Case Taskforce has worked on 131 cases, closed 90 cases and has significantly reduced the risk of these cases from high to low.
- 1.2.15. We are working with University College London in conducting a net zero and damp and mould research study to best prepare us for reducing damp and mould in Islington Council properties and meeting our net zero carbon aims.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. This report provides the Housing Scrutiny Committee with information and progress made to date on the damp, condensation and mould programme since the previous update to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in September 2023.
- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. Members of the committee are asked to amend add and approve the draft recommendations for presentation to the council's executive committee.
- 2.4. An update on the damp, condensation and mould programme to be presented in a future Housing Scrutiny Committee as determined by the committee:
  - 2.4.1. Performance data based on the key performance indicators that have been agreed.
  - 2.4.2. Tenancy and property visits phase two pilot findings and overview of how the work is embedded in the service.
  - 2.4.3. Overview of how data and systems have been used and developed to improve service delivery.
  - 2.4.4. A review of how the service better communicates the process for damp and mould and how it acts for different causes.
  - 2.4.5. The service is to explore combining cyclical safety visits to properties to improve access and reduce disruption of tenants.

- 2.4.6. The service reviews its investment work to target damp and mould as well as other priorities such as decent homes, fire safety, net zero carbon.
- 2.4.7. The service completes and considers its pilots in to remote technology.
- 2.4.8. Update on the development of referral pathways for other services such as GPS and Health Practitioners.
- 2.4.9. Overview of blocks with high level of damp and mould prioritised for capital work and investment.
- 2.4.10. Action plan implemented from the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman's paragraph 49 special investigation report.
- 2.4.11. Overview of the Social Housing Regulators pilot inspection and any learning that can improve services for residents in relation to damp and mould.