

To: Communities and Housing Policy Board

On: 22 August 2023

Report by: Director of Environment, Housing and Infrastructure

Heading: Housing: Tackling Dampness, Mould and Condensation

1. Summary

- 1.1 A report to the Communities and Housing Policy Board on 17th January 2023 outlined the processes in place to deal with reports of dampness and mould, and detailed the actions which were taken to review these, as well as setting out further actions to be undertaken.
 - 1.2 This report provides the Policy Board with an update on changes that have been implemented since January 2023 and sets out further actions to be undertaken.
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2. Recommendations

It is recommended that that Communities and Housing Policy Board:

- 2.1 Note the actions taken to date and the proposed future actions to ensure the effective management of dampness, mould and condensation cases within Renfrewshire Council housing stock.
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3. Background

- 3.1 A report to the Policy Board on 17th January 2023 noted the measures in place to ensure the effective management of dampness, mould and condensation

cases within Renfrewshire Council housing stock. The report also noted the Cost of Living Crisis and the Energy Crisis were expected to result in an increasing number of tenants being unable to adequately heat their homes with the potential consequence of increased problems with damp, mould and condensation.

3.2 The report detailed the actions taken which were taken to review the Council's existing processes and also set out further actions to be undertaken. This review took account of the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman's report entitled "Spotlight on: Damp and Mould".

4. **Renfrewshire actions to tackle Damp, Mould and Condensation**

4.1 Renfrewshire Council's revised process for dealing with cases of dampness and mould, incorporating the changes and improvements made in the last 6 months, is as follows:

- Dampness, mould, and condensation problems are reported by tenants or other parties through the customer contact centre.
- New scripts have been provided to the customer contact centre to ensure that any underlying issues such as broken or missing extractor fans, faulty heating or window ventilation can be picked up at the initial call and repairs instructed immediately. An offer of energy advice referral is also made. This allows an early intervention for any underlying issues in advance of the inspection visit.
- A new inspection category specifically for dampness and mould has been created to allow easier monitoring of cases.
- A Repairs and Maintenance Officer (RMO) will attend and assess any repair requirements. Inspection appointments for dampness and mould have increased from 30 minutes to 60 minutes to ensure there is sufficient time to fully assess all potential issues within the property.
- All RMOs attended a training session in February 2023 on dampness and mould, delivered by an external consultant with expertise in this field.
- A new electronic checklist has been created which is completed for each inspection providing a detailed record of the inspection and actions taken. This also has automated links to initiate referrals to our rotworks contractor and/or to our property sensor installation team. The automation ensures a quick response and provides an audit trail for each case.
- Moisture meters have been upgraded to a more sophisticated model which enable moisture, humidity and temperature to be checked.
- Repair lines are issued to Building Services for any issues identified or referred to a specialist contractor where this is required.
- Anti-fungal paint application is carried out by Building Services. The supplier has carried out further training to Building Services on the application of the paint. Normally at least 2 visits are required for paintwork. Anti mould treatment kits have been made available for issue to tenants.

- Dampness and Condensation leaflets have been reviewed and continue to be issued where appropriate.
- Severe cases or cases where there is no obvious cause are passed to our specialist rot works contractor who will provide a detailed report, identifying factors contributing to the dampness problem and recommendations for works to be carried out. The contractor will offer advice to the tenant where appropriate.
- Sensors which monitor humidity levels within a property can now be installed by our in-house team as well as our external provider. Following installation and a period of monitoring, reports are returned to RMOs for follow up with tenants.
- Sensors continue to be pro-actively installed in properties council wide with a focus on areas where stock improvement works are not scheduled in the near future. This will ensure that early intervention is undertaken for any properties flagged up as at risk.
- Consultation is underway with a specialist decontamination and disinfecting company. Their process deals with mould contamination on surfaces and airborne spores. Properties with severe cases of mould have been identified for a pilot to be undertaken.
- The Housing Investment Team continue to participate in any working groups and forums where dampness and mould is on the agenda to learn and share good practice.

4.2 The processes and procedures will be subject to an ongoing review but further actions that have already been identified are as follows:

- Pilot projects for decontamination and disinfection to be reviewed.
- The dampness checklist to be rolled out to the void property team.
- The void property team to review any history of damp to ensure potential problems can be rectified whilst the property is empty.
- Robust process to be put in place to ensure any instances of 'no access' for mould treatment works are followed up.
- Liaise with Corporate Energy Team and Cost of Living Crisis Team in relation to energy advice and fuel poverty issues.
- A strategy for managing dampness, mould and condensation to be finalised and presented to a future meeting of this Policy Board.
- Further refinement to contact centre scripts following review of changes implemented.
- An assessment of additional training requirements.
- Creation of management reports to monitor damp and mould cases.

4.3 Challenges that continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis are as follows:

- Energy crisis – tenants unable to afford to heat their homes is likely to result in an increase in damp/mould/condensation cases.

- Resource Capacity – internal and external resources require to be monitored in line with demand. Prioritisation of workload to ensure most severe cases are dealt with.

4.4 Officers will continue to proactively manage any reports of damp, mould or condensation, and to improve practice in line with the actions outlined in paragraph 4.1.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None – Provision included within existing HRA Repairs budget allocation.
 2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
 3. **Community/Council Planning** –
 - Building strong, safe and resilient communities – the range of measures that are in place help to ensure tenants are safe.
 4. **Legal** – None
 5. **Property/Assets** - None.
 6. **Information Technology** - None
 7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 8. **Health & Safety** - None
 9. **Procurement** - None
 10. **Risk** - None
 11. **Privacy Impact** - None
 12. **Cosla Policy Position** – N/A
 13. **Climate Risk** - None
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List of Background Papers

- (a) Report to Communities and Housing Policy Board on 17 January 2023 – Housing: Tackling Dampness, Mould and Condensation

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