

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny
Date: 20 September 2023
Report for: Noting
Report of: Executive Member for Housing & Advice

Report Title

Damp & Mould within the Trafford Housing Stock

Summary

This report sets out an overview of the Council's approach to addressing problems of damp and mould within the housing stock of Trafford. It is intended to set the scene on the subject before the Committee considers comment from leading housing providers about their strategy for tackling the issue.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note the Report & the activity being carried out to protect residents from Damp & Mould in their homes.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Adrian Fisher
Email: adrian.fisher@trafford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	Addressing Damp & Mould has clear benefits in terms of reducing Health inequalities.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	Housing Improvement has been championed by the GM mayor as a key objective.
Financial	None directly arising from this report.
Legal Implications:	These are set out within Section 3.2 of the report
Equality/Diversity Implications	The issue of damp & Mould tends to especially

	affect those who are vulnerably housed or who have existing health conditions.
Sustainability Implications	The remediation substandard housing supports the concept of sustainable development
Carbon Reduction	These are set out within Section 4 of the report
Resource Implications e.g., Staffing / ICT / Assets	Damp & Mould is tackled by the Private Sector Housing team in Environmental Health which faces multiple demands for its services
Risk Management Implications	Attention to Damp & Mould issues mitigates the risk of further tragic incidents.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	The adverse implications of damp & mould on human health are well documented. Consequently effective management of the issue has clear benefits in terms of health and well-being.
Health and Safety Implications	None Directly (but see health implications above)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The problem of Damp & Mould in housing has been highlighted by the tragic death of Awaab Ishak. In December 2020 the two year old died of a severe respiratory condition – and in November 2022 the Coroner ruled that the young boys death was linked prolonged exposure to Black Mould in his home in central Rochdale. The Property was managed by the Registered Provider Rochdale Boroughwide Housing.
- 1.2 The death led to additional clauses being introduced into the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which became law in July of this year. The Act introduces stronger safeguards for social housing by strengthening the role of the Regulator of Social Housing, introducing new powers for the Housing Ombudsman and setting time limits to address hazards within homes (including damp & mould)
- 1.3 This report explains the work undertaken to address the problem of damp and mould by Registered Providers – alongside activity within the private housing stock. It also makes a link to housing improvement programmes designed to reduce carbon emissions.

2.0 Registered Housing Providers in Trafford

- 2.1 Trafford currently have approximately 16,000 social housing properties within the borough provided by various Registered Providers. The largest stockholder in Trafford is L&Q (previously THT) who currently own/manage over 50% of the social rented properties in the borough. Irwell Valley and Your Housing Group are the second and third largest stockholders respectively.

2.2 Trafford Council have strong relationships with all Registered Providers who operate within the borough. In addition to ad-hoc 1-2-1 meetings and frequent email communication, the Housing Strategy & Growth Team have several structures and channels in place for communication with Registered Providers including the following:

- Trafford Strategic Housing Partnership – held quarterly
- Registered Provider Developer Forum – held quarterly
- Nominations Monitoring - Monthly data requests and quarterly reports
- A Cost-of-living Group involving L&Q, YHG, MHA, Great Places and CAB, which is chaired by Cllr James Wright.

2.3 Following the recently approved Motion with regards to damp and mould in social rented accommodation in Trafford, the Housing Strategy & Growth Team asked Registered Providers to supply their organisations most appropriate contact to establish a Working Group. In addition, Registered Providers were asked to provide a response to the Motion outlining any improvement programmes, good new stories, and their future plans. Those Associations approached are listed in Appendix 1 and updates received are set out in Appendix 2

3 The Work of the Council in addressing Housing standards

3.1 The Housing Standards Team in the Council's Regulatory Services Department primarily deal with complaints relating to substandard properties in the private rented sector under the Housing Act 2004 and associated Regulations. The team also deal with licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and bringing empty properties back into use.

Legal powers

3.2 Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 introduced the [Housing Health and Safety Rating system \(HHSRS\)](#) for assessing housing conditions. The HHSRS is a risk-based assessment and evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to occupants' health and safety arising from any deficiencies identified in residential housing (private, social rented and owner-occupied housing). This includes dwellings which may not be occupied. The underlying principle of the HHSRS is that residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor.

3.3 The HHSRS determines whether a housing hazard falls into one of the following categories:

- **Category 1 hazards (serious).** A local authority **must** take action to deal with a category 1 hazard, either undertaking the necessary works itself, or requiring the owner or manager of the property to do so.
- **Category 2 hazards (other).** Local authorities have powers to take action to deal with the hazard, or can require the property owner or manager to take action.

3.4 An HHSRS inspection may be triggered in a number of ways, including:

- As part of an overall assessment of a particular area. For example, as part of a local authority's routine inspection of their social housing stock.
- At the request of an individual (such as a tenant or neighbour). However, in some cases local authorities may attempt to avoid undertaking inspections and assessments at the request of a tenant or local resident (for example, for budgetary reasons). Where this occurs, a resident can make an official complaint through a local magistrate, or the relevant parish or community council, which can require the local authority to undertake an inspection if it looks likely that there may be a hazard.
- As part of an official complaint (for example, by a magistrate or parish council).
- Following a complaint being made to another agency (such as Citizens Advice).
- At the request of an owner or tenant in order to deal with various aspects of home repair, adaption or improvement.

3.5 During an HHSRS investigation, a local authority inspector assesses what hazards exist and what subsequent enforcement action is required (that is, whether the hazards can be reduced or removed and how this should happen). The inspector then determines the most appropriate enforcement method and informs the relevant landlord of their reasons for choosing this ([section 8](#), HA 2004).

3.6 The Council has a range of enforcement options to address hazards of either Category 1 or Category 2 that exist in residential premises. Notices which may be served in relation to a hazard are as follows:

- Improvement Notices – Section 11 and 12 Housing Act 2004
- Prohibition Orders – Section 20 and 21 Housing Act 2004
- Hazard Awareness notices – Section 28 Housing Act 2004
- Emergency Remedial Action – Section 40 Housing Act 2004

- Emergency Prohibition Order – Section 43 Housing Act 2004
- Demolition Order – Section 265 Housing Act 1985 as amended
- Clearance Areas – Section 289 Housing Act 1985 as amended

The first three options are available for both category 1 and category 2 hazards. The last four are not available for category 2 hazards: The action the Council chooses to take must be the most appropriate course of action in relation to the hazard.

Complaint procedures

- 3.7 When Trafford's Housing Standards team first receive a complaint, the tenant is requested to complete an online disrepair form [Report disrepair in your privately rented property \(trafford.gov.uk\)](https://www.trafford.gov.uk). This form requires confirmation that a report has been made to their landlord and an opportunity given to remedy the matter (this would not apply in cases where the risk posed by the hazard is imminent).
- 3.8 If the property is owned by a Housing Association, the tenant is asked to follow the Housing Association formal complaints procedure and contact the Housing Ombudsman, prior to completing our online referral. This option for recourse is not available to privately renting to tenants but it is available to social housing tenants, therefore the team tend to not get involved in complaints relating to this sector.
- 3.9 Following receipt of a completed online disrepair form, contact is made with the landlord and/or letting agent to notify them of the issue and request that they make arrangements to inspect the property and contact the Council to outline their plans for remedial action within a specific time period (usually 28 days).
- 3.10 If no or an inadequate response is received, an inspection of the property will be arranged under section 239 of the Housing Act 2004, to assess any hazards and determine whether enforcement action is required. Where applicable, enforcement notices are then served following a HHSRS assessment. If an inspection takes place but no defects are identified which relate to dampness and mould growth, a letter will be sent to tenants confirming the outcome of the inspection and providing advice.

Government Damp & Mould Initiative

- 3.11 In November 2022, the Council received a letter from the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities, regarding the tragic death of Awaab Ishak as a direct result of the damp and mould in his family home. The letter requested information from the Council regarding its policies and procedures for dealing with damp and mould complaints, the prevalence of damp and mould in our housing stock, together with data regarding damp and mould enforcement activities.

3.12 Information was provided in response to this request, including the most recent Stock Condition Survey in Trafford [Trafford Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2019](#). The information on the Housing Standards web page was reviewed [Disrepair in private rented properties \(trafford.gov.uk\)](#) and all complaints of damp and mould now receive an advice leaflet on dealing with damp and mould. [Dealing-with-damp-and-condensation-2019.pdf \(nea.org.uk\)](#). The team have also created a category code in our management information system to enable reports to be created to monitor the number of complaints received in relation to damp and mould. Since the creation of that code in November 2022, a total of 68 damp and mould complaints have been received (up to and including 8 August 2023).

4. The Link to Housing Retrofit & Other Housing Improvement

4.1 There is a linkage between Housing improvement and efforts to reduce carbon emissions from the housing stock. For the most part efforts to improve thermal efficiency will also ensure a higher standard of home overall. However efficiently insulated homes may also require householders to adjust the way they live to avoid undue internal condensation.

4.2 Trafford Housing Associations have incorporated home energy efficiency into their estate management plans and have access to funding such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Examples of projects undertaken by Housing Associations are provided below:

L&Q

2023-25 Multi Measure Programmes: Altrincham

- Refit (~60 homes)
- Empty cavities and failed cavity wall insulation (~80 homes)
- Renewables 215 Solar PV systems, 51 with batteries

Irwell Valley Homes

- Launching a retrofit pilot on one of the existing homes on the Sale West estate to test new technology and see how we can make homes across the estate more energy efficient. Irwell Valley received £1,259,000 from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund for 157 homes (including some outside of the Borough)

MSV Housing

- Energy Performance Target rating C with a road map to B
- Fabric First approach and “no regrets” technology
- Undertaking a deep retrofit pilot programme

- 4.3 There are also a series of public sector lead programmes which seek to improve the thermal standards of housing. Several are summarised below:

Your Home Better

In partnership with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, we have launched the [Your Home Better](#) service offering a whole house approach for residents wishing to install measures for a more energy efficient, healthier and comfortable home.

ECO4

In partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Trafford Council have appointed Installers to deliver whole house energy efficiency improvements funded by the Energy Company Obligation Local Authority Flexible Eligibility Scheme ([ECO4 LA Flex](#)).

Local Energy Advice Programme (LEAP)

LEAP is a free service that is helping people keep warm and reduce their energy bills without costing them any money. It is open to all types of householders – homeowners, private renters and social housing tenants.

Once LEAP have checked eligibility, households receive a free home visit from a qualified Home Energy Advisor who can help with:

- Installing free, simple home energy measures such as LED lighting and draught proofing.
- Giving day-to-day energy efficiency hints and tips and making sure your heating controller is working correctly.
- Checking the cheapest tariff.
- Arranging a free telephone advice service to help with benefits, money and bill problems.
- Referring for further energy efficiency improvements such as loft or cavity wall insulation and in some instances a new boiler.

Free central heating systems

This limited offer is part of Greater Manchester Warm Homes Fund which will install a free 'first-time' central heating system in 500 homes across Greater Manchester on a first come, first served basis. to help vulnerable households get ready for winter.

It aims to provide a helping hand to vulnerable households that do not currently have a central heating system and who, during the colder months, are struggling to stay warm.

It is open to both homeowners and private tenants (with their landlord's permission) who meet eligibility criteria based on income, health or other personal circumstances.

- 4.4 Whilst these various initiatives do not directly address the issue of damp and mould, they are part of the wider picture of housing improvement. Whilst the primary aim may well be carbon reduction, there are wider benefits to upgrading the standard of the housing stock.
- 4.5 Finally it should be noted that all new homes, house extensions and most housing refurbishments require compliance with the Building Regulations. The Building regulations set requirements for the thermal efficiency and ventilation of homes. Consequently adherence to the Building Regulations has an important role to play in maintaining housing standards.

APPENDIX 1 – List of Registered Providers Contacted

APPENDIX 2 - Feedback from Registered Providers

- Arawak Walton (update & policy)
- L&Q (update)
- Your Housing (update letter)
- MSV – data and documents (circulated separately)
- Jigsaw Housing – documentation (circulated separately)

Key Decision No

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? N/a

Finance Officer Clearance PC

Legal Officer Clearance IA

CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE *(electronic)*.....

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF REGISTERED PROVIDERS CONTACTED

Irwell Valley Homes
Arawak Walton Housing association
Mosscaire St Vincents
Onward Homes
L&Q Homes
Arcon Housing Association
Southway housing Trust
Great Places Housing Group
Your Housing Group
Jigsaw Homes

APPENDIX 2 - Feedback from Registered Providers

Arawak Walton Housing Association

The Association has had 9 cases of damp / mould in the Old Trafford area this financial year (1st April to date):

7 are complete
2 are outstanding

A copy of the Company's policy and review group scrutiny report is set out below:

Arawak Walton Housing Association Review Group Scrutiny Report (March 2023)

1. Background

Following the conclusion of a Coroner's inquest that found that the tragic death of two year old Awaab Ishak was a result of prolonged exposure to mould in his family's social housing property, all social landlords have been reviewing their policies and procedures in relation to damp, condensation and mould.

As a result, we wanted to review how effective Arawak Walton (Arawak) is in responding to reports of damp, condensation and mould from tenants.

2. What we reviewed

To inform our review we:

- Received a briefing from staff on the service
- Considered information available on the website
- Reviewed the 'Draft Damp and Mould' policy.

3. Summary of findings

We found that Arawak is responsive and effective in responding to issues relating to damp, mould and condensation. Arawak inspects all reports of damp, condensation and mould and takes action to resolve issues.

4. Findings

4.1 Responding to tenants' reports of damp, condensation and mould

We found that Arawak inspects every report of damp, condensation and mould they receive. Upon investigation action is taken to resolve the problem, this may include rectifying property issues, mould removal and treatment, provision of extractor fans and advice on how to prevent damp, condensation and mould in the home. Return visits are scheduled to check issues are resolved.

Two of our panel members noted that they had reported mould issues within the last 6 months. The mould issues had been inspected and appropriate action was taken. This has resulted in the mould issues being resolved.

4.2 Preventative Action

Through stock condition surveys and void inspections Arawak is proactive in identifying damp and mould issues in its housing stock.

Arawak will provide support to tenants to maximise incomes to ensure homes can be adequately heated.

Following the Coroner's inquest Arawak has been identifying properties that are overcrowded and has contacted tenants to identify if there are issues with damp and mould in the properties that have not been reported.

Clear information is provided for tenants on the website on how to prevent damp, condensation and mould and tenants are encouraged to report issues to Arawak.

4.3 Draft Damp and Mould Policy

We support the development of a separate policy; we have reviewed the draft policy and support its aims. We have identified in section 3 areas of the policy that we feel could be improved.

5. Recommendations

In response to our findings, detailed below are our recommendations.

Area	Our Recommendations
Preventative Action	1. Consider developing case studies with Arawak tenants on how their issues of damp and mould have been tackled and promote these on the website and in the newsletter.
Draft damp and mould policy	2. We ask you to consider the following for inclusion in the final policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clearly state that you inspect all reports of damp and mould.• Revise the headings to make them more relevant to the content, for example headings which summarise preventative action, responding to tenants and support for tenants.• Use 'EPC rating of C or above' rather than SAP ratings in section 3.3• Identify performance indicators that relate to damp and mould specifically in section 4.

6. Support provided for the Scrutiny Review

We wish to thank all the staff who have participated in this review by providing us with all the information we have requested.

Arawak Walton Housing Association

Damp Mould and Condensation Policy

Approved by	Board
Date of Approval	March 2023
Date issued to staff	TBA
E&D impact Assessed	Yes
Date of Next Review	Feb 2025
Policy Ownership	Maintenance Delivery Supervisor
Strategic Bridges	<p>We are keen financial managers</p> <p>We aim high and move with the times</p> <p>Value our people and our roots</p> <p>We are open and accountable</p>
Legal Review	No
Version	1.0
Revision details	New Policy

DAMP MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY

1. Introduction/Statement of Intent

- 1.1. Arawak Walton works in areas where BME communities predominantly live or aspire to live. Our roots, in addressing the needs of African and Caribbean communities and their cultural needs, provide the framework for our work in relation to addressing discrimination and raising aspirations. Over the last 28 years, the increasingly diverse profile of our tenant population confirms that we continue to meet our mission and stated objectives.
- 1.2. We want to do everything we reasonably can to make sure our tenants stay safe, healthy and well in their homes. Damp, mould and condensation are issues which can have a serious impact on the health and well-being of our residents, and cause damage to homes.
- 1.3. Arawak Walton is committed to providing safe and warm housing that meets the needs of our tenants. This policy sets out our approach to dealing with damp, mould and condensation in our homes and communal areas. It covers the services we provided to tenants who rent their home under a tenancy agreement.
- 1.4. Arawak Walton will implement its plan to meet the performance standards expected by the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH).

2. The aims of the damp, mould and condensation policy is to:

- 2.1. Provide dry, warm, healthy and safe homes for our tenants which are free from any hazards.
- 2.2. Comply with legislative, regulatory and contractual (including tenancy and lease) obligations.
- 2.3. Ensure the fabric of our homes is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp.
- 2.4. Treat tenants reporting damp, mould and condensation with empathy and respect, without prejudging the cause.
- 2.5. Take proactive responsibility for diagnosing and resolving damp, mould and condensation in a timely and effective way.
- 2.6. Publicise the standard of properties offered to new tenants. Support tenants in resolving damp, mould and condensation where it occurs as a result of the use of the home, providing appropriate, clear, sensitive, practical and accessible advice.
- 2.7. Communicate with our tenants clearly and regularly regarding any actions we plan to take and any actions our tenants are advised to take.
- 2.8. Ensure staff are trained to enable them to spot potential causes of damp, mould and condensation so they can advise tenants, diagnose problems and provide solutions.
- 2.9. Apply this policy and make reasonable adjustments for people who have a disability and

will take into account the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

3. Background

3.1 Arawak Walton is a Black & minority ethnic specialist housing association operating mainly in inner city locations where the majority of our communities live; or aspire to live. Particularly in Manchester this means a significant percentage of our properties, c30% are pre-1919 on-street terraces with a predication to damp. In addition, whilst we have a good percentage of smaller accommodation, the majority of our homes, are general needs family homes. Due to bedroom tax restrictions, we cannot under-occupy homes at first-let which means many families with young children can very quickly outgrow their accommodation. As larger properties are increasingly too expensive to build (due to lack of grant) or buy, this creates problems in finding suitable alternative accommodation for growing families. At the time of responding to the Regulator's request (December 2022), we had c250 properties which were over occupied - based on the number of people over the permitted bedroom type - of which 77 required 2+ beds. Therefore, we have always taken a robust approach to requests to deal with such cases because of the potential impact on health, the quality of life for our tenants living in such properties and the impact on decency as damp, and mould conditions deteriorate very quickly, if not treated and have a detrimental impact on property condition.

4. Action Plan to address damp mould and condensation

- 4.1. We will take action to identify homes that have, or may be at risk of developing, problems with damp, mould and condensation. We will use data on our households and homes to help us understand the risk profile in relation to it.
- 4.2. A programme of stock condition surveys will be carried out. Where works are identified to treat serious cases of damp, mould and condensation they will be ordered as priority. Where tenants need to be moved temporarily from their home for remedial works to be carried out, We will administer the decant process in accordance with our Tenancy Management policy. Where tenants do not need to move, or choose not to move, we will maintain regular contact with them during the duration of the works and for 3 months following completion of the work.
- 4.3. We will prioritise improving EPC ratings to C and above in our planned programmes to increase thermal efficiency to assist tenants with their ongoing household running costs and budgets.
- 4.4. When a property becomes vacant, and prior to re-letting, we will seek to identify and remedy any issues which may cause damp. This may include ensuring doors and windows (incl. window vents) are serviceable and can effectively ventilate the property, ensuring extractor fans are working well, as well as applying mould treatments and fitting floor coverings where necessary.
- 4.5. We will give tenants advice on how to prevent damp and what they should do to remove mould and condensation. However, we recognise that not every resident will be in a position to resolve this themselves. We will provide appropriate support in such cases in relation to the specific circumstances and the individual tenant's needs.
- 4.6. We know that some tenants cannot afford to heat their homes adequately due to their income levels. We will work with tenants to ensure that they are receiving the income to which they are entitled.

- 4.7. Where homes are overcrowded humidity will tend to be higher and this increases the likelihood of condensation. We will work with the tenant and explore solutions which may include them moving to a more suitable home if this is available and appropriate. In the interim we will provide dehumidifiers.
- 4.8. We will engage consultants / contractors to assist us managing complex cases.
- 4.9. We will ensure that our staff (whether in house or our contractors) have the required skills and training to diagnose and remedy damp, mould and condensation. Monitors will be made available to staff and tenants so we can assess quickly whether action is needed to protect our asset and maintain comfort for our tenants.

5. Engaging and Supporting Tenants

- 5.1 We will inspect reports of damp mould and condensation.
- 5.2 We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible without tenants needing to resort to disrepair claims and legal action. Where legal action is taken, we will follow the Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims so that we may resolve the dispute outside of court to help ensure issues are resolved quickly for customers.
- 5.3 We will provide advice and literature to tenants regularly. This will include advice when they report damp mould and condensation, articles in our newsletters, on our website, in our office reception and in sign up packs for new tenants.

6. Monitoring and development

- 6.1 Arawak Walton has a number of key performance indicators, and the Association will strive to achieve or exceed the indicators.
 - Annual home visits to tenants / property inspections
 - Damp & Mould repairs completed within target timescale
 - The average time taken to re-let void properties
 - The level of rent loss from void properties (rolling 12 months)
 - Delivery of planned works
 - Complaints responded to within target timescale
- 6.2. Performance against the targets will be monitored by the Operations Director.
- 6.3. Performance will be reported to the Senior Management Team monthly and to Board on a quarterly basis through the association's performance management structure.
- 6.4. We will learn lessons from damp mould and condensation cases, update our technical approach and how we communicate with tenants, in order to improve future responses.
- 6.5. Where available, Arawak Walton will benchmark its performance in this area against other Housing Associations (HA's) and aim to continuously improve and achieve performance in the top quartile of similar HA's.

7. Linkages with Other Arawak Walton Policies

7.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies.

- Customer Service Charter
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Allocations and Lettings Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Tenants Responsibility and Recharge Policy

8. Legal framework

8.1 This policy and the way in which services are delivered comply with the requirements of the following standards and legislation:

- The Housing Act 1985 / Housing Act 1996 (Part 6)
- Housing, health and safety ratings system (HHSRS) inc in the Housing Act 2004
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Equalities Act 2010
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR) as amended 2018. Approved Code of Practice and guidance
- British Standard 7671 As Amended (Electrical Installations)
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1. AWAHA is committed to equality and diversity and will not unlawfully discriminate. We will recognise and consider tenant's protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 including: Race, Gender, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief and Age.
- 9.2. As part of this undertaking, we give equal standing to tenants who are married, civil partners or cohabiting partners, except where this approach is overridden by the law.
- 9.3. We will be sensitive to individual needs and will tailor our services and approach accordingly.
- 9.4. All tenants will have access to this document upon request.
- 9.5. This document can be translated or provided upon request in alternative formats, such as, Braille, large print and audio where resources allow.
- 9.6. Equality and diversity training is mandatory for all staff.

L& Q HOUSING - Response

L&Q consider any case beyond minor damp and mould as a service failure. Therefore, all L&Q staff and contractors are asked to report any cases of damp and mould that they come across when visiting residents' homes. In addition, all call handlers are trained to carry out follow-up questions when logging damp, mould, and condensation cases and L&Q's website encourages reporting of damp and mould and provides details of how to raise/track a complaint relating to damp and mould.

Reports of damp and mould from vulnerable residents are prioritised along with referrals from TMBC, other L&Q staff, and contractors.

All reports of damp and mould are inspected by an L&Q Surveyor, with serious cases being assessed within 24 hours (usually the same day) and follow up visits are arranged if required. Remedial action is taken in the form of repairing structural and ventilation issues, and checking heating systems are working effectively. Residents are advised on effective use of heating and provided with a leaflet containing guidance on preventing and curing damp, mould, and condensation in their properties.

In terms of preventing damp and mould, L&Q have a rolling programme of Stock Condition Surveys covering 20% of their stock each year which includes a damp and mould survey. Residents who are flagged as vulnerable are visited regularly with support provided on damp and mould prevention. L&Q also invest in "SkyVac" technology and carry out regular Estate Inspections which residents and local Councillors are invited to attend.

L&Q's future plans for tackling damp and mould include stock investment programmes which include window, roof, and door replacements, and enhanced roof insulation. They are also looking to utilise the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to improve thermal efficiency on approximately 210 'hard to heat' homes in Altrincham, Sale Moor and Stretford.

Since the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak in late 2022, L&Q have seen a significant increase in requests for damp and mould inspections; requests for Surveyor Assessments have more than doubled and the number of damp and mould repairs carried out has increased by 126%. While most of these reports were for minor cases of damp and mould, some significant cases have come to light which had previously gone unreported for a number of years. As such, L&Q welcome the additional publicity around damp and mould as this is bringing more residents who are experiencing issues forward.

YOUR HOUSING GROUP LETTER:



Ref: D&M response to Trafford Cllr Ross

Youggle House
130
Birchwood
Blvd
Birchwood
Warrington
WA3 7QH

Councillor Tom Ross
Leader of the Council
Trafford Council
The Leader's Office
Trafford Town Hall
Stretford, Manchester
M32 0TH

21 August 2023

Dear Councillor Ross

First of all, may I thank you for your letter dated 10th August 2023 and the opportunity to share with you our arrangements in relation to tackling damp and mould (DM). Your Housing Group (YHG) welcomes your support in responding to these matters within both the social and private rented sector.

Background

YHG have a now well established 'Damp & Mould Taskforce' to manage our customer's DM complaints and queries. This team has developed a bespoke case management system for all DM queries and reports which tracks the case from initial receipt through the various stages including all contact with the customer, surveys and works through to completion. In addition to this, we are also building our dedicated 'Damp & Mould Delivery Team' who are entirely focussed on DM works.

In the past 12 months (July 22-July 23) YHG has received 199 direct damp and mould related reports for our 1,772 properties in the Trafford area. Of those, 63% were reported from the Partington/Carrington area and 29% were in the Old Trafford District, the two districts within Trafford with the highest YHG stock levels. The remaining 8% of reports recorded were in the Sale and Urmston/Davy Hulme Districts.

Damp & Mould Complaints and Process

For all formal Damp & Mould complaints we aim to agree a resolution including timescale for any repairs within 10 working days. However, to ensure reporting damp & mould is as easy as possible we have several ways in which customers, colleagues and contractors can report:

- **Customer reports:** Customers can contact us directly with issues by speaking to a member of our staff (including our Contact Centre), using a dedicated webform on our website and via a Your Home Hub (online resident portal). Residents are supported with information available on our website and regular newsletters providing details and guidance.

2.

Councillor T Ross

21 August 2023

- **Colleague reports:** All colleagues are encouraged to keep their eyes and ears open when out and about. All colleagues are provided with training to better understand damp and mould, how it is caused, how to spot it, and to report to our dedicated 'Damp & Mould Taskforce' when they see it.
- **Contractor reports:** We have liaised with our wider contractor-base (including stock condition surveyors, gas servicing contractors) to keep their eyes and ears open when out and about our properties and to report instances of damp and mould again to our dedicated 'Damp & Mould Taskforce'.

Prioritising Vulnerable Tenants & Prevention

In all the processes described above and when dealing with DM repairs/queries our vulnerable customers are prioritised by accelerating any necessary surveys or works. In addition to this we have developed a gutter and flat roof clearance programme which incorporates our Older Person, Extra Care and Sheltered schemes.

Property Surveys

Within the Trafford District, 1,607 properties (90.69%) have been surveyed in the last five years with the remainder to be completed over the next two and a half years. Any properties that have potential category 1 or 2 hazards under the housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) assessment are triaged through to the relevant Repairs & Maintenance team for urgent action.

We also undertake specific damp & mould surveys to any properties where the customer has reported a damp and mould issue. This survey is recorded within our bespoke damp & mould case management system and a copy provide to the customer which includes what action we will take and when. We aim to complete all repairs within 21 working days and keep the customer informed on timescales for larger scale works.

Guidance for Customers

At YHG we have ensured that customers have easy access to guidance:

- A page on our website – Tips for preventing damp/mould in your home
- A leaflet – Your guide to condensation, damp & mould
- Visited every customer via our customer connect visits to explain how to report DM & provided them with a card stating that plus tips and guidance on prevention

Training

Your Housing Group has provided training and guidance not only to call handlers but to the entire business. This has emphasised our cultural and zero tolerance approach. Surveyors and Contract Supervisors have also received more bespoke technical training or diagnosing DM whilst inspecting properties.

Inspection Walkabouts

We are happy for local councillors to join neighbourhood walkabouts with our housing teams. This currently works well in Partington with councillors attending walkabouts and regular meetings with our housing management team. We will review our neighbourhoods across Trafford and where applicable, will engage Trafford Councillors accordingly.

3.

Councillor T Ross

21 August 2023

Again, I would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to share our progress and ongoing development with tackling damp and mould. I hope that the information has provided you with assurance that we treat such issues, and the safety of our residents, as our number 1 priority, and that we are not complacent in our performance and are committed to our continual improvement in this area. We do this with enthusiasm to work with our customers, colleagues, sector peers and external professional bodies in a collaborative approach.

Yours sincerely



pp Conan McKinley
Director – Asset Management

cc: Jacque Allen

MSV HOUSING:

The number of properties in Trafford currently reporting issues with damp and mould.

We have put in place a program of planned pro-active preventative works for customers reporting issues with damp or mould (over the past years) as well as a reactive program of works for surveying and planning of works for damp or mould, the figures for these are combined and shown below.

The total properties in the planned/preventative works for Damp/Mould = 84

- WA14 = 2
- M16 = 34
- M32 = 22
- M33 = 8
- M41 = 18

*M16 properties only in Trafford.

New cases open in Trafford to be checked = 10

Total = 94

the Damp and Mould policy

Attached, I have also included our strategy document which compliments our policy and has recently been audited and benchmarked favourably.

The breakdown of EPC ratings for the stock in Trafford.

MSV have a commitment to improve all properties with an EPC rating of D or below by 2030. We are part of the GMCA SHDF consortium and delivered works under Wave 1 with a Wave 2 programme due to commence in October 2023.

Any Trafford properties below EPC C will be included in a programme of works to bring the EPC rating up to at least a C, by 2030.

Row Labels	Count of Rate
B	2
C	135
D	42
E	3
Grand Total	182

(policies to be circulated Separately)