



Full Council	Tuesday, 13 December 2022	Matter for Information
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Report Title: **Housing Standards in Rented and Social Rent Properties
(Mould, Damp and Condensation)**

Report Author(s): **Chris Eyre (Housing Manager)**

Purpose of Report:	To provide assurance in respect of the condition of properties in the Council's role as a landlord.
Report Summary:	This report provides a review of the Council's housing stock in respect of the issues concerning the management of damp, mould and condensation.
Recommendation(s):	<p>A. That Members note the content of the report.</p> <p>B. That Members note that the Council will respond to the request for information by the Regulator of Social Housing as set out in Section 4 of this report.</p> <p>C. That Members note the letter to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP regarding housing standards in private rented properties in the Borough as set out in Section 6 of this report.</p>
Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):	<p>Tracy Bingham (Strategic Director / Section 151 Officer) (0116) 257 2845 tracy.bingham@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Adrian Thorpe (Head of Build Environment) (0116) 257 2645 adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Chris Eyre (Housing Manager) (0116) 257 2726 chris.eyre@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p>
Corporate Objectives:	Providing Excellent Services (CO3)
Vision and Values:	Accountability (V1) Customer Focus (V5)
Report Implications:-	
Legal:	There are no implications directly arising from this report.
Financial:	There are no implications directly arising from this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	Reputation Damage (CR4)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report.
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.

Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Ombudsman 2021 Spotlight Report: Damp and Mould 2. Response to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The tragic case of Awaab Ishak, who died recently of a respiratory condition caused by mould in his home, has rightly focused attention on the responsibility of all social housing providers to ensure that the homes they provide are well-maintained and of a decent standard.
- 1.2 It also demonstrates the serious effects of having damp and mould in the home and the impact on people's health and it has highlighted the importance of housing providers listening to their tenants' concerns, understanding their diverse needs, removing barriers to accessing services and responding promptly.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council own and manage 1,202 properties throughout the Borough. The stock profile can be defined into property type illustrated below in table 1.

Housing Stock (Property)	Number
Bedsits	44
Bungalows	180
Flats	388
Maisonettes	106
Houses	484

Table 1 Stock Profile Orchard April 2022

- 2.2 In the past seven years the Housing Repairs Team has received and processed approximately 21,500 day to day repair jobs.
- 2.3 Of this number, 280 jobs/inspections were raised by the tenant reporting that they had a problem with damp, mould and/or condensation in their home.
- 2.4 This represents an annual average of 1.30% of jobs reported by a tenant being associated with damp, mould or condensation within the home. Table 2 provides a summary of the total number of day to day repair jobs reported in each of the last seven years, with the actual number of jobs reported and attributed to damp, mould or condensation.

Year	16 17	17 18	18 19	19 20	20 21	21 22	22 23	Total
Total Number of all repair jobs processed	2,294	4,005	3,854	3,266	2,754	3,631	1,693	21,497
Awaiting Inspection (Damp mould and or condensation reported as an issue)							6	
Job Raised (Damp mould and or condensation reported as an issue)							3	
Completed jobs/Inspections (Damp mould and or condensation reported as an issue)	50	59	40	37	36	46	27	280
% of jobs processed (Damp mould and or condensation reported as an issue)	2.17%	1.47%	1.03%	1.28%	1.34%	1.26%	0.70%	1.30%

Table 2 Orchard Repairs Module Data November 2022

- 2.5 There are no indicators to suggest that particular types of properties are susceptible to damp, mould and or condensation. Although 64% (180 properties) are houses and bungalows with the remaining 36% (100 properties) being flats or maisonettes.
- 2.6 In the analysis of the data and records there is no evidence to suggest that a tenant is repeatedly contacting the Council to report problems of damp, mould or condensation.
- 2.7 The Council's Corporate Complaint Procedure has recorded two separate occasions in which a tenant has made a formal complaint relating to damp, mould or condensation in their property. These complaints were received in 2019 and more recently, 2022. Both of these complaints were resolved to the tenant's satisfaction through the Council's complaint procedure.

3. The Landlord Response

- 3.1 As the landlord the Council has taken a pro-active approach to managing the problem of damp, mould and condensation in the home.
- 3.2 Historically, the Council has invested in the installation of quality mechanical extraction systems in kitchens and bathrooms and ensured that there is adequate fixed ventilation through air vents and air bricks.
- 3.3 In 2017 the Council installed positive pressure ventilation systems into all of the flats at Boulter Crescent. This was in response to significant problems of damp, mould and condensation in the flats throughout the scheme at that time.
- 3.4 In 2019 properties in Elizabeth Court were fitted with positive pressure ventilation.
- 3.5 Since November 2021 the Housing Repairs Team has adopted a robust process and procedure for managing damp, mould and condensation in Council homes.

- Allowing additional time for inspections and carrying out 360-degree surveys which

involves inspecting the entire property inside and out for additional defects that may result in damp and mould

- Prioritising damp inspections over most other requests for inspections
- Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) trained Property Inspectors, to ensure Inspectors identify health and safety hazards in the home and not just building defects
- Specialist contractor support including Envirovent, a leading manufacturer and supplier of ventilation systems and Rentokil who provide a wide range of damp proofing and condensation treatments
- Tenant advice and support, through support plans that provide bespoke advice, suggestions and support following each inspection.

4. Responding to the Regulator of Social Housing

- 4.1 In November 2022 the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has written to all Social Housing providers seeking an assurance that as Landlords they are addressing risks relating to damp and mould in tenants' homes.
- 4.2 The RSH asks what is the Council's approach to assessing the extent of damp and mould issues affecting our properties, including how we assess the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards. Our response will be that we take a zero-tolerance approach to damp, mould and condensation interventions, with each household reporting a problem receiving a support plan that identifies what work will be carried out.
- 4.3 The RSH also asks in the context of the Council's approach, the most recent assessment of the extent of damp and mould hazards in our homes, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards. We will respond by saying that we have carried out an assessment and our findings are that we have not seen an increase in the number of reports of damp, mould and condensation over the last seven years. The average number of reports of damp, mould and condensation equates to 1.3% (40 requests for service) of the total number of jobs reported in an average year. Also we will say that there is no evidence that there is a particular problem with property types and in specific areas.
- 4.4 Given the findings the RSH asks what action the Council is taking to remedy any issues and hazards, and ensure that our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard. In response to this question we will respond by elaborating on our proactive response to a tenant's request for service when they report problems or issues with damp, mould or condensation in their home. We will also provide a summary of how we use the data that we have, complaints and tenant feedback, to form part of strategic approach to improving homes. Finally on this point we will inform the RSH that the Council has committed to carrying out a full stock condition survey in April 2023.
- 4.5 Finally the RSH asks how we ensure that individual damp and mould cases are identified and dealt with promptly and effectively when raised by tenants and residents. We will respond by summarising our process and procedures associated with the management of damp, mould and condensation and that we have invested in training so that our Building Inspectors are trained to HHSRS standard.

5. Housing Ombudsman

- 5.1 The Housing Ombudsman has written an open letter to Social Housing landlords to bring a renewed focus on the recommendations that the Ombudsman made in their 2021 Spotlight report: Damp and Mould (Appendix 1). In this report the Ombudsman made 26 recommendations that a landlord should consider in their management of damp, mould and condensation.

5.2 In response to the Housing Ombudsman's renewed focus the housing team has initiated a review of the services connected with damp, mould and condensation set against the 26 recommendations. This review will be completed by 31st January 2023.

6. Housing Standards in Private Rented Properties in the Borough

6.1 The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities has written to all councils in England asking them to provide a range in information relating to damp, mould and condensation issues in private rented properties. The Council's response is included in Appendix 2.

7. Summary

7.1 The Council is in a good position to provide the RSH with a significant assurance that we have a clear understanding and strong grip on damp and mould issues in our homes. We can demonstrate that we are taking a proactive response through our operational processes and procedures, and through the Council's Housing Improvement Programme we are working to prevent damp and mould by insulating our homes with the addition of providing good ventilation systems and measures to compliment the improvements.