

## Council – 19 July 2023

### Labour Amendment to motion 8c – Tackling Damp and Mould in Trafford's Social Housing

As a council, we ~~must lead~~ **are already leading** from the front to ensure our residents benefit from safe and secure housing. As such, this Council ~~must ensure~~ **will continue to monitor** that **social** housing stock is maintained to the highest quality. This is especially the case for socially rented properties. Many housing association properties in Trafford are affected by damp and mould. Poor living conditions are a major risk to the health and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable people in society, especially children and the health impacts, both physical and mental, of living with damp and mould can be devastating.

Therefore, this Council acknowledges:

- The tragic death of the two-year old Awaab Ishak as a result of chronic exposure to mould within his family's one-bedroom flat in Rochdale.
- The failure of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing to maintain the property and fix the mould issue that led to Awaab's death.
- That there is no room for complacency. Without **ongoing** serious action to tackle damp and mould, a tragic case like this could happen in Trafford.
- The subsequent letter written by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to council leaders and social housing providers stating that damp and mould complaints must be handled "with sufficient seriousness".

**Note that since the letter received by the SoS, we have done the following regarding damp and mould:**

- Created a link on the Council's website to an advice leaflet on damp and mould - [Disrepair in private rented properties \(trafford.gov.uk\)](https://trafford.gov.uk/disrepair-in-private-rented-properties)
- Set up a new code on our case management system to be able to report specifically on the number of complaints received about damp and mould growth
- Completed and returned the data collection request received by the SoS following their initial letter  
Changed our procedure to ensure that all tenants who contact us about damp and mould are emailed a link to the advice leaflet above (or provided another way if not by email)
- Note the creation of a £15m fund by GMCA called the Social Housing Quality Fund to help improve properties suffering with severe mould and damp.

- The creation of, and subsequent transfer of housing stock to, Housing Associations does not render local authorities powerless to improve the lives of tenants.
- That under the Housing Act 2004, Trafford has a legal duty to review housing conditions in their district, identify actions required to remedy 'category 1 hazards' and then - to quote legislation - "they must take the appropriate enforcement action in relation to the hazard".
- That under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, mould is designated as a 'category 1 hazard', meaning that local authorities can serve hazard awareness and improvement notices and can also take other emergency action, where housing associations are falling short.

Therefore, this Council resolves to ask all housing associations with properties in Trafford to:

- Ensure they prioritise damp and mould complaints and resolve them without delay.
- Identify and prioritise vulnerable tenants dealing with damp and mould issues - particularly the very young, the very old and those with chronic lung conditions.
- Prioritise these vulnerable tenants by actioning repairs to areas of their homes that can prevent damp and mould. For example, clearing guttering, sealing windows, replacing faulty extraction fans in bathrooms and kitchens as well as providing cavity wall insulation.
- Conduct a full damp and mould survey of properties in Trafford and provide an action plan for reparatory works.
- Provide tenants with actionable guidance for preventing damp and mould, beyond advice to simply 'wipe it off'. This work should be amplified by the council's communications team.
- Provide specific training to call handlers on how to advise tenants telephoning or emailing about their damp and mould problems.
- Inform all tenants on the process for raising and tracking a damp or mould complaint.
- Ensure all councillors are given the opportunity to attend regular inspection walkabouts with housing officers.
- Recognise that this issue is not solely an issue within a social housing environment and that in conjunction with Trafford and the other nine boroughs, GMCA has created the New Deal for renters which specifically aims to improve conditions in the private rented sector.

This Council further resolves to:

- **Continue to** Work constructively with housing associations to deliver meaningful improvements for social housing tenants, ~~to~~ many of whom are left without proper protection or recourse when they encounter a damp or mould issue.
- Where progress is too slow, to use powers including but not limited to hazard awareness notices and hazard improvement notices to ensure that damp and mould complaints are treated with the urgency they are due.
- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to all housing associations outlining the above resolutions and stating this council's strongly held view that nobody should have to live in a damp, cold or unsafe home.