

APPENDIX 2

Damp and Mould Self-Assessment July 2023

	Housing Ombudsman Recommendation	Response	Proposed New Action
1	Landlords should adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould interventions. Landlords should review their current strategy and consider whether their approach will achieve this.	The Council has a zero-tolerance approach in the way that it deals with any reports of damp and mould. The current process gives priority to damp and mould inspections, over less urgent matters. The topic is not currently included in the Council's Housing Strategy, but will be included when the strategy is reviewed later this year.	Include damp and mould issues in new Housing Strategy.
2	Landlords should consider whether they require an overall framework, or policy, to address damp and mould which would cover each area where the landlord may be required to act. This would include any proactive interventions, its approach to diagnosis, actions it considers appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication and aftercare.	The Council does not currently have a policy specifically for damp and mould. A new policy would demonstrate the Council's commitment to this issue.	Write a new Damp and Mould policy.
3	Landlords should review the accessibility and use of their systems for reporting repairs and making complaints to 'find their	Majority of repairs are reported via telephone, although reports through the online form are increasing. High number of repairs complaints are	Review a sample of damp and mould cases to identify missed opportunities for the issue to have been reported sooner.

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	silence’.	received, which demonstrates that tenants know how to make a complaint. Further work could be completed to consider when reports could have been made sooner, and why this was not done.	
4	Landlords should identify opportunities for extending the scope of their diagnosis within buildings, for example by examining neighbouring properties, to ensure the response early on is as effective as possible.	Under the Council’s current process wider issues, such as neighbouring properties and similar property types are considered.	n/a
5	Landlords should implement a data driven, risk-based approach with respect to damp and mould. This will reduce over reliance on residents to report issues, help landlords identify hidden issues and support landlords to anticipate and prioritise interventions before a complaint or disrepair claim is made.	The Council is currently reviewing how data is held in our housing management system and improving recording of information and reports available, for all repairs matters. The records and use of information for damp and mould will be considered as part of this review.	Introduce regular reporting on damp and mould works to identify patterns.
6	Where properties are identified for future disposal or are within an area marked for regeneration, landlords should proactively satisfy themselves that residents do not receive a poorer standard	This is currently not an issue for the Council as there are no tenanted properties identified for disposal. The Council will consider this if this situation arises in future.	n/a

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	of service or lower living conditions, that steps are taken to avoid homes degrading to an unacceptable condition and that they regularly engage and communicate with these residents.		
7	Landlords should avoid taking actions that solely place the onus on the resident. They should evaluate what mitigations they can put in place to support residents in cases where structural interventions are not appropriate and satisfy themselves they are taking all reasonable steps.	The Council uses an external specialist contractor to complete damp surveys. The reports provided give actions for both the Council and the tenant to add issues. If the issues are not structural the Council considers what other support can be provided, this can include referrals to our Financial Inclusion or Tenancy Sustainment Officers.	n/a
8	Together with residents, landlords should review the information, materials and support provided to residents to ensure that these strike the right tone and are effective in helping residents to avoid damp and mould in their properties.	Review of information has been undertaken, but input from tenants so far has been minimal. The Resident Involvement Group will be asked to review the information, including the tone.	Resident Involvement Group to be asked to review the information provided to tenants on damp and mould issues, including the tone used.
9	Landlords should be more transparent with residents involved in mutual exchanges and make the most of every opportunity to identify and	The Council inspects all properties prior to mutual exchange, and if any damp and mould issues are identified these will be addressed.	n/a

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	address damp and mould, including visits and void periods.		
10	Landlords should ensure their strategy for delivering net zero carbon homes considers and plans for how they can identify and respond to potential unintended consequences around damp and mould.	The Council has plans to install Air Source Heat Pumps in new build properties. Consideration should be given to the advice given to tenants, and if this should be different for those with alternative heating systems	Add damp and mould to agenda for Housing Delivery Group so that this matter can be considered and progressed if required.
11	Landlords should review, alongside residents, their initial response to reports of damp and mould to ensure they avoid automatically apportioning blame or using language that leaves residents feeling blamed.	The Council's process does not apportion blame, and has been careful with the language used for some time. The Council have reviewed their approach to this prior to the publication of the report. However, the Council has not yet reviewed this with tenants.	Resident Involvement Group to be asked to review a sample of anonymised cases and provide feedback.
12	Landlords should consider their current approach to record keeping and satisfy themselves it is sufficiently accurate and robust. We would encourage landlords to go further and consider whether their record keeping systems and processes support a risk-based approach to damp and mould.	The Council is currently reviewing how data is held in our housing management system and improving recording of information and reports available, for all repairs matters. The records and use of information for damp and mould will be considered as part of this review.	n/a – action already included in point 5
13	Landlords should ensure that their responses to reports of damp and mould are timely and	The Council's process ensures that reports are dealt with promptly	n/a

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	reflect the urgency of the issue.		
14	Landlords should review the number of missed appointments in relation to damp and mould cases and, depending on the outcome of any review, consider what steps may be required to reduce them.	The Council has a low number of missed appointments each month, which are reviewed and reported. Reporting could be amended to confirm how many related to damp and mould.	Amend monthly reporting regarding appointments made and kept, so that the number relating to damp and mould is noted.
15	Landlords should ensure that their staff, whether in-house or contractors, have the ability to identify and report early signs of damp and mould.	The Council has provided training to visiting housing employees on identification of damp and mould. Currently looking at use of e-learning to ensure all employees receive regular training.	Implement BLZ course on damp and mould for visiting officers.
16	Landlords should take steps to identify and resolve any skills gaps they may have, ensuring their staff and contractors have appropriate expertise to properly diagnose and respond to reports of damp and mould.	Employees in the Repairs team have received in-depth training from an external provider. Where concerns are identified, reports are completed by an external specialist contractor.	n/a
17	Landlords should ensure that they clearly and regularly communicate with their residents regarding actions taken or otherwise to resolve reports of damp and mould. Landlords should review and update any associated processes and policies accordingly.	Regular information has been shared through Housing News bulletins. The Council's Allocations Policy has been updated to ensure that it reflects the needs of applicants experiencing damp and mould issues. New policy for damp and mould to be written.	n/a – action already included in point 2

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18	Landlords must ensure there is effective internal communication between their teams and departments, and ensure that one individual or team has overall responsibility for ensuring complaints or reports are resolved, including follow up or aftercare.	Repairs, Capital Works and Neighbourhoods work closely together to resolve issues. The Repairs team has overall responsibility to address and resolve issues.	n/a
19	Landlords should ensure that their complaints policy is effective and in line with the Complaint Handling Code, with clear compensation and redress guidance. Remedies should be commensurate to the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident, whilst recognising that each case is individual and should be considered on its own merits.	The Council's complaints policy is clear and effective and has been reviewed in line with the Complaint Handling Code.	n/a
20	Landlords need to ensure they can identify complex cases at an early stage, and have a strategy for keeping residents informed and effective resolution.	Initial assessment is completed by Repairs Inspectors. If the case is complex external advice will be sought from specialist company.	n/a
21	Landlords should identify where an independent, mutually agreed and suitably qualified surveyor should be used, share the	Reports produced by specialist external company are shared with tenants, and appointments provided for remedial works to be completed	n/a

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	outcomes of all surveys and inspections with residents to help them understand the findings and be clear on next steps. Landlords should then act on accepted survey recommendations in a timely manner.	as soon as possible.	
22	Where extensive works may be required, landlords should consider the individual circumstances of the household, including any vulnerabilities, and whether or not it is appropriate to move resident(s) out of their home at an early stage.	The Council will always consider whether a decant is required. The decision will be made considering individual circumstances. The Council has an approved Decant Policy. In some situations, it may be more appropriate to offer the household a permanent move to another property. This is possible in accordance with the Allocations Policy. So far, this has been used on two occasions.	n/a
23	Landlords should promote the benefits of their complaints process and the Ombudsman to their residents as an appropriate and effective route to resolving disputes.	The Council does not currently promote the complaints process or the Ombudsman service.	Housing to work with Corporate Communications team to appropriately promote the benefits of the complaints process and the Ombudsman service.
24	Landlords should continue to use the complaints procedure when the pre-action protocol has commenced and until legal proceedings have been issued to maximise the opportunities to	The Council continues to use the complaints procedure to try to resolve issues promptly and without the need for legal action.	n/a

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	resolve disputes outside of court. Landlords should ensure their approach is consistent with our jurisdiction guidance and their legal and complaint teams work together effectively where an issue is being pursued through the complaints process and protocol.		
25	Landlords should consider how best to share learning from complaints and the positive impact of changes made as a result within the organisation and externally. Systems should allow the landlord to analyse their complaints data effectively and identify themes, trends and learning opportunities.	The Council reviews complaints and the learning points identified. Complaint trends and improvements made are shared in Housing Management Team meetings. Changes made to services following complaints are included in the Annual Report.	n/a
26	Landlords should ensure they treat residents reporting damp and mould with respect and empathy. The distress and inconvenience experienced by residents in this area is some of the most profound we have seen, and this needs to be reflected in the tone and approach of the complaint handling.	The Council's approach ensures that tenants are treated with empathy and respect when reporting damp and mould.	n/a