



# Public Document Pack Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Agenda

*Scrutiny making a positive difference: Member led and independent, Overview & Scrutiny Committee promote service improvements, influence policy development & hold Executive to account for the benefit of the Community of Dacorum*

**Wednesday 11 January 2023 at 7.30 pm**

**Council Chamber, The Forum**

The Councillors listed below are requested to attend the above meeting, on the day and at the time and place stated, to consider the business set out in this agenda.

#### Membership

Councillor Harden	Councillor Oguchi
Councillor Adeleke (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor Hollinghurst
Councillor Imarni (Chairman)	Councillor Barry
Councillor Su Mahmood	Councillor Ransley
Councillor Pringle	Councillor Dhyani
Councillor Durrant	Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe
Councillor Johnson	

For further information, please contact Corporate and Democratic Support

## **AGENDA**

**1. MINUTES** (Pages 4 - 8)

To confirm the minutes from the previous meeting

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive any apologies for absence

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of interest

A member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered -

- (i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent

and, if the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest, or a personal interest which is also prejudicial

- (ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter (and must withdraw to the public seating area) unless they have been granted a dispensation.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Members' Register of Interests, or is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal and prejudicial interests are defined in Part 2 of the Code of Conduct For Members

[If a member is in any doubt as to whether they have an interest which should be declared they should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer before the start of the meeting]

#### **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

An opportunity for members of the public to make statements or ask questions in accordance with the rules as to public participation

#### **5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN**

#### **6. DOMESTIC ABUSE (Pages 9 - 46)**

#### **7. DAMP AND MOULD -DACORUM UPDATE AND RESPONSE (Pages 47 - 78)**

#### **8. NEW LIST OF KPIS**

Report to follow

#### **9. ACTION POINTS (Page 79)**

#### **10. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 80 - 82)**

#### **11. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded during the item in Part II of the Agenda for this meeting, because it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of a particular company.

**12. TOTAL ASSET MANAGEMENT (TAM) CONTRACT - BENCHMARK AND RECOMMISSION UPDATE (PART 2) (Pages 83 - 111)**

# Agenda Item 1

## MINUTES

### JOINT BUDGET

#### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 6 December 2022

#### **Present:**

Councillor Imarni (Chair)  
Councillor Johnson  
Councillor Pringle  
Councillor Dhyani  
Councillor Wyatt-Lowe

#### **Officers:**

Jon Maxwell	Assistant Director Housing Operations (interim)
Oliver Jackson	Head of Housing Management
Joe Guitton	Team Leader Community Safety & Children's Services
Natasha Beresford	Assistant Director - Strategic Housing
David Barrett	Head of Development
Fiona Jump	Head of Financial Services (deputy S151)
Kayley Johnston	Corporate & Democratic Support Officer (minutes)

#### **Others:**

Councillor Griffiths	Portfolio Holder – Housing
Councillor Banks	Portfolio Holder

Started: 20:10

#### **HC/057/22 MINUTES**

The minutes from 2 November 2022 were agreed by the committee and signed by the Chair.

#### **HC/058/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Adeleke, Cllr Barry-Mears.

It was noted that Cllr Hollinghurst and Cllr Suqlain Mahmood were at the Finance and Resources meeting, and that Cllr Harden was chairing another meeting.

#### **HC/059/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **HC/060/22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**HC/061/22    CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN  
RELATION TO A CALL-IN**

None.

**HC/062/22    JOINT BUDGET REPORT**

NBeresford presented the report, noting that the Housing Service operates under the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. The Housing Transformation Improvement Programme ("HTIP") has identified a number of areas that are required to build capacity in 2023-24, including an end-to-end process review of sustainment activity across residents in temporary accommodation, supported housing and the alternative portfolio. The team will be working with Finance to refine the service charge position. Throughout the transformation, there has also been close work with Digital and ICT to identify the infrastructure needed to support the new customer centric approach. There is a full review of the new target operating model for the Housing Service, and there is also a strong focus on commissioning and contracting.

There is a removal of £75k to the General Fund Strategic Housing budget, which relates to cessation of fixed term contracts in the service that are no longer required. On growth items in the HRA, there is £260k of growth that has been identified through HTIP, specifically £86k for a tenancy sustainment officer and a triage officer, £150k for 2 FTE tenancy management officers and a lead officer focusing on implementing improved management arrangements across stock and ensuring an end-to-end review of how residents are supported. For the £37k for building safety, there will be a focus on improving the asset management function and service to the tenant and leaseholder portfolio. Asbestos management is currently managed externally and the £168k is proposed to bring this in-house and align compliance with other areas of compliance across the stock. The Compliance team will be rebranded in line with this as the Safer Homes Team.

On HRA rents, the proposal is to increase rents by 7% in line with the maximum allowed and this has been benchmarked against other local authorities. The average dwelling rent is proposed to be £118.62 per week in 2023-24.

There are a number of forthcoming challenges across the service and a list of these areas was noted. It was noted that recent communication was issued to all local authorities nationally from the Secretary of State and the regulator for social housing in regard to housing standards, particularly regarding the impact of damp and mould on health conditions. There will be significant scrutiny on housing services in relation to this area and the service is confident about its current position about how stock is managed and is currently preparing a response to the communication with robust case studies. An initial response was also sent outlining the service's current position.

Asylum dispersal is being experienced by local authorities, and as of 2023, all local authority areas will become nationwide disposal areas. Whilst the review of tenancy sustainment is underway, the potential impact of this dispersal on resources needs to be considered to ensure that they can respond appropriately.

The approach to reviewing void performance and ensuring a positive outcome for residents may see further changes in relation to income and forthcoming costs. Given the rising cost of living, NBeresford advised that they are working with colleagues and partners to ensure they can alleviate any pressures for residents in relation to rising costs, which may impact their approach to income collection.

On aids and adaptations, this is an increasingly challenging area with an increase in existing and new tenants presenting with complex needs and multiple disadvantages, which is resulting in an increased spend. Budgets to date have been exceeded and the approach to aids and adaptations will therefore need to be reviewed, such as how to repair ongoing stock and meet these needs through new builds.

Decarbonisation and stock condition work will also be considered to ensure the service is meeting growing demands, and the modelling implemented in the HRA business plan reflects current market conditions and other external pressures, including inflation.

Cllr Pringle commented on damp and mould and asked if there would be any public education around this. NBeresford confirmed that information was recently circulated to all members via member news to raise awareness for residents on damp and mould. This information is also provided at sign up for new tenancies with advice on how to manage damp, mould and condensation. The portfolio also has a newsletter that goes out to private sector landlords and the website has also been updated on the subject with useful information on how to manage the situation. The information is also being disseminated to all housing staff and additional training is being provided to ensure staff can identify instances that require additional attention. The team is also working to identify a communication plan to provide further information to residents and contact DBC if they have any concerns. Registered providers have also been contacted to ensure they are being proactive and are taking the same steps. NBeresford asked members to inform them if they feel there is any other information that residents require.

Cllr Pringle stated that not all residents will be able to purchase mould cleaner and asked if they can be provided resources to use themselves. NBeresford confirmed that there currently isn't the budget to support this, though there are other ways to wash down mould without using specialist cleaners. In serious damp and mould situations, officers can respond quickly to undertake a visit with representatives of the property teams to identify the situation, and toxic mould washing can be undertaken by the service if required. There may also be requirements to provide dehumidifiers or additional vents in a property. It was advised that residents with concerns and financial difficulties should contact the team to provide the appropriate advice and support.

Cllr Pringle noted that some residents may be vulnerable or have young children and asked if the team can reach out to them as they may be unable to contact the team themselves. NBeresford agreed that they need to consider the diverse ways that they can engage with

residents and be mindful of these factors, and through their engagement with stakeholders, they are ensuring they are able to identify issues. It was confirmed that this will be considered when developing the communications plan and all communication will be shared with members.

The Chair commented on the damp roadshow that Dacorum used to run and asked if residents are receiving education on how to prevent damp and mould. NBeresford confirmed that they are not currently doing the roadshow, though the information is provided in sign-up packs. It was noted that overcrowding and pets can also cause damp or mould. OJackson commented that they are looking to take a more proactive approach, such as through tenancy review visits to assess household needs, and they have also started carrying out state inspections to help check for issues that may be occurring within the property. Roles and responsibilities are also covered in the training for housing applicants, including what to look out for, and the Tenancy Sustainment team are also focusing on younger tenants who may be taking on a tenancy for a first time and may require additional support.

Cllr Dhyani noted that council tax increased by 2.9% and asked if there is any consideration of creating another tax band for higher end properties to gain greater revenue. FJump advised that the council tax banding system is set by central government and that they are unable to change these. Cllr Dhyani asked if there would be a possibility to propose this to central government. FJump agreed that local authorities can put it forward and that they can look to have this idea taken forward, though it would be the decision of central government to implement.

Cllr Pringle commented on inflationary pressures and noted that families spending all their disposable income on essentials will be affected more than those with spare income and that this was not helped by unprogressive tax bands, adding that it would be useful to see percentage contributions to council services. FJump stated that the flaws in the system are well acknowledged, noting that they do provide information on where council tax money is spent alongside bills. FJump agreed that whilst it would be helpful to see the percentage of outgoings spent on council tax, she was unsure how this could be captured. FJump agreed to look into this further.

NBeresford added that they are working with partners to provide additional support to residents as a result of the cost of living and agreed to liaise with FJump on this.

**ACTION: FJump to look into how to present percentage of personal spending on council tax.**

**ACTION: Councillor Griffith to as Member Support to send out the link for the 'Support Website'.**

#### **HC/063/22 ACTION POINTS**

The action points were agreed and those that are green can be removed.

## HC/064/22 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was agreed.

N Beresford informed the committee of members briefing on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan. The asset Management date is still pending.

2 New Domestic Abuse policies coming in January, also a Revised policy on Decants (FEB OSC) and Tenants policy (date TBC)

The meeting finished at 21:05



# Housing Community

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Report for:</b>	Housing Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Title of report:</b>	Domestic Abuse Policies
<b>Date:</b>	11 January 2023
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths Portfolio Holder for Housing
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	<p>Appendix A - Domestic Abuse Policy for Employees</p> <p>Appendix B - Domestic Abuse Policy for Residents, Tenants and Members</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Domestic Abuse Policy for Employees - Additional information about domestic abuse</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Domestic Abuse Policy for Residents Tenants and Members - Our standards for responding to domestic abuse</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Domestic Abuse Policy for Employees – How to access domestic abuse support if you are or have been a victim of domestic abuse</p> <p>Appendix 4 - Domestic Abuse Policy for Employees - How to access support if you are concerned about your own behaviour or that of someone you know</p> <p>Appendix 5 - Domestic Abuse Review &amp; DAHA Accreditation EIA</p>
<b>Background papers:</b>	<p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/domestic-abuse-act-statutory-guidance">Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> <p><a href="https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144447/VAWG_Strategy_FINAL_PUBLICATION_MASTER_vRB.PDF">VAWG Strategy FINAL PUBLICATION MASTER vRB.PDF (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a></p> <p><a href="https://dahalliance.org.uk/what-is-da">What is DAHA Accreditation - daha - Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (dahalliance.org.uk)</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.hertssunflower.org/media/documents/hertfordshire-da-partnership-strategy-2022-25-.pdf">https://www.hertssunflower.org/media/documents/hertfordshire-da-partnership-strategy-2022-25-.pdf</a></p>
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	<p>DA – Domestic Abuse</p> <p>DAHA – Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance</p> <p>HTIP – Housing Transformation Improvement Programme</p> <p>HR - Human resources</p>

**Report Author / Responsible Officer**

Natasha Beresford, Assistant Director – Strategic Housing



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<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
<b>Wards affected</b>	ALL
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide information outlining the approach to improving service delivery in relation to Domestic Abuse (DA)</li> <li>2. Inform Members of the revised policy approach in relation to DA</li> </ol>
<b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide feedback regarding the approach and policy development</li> <li>2. Support recommendation to Cabinet to implement the policies</li> </ol>
<b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>	Annually or upon legislative change

## **1 Introduction/Background:**

It has been estimated that 2.3 million people aged 16 to 74 are victims of domestic abuse a year (two-thirds of whom are women), and more than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related (Gov.uk).

Domestic abuse is increasingly being acknowledged as an urgent threat to people on a national and global scale. The past few years have brought landmark changes within the sector: the first Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales was appointed in 2019, and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was published last year. The act has brought about significant changes to how domestic abuse is defined, and the expectations for how it should be responded to.

The Council committed to gaining accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in 2022, with Domestic Abuse Project Officer, Jodie Bartlett leading the project. DAHA are recognised within the Home Office's Statutory Domestic Abuse Guidance as the 'first domestic abuse accreditation for housing providers'. They aim 'to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through the introduction and adoption of an established set of standards and an accreditation process'. The Council are estimated to achieve accreditation in 2024, subject to a continued commitment to the project and progress is monitored via the Housing Transformation Improvement Programme (HTIP).

This report introduces two policies, which have been extensively consulted on with key stakeholders, consultees include those with lived experience - as well as tenants, leaseholders, statutory and voluntary sector partners, staff, Senior Leadership Team and elected Members. As recommended under Standard 1 of the DAHA Accreditation the following has been developed: an updated Domestic Abuse Policy for Residents, Tenants and Members, and for the first time, an additional standalone Domestic Abuse Policy for Employees – Section 2 of the report will outline the key policy introductions.

## **2 Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report:**

This section highlights the key areas of focus that are to be introduced by the new DA policies.

### Employees

Introduce a robust support package for employees who are experiencing or have recently experienced domestic abuse that includes:

- Allowing employees who are victims of crime, including those who are victims of domestic abuse, to work flexible hours to allow them to attend court, legal appointments, associated counselling or access support. This would not be available to those accused of acting abusively;
- Extending the provisions of our Special Leave Policy to all victims of crime, (such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, burglary etc.). For victims of domestic abuse, this may be used to relocate, recover from trauma or for any of the reasons given above. This leave would not be treated as sickness or absence and therefore would not trigger any disciplinary proceedings if taken;
- Allowing employees experiencing domestic abuse to request advanced salary pay or salary payment into another bank account (in the interest of minimising economic abuse, and/or increasing the possibility that they will have means to flee if they wish to);
- Adopt a proactive approach to identifying and corroborating employee domestic abuse crimes by implementing a process of asking employees to declare cautions or convictions received in the preceding year as part of an Annual Declaration of Interests. Where information is disclosed about a recent caution or conviction, carrying out an adverse information risk assessment (see Appendix J) when information about an employee's caution or convictions is disclosed, to determine whether the crime/s impact the individual's ability to continue to undertake their role.

### Residents, Tenants and Members

Demonstrate how we, as a local authority and housing provider, will respond to those who have acted abusively, by:

- Stating in our policies and Tenancy Agreement that we do not condone domestic abuse, and committing to pursuing enforcement action up to and including termination of tenancy for the person who has acted abusively, where it is proportionate and possible to do so;
- Pursuing enforcement action for domestic abuse related breaches (e.g. abusive behaviour as anti-social behaviour), domestic abuse related damages to property (where it is possible to do so without negatively affecting victim/s) collaborating where possible to strengthen enforcement action;
- Encouraging the use of rehabilitative support services where possible and appropriate;
- Reviewing our DAPN/DAPO process to ensure efficacy;

Commit to not recharging survivors/victims for domestic abuse related damage to property/ies, by:

- Formalising our process of not recharging victims/survivors for domestic abuse related damage to properties (the decision to recharge is currently at the discretion of Tenancy Management);
- Solely recharging the perpetrator where it is possible to do so without increasing risk to victim/s.

Reduce the financial barriers to victim/survivor/s fleeing abusive situations by:

- Developing ring-fenced funding that can be used to cover the costs of ending joint tenancies where a person wishes to end the tenancy to flee domestic abuse;
- Provide support to address or waver (where necessary) rent arrears debt in instances where a person may be otherwise prevented from fleeing domestic abuse through the Housing Panel (or similar counterpart) process OR paying costs through a similar ring-fenced 'pot'.

### **3 Options and alternatives considered**

Alternative options have not been considered. It is necessary for the Council to update and refresh regularly upon material or legislative change its policies to ensure that they remain compliant with the statutory framework and adequately inform all stakeholders of the Council's approach. As the Council has committed to transforming its services to provide exemplar support to survivors and victims of abuse, having two robust policies is identified as a good practice requirement and a step towards gaining DAHA accreditation.

## 4 Consultation

During the process of delivering activity led by the DA Review, consultation and engagement activity has been integral to development of the new policies - with key stakeholders, ensuring that the learning from good practice, stakeholder feedback and approaches taken by other housing providers are embedded in a robust Dacorum approach to supporting and tackling DA. During the development of the new policies activity has been undertaken as outlined below:

### Human Resources

A review of our current Employee Handbook and Human Resources (HR) provision. Good practice examples were gathered from the DAHA network of accredited organisations – this enabled improved understanding of the HR provision in place through other housing providers, in particular examples included Calico Homes in Lancashire who currently provide up to ten working days of paid leave for domestic abuse victims as part of their 'Safe Leave' policy, their staff policy enables ability to grant such leave rests with an employee's line manager.

Good practice example of Adverse Risk Assessments were shared with HR to enable a review of current processes to be undertaken.

### Resident Services

Representatives from Tenancy Management, Enforcement and Community Safety Partnership were consulted and engaged with in relation to the introduction of Domestic Abuse Prevention Notices and Orders, known as DAPN and DAPO. The outcome of the consultation and engagement with the project team led to the successful development of procedures to support the use of DAPN and DAPO's in line with the statutory framework.

Further consultation to be had with our repairs contractor/s to identify improvements in identification of DA when delivering services in our homes – via HTIP the review of service delivery will lead to improved governance, consistency in knowledge, reporting and support provided.

Good practice examples gathered from DAHA accredited organisations, Luton Housing and Cambridge City Council. The former state in their policy that they will take action 'repairing damage to the property ensuring that the victim is not recharged where it has been caused as a result of domestic abuse' (this is dependent upon them being aware that DA has occurred). The latter have elected to not recharge for damages at all in properties where they are aware of DA. Further consultation with Property Services in Housing and Finance colleagues will enable development of a Dacorum specific approach.

Consultation and engagement with several housing providers, has identified the benefits of allocating funding to cover the costs (such as legal costs) of ending joint tenancies for those fleeing domestic abuse was included as part of the Domestic Abuse Project Group's early action plan. Options are currently being explored as to how this can be implemented as part of HTIP, with the intention to identify funding using ring-fenced grant such as Homeless Prevention Grant to undertake a pilot scheme.

Consultation with several housing providers has been undertaken and a further good practice example from DAHA accredited organisation, Cheshire East, was identified – they have been able to mitigate the loss of organisational revenue to rent accounts by allocating funding to pay the costs for victims, instead of waiving them entirely. Further exploration is underway via the project group to determine the feasibility of implementing approach within HTIP.

In addition to the above consultation has been undertaken via the following forums:

- DA Project Group – which includes: HR, Community Safety & Safeguarding, representatives from Housing Operations, Property and Strategic Housing;
- Staff and Members via a DA survey;

- Community Safety Partnership;
- Hertfordshire County Council, Strategic Leads and commissioners;
- Tenant & Leaseholder Scrutiny Committee
- DAHA Regional Lead: supported by the DAHA Accreditation Portfolio
- Employees with lived experience of domestic abuse
- Volunteers with lived experience of domestic abuse (facilitated by local support service, Cherished)
- Senior Officers from Strategic Housing, Community Safety & Safeguarding were consulted across all proposals
- Member briefing session
- Senior Leadership Team briefing
- Informal Cabinet

Feedback and learning from consultation and engagement activity has enabled the shaping of the final draft policies attached with the report.

## **5 Financial and value for money implications:**

Effective delivery of DA support has a positive impact on resources, as a robust approach to tackling DA may for example: prevent homelessness and necessary costs of administration of applicants and temporary accommodation provision or travel services, early intervention may prevent damage to property and/or escalation of rent arrears.

Should the Council go on to implement additional services such as additional provision of paid leave, this will have a financial impact, which will need to be determined through service planning and the budget setting process.

Where modifications are required to an employee's role following an adverse risk assessment, this may result in financial or resource impact.

At the current time no additional financial outlay is required, the Council may benefit financially from strengthening service delivery and processes, such as reviewing the approach to rechargeable costs following damage caused to property.

Should it be determined following further consideration to introduce 'ring-fenced' funding allocations to support activity – this will have financial implications, which will need to be determined through budget setting process. Any such decisions will in the first instance require further consideration by SLT.

## **6 Legal Implications**

Any amendments to policy and/or our tenancy agreements, will be undertaken in collaboration with Legal and Democratic Services to ensure statutory compliance.

The development of the new policies, provides reassurance that the Council is committed robustly to supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse, taking action against perpetrators and ensuring compliance with the legal framework.

## **7 Risk implications:**

A robust policy approach, provides reassurance that the Council has appropriate governance and processes in place to support, safeguard victims and survivors taking mitigating actions against risks arising through delivery of activity and safe case management practices.

## **8 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

Community Impact Assessment has been undertaken and approved by the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Leader officer – the assessment is pending formal sign off and adoption to the register. The impact assessment identifies that adopting the DAHA framework and achieving standards is likely to positively impact those from protected groups. The assessment provides detail of the analysis of the impact on protected groups

and others, outlining clearly the steps that will be taken to remove barriers that those with protected characteristics may face in accessing support and making concerted efforts to reduce them wherever possible.

Human Rights –there are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

#### **9 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

There are no sustainability issues arising from the development of these policies, the implementation will provide clearer guidance as to the Council's approach when dealing with DA, enabling marked improvements in service delivery and supporting the health and wellbeing of those affected. Day to day delivery of activity within the remit of the policy, will be overseen by the Joint Action Group (JAG) ensuring that it is aligned with our Community Safety delivery plans.

#### **10 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)**

Human Resources have indicated that any later process changes that require amendment to HR policy, will need to be approved with the Trade Union.

#### **11 Conclusions:**

This report outlines the intention to introduce two new policies, providing clear direction as to the approach that will be undertaken by the Council when tackling perpetrators of DA and supporting victims and survivors. The policies have been consulted on broadly and are compliant with the key recommendations of DAHA accreditation framework, of which the Council is the only local authority in Hertfordshire that has committed to date to achieving.



# Domestic Abuse Policy for Employees

**Author:** Jodie Bartlett, Domestic Abuse Project Officer

**Version:** 1.0

**Last updated:** November 2022

## 1.0 Introduction and policy purpose

1.1 We believe that everyone has the right to live free from fear of abuse or violence. As an employer, we want to provide a robust and supportive response to domestic abuse, so that we can limit the threat it poses to the health and happiness of our people.

1.2 It has been estimated that there are currently 2.3 million victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74 (two-thirds of whom are women), and more than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related (Gov.uk, 2022). We recognise that the prevalence of domestic abuse means it is highly likely that we will employ people who have been, or will be, victims of domestic abuse. Similarly, we recognise that we may employ people who are, or have been, perpetrators of domestic abuse.

1.3 This policy references the support we will provide to employees who are victims of, or have been victims of, domestic abuse. It states that we will not condone or tolerate domestic abuse, and outlines how we will hold employees accountable for their actions if they are perpetrators of domestic abuse.

1.4 We recognise that there are many barriers to disclosing domestic abuse, and we want to reassure our employees that any concerns they raise will be treated empathetically, appropriately, and confidentially.

## 2.0 Note on language

2.1 In this policy we use the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. 'Victim' is used to refer to the person/s who has been or is being abused, and 'perpetrator' refers to the person/s who is acting, or has acted, abusively.

2.2 We use these terms as they allow us to describe how the abuse affects those involved, in a context in which individual names are not available or appropriate to use.

2.3 We recognise that a 'victim' may prefer to be referred to as 'survivor', but we have chosen to use 'victim' within this policy as it allows us to clearly acknowledge that a person is or has been subjected to domestic abuse, without making assumptions about where they are within their own personal journey.

2.4 Within our practices, and particularly when engaging directly with those who are, or have been victims of domestic abuse, we will use the terms of address that they prefer where it is possible to do so.

### 3.0 Policy scope

3.1 This policy applies to those employed by Dacorum Borough Council, including those employed through agency contracts. If an agency contracted employee requires support that we cannot action without the agency's involvement, we will liaise with the agency. Contractors who work with, but not directly for, Dacorum Borough Council are encouraged to refer to their direct employers for advice on the workplace support that is available to them if they are experiencing domestic abuse.

3.2 When Dacorum resident/s or tenant/s are affected by domestic abuse, we will refer to our Domestic Abuse Policy for Residents, Tenants and Members. Where a person is both an employee and a resident or tenant, we will refer to both policies for guidance and tailor our response accordingly.

### 4.0 Our values

4.1 We are committed to demonstrating our organisational values in all that we do, including how we support employee/s who are affected by domestic abuse.

We will:

- **Be honest** about the prevalence of domestic abuse, and **act with integrity** by doing all we can to support employees who have been affected.
- Utilise the support of our internal service areas, specialist domestic abuse services and partner agencies, because we recognise that we need to **support each other and work together** to provide a co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse.
- **Be ambitious for our places and our people** by continuously seeking opportunities to improve our response to domestic abuse.
- **Be accountable to each other** and honour the trust that our employees place in us when sharing their experience/s of domestic abuse by responding respectfully, and providing guidance about how and where they can access further support.
- **Nurture and celebrate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in everything we do**, including how we recognise and respond to domestic abuse. We will take an intersectional approach when responding to domestic abuse by considering how a person's experience of domestic abuse may be impacted by their sex, age, gender identity, race, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, pregnancy status or social background differences.

## 5.0 Definition of domestic abuse

5.1 This policy uses an abridged version of the definition of domestic abuse provided by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. An expanded definition is included, alongside additional information about domestic abuse, in Appendix 1.

5.2 Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:

- A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other
- And
- the behaviour is abusive

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

5.3 It **does not matter** whether the behaviour is a single incident or a course of actions: behaviour of this kind is domestic abuse.

5.4 More information about other forms of abuse (including those that can also be domestic abuse), is included in our Children and Adults at Risk Policy.

5.5 ‘Domestic abuse significantly impacts the lives of children and young people: one in five children lives with domestic abuse’ (Domestic Abuse Commissioner, 2022).

5.6 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that children can be victims of domestic abuse, even when the abusive behaviours are not directly aimed at them.

They can also be victims if they:

- See, hear, or experience the effects of abuse
- Are related to the victim or perpetrator of the abuse (or both)

5.7 Further information about how domestic abuse affects children is provided in our Children and Adults at Risk Policy.

## 6.0 Awareness of domestic abuse

6.1 We will raise awareness of domestic abuse within our organisation by featuring it regularly within our internal and external communications, and participating in local and national campaigns. We will try to reduce the 'hidden' nature of domestic abuse by regularly acknowledging its prevalence, and encouraging our employees to make domestic abuse a regular topic of discussion in team meetings, where it is appropriate to do so.

6.2 We will encourage our employees to learn about domestic abuse by providing mandatory training, and additional training will be provided as it is relevant to employees' roles and their level of engagement with our community.

6.3 This policy will be made available to all employees, and treated as an essential part of the Induction package for our new employees.

## 7.0 Responding to domestic abuse

7.1 We will provide managers and those supporting staff with additional guidance and procedures to help them to support staff who are experiencing domestic abuse.

7.2 Additional information about domestic abuse, including how it may present when it affects colleagues or peers, is available in the domestic abuse section of the safeguarding hub on Dennis.

7.3 If you are concerned that a colleague or peer that you work with may be experiencing domestic abuse, we would encourage you to raise your concerns with your Line Manager/an alternative Line Manager, or a Designated Safeguarding Officer or Champion.

## 8.0 Support for employees who are, or have been, victims of domestic abuse

8.1 We respect our employees' right to privacy, and we recognise that it is their right to decide whether they disclose if they are, or have been, a victim of domestic abuse. We will prioritise gaining their consent before taking action.

8.2 The findings from our internal survey of Dacorum Borough Council employees that took place in autumn 2021, suggested that many of our employees would be likely to seek workplace support from their line manager if they were a victim of domestic abuse.

8.3 We encourage you to speak with an alternative line manager, a Designated Safeguarding Officer or Champion, or our Community Safety & Safeguarding team, if you feel able to. A list of Designated Safeguarding Officers and Champions will be published on Dennis.

8.4 We will ensure that these points of contact have the knowledge, tools and support they need to confidently support you by giving them additional resources, procedures, and training.

8.5 They will take a flexible and victim-centred approach to supporting you, and with your consent, will work with specialist domestic abuse agencies to take action/s to increase your personal safety. They will also consider the safety of your colleagues.

8.6 They can take action/s including:

- Agreeing whether to advise your colleagues, including level of detail you are comfortable to share, and planning how they should respond if the perpetrator/s make contact.
- Making reasonable accommodations to your working environment, duties or schedule, if it is likely to reduce the risk of contact with the perpetrator/s and/or have a positive impact on your wellbeing.
- Allowing you to work alternative or flexible working hours if this will minimise the risk of contact with the perpetrator/s.
- Agreeing changes to your schedule to allow you to attend appointments with the Police, specialist domestic abuse services, counselling and legal services et al during working hours, where necessary.
- Changing your workplace contact details to reduce the risk of harassment by phone or email.
- Arranging for your salary to be paid into an alternative account, at your request.

8.7 We recognise that an employee may wish to access support without our involvement, and we want to make it accessible for them to do so. A guide to how to access support as a victim of domestic abuse is provided as Appendix 2.

## 9.0 **Perpetrators of domestic abuse**

9.1 We do not condone the perpetration of domestic abuse by our employees under any circumstances.

9.2 If you have reason to believe that an employee has perpetrated domestic abuse, you can raise your concerns confidentially by using our Whistleblowing policy.

9.3 We will respond to employee perpetrated instances of domestic abuse in the interest of reducing risk to the perpetrator's victim/s and colleagues.

9.4 We will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a domestic-abuse-related offence that relates to an employee, on a case a case-by-case basis.

9.5 We will complete an adverse risk assessment when we are made aware that an employee has been cautioned or convicted of a domestic abuse related offence.

9.6 We will use the findings of this risk assessment to take proportionate and appropriate action. This could include redeployment of duties and/or dismissal.

9.7 We also recognise the need to offer appropriate support to employed perpetrators, or those concerned about their own behaviour, and genuinely want to change.

9.8 We will signpost or refer employed perpetrators to support programmes, where it is appropriate to do so without increasing the risk to their victim/s or colleagues. A guide to how to access support as a perpetrator/someone concerned about their own, or as a person concerned about someone else's behaviour is included as Appendix 3.

## 10.0 Confidentiality and GDPR

10.1 Any information related to domestic abuse will be treated with sensitivity, and if it is recorded, it will be stored securely on our systems. We will maintain confidentiality and prioritise gaining consent from victims before making referrals or taking further action, as far as it is practicable to do so. We may have to share information with agencies such as the Police or Social Services if an adult or child is at serious risk of harm.

10.2 If an instance of domestic abuse meets the MARAC risk threshold or if there are child protection concerns, we have a legal duty to share information with relevant partner agencies in the interest of reducing risk to those concerned.

## 11.0 Links to other policies and policy review expectations

11.1 We involved employees from across the organisation, including those with lived experience of domestic abuse, when developing this policy.

11.2 We will review this policy, related strategy, and information sources every 3 years at minimum to ensure that it aligns with changes in research, national legislation, policies and local support and service provision.

11.3 We may also review this policy in response to: staff and tenant/resident/leaseholder feedback; local Domestic Homicide Review; Serious Case Review and Serious Adult Review recommendations and findings.

11.4 This policy can be read in conjunction with its associated domestic abuse procedures and the following relevant policies and procedures:

- Employment Handbook
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Children and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) / Data Protection Act 2018 Policy

11.5 We recognise that this policy must align with the legislative framework set out by the following:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Homeless Reduction Act 2017
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act 2014
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Civil partnership Act 2004

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# Domestic Abuse Policy for Residents, Tenants and Members

**Author:** Jodie Bartlett, Domestic Abuse Project Officer

**Last updated:** November 2022

## 1.0 Introduction and policy purpose

1.1 We believe that everyone has the right to live free from fear of abuse or violence. We know that domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity differences.

1.2 It has been estimated that there are currently 2.3 million victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74 (two-thirds of whom are women), and more than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related (Gov.uk, 2022).

1.3 We believe that as a local authority and housing provider, we are well placed to recognise and respond to domestic abuse. We recognise that there are many barriers to disclosing domestic abuse, but we want to reassure our residents, tenants and members that any concerns they raise will be met with an empathetic and appropriate response.

1.4 This policy acts in the intention of reducing the risk of domestic abuse, and outlines how we will respond to domestic abuse when it affects our residents, tenants and members.

1.5 This policy references the support we will provide to those are victims of, or have been victims of, domestic abuse. It states that we will not condone or tolerate domestic abuse, and outlines how we will hold perpetrators of domestic abuse accountable for their actions.

## 2.0 Note on language

2.1 In this policy we use the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. 'Victim' is used to refer to the person/s who has been or is being abused, and 'perpetrator' refers to the person/s who is acting, or has acted, abusively.

2.2 We use these terms as they allow us to describe how the abuse affects those involved, in a context in which individual names are not available or appropriate to use.

2.3 We recognise that a 'victim' may prefer to be referred to as 'survivor', but we have chosen to use 'victim' within this policy as it allows us to clearly acknowledge that a person is or has been subjected to domestic abuse, without making assumptions about where they are within their own personal journey.

2.4 Within our practices, and particularly when engaging directly with those who are, or have been victims of domestic abuse, we will use the terms of address that they prefer where it is possible to do so.

### 3.0 Policy scope

3.1 This policy applies to residents within the Dacorum area, tenants of Dacorum Borough Council, and Dacorum Borough Council members.

3.2 When our employees are affected by domestic abuse, we will refer to our Domestic Abuse Policy for Employees. Where a person is a resident or tenant, and also employed by Dacorum Borough Council, we will refer to both policies for guidance and tailor our response accordingly.

3.3 Although this policy is primarily for Dacorum Borough Council residents, tenants and members, the guidance included within Appendix 3 can be used by anyone who needs to access domestic abuse support.

### 4.0 Our values

4.1 We are committed to demonstrating our organisational values in all that we do, including how we support those affected by domestic abuse.

We will:

- **Be honest** about the prevalence of domestic abuse, and **act with integrity** by doing all we can to support residents, tenants and members who have been affected.
- Utilise the support of our internal service areas, specialist domestic abuse services and partner agencies, because we recognise that we need to **support each other and work together** to provide a co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse.
- **Be ambitious for our places and our people** by continuously seeking opportunities to improve our response to domestic abuse.
- **Be accountable to each other** and honour the trust that our residents, tenants and members place in us when sharing their experience/s of domestic abuse by responding respectfully, and providing guidance about how and where they can access further support.
- **Nurture and celebrate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in everything we do**, including how we recognise and respond to domestic abuse. We will take an intersectional approach when responding to domestic abuse by considering how a person's experience of domestic abuse may be impacted by their sex, age, gender identity, race, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, pregnancy status or social background differences.

## 5.0 Definition of domestic abuse

5.1 This policy uses an abridged version of the definition of domestic abuse provided by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. An expanded definition is included, alongside additional information about domestic abuse, in Appendix 1.

5.2 Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:

- A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other
- And
- the behaviour is abusive

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

5.3 It **does not matter** whether the behaviour is a single incident or a course of actions: behaviour of this kind is domestic abuse.

5.4 More information about other forms of abuse (including those that can also be domestic abuse), is included in Children and Adults at Risk Policy.

5.5 ‘Domestic abuse significantly impacts the lives of children and young people: one in five children lives with domestic abuse’ (Domestic Abuse Commissioner, 2022).

5.6 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that children can be victims of domestic abuse, even when the abusive behaviours are not directly aimed at them.

They can also be victims if they:

- See, hear, or experience the effects of abuse
- Are related to the victim or perpetrator of the abuse (or both)

5.7 Further information about how domestic abuse affects children is provided in our Children and Adults at Risk Policy.

## 6.0 Our aims and practices

6.1 We will:

- **Support our employees to confidently recognise and appropriately respond to domestic abuse** by providing mandatory domestic abuse training for all employees. Additional training will be provided as it is relevant to the employees’

roles and their level of engagement with residents, tenants and members. This policy is supported by internal procedures and guidance that our employees can refer to.

- **Make information about what domestic abuse is readily available to tenants and residents** through regular communications and during our engagement with our community.
- **Set the expectation for all domestic abuse disclosures to be responded to empathetically and appropriately.** We have created a set of standards that we will uphold when responding to disclosures of domestic abuse. These standards are outlined in Appendix 2.
- **Publicise support pathways for victims of domestic abuse** and make information about how to access domestic abuse support easily accessible, so that those who need support can access support that is right for them and their circumstances. We will review these pathways regularly to ensure that the information remains up-to-date, and to identify opportunities to increase provision where necessary. A guide to how to access support as a victim of domestic abuse is provided as Appendix 3.
- **Work closely with local specialist domestic abuse services and agencies (such as the Police) to provide a co-ordinated response to domestic abuse** by making referrals where necessary, taking actions from MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference), and being active contributors to the Dacorum Community Safety Partnership through engagement at the RAG (Responsible Authorities Group), JAG (Joint Action Group), and CSAG (Community Safety Action Group).
- **Create opportunities for cross-working, collaboration and escalating barriers to supporting victims** by communicating regularly with local services through events and our regular Domestic Abuse Forum.
- **Act in accordance with our existing safeguarding framework** by addressing any links to domestic abuse when safeguarding referrals are made, in the interest of protecting vulnerable adults and children.
- **Maintain flexibility and a victim-centred approach** because we know that no two experiences of domestic abuse are the same. Our employees will use this policy, its associated procedures and guidance documents and/or advice from our Safeguarding Lead, the Police and specialist domestic abuse services to ensure that they respond appropriately to domestic abuse.
- **Create ‘safety at home’ for victims of domestic abuse who wish to stay within their home** through working with the Police and partner agencies to use legal measures to remove the perpetrator from the property (such as Non Molestation Orders, Domestic Abuse Protection Orders and Domestic Abuse Protection Notices) and/or providing panic alarms, locks and additional security measures.
- **Support victims who wish to relocate because it is not safe, or preferable for them to remain at their address because of domestic abuse** by providing guidance and assisting their move to alternative

accommodation. Our Housing service areas and our Domestic Abuse Action Group (DAAG) will take an active role in helping victims to live in accommodation that is free from abuse.

- **State that perpetrating domestic abuse is unacceptable, and take appropriate action to hold perpetrators accountable.** This sentiment is echoed in the Tenancy Agreement that is issued to tenants when they start a tenancy with Dacorum Borough Council. We reserve the right to take enforcement action against Dacorum Borough Council tenants, using the powers available under the Housing Act, up to and including terminating a tenancy, for domestic abuse related offences. When taking action against perpetrator/s, we will prioritise the safety and wishes of their victim/s, and ensure that their wishes and housing needs are considered.
- **Refer perpetrators to specialist support when it is appropriate to do so** because we recognise that long-term domestic abuse prevention requires behavioural change from those who cause harm. We believe in referring perpetrators, and those concerned about their behaviour or that of someone they know, to specialist services who can help them to change, when it is safe and appropriate to do so without increasing risk to their victim/s. A guide to how to access support as a perpetrator, or someone concerned about their own or someone else's behaviour is included as Appendix 4.
- **Continually strive to improve our response to domestic abuse and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)** by seeking opportunities to receive feedback from victims and survivors, and taking note of learnings from the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process. As of 2022, we are working towards accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) because we want to provide our residents, tenants and members with an exemplary response to domestic abuse.



## 7.0 Confidentiality and GDPR

7.1 Any information related to domestic abuse will be treated with sensitivity, and if it is recorded, it will be stored securely on our systems. We will maintain confidentiality and prioritise gaining consent from victims before making referrals or taking further action, as far as it is practicable to do so. We may have to share information with

agencies such as the Police or Social Services if an adult or child is at serious risk of harm.

7.2 If an instance of domestic abuse meets the MARAC risk threshold or if there are child protection concerns, we have a legal duty to share information with relevant partner agencies in the interest of reducing risk to those concerned.

## 8.0 Links to other policies and policy review expectations

8.1 We involved employees from across our organisation, including those with lived experience of domestic abuse, when developing this policy. We also sought feedback and contribution from service users of local specialist domestic abuse support services.

8.2 We will review this policy, related strategy, and information sources every three years at minimum to ensure that it aligns with changes in research, national legislation, policies and local support and service provision.

8.3 We may also review this policy in response to: employee and resident/tenant feedback; local Domestic Homicide Review; Serious Case Review and Serious Adult Review recommendations and findings.

8.4 This policy is supported by a number of internal procedures, and can be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Children and Adults at Risk Policy
- Housing Allocations Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy
- GDPR Policy

8.5 We recognise the need to align this policy with the legislative framework set out by the following:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Homeless Reduction Act 2017
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act 2014
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Civil partnership Act 2004
- Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Housing Act 1996, Part 7 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002)
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

- Protection of Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Housing Act 1985 and 1996
- Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations 2022

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## Appendix 1 – Additional information about domestic abuse

### Definition of ‘personally connected’

‘Personally connected’ means that the relationship between the involved parties meets one or more of the following criteria:

They:

- Are married to each other
- Are in a civil partnership with each other
- Have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- Have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- Are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- Are relatives

### Coercive and controlling behaviour

‘Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour’ (ONS, 2022).

More information about coercive and controlling behaviour is available from the following resource:

[What is Coercive Control?](#)

### ‘Honour’ based violence (HBV) as a form of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can also be a form of ‘honour’ based violence if it ‘has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community’ (NPCC, 2015).

More information about ‘honour’ based violence is available from the following resources:

[Refuge - Honour Based Violence](#)

[CPS – So-Called Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage](#)



## Appendix 2 - Our standards for responding to domestic abuse

We recognise that it can be difficult to share personal experiences of domestic abuse.

In any interaction with us, you can expect us to maintain the behavioural standards we set out in our housing service standards: [Our House, Your Home](#).

If you believe that you are a victim of domestic abuse, and you decide to share your experience with us, you can also expect:

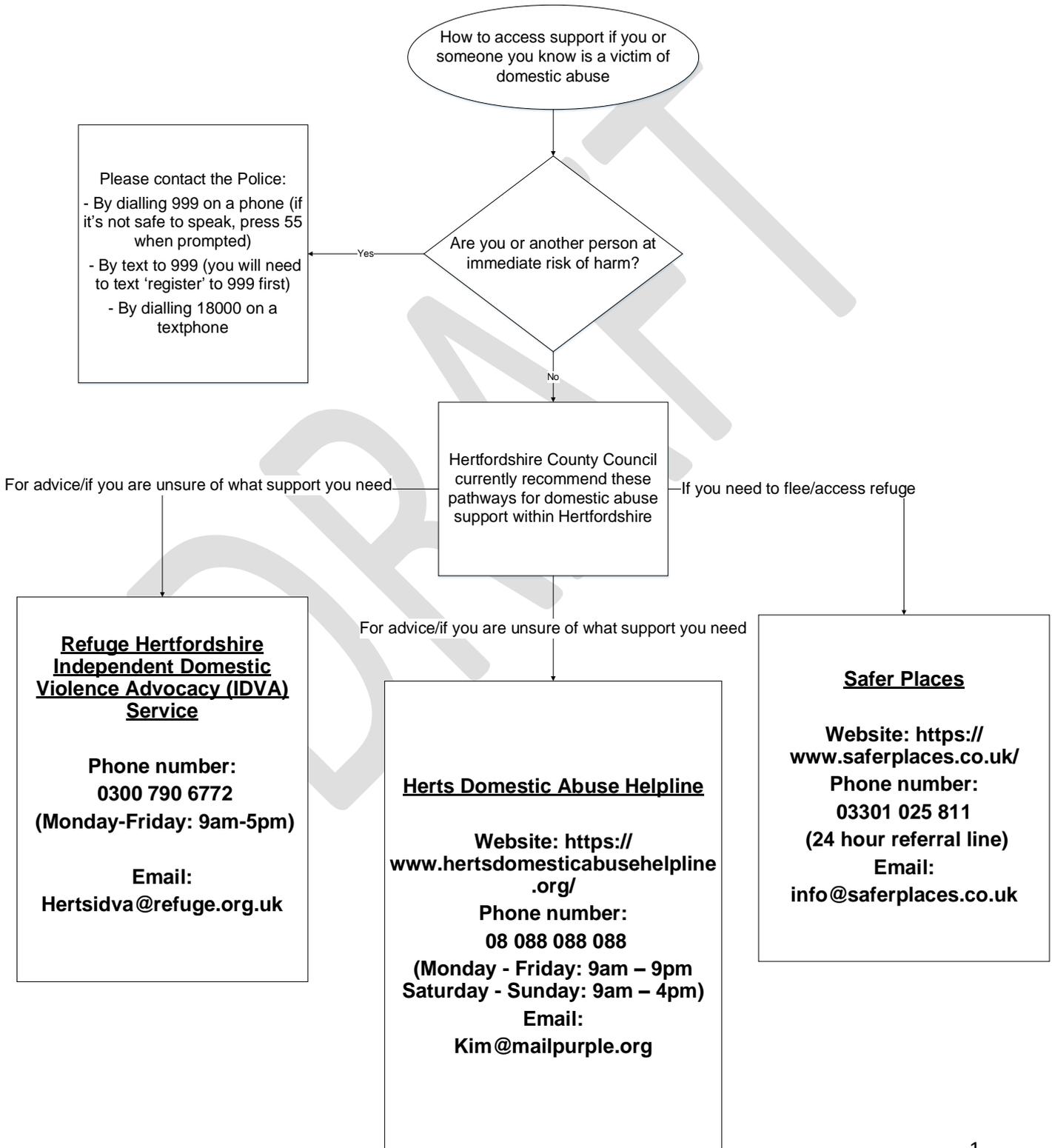
- To be listened to and treated in a non-judgemental and empathetic manner.
- We will meet your requests to speak with an employee of the same (or different, according to your preferences) gender and/or sexual orientation, as far as is reasonably practicable.
- To be able to discuss your concerns at the time that you make contact, if it is safe and possible for you to do so. Where there is a need to refer to another service area or employee/s, domestic abuse disclosures will be treated as a priority, and you can expect to speak with a suitable employee within 24 hours at most.
- For the Dacorum Borough Council employee/s you speak with to consider your personal safety before engaging in any discussion of your situation, by asking you whether it is a safe and appropriate time to talk, and to make arrangements to speak with you alone.  
If the employee that you disclose your experience to is within a service area that will be unable to meet these expectations, or limited in the follow up support that they can provide, (such as the Customer Services Unit), they will make arrangements for you to discuss your situation further with an employee from a relevant service area.
- If it is not safe or appropriate for you to discuss your situation at the time that you make contact, the Employee should make arrangements for further discussion at a time, and in a way, that is safe, appropriate, and in accordance with your wishes, for example by arranging to meet with you in a mutually agreed location, or continuing the discussion at another time or via an alternative contact method.
- For an impartial interpreter to be made available and/or for other accommodations to be made if English is not your first language, and to provide support for any other literacy or support needs that may impact your ability to communicate effectively.
- To receive a relevant and supportive response that prioritises your wishes and your safety.
- For the Dacorum Borough Council employee/s you speak with to consider any associated safeguarding risks and escalate any concerns through our Safeguarding processes, including to any relevant partner agencies where it is necessary and appropriate to do so.



## Appendix 3 – How to access domestic abuse support if you are or have been a victim of domestic abuse

### Hertfordshire County Council recommended pathways

The following flowchart outlines the referral pathways that are currently recommended by Hertfordshire County Council:



We recognise that victims may benefit from additional support from 'by and for' services, particularly if their experience of domestic abuse is impacted by their characteristics.

'By and for' services are created and run by the communities or those with similar lived experiences as those they intend to support E.g.: Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME), LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and more), Gypsy, Romany and Traveller etc.

We have included 'by and for' services within our more detailed directory of the specialist domestic abuse victim support services that are available at a local (within Dacorum and the surrounding Hertfordshire area) and national level.

Where local provision of 'by and for' services are not available or are limited within Dacorum, we have tried to include details of services that are available outside of the borough or at a national level.

Domestic Abuse Victim Support Services \*\*\*to be published on website alongside policy

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## **Appendix 4 - How to access support if you are concerned about your own behaviour, or that of someone you know**

We understand that it may be difficult to acknowledge or recognise if you, or someone you know is acting, or has acted abusively. We have put together the following checklist to help you recognise abusive behaviours:

### **Mental / emotional abuse**

If you are being mentally or emotionally abusive towards your partner or family member, you might be:

- Criticising
- Using language designed to humiliate
- Blaming
- Intimidating and threatening
- Destroying personal belongings
- Telling them that they are mad
- Telling them that you are not being abusive

### **Threatening behaviours**

This can include making threats to:

- Take the children away yourself
- Have the children taken away by Social Care or other people
- Have your victim deported
- Have your victim sectioned
- Abuse your victim's children, family, friends or pets
- Kill someone
- Commit suicide
- Mutilate your victim or their loved ones
- Stalk your victim (any of which could be in person, via phone call, email or text message)

### **Intimidation and isolation**

It could be you:

- Repeatedly criticise your victim
- Tell your victim that they are ugly / worthless / useless
- Prevent your victim from having contact with family and friends
- Humiliate your victim in front of others

- Give your victim a curfew
- Stop or monitor your victim's phone calls

### **Psychological abuse**

You may:

- Act jealously
- Blame your victim for causing the abuse
- Lie to your victim
- Manipulate your victim to do as you want
- Ignore your victim
- Undermine or confuse your victim
- Tell your victim that they are losing their mind

### **Financial abuse**

Being financially abusive may include:

- Building up debt in your victim's name
- Withholding money from your victim
- Stealing money from your victim
- Limiting or preventing your victim from having access to money
- Not letting your victim work
- Using family money for alcohol / drugs
- Claiming and keeping your victim's benefits
- Selling your victim's possessions
- Not paying child support
- Refusing to pay bills
- Forcing your victim to earn money for you/ another person
- Threatening to report to your victim to the Benefits Agency or other authorities

### **Sexual abuse**

Are you asking your victim to do sexual things in return for meeting their basic needs and requirements?

Whether in a relationship or not, if someone does not want to have sex, they do not have to. If you are forcing someone against their will, then you are being abusive.

Some forms of sexual abuse can include:

- Rape
- Forcing someone to engage in sexual acts
- Degrading treatment
- Sexual name-calling

- Forcing someone to prostitute themselves
- Making someone wear clothes that they haven't chosen
- Forcing someone to take part in or look at pornographic images
- Forcing someone to have sexual relationships with other people

### **Violence / physical abuse**

You may be directing violence and physical abuse at your victim, or at their family, friends or pets.

An example of this is:

- Hitting / punching / kicking / shoving
- Spitting
- Strangling
- Pulling hair
- Making angry or physical threats
- Biting
- Burning
- Using weapons
- Forcing someone to use drugs and / or alcohol
- Depriving someone of sleep
- Hurting a pet
- Invading other's space

If you are concerned about your own behaviour, or that of someone close to you, we would encourage you to make contact with a suitable support service, such as Respect.

Their contact details are available from their website: [respectphoneline.org.uk](http://respectphoneline.org.uk).

A more detailed directory of the specialist domestic abuse perpetrator and family support services available at a local (within Dacorum and the surrounding Hertfordshire area) and national level is included below:

[Domestic Abuse Perpetrator and Family Support Services](#)

# Dacorum BC Community Impact Assessment (CIA)

**Policy / service / decision**

**Domestic Abuse Review and Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation**

## **Description of what is being impact assessed**

*What are the aims of the service, proposal, and project? What outcomes do you want to achieve? What are the reasons for the proposal or change? Do you need to reference/consider any related projects?*

*Stakeholders; Who will be affected? Which protected characteristics is it most relevant to? Consider the public, service users, partners, staff, Members, etc*

*It is advisable to involve at least one colleague in the preparation of the assessment, dependent on likely level of impact*

A review of Dacorum Borough Council's organisational domestic abuse response was initiated in response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and a Domestic Abuse Project Group and project plan were put together. A Domestic Abuse Project Officer was appointed to oversee the project plan, and later, to lead Dacorum Borough Council to achieving accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).

The aim of this review and accreditation process is to improve Dacorum Borough Council's organisational response to domestic abuse, in line with DAHA's model for a housing response 'which is nationally recognised as best practice, through the Domestic Abuse Act Statutory Guidance 2022, and is endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England & Wales, Nicole Jacobs' (DAHA, 2022).

This assessment considers the impact of the project and accreditation. The review and accreditation will affect the Dacorum community, including residents, tenants and members/councillors. It will also impact Dacorum Borough Council employees, because for the first time, a separate domestic abuse policy has been created for employees.

## Evidence

### **What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service/decision might impact on protected groups?**

*(Include relevant national/local data, research, monitoring information, service user feedback, complaints, audits, consultations, CIAs from other projects or other local authorities, etc.). You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.*

The accreditation framework that steers the review direction is informed by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and the direction agreed by the current Domestic Abuse Commissioner. Additionally, the DAHA framework includes the priority area, 'Intersectional and anti-racist practice'. Achieving the standards in this section in particular is likely to positively impact those from protected groups. See attached framework for more detail.

### **Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups?** *If you have not consulted other people, please explain why? You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.*

The action plan's progress and actions is regularly discussed at the project group meetings, which are attended by a broad selection of staff from across Dacorum Borough Council (including those from Housing and Community Safety) and Hertfordshire County Council (aligning with their Domestic Abuse Strategy). Diversity and Community Inclusion Lead Officer, Cybele Fernandes, is also part of this group, and will continue to assist in maximising accessibility and inclusivity, especially for those from protected groups.

The policies created as part of this project were consulted on by members of the Domestic Abuse Project Group, Hertfordshire County Council and our local DAHA Regional Lead (South). Efforts were also made to gain a 'survivor voice': employees and volunteers with lived experience of domestic abuse (kindly facilitated by local support service, Cherished) also provided feedback on the policies.

**Analysis of impact on protected groups (and others)**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Dacorum BC to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service/decision will achieve these aims. Using the table below, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of these using the evidence that you have collated and your own understanding. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, **before** you have implemented any mitigation.

- The PCs of Marriage and Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity should be added if their inclusion is relevant for impact assessment.
- Use “insert below” menu layout option to insert extra rows where relevant (e.g. extra rows for different impairments within Disability).

Summary of impact		Negative impact / outcome	Neutral impact / outcome	Positive impact / outcome
Protected group	<i>What do you know? What do people tell you? Summary of data and feedback about service users and the wider community/ public. Who uses / will use the service? Who doesn't / can't and why? Feedback/complaints?</i>			
Age	<p><b>*For all characteristics*</b></p> <p>Domestic abuse can affect victim/s differently depending on the intersection of their protected characteristics, and the DAHA ‘Intersectionality and Anti-Racist practice’ focuses specifically on recognising the barriers that those with protected characteristics may face in accessing support, and making concerted efforts to reduce them where possible.</p> <p>Whilst our interaction with tenants is likely to be limited to those 18+, our residents may be under 18. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that children can be victims of domestic abuse in their own right when they ‘see or hear, or experience the effects of, the abuse’ and they are ‘related to the person/s being abused or the</p>	□	□	☒

	<p>person/s acting abusively. In any interaction with those under 18, we will uphold our Safeguarding responsibilities.</p> <p>Age will be especially relevant when targeting communications and awareness raising for the tenants in our sheltered housing schemes.</p> <p>All age groups are likely to benefit from the changes made organisationally in response to this work.</p>			
<p><b>Disability (physical, intellectual, mental)</b></p> <p><i>Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness &amp; Learning Disability Guide</i></p>	<p>The intersectional lens of this project’s aims prioritises promoting ‘by and for’ services, which is likely to positively impact those with disabilities.</p> <p>‘Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse, but the rate of support referrals are much lower than those for able bodied victims. Disabled victims also typically experience abuse for a longer period of time before accessing support’ (Safe Lives, 2022).</p> <p>There are also often concerns about mental health linked to domestic abuse, not least because of the impact that it can have on a person.</p> <p>Increasing awareness of and strengthening our response to domestic abuse is likely to positively impact those with disabilities.</p>	<p>□</p>	<p>□</p>	<p>☒</p>
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p>	<p>Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone, and our work around the topic will not be specifically relevant to those who have undergone gender reassignment. With that being said, the intersectional lens of this project will consider how domestic abuse is experienced by those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Increased awareness of and focus on how LGBTQ+ experiences can impact a person’s experience of domestic abuse will likely have</p>	<p>□</p>	<p>□</p>	<p>☒</p>

	a positive impact on those who have undergone gender reassignment.			
<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	The 'Intersectional and Anti-Racist' priority of the DAHA framework is likely to have an especially positive impact for this characteristic. A lot of the focus of this work is about reducing barriers to support for those experiencing domestic abuse, and recognising how race and ethnicity can impact ease of access. It also focuses on broadening the understanding of what domestic abuse is, and increased focus on 'honour based abuse' may be linked to other factors of ethic or cultural significance.	☐	☐	☒
<b>Religion or belief</b>	This work is likely to have less of an impact related to religion or belief, but it is also unlikely to have a negative impact, so I have classified this as neutral.  However, one aspect that I believe we need to be mindful of, is to avoid any encouraging assumption that 'honour based abuse' or certain types of domestic abuse are only enacted by to those of particular religious or cultural beliefs (or race or ethnicity), or that they are linked to said religion/s or beliefs. This can be managed by applying the intersectional lens that this work commands.	☐	☒	☐
<b>Sex</b>	Women are currently more likely to be victims of domestic abuse: the majority (approximately 73%) of all domestic abuse related offences recorded by the Police between April 2020 and March 2021 were against female victims, compared to 26.9% of male victims (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Male perpetrated, female victim domestic abuse is in some instances related to misogynistic ideology, and increasing awareness of domestic abuse is therefore	☐	☐	☒

	<p>relevant to our efforts to address Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in this context, thus having a positive impact on addressing sex discrimination.</p> <p>It is also relevant to note that whilst this work acknowledges that women are currently more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than men (and often in an intimate partner relationship), it seeks to broaden the public perception of domestic abuse by recognising the DA Act definition of domestic abuse, and confirming (in Comms and awareness and through our guidance etc) that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse.</p>			
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<p>Increased awareness of and focus on how being LGBTQ+ can impact a person's experience of domestic abuse will likely have a positive impact on this group.</p>	☐	☐	☒
<b>Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.</b>	<p>This work is likely to have a positive impact on many of these factors.</p> <p>Domestic abuse is often cited as a reason for homelessness, and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 gives automatic priority need to <u>'a person who is homeless as a result of that person being a victim of domestic abuse'</u>.</p> <p>Domestic abuse may also be present in relationships between carer and patient, especially where those concerned are also related.</p> <p>External stressors such as financial pressures (perhaps aggravated by low income or cost of living concerns) can increase the risk of domestic abuse. This may be linked to economic/financial abuse, which is recognised as a form of domestic abuse.</p>	☐	☐	☒

	<p>Rurality is also often a concern in relation to domestic abuse. Victims are often isolated from their support networks by those who abuse them, and this can be compounded by the physical isolation of living in a rural area.</p> <p>The work associated with this assessment will consider all of these factors as they relate to domestic abuse.</p>			
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**Negative impacts / outcomes action plan**

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative impacts / outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

<b>Action taken/to be taken</b> <i>(copy &amp; paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)</i>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Action complete</b>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>

	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.</b>			
<b>Completed by (all involved in CIA)</b>	<b>Jodie Bartlett, Domestic Abuse Project Officer</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>04/10/2022</b>		
<b>Signed off by (AD from different Directorate if being presented to CMT / Cabinet)</b>	<b>Pending sign off with AD People</b>		
<b>Date</b>			
<b>Entered onto CIA database - date</b>			
<b>To be reviewed by (officer name)</b>			
<b>Review date</b>			





# HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Report for:</b>	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Title of report:</b>	Damp and Mould – Dacorum Update and Response
<b>Date:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Services
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Letter for Secretary of State Appendix 2 – DBC Response Secretary of State Appendix 3 – Letter from RSH Appendix 4 – ‘As Is’ Process Map Appendix 5 – Condensation Leaflet Appendix 6 - Net Zero Innovation Programme (NZIP) proposal
<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) Osborne Property Services Limited (OPSL) Stock condition surveys (SCS) Housing Health and Safety Rating (HHSRS) Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) University of Bedfordshire (UoB) University College London (UCL) Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

**Report Author / Responsible Officer**

Mark Pinnell, Assistant Director of Housing



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<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need
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	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	1. To provide an update on damp and mould and the DBC approach.
<b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b>	To note the recommendations set out in section 4.
<b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>	Proposed annual report

## 1 Introduction

Housing Secretary Michael Gove, has launched a crackdown on poor housing conditions by demanding every council and housing authority provide details of how they plan to tackle damp and mould following the death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in December 2020. The inquest ruled that Awaab died due to severe breathing problems caused by mould fungus in his blood and lungs.

**Appendix 1** - Since the inquest's conclusion Mr Gove has written to every English council leader and social housing provider stating that the country needs to 'raise the bar dramatically' on the quality of social housing and 'empower tenants' to ensure 'their voices are truly heard'.

The letter directs local councils to supply his department with an assessment of damp and mould issues affecting their privately rented properties, as well as details of how it is being tackled. Additionally Councils have also been asked to list the number of civil penalty notices and successful prosecutions pursued in relation to dangerous damp and mould.

**Appendix 2** Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) have provided an initial response to this on the on the 28 November.

**Appendix 3** - A further letter has been received from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) dated 22 November 2022 entitled, **Assurance on addressing risks relating to damp and mould in tenants' homes**. The RSH is seeking assurance from all providers that they have a clear understanding and strong grip on damp and mould issues in their homes and are addressing risks to tenants' and residents' health.

The requested information is:

- The approach to assessing the extent of damp and mould issues affecting properties, including how you assess the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards
- The context of that approach, most recent assessment of the extent of damp and mould hazards in your homes, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards
- Given those findings, the actions being taken to remedy any issues and hazards, and ensure that homes meet the Decent Homes Standard
- How we ensure that individual damp and mould cases are identified and dealt with promptly and effectively when raised by tenants and residents.

This information was submitted online on the 18 December before the deadline of the 19 December.

## 2 Current Position

It is important to note that Damp and mould are not the same thing, however where there is damp, mould will usually follow. This is because mould needs moisture to grow.

Reports of damp and/or mould are seasonal with an influx during the winter months, anecdotally Osborne Property Services Ltd (OPSL) have experienced an increase in reported cases following the media headlines of the ITN news story and more recently following the reported death of Awaab.

In Quarter 2, 2021/22 there were 88 cases associated to damp and/or mould in the system. We have seen a steep increase for the same period in 2022/23 with 166 live cases of which 90-95 cases are specifically regarding mould, this represents an increase of 88.6% this year and we are only marginally into the winter period.

### 2.1 Reporting Lines

**Appendix 4** – ‘As Is’ Process map, demonstrates 2 ways we capture and respond to Damp and Mould issues, these being;

1. Reported by a Tenant into the Contact Centre or via email
2. The outcome of a Stock condition Survey

#### **Reported into DBC –**

Upon discovering the presence of damp and/or mould the resident makes contact with the Housing Repairs team to report the issue, there are two channels for the resident to do this, via a telephone call or they can download and email a repair request form.

If the resident opts to call in, they are taken through a ‘triage’ style process which allows the call handler to gather as much information as possible regarding the issue. (The same information request is required via the email route). In both cases a self-help condensation leaflet **Appendix 5** is sent out and photographs are requested. These photographs are reviewed by the OPSL repairs team and corrective repairs raised.

This approach can lead to serious cases being misdiagnosed and dismissed as condensation without visiting the property to assess the pathology of the building. This is due to historical ways of working driven by capacity. It is also important to note that surveyors are not trained to investigate, diagnose and specify correctly.

There has been a recent instruction to OPSL by DBC repairs staff to use the correct products and processes to treat the mould. However whilst this is a positive step, there is currently an 8-week lead time for a mould treatment appointment. This is dictated by current resource levels with only one operative carrying out the mould treatment.

This excessive delay is having an impact on the tenants living conditions and in some cases will be allowing the mould to migrate to other areas that a quicker response may prevent.

### 2.2 Stock condition surveys (SCS)

DBC have 102 property archetypes generally Flats, Houses, Bungalow and Bedsits categorised by property type and the number of bedrooms.

DBC has set a target of 100% of its properties to have a stock condition survey within the next four years. Once the survey has been booked. The surveyor attends the property to carry out the survey, and a report is produced including detail if damp and/or mould was present.

The survey includes a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) review and hazards are categorised as 'cat 1 or cat 2' as per current guidance. The HHSRS is quite a complex rating system and open to interpretation - different surveyors are likely to come back with different ratings. Therefore DBC have broken the categorisation down further into a rating system based on three levels of risk - high risk (Cat 1 and 2), medium risk and low risk. Once rated, the DBC Asset Manager reviews the output of the surveys and escalates as appropriate to OPSL.

DBC have completed 3078 stock conditions surveys to date. Out of the survey's undertaken, 84 cases of damp and/or mould were identified in the survey, equating to circa 2.7% of these 6 where identified as High Risk which were sent to OPSL w/c 21st Nov 22.

Of the 84 cases the largest cohort of identified archetypes are 2 bed flats built between 1950-66 (15 cases) and 3 bed houses 1950-66 (16 cases). This would at first appear to be a pattern but these two archetypes also represent the largest amount of stock, 464 units and 1675 units respectively. Not surprisingly the majority of Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) for these properties were rated as D's and E's, which further supports the drive to achieve the government target for all social housing properties to EPC C and above by 2030.

To articulate some sort of scale. SCS have been completed for 3078 (30% of the total stock), in which mould/damp problems have been identified in 84 (2.7%), the archetypes with the most cases identified combined equate to 31 cases (37%). The total number of properties in this archetype is 2139 (21% of total stock) and the total number of these properties surveyed is 763 (170 flats and 593 houses).

Of the 763 properties 31 have problems – 4%

763 represents 36% of the properties in this combined archetype just over a third, crudely modelled up 12% of these properties could have problems which is circa 256.

### **3. Options to address the problem**

There is a missing managerial loop within our current process. The SCS survey can highlight issues, the surveyor hands over to DBC Asset manager who escalates the cases based on the identified risk, a resident can identify an issue as can front line visiting officers and elected members, however there appears to be no follow up or update on progress once passed to OPSL. Additionally there are no current reporting mechanisms or governance in place which increases the risk for cases to be missed or remain unresolved.

Every property is unique and a bespoke strategy and process is required. Experience and training are key to evaluating the many connotations that cause condensation and mould-related repairs and the subsequent remedy.

The panacea solution is to upgrade all DBC properties thermally with adequate ventilation and an affordable heating source which is clearly not realistic in the short to medium term. However we can do more now as highlighted below.

#### **3.1 Initial response**

- Compile a high level action plan to focus actions and accountability – **Appendix 6**
- Desk study to review all known cases – age, stage in the process, ascertain previous repairs, property layout, archetype, heating system etc.
- Use this and the cloned stock condition data to plan the strategic approach to remediation.

#### **3.2 Increased agile response and on-site presence**

- Change process to introduce a physical survey of all properties upon receipt of damp / mould report as standard.

- Visit to include a thorough assessment of air quality, humidity, lifestyle, presence of loft insulation, function of humidistat extraction fans and trickle vents etc. Determine if the cause is a building defect or excess condensation. If a defect instruct a repair to be completed in a timely manner.
- Capture reports from visiting officers, repairs staff, tenancy audits etc.

### 3.3 Condensation Response

- Specify mould wash to be completed by DBC contractors using appropriate chemicals such as; Bacdet and Halophen to affected areas.
- Carry out thermal calculations to determine structural gradient and dew point (factors that provide an indication of condensation forming) of affected areas and the property in general.
- Consider if any thermal improvements are possible or practical, if so determine revised structural gradient readings to specify remedial works.
- Install data loggers to record heating, humidity levels, readings and /trends.
- Resident interaction and education – spending time with residents discussing measures to be undertaken by them are vital to achieving long term positive results.
- Free issue a simple to read hygrometer to all properties with damp and mould to allow tenants to self-help by regulating humidity and room temperature.

It is known how mould forms and it can be predicted when it is likely to form, but diagnosis and treatment are difficult due to the many factors that influence mould growth. Interaction with the resident is key to successful treatment, thermal and ventilation improvements alone will not suffice.

## 4. Recommendations

To continue improving the DBC response to reported cases of damp and or mould the following recommendations are proposed;

- Create a specialist team including a lead surveyor with enhanced knowledge of damp and mould, mirroring the structure for regulatory compliance.
- Continuation of Stock condition survey to identify and rank HHSRS damp and mould issues. This process may also highlight archetypes that may need more radical solutions such as remodeling/disposal etc.
- Plan to tackle and resolve the situation promptly.
- Tenant education through website, leaflets, tenants newsletters, estate days,
- Officer and contractor training.
- Contractor toolbox talks for them to identify and report damp and mould issues back to DBC.
- Team to track all cases of damp and mould with follow-up physical inspections and review of those identified as high risk.
- Self Help - Specifically for properties with small mould patches, supply kits containing biocide fungal wash down solutions, gloves, goggles and a container along with an additional inhibitor that can be added to paint/grout. Combined with education and instruction on how to use correctly.

## 5. Research Project

In conjunction with the University of Bedfordshire (UoB), DBC has submitted a proposal for funding to the University College London (UCL) to carry out research into 'Condensation in Social Housing, Engagement and Net Zero'. The aim is to tackle condensation in social housing by engaging with tenants to improve their understanding of perspectives, behaviours, motivations and needs. The project will enhance knowledge sharing across social housing tenants and local authority professionals to develop collective approaches to reduced condensation in housing.

The team will specify a 'toolkit' including the development of an App to support local authority staff in accurately diagnosing the causes of condensation for different property types and constraints. Knowledge sharing and education will cross multiple stakeholders including tenants, surveyors, local authority technical staff, managers and chief executives. Ultimately, knowledge exchange around factors contributing to condensation (insulation, heating and ventilation) will also support zero carbon targets.

The emphasis will be on enabling tenants to discuss attitudes and lifestyle factors that can affect the successful avoidance and eradication of excess condensation in their homes. Understanding perceptions, concerns and issues is a main element of the research. (**Appendix 7** - proposal).

Targets (research project):-

- 1) Short term - educating council staff and providing support/tools.
- 2) Medium/longer term – toolkit specification.
- 3) Short/medium/longer term - working collaboratively with tenants (sharing knowledge with them. establishing a better understanding of their perceptions/behaviours/perspectives) to better inform council initiatives around condensation/mould.
- 4) Medium/longer term - work collaboratively with other regional local authorities around condensation/mould action.

## **6. Consultation**

It is important to demonstrate that DBC are a 'Listening' organisation and that our tenants are assured their voices are heard and the DBC response is tailored to their needs. Once the resource is in place to provide a swift and consistent approach to reports of damp and mould it is proposed that a comprehensive promotion of the service will be undertaken.

This approach will include, revised literature and infographics, sign posting for those able to help themselves, organisational wide awareness and collaboration and tenant inclusion to review, improve and shape the services we provide.

## **7. Financial and value for money implications:**

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have approved an increase in surveying capacity of 2 – for the next 6 months. Indicative market trends of the appropriate staff appointed via an agency are £45 - £50 per hour, leading to a staffing cost pressure over the period of circa £86,400 - £96,000.

DBC will also purchase specialist equipment for accurate diagnosis, i.e. damp meters, air monitors, thermo-detection thermometers, data loggers, thermal imaging cameras, ladders for investigating officers at an estimated cost of £5,000.

The repairs cost to address the known cases and those yet to be reported is estimated to be in the region of £100,000. Whilst OPSL may have some capacity to respond it is highly likely that additional capacity will need to be established from a highly competitive market.

The longer term strategic consideration will be to form a bespoke team focused on the cradle to grave process for all damp related issues, including resident reporting, in house referral and stock survey escalation. The team would consist of;

- 2 x additional surveyors with a comprehensive condensation/damp training/knowledge
- 2 x operatives as a minimum normal operating level but with additional resources during the winter months. The same team would undertake proactive preventative work in summer.

**7 Legal Implications**

The failure to protect the health and wellbeing of our tenants carry a number of legal implications along with significant reputational risk.

**8 Risk implications:**

Key risks are considered in **Table 1**.

**Table 1**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Evidenced by</b>
RSH Intervention	Supply RSH requested information and supporting information by due date.  Continued oversight and Strategic intent to improve approach	Online submission completed and additional information uploaded on LADR portal.  SLT and Corporate reporting including measured metrics such as case numbers and case outcomes
Financial	Regular reporting of associated financial implications  Awareness of commercial environment and escalating costs and agile response  Comprehensive business planning to include funding sources.	Monthly management accounts and performance reports  Articulation of reactive action plan to address identified issues.  Business cases
Reputational	Promote and demonstrate a listening response to residents.  Deal with complaints quickly and comprehensively.	Do what needs to be done in a timely manner to address concerns  Respond to complaints within policy timelines and ensure all elements of the complaint are addressed.

**9 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

An impact assessment will be carried out to inform the longer term strategy to address the condition of the property portfolio and the life chances of our residents.

**10 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

There are no direct sustainability issues arising from this report however, a fabric first approach to improving the thermal performance of a property to reduce damp and mould, will add additional financial pressures whilst also contributing towards the Council’s pledge to meet government targets of net zero housing stock by 2050.

**11 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)**

Addressing damp and mould issues places the safety of our tenants and leaseholders at the centre of asset related decision making. There is a need to enhance understanding, competence and oversight to ensure continued compliance with legislation such as but not limited to Decent Homes standard, HHSRS etc.

**12. Conclusions**

Like many social housing providers DBC are reliant on tenants reporting issues of damp and mould. To date these reports have been treated with some specialty via the submission of photographs and associated triage approach, however there is a need to develop a more bespoke and comprehensive approach.

Through SLT there is a longer term commitment to the provision of a comprehensive, proactive service with explicit and continued oversight that includes a structured review of cases identified as high risk. Collaboration across all departments will be key for early identification and intervention leading to the prevention of serious cases.

In addition the strategic approach to asset management via the now forming Asset Management Strategy and associated categorisation of the housing stock, will provide granular intelligence/data to assist when making key investment decisions.



## Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**  
*Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing &  
Communities*  
*Minister for Intergovernmental Relations*

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and  
Communities**  
4th Floor, Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

19 November 2022

To: All providers of social housing

### **ENSURING QUALITY IN SOCIAL HOUSING**

The tragic case of Awaab Ishak, who died at two years old as a direct result of mould in his family home, has rightly shocked people across the country. This is an appalling case of the utmost gravity, and it is abhorrent that anyone should have to live in such conditions in Britain today.

As I said in Parliament this week: every single person in this country, irrespective of where they are from, what they do, or how much money they earn, deserves to live in a home that is decent, safe and secure. I expect those who hold the high responsibility of managing people's homes to ensure that no family experiences such a tragedy again.

Together, we must raise the bar dramatically on the quality of social housing and empower tenants so that their voices are truly heard. I want to be clear about what this must mean in relation to damp and mould, as I have been made aware of many cases where this has gone unaddressed for far too long and am concerned that they are not treated with sufficient seriousness.

#### **Treating damp and mould seriously**

The coroner's report into Awaab's death is a litany of failure. As housing providers, I expect you to read it in full and absorb its lessons. All social homes must meet the Decent Homes Standard; you must be aware of any that do not and undertake rapid remedial works. However, in light of this case I expect you to go further than the letter of the Standard and have particular regard to damp and mould.<sup>1</sup> Damp and mould are not 'lifestyle issues' as the Housing Ombudsman Service underscored last year. Where people complain about damp and mould, you must listen; where you find them, you must take prompt action. To keep tenants safe, you must not hide behind legal process.

It is vital as we go into a challenging winter that you know the extent of damp and mould issues in your stock and that these are being addressed. To that end, I expect you to be undertaking assessments of:

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically, as well as category 1 damp and mould hazards, to have regard to and take action on high scoring (bands D and E) category 2 damp and mould hazards, as outlined in the relevant guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-enforcement-guidance-housing-conditions>

- damp and mould issues affecting your properties, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards;
- the action you have identified that may need to be taken in relation to damp and mould issues affecting your properties.

The Regulator of Social Housing will be writing to you imminently on this and you should respond promptly. You should also self-refer to the Regulator of Social Housing should you become aware through those assessments, or other means, that you may be in breach of its regulatory standards.

### **Taking responsibility**

I am more determined than ever to deliver our drastic reforms to the housing sector, protecting the rights of tenants and ensuring social landlords do not put people's lives and livelihoods at risk. Our Social Housing Regulation Bill will enable a rigorous new regime that holds all landlords to account for the decency of their homes and the service they provide. The Regulator of Social Housing will proactively inspect landlords – and will have the power to issue unlimited fines. It will be able to intervene in those cases where tenants' lives are being put at risk because landlords are dragging their feet in actioning repairs. And in the very worst cases, it will have the power to instruct that properties are brought under new management.

We are bringing in these changes to rebalance the relationship between residents and landlords by enhancing the current system of regulation and redress, but there is already a well-recognised minimum quality standard, the Decent Homes Standard, and clear guidance from the Housing Ombudsman Service on how complaints should be handled. Landlords must ensure their homes meet this Standard and handle complaints in line with the Ombudsman's guidance.

It is vital that we learn from the mistakes that led to the tragic death of Awaab, and I look forward to working collaboratively with you to improve standards. I firmly believe in the right of everyone to feel safe in the place where they and their loved ones sleep at night. I hope you will join me in doubling down on our efforts to provide the high-quality social housing this country deserves.

Yours,



**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**  
**Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities**  
**Minister for Intergovernmental Relations**

Date: 28 November 2022  
Ref: Private Sector Housing Team, Strategic  
Housing  
Contact: Natasha Beresford  
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Dear Mr Gove,

## HOUSING STANDARDS IN RENTED PROPERTIES IN ENGLAND

Thank you for your letter dated 19 November 2022 in regards to the above. I was very saddened to learn of the tragic death of Awaab Ishak.

The contents of the letter has been acknowledged and the directions will be addressed as a matter of priority to ensure a full response is provided by 27 January 2023. I would like to offer my assurance that the Private Sector Housing Team are taking all steps as necessary to prioritise and deal appropriately with damp and mould throughout the borough's private sector.

The safety of residents in the Dacorum borough is paramount, all staff members within the Private Sector Housing Team have been informed of the requirements that have been communicated to the Council. Since your communication an internal team briefing has taken place and the team are liaising across the organisation to ensure a cohesive, inclusive and consistent stance is taken within the private sector.

The team will be considering and implementing/continuing the following approaches to ensure the prioritisation of damp and mould cases:

1. A robust approach to promote legislative requirements and responsibilities of landlords as well as outlining and promoting their powers of intervention and resolution to tenants. Comprehensive, effective and unambiguous advice will also be provided to residents, landlords and property owners. We will review our communication methods and consider all accessible platforms including website, social media, newsletters, email footers.

#### Data Protection Statement

Dacorum Borough Council may share your information: within the council, with law enforcement agencies, councils and community organisations. This is done to detect/prevent crime, to enable delivery of your services and/or meet our legal obligations. Full details of how we process, use and store your information can be found at [www.dacorum.gov.uk/opedata](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/opedata)



2. A full review of the council's website and advice pages in regards to damp, mould and condensation to ensure up to date, effective and informative advice is accessible for both landlords and tenants as well as details as to how to make a complaint.
3. A review of current staff skills with upskill training to enhance expertise and a procedure in place to ensure all future officers within the team undergo damp/mould/condensation specific training to ensure skills to identify, advise and enforce resolution.
4. A full review of the team's procedures and processes in dealing with damp and mould cases. To ensure a sufficient and timely investigation of every complaint received is carried out. These procedures will outline a local requirement to consider it a duty to take enforcement action where necessary and/or appropriate where Damp and Mould HHSRS assessment outcomes are bands D and E (CAT 2).
5. The team will continue to utilise the skills of Surveyor's within our Property Team in complex cases for both defect/deficiency identification and assistance with outlining works as required to effectively reduce or remove the damp and mould hazard.
6. The team will source suitable heat and humidity data loggers and review all other options to support intelligence gathering to aide investigations into damp and mould, particularly those that are attributed to condensation.
7. In addition to the above, the council will continue to provide advice to those housed within Registered Provider properties - including damp and mould investigation and enforcement where necessary, but also the complaint and escalation procedures where repair requests have been dealt with unsatisfactorily.
8. Review of existing resources to determine if sufficient capacity to ensure a robust response to management of activity in the private sector.

Whilst I foresee no direct issues in relation to providing the response, there are some factors that will need to be considered:

Cost of Living Crisis – the impact of rising costs on households will have a direct influence on increased fuel poverty and decreased heating usage which can exasperate issues with damp and mould, particularly those associated with condensation. Whilst we are yet to see how this will correlate with the number of damp and mould cases we are expecting an increase in those approaching our service.

Prevalence of Category 1 and Category 2 hazards – the Council's Enforcement Policy includes an informal approach to remedying disrepair and deficiencies (both Category 1 and Category 2) in the private sector in the first instance unless the hazard presents an imminent risk or the landlord is known to be non-compliant, fails to act in a timely matter or where remedial works are determined to be

unsatisfactory. This has led to the majority of damp and mould cases to be resolved informally and without the need for HHSRS assessments.

I hope the above gives a clear outline of the prioritisation of damp and mould complaints within our private sector portfolio, in addition to providing an overview as to our approach ahead of the full submission on 27 January 2023.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Hamilton', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**Claire Hamilton**  
**Chief Executive**



22 November 2022

Dear Chief Executive

## Assurance on addressing risks relating to damp and mould in tenants' homes

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

Damp and mould are potential hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System; failing to address them could lead to failure of the Decent Homes Standard and our Home Standard. All providers should have systems in place to ensure that their homes are free from hazardous levels of damp and mould, and to identify and deal with cases promptly and effectively.

As we move into winter, cases of damp and mould are likely to increase. We are therefore seeking assurance from all providers that they have a clear understanding and strong grip on damp and mould issues in their homes and are addressing risks to tenants' and residents' health. Where we consider providers are not meeting the standards, including the Decent Homes Standard, we will take appropriate action.

To inform this work, please provide:

- Firstly, your approach to assessing the extent of damp and mould issues affecting your properties, including how you assess the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards
- Secondly, and in the context of that approach, your most recent assessment of the extent of damp and mould hazards in your homes, including the prevalence of category 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards
- Thirdly, given those findings, the action you are taking to remedy any issues and hazards, and ensure that your homes meet the Decent Homes Standard
- Lastly, tell us how you ensure that individual damp and mould cases are identified and dealt with promptly and effectively when raised by tenants and residents

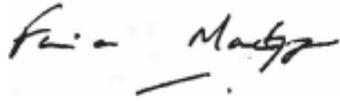
Explanations should be supported with recent data. If data are not available, this should be noted.



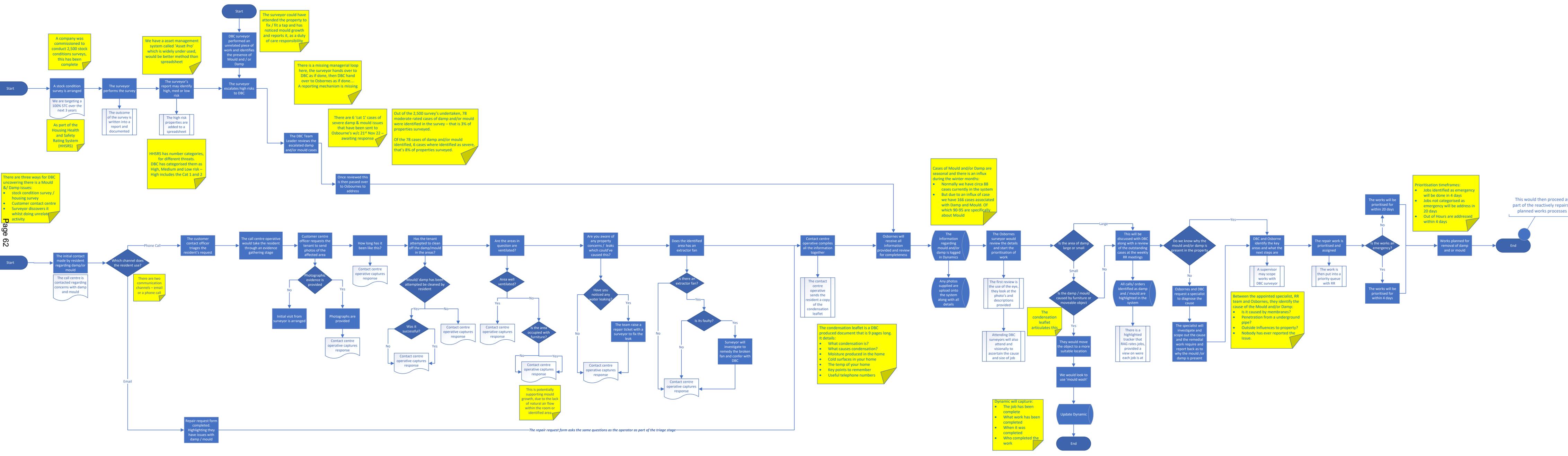
Submission of this information should be made through this MSForms survey <https://forms.office.com/r/ravGxEizWR> by 19 December 2022. We will review all the information provided and may request further information if necessary. Should you identify that your homes do not meet the relevant standards, you should self-refer immediately.

I look forward to receiving your data and working with you to improve conditions for tenants and residents – ensuring they are treated equitably and with respect, there are no barriers to reporting problems, and that their concerns are appropriately addressed.

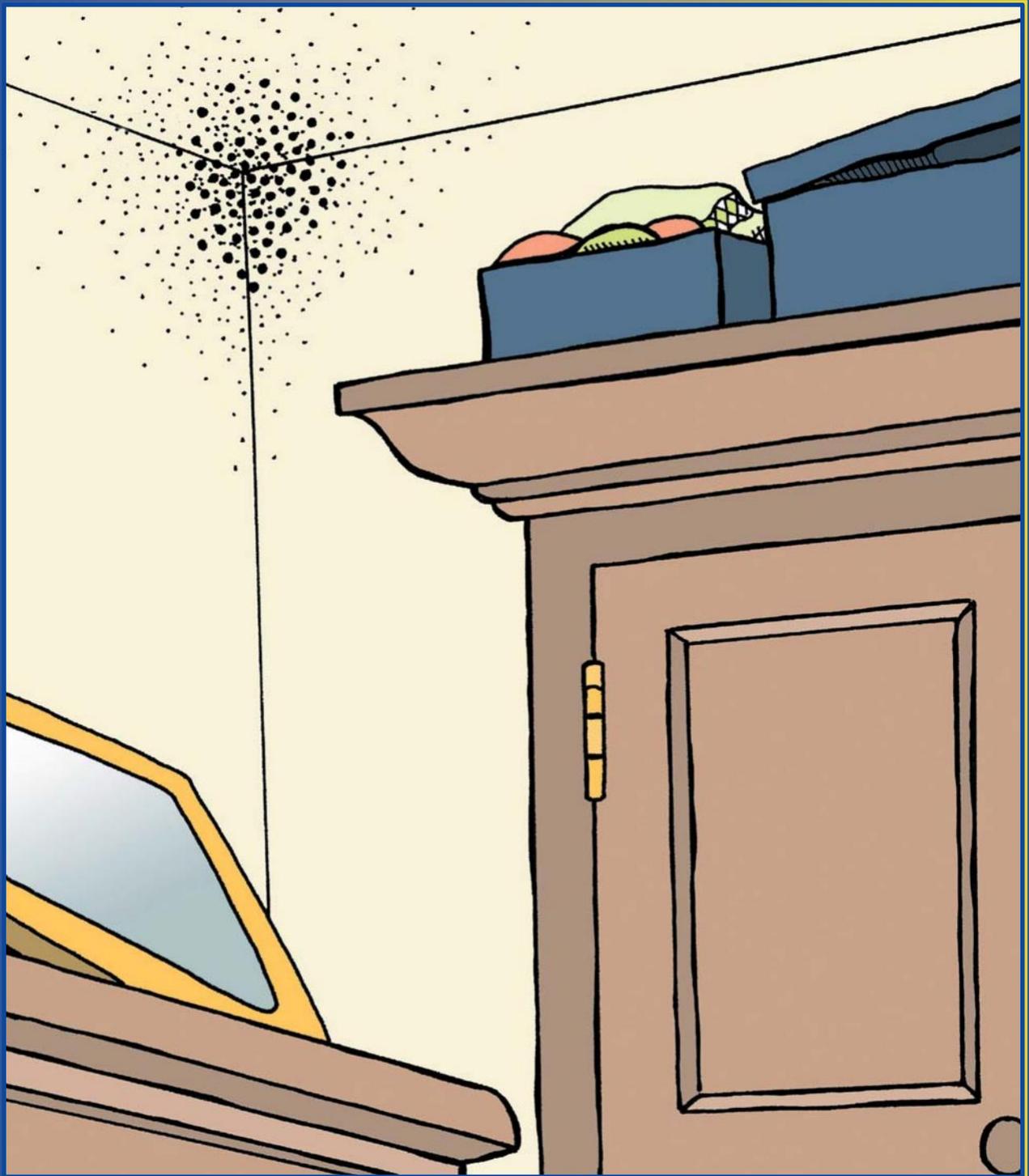
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fiona MacGregor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Fiona MacGregor  
Chief Executive



# CONTROLLING CONDENSATION AND MOULD



# CONTENTS

	(SECTION)
<b>What is condensation?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What causes condensation?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Moisture produced in the home</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Ventilation of the home</b>	<b>4</b>
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# 1 WHAT IS CONDENSATION?

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If air gets cold, it cannot hold all the moisture produced by everyday activities and some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeable on windows on a cold morning. This is condensation. It can also be seen on mirrors when you have a bath or shower, and on cold surfaces such as tiles or cold walls.

Condensation occurs in cold weather, even when the weather is dry. It doesn't leave a 'tidemark' round its edges on walls. If there is a 'tidemark', this dampness might have another cause, such as water leaking into your home from a plumbing fault, loose roof tiles or rising damp.

Look for condensation in your home. It can appear on or near windows, in corners and, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Condensation forms on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air.

## Problems that can be caused by excessive condensation

Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden window frames. Also, damp humid conditions provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply. The presence of mould and dust mites can make existing respiratory conditions such as asthma and bronchitis worse.

## First steps against condensation

You will need to take proper steps to deal with condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple things you should do straight away.

Dry your windows and windowsills every morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet. Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.

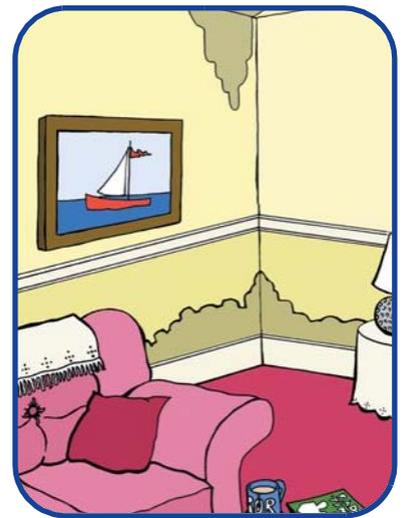
## First steps against mould growth

First treat the mould already in your home, then deal with the basic problem of condensation to stop mould reappearing.

To kill and remove mould, wipe down or spray walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 'approval number', and ensure that you follow the instructions for its safe use. These fungicidal washes are often available at local supermarkets. Dry-clean mildewed clothes, and shampoo carpets. **Do not** try to remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner.

After treatment, redecorate using good-quality fungicidal paint and a fungicidal resistant wall paper paste to help prevent mould recurring. The effect of fungicidal or anti-condensation paint is destroyed if covered with ordinary paint or wallpaper.

**But remember: the only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of the dampness**



## 2 WHAT CAUSES CONDENSATION?

There are four main factors that cause condensation:-

- TOO MUCH MOISTURE BEING PRODUCED IN YOUR HOME
- NOT ENOUGH VENTILATION
- COLD SURFACES
- THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR HOME

You need to look at all of these factors to cure a condensation problem.

## 3 TOO MUCH MOISTURE BEING PRODUCED IN YOUR HOME

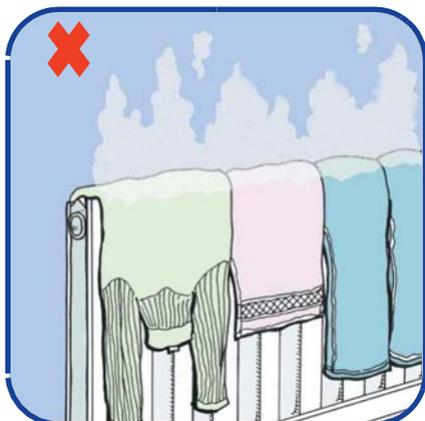
Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture. One person asleep adds ½ pint of water to the air overnight and at twice that rate when active during the day.

To give you some idea as to how much extra water this could be in a day, here are some illustrations:-



### What can you do

Hang your washing outside to dry if at all possible, or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on. Don't be tempted to put it on radiators or in front of a radiant heater.





If you use a tumble drier, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is of the new condensing type.

Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.

When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90% which leads to condensation.



Try to avoid use of bottled gas heaters; they produce about 8 pints of moisture from an average-sized gas cylinder.

(Tenancy Agreements may not allow the use of this type of heater).

Don't use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas. (You might notice your windows misting over).



## 4 VENTILATION OF THE HOME

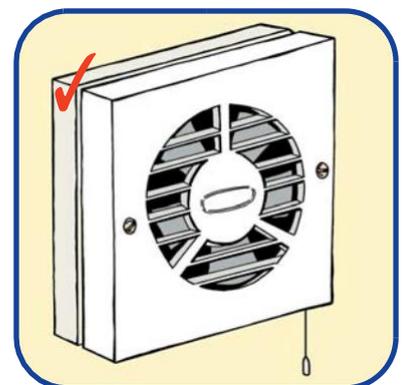
Ventilation can help to reduce condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside

Help to reduce condensation that has built up overnight by opening to the first notch a small window downstairs and a small window upstairs. (They should be on opposite sides of the house, or diagonally opposite if you live in a flat). At the same time, open the interior room doors, this will allow drier air to circulate throughout your home. This should be carried out for 30 minutes each day.



**Note: Make sure that accessible windows will not cause a security problem - remember to close windows when you go out.**

Ventilate your kitchen when cooking, washing up or washing by hand. Use your cooker extractor hood or extractor fan or open a window.





Keep your kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house.

Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small window. Use an extractor fan if possible.

Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night, or use trickle ventilators if fitted. (But again, remember your security).



Reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, by allowing air to circulate round them:

Remove “false” wardrobe backs or drill breather holes in them

Place furniture on blocks to allow air to circulate underneath.

Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls, and where possible place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.

Pull shelves away from the backs of wardrobes and cupboards

Never overfill wardrobes and cupboards as it restricts air circulation.



## 5 COLD SURFACES IN YOUR HOME

Condensation forms more easily on cold surfaces in the home, for example walls and ceilings. In many cases, those surfaces can be made warmer by improving the insulation and draughtproofing.

Insulation and draughtproofing will also help keep the whole house warmer and will cut your fuel bills. When the whole house is warmer, condensation becomes less likely.

Loft and wall insulation are the most effective forms of insulation.

If you install any draught proofing, observe the following guidance.

Do not draughtproof rooms with a condensation problem, or where there is a heater or cooker that burns gas or solid fuel.

Do not block permanent ventilators or airbricks installed for heating or heating appliances.

Do not draughtproof bathroom or kitchen windows.



## 6 THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR HOME

Warm air holds more moisture than cooler air which is more likely to deposit droplets of condensation round your home. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. It is better to have a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house. Keeping the heating on at low all day in cold weather will help to control condensation.

If you have a heating system such as underfloor electric but are afraid to use it because you've been told it is expensive to run, please contact the Energy Saving Trust for an advice guide on how to control your system on **0300 123 1234**. You might find it costs less to run than you expect or have experienced in the past.

If you don't have heating in every room, you could keep the doors of unheated rooms open to allow some heat into them.

To add extra heat to rooms without any form of heating, it is better to use electric heaters, for example oil-filled radiators or panel heaters, on a low setting. Don't use portable bottled gas heaters in homes suffering with condensation as they give out a lot of moisture whilst in use. Contrary to popular belief, it is actually cheaper to heat a room with on-peak electricity than by bottled gas heaters.

If you have a freezer, it is a good idea to put it in a space suffering from condensation, as the heat from the motor should help to keep condensation at bay.

Be careful not to "over-ventilate" your home when it is cold, it causes the temperature to drop and makes condensation more likely. It will also increase your heating costs.



If you have a chronic medical condition and require extra warmth, you might wish to contact your landlord about the procedure for obtaining a medical referral for heating improvement.

## 7 TO CONTROL CONDENSATION REMEMBER THE KEY POINTS

### REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF MOISTURE YOU PRODUCE

SEE ACTIONS IN SECTION 3

### IMPROVE THE VENTILATION

SEE ACTIONS IN SECTION 4

### REDUCE THE NUMBER OF COLD SURFACES IN YOUR HOME

SEE ACTIONS IN SECTION 5

### MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE TEMPERATURE

SEE ACTIONS IN SECTION 6

## USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Energy Saving Trust	<b>0300 123 1234</b>
Gas (leaks) National Grid	<b>0800 111 999</b>
UK Power Networks	<b>105</b> or <b>0800 316 3105</b>
Winter Fuel Payments	<b>0345 915 1515</b>
Age UK Dacorum	<b>01442 259 049</b>
Housing Repairs Line (Dacorum Borough Council Tenants & Leaseholders)	<b>0800 018 6050</b>
Herts Interpreting and Translation Service	<b>01442 867 212</b>

**THIS BOOKLET CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON HOW TO REDUCE PROBLEMS IN YOUR HOME CAUSED BY CONDENSATION AND MOULD.**

Please ring the Herts Interpreting and Translation Service on **01442 867 212** if you would like someone to translate it for you.

**Remember:** If you are a Dacorum Borough Council Tenant or Leaseholder and have a condensation problem please contact Housing Repairs on **0800 018 6050** or visit **[www.dacorum.gov.uk/housing](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/housing)**

**Damp and Mould Action Plan: January 2023**

Ref	Action	Overview / Outcome	Owner	Target Date	Update	Rag Status
D&M001	Review and amend current process	To update current processes to ensure that any reports of damp and mould are managed effectively and there is a reporting mechanism in place. Also agreed how and when processes should be updated further in line with this action plan.	IK	13/1/23	Workshop taking place on 9/1/23 to review current working practices. This will result in further actions being identified and added to this plan	
D&M002	Train key staff on the new process	Ensure that key staff and stakeholders are aware of the new processes and agreed to ensure these are being followed	IK	20/1/23	Training sessions and attendees to be finalised week commencing 3/1/23. Training also to be included in induction of new staff/surveyors including relevant staff outside of the Property service.	
D&M003	Recruit 2 x damp and mould surveyors	Undertake the recruitment of 2 new specialist surveyors to ensure reports of damp and mould are assessed and prioritised quickly and effectively and root causes are identified	SC	27/1/23	Agencies will be briefed week commencing 3/1/23	
D&M004	Review current tools and equipment available to surveyors	To ensure that our surveyors have the correct equipment to support in the diagnosis of issues and root causes	SC	27/1/23	Review to take place week to enable any equipment to be ordered and in place for both existing and new inspectors starting	

D&M005	Improved reporting of damp and mould works	Review current coding structure within the Housing Repairs system when raising damp and mould works to ensure we are able to report on the number of jobs raised	IK	27/1/23	Discussions taking place with Osborne on what reports are required and the codes needed to ensure the correct management information is available	
D&M006	Earlier identification of damp and mould issues	Review how issues can be identified and reported earlier, including from Housing management visits, repair appointments etc.	IK	10/2/23	Discussions to be arranged with key stakeholders to identify where and how concerns can be reported. Tool box talks to be introduced ASAP	
D&M007	Review Osborne current supply chain partners	Ensure that Osborne has supply chain partners in place to accommodate any works effectively and in agreed timescales. Commercial/ complaint agreements may also need to be put in place for directly appointed resource if required.	IK	27/1/23	Meetings to be set up with Osborne to discuss for week commencing 3/1/23	
D&M008	Long term strategy	Develop a longer term strategy and identify resource requirements for managing damp and mould cases effectively	MP	28/2/23	Meetings and discussions to be scheduled to enable longer term strategy to be in place by the new financial year. This will result in this action plan being reviewed and developed further.	
D&M009	Resident awareness	Identify mechanisms to raise resident awareness on damp, mould and condensation issues and to educate residents on how they can support/help themselves in the management of damp and mould.	IK	28/2/23	Arrange discussions with various stakeholders to determine how we can engage with residents. This will support and be included in the longer term strategy,	



## **Net Zero Innovation Programme: Project Plan (2022/23)**

This form is an overview of the project which you are undertaking and will be appended to the grant agreement. The grant will be given directly to the council. Please work on the form with your partner and submit it using the online form by November 25th 2022 before 5pm. If you have any queries, please contact [climate@local.gov.uk](mailto:climate@local.gov.uk) or [freya.roberts@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:freya.roberts@ucl.ac.uk)

### **Name of partnership**

Condensation in Housing: Systems, Engagement and Net Zero.

### **Names of the Council and University in your partnership**

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC), University of Bedfordshire (UoB).

### **Please outline what your project is setting out to achieve (max 100 words)**

This project will tackle condensation in social housing by engaging with tenants to improve understanding of perspectives, behaviours, motivations and needs. The project will enhance knowledge sharing across social housing tenants and local authority professionals to develop collective approaches to reduced condensation in housing.

The team will specify a 'toolkit' to support local authority staff in eradicating condensation for different property types and constraints. Knowledge sharing and education will cross multiple stakeholders including tenants, surveyors, local authority technical staff, managers and chief executives.

Ultimately, knowledge exchange around factors contributing to condensation (insulation, heating and ventilation), will support zero carbon targets.

### **Please outline how you plan to undertake the project (max 300 words)**

The aim is to improve understanding of direct stakeholders' views and perceptions around condensation and allow this to guide the project outputs. The cultural and social-economic factors impacting on condensation issues across key stakeholders needs to be better understood to develop collaborative, co-created approaches to condensation action.

The research will focus on stakeholder participation in small localised research events based at local community centres.

The emphasis will be on enabling tenants to discuss attitudes and lifestyle factors that may affect successful avoidance and eradication of excess condensation in their homes. Understanding perceptions, concerns and issues is a main element of the research.

A key aim is to develop guidance and advice based on research evidence and address individual circumstances. This will be achieved by enabling tenants to better inform local authorities.

Training and knowledge exchange will be a multi-directional process involving tenants, local authorities and the academic team. Although it is known how and why condensation forms, the key element is how to support people in challenging economic circumstances to improve ventilation, and/or change deep-rooted perceptions and behaviours.

The research will culminate in a larger-scale research dissemination and knowledge-sharing event. The project team will involve other regional local authorities, housing bodies, tenants, housing officers and maintenance personnel to enhance the development of balanced workable solutions. The academic team will provide support in developing the evidence to inform the outputs and guidance provided for key/vulnerable stakeholders in particular.

There will be three key elements to the project:

1. Local community engagement (social housing tenants) to exchange knowledge and enhance understanding of the key issues.
2. Knowledge sharing and training for local authority professionals.
3. Condensation toolkit (specification) to support local authorities in assessment of action to address condensation issues (insulation, heating and ventilation), minimise health risks and support Net Zero targets.

### **Please outline the outcomes and outputs of your project**

- 2-3 targeted, accessible and inclusive research events at local community centres to facilitate discussions with tenants and leaseholders and develop the required understanding of the status, restrictions and expectations of tenants. This will also be an opportunity for local authority surveyors to provide some initial guidance for tenants on condensation issues.
- Formulate a realistic evidence and solution-based approach to addressing condensation, based on the data gathered from the research events.
- Apply scientific rigour to the project and formulate the basis (specification) for an accessible and useable toolkit to help guide different stakeholders in addressing condensation issues.
- A dissemination/knowledge-sharing event involving multiple stakeholder types. This will include discussions, information sharing and collaboration with other regional local authorities, housing bodies, tenants/leaseholders, academics, contractors and associated departments within council housing services.

### **How will you budget your project? (Please break down how you will spend up to £12,000)**

- £4500
  - 2-3 targeted research/knowledge-sharing events with tenants/local authority professionals, and a dissemination event involving wider group of project stakeholders (including food and refreshments).
- £4800
  - 7 days of academic consultancy for the preparation/facilitation of the research/knowledge-sharing events, and development of the toolkit specification.
- £500
  - Transportation costs for research events (taxis, buses etc.).
- £200
  - Printing and stationary for research events.
- £2000

- Miscellaneous (potentially including British Sign Language interpreter, language access/translator and streaming service for online access and participation).

**Please identify the key stakeholders involved in your project**

Robert Smith (DBC), Annie Smith (DBC), James Bishop (UOB), David Jazani (UOB), Tenants/Leaseholders (DBC), Senior Management (DBC).

**Please outline the timeline and key milestones of your project (between January-June 2023)**

- January 2023 – Planning and mobilisation
- February/March 2023 – Targeted research events
- April/May 2023– Academic research and data review. Review with stakeholders.
- May 2023 – Condensation guidance/toolkit specification development/production.
- June 2023 – Information exchange/stakeholder dissemination event
- July 2023 – Project report

**Please include your main project risks and how these will be mitigated**

Management

- Weekly/bi-weekly meetings with the project team to assess and amend schedules, tasks and targets.
- Production of a clear and detailed plan with a programme for delivery of each stage of the project, to include time contingency and prevent scope creep.
- A clear process of interaction and communication with key stakeholders (tenants) will be developed.
- Early experience of tenant consultations will be reviewed and the engagement process will be adapted, if required.
- Safeguarding awareness – the team will consult with and seek guidance on policies from DBC (and the University).
- GDPR guidance and policies from DBC (and the University) will be adhered to.
- The team will consider key political/policy focus within local authorities, and the current issues and priorities that may influence the project by working closely with the relevant DBC teams and departments (with initiatives that are closely aligned to the scope of this project).
- Financial management – the team will regularly review the budget/project plan, based on the delivery of the research/knowledge-sharing events in particular.

External

- Covid19 and associated impacts – the team will minimise risk by adhering to DBC and University policy/guidance around engagement of project participants. The team has the option of running virtual events, should face-to-face events prove to be problematic due to any unforeseen restrictions due to Covid-19.
- Management of key stakeholder expectations – the team will look to engage with key stakeholders early-on in the project, and in particular senior DBC management and social housing tenants, to communicate the scope of the project, anticipated coverage and engagement, and collaboration in the co-creation of outputs.

- Affordability (of engagement) – the project team will utilise the budget to cover transport costs to/from project events if required. Food and refreshments will be provided at the research events.

### Quality/Technical

- Access to tenant data and archetypes of properties – the team will work with the relevant DBC teams/departments to access this data in support of the project. However, the project is not limited to this data (with a key focus being on tenant engagement), should the team experience any issues with data access.
- Contractor competence – DBC is aware of issues in the implementation of remedial works to tackle condensation, implemented by external contractors. Although potentially beyond the scope of this project, the project team will consider engagement with contractors, with a view to continuing to work with them after the completion of the project.

### Organisational

- Lack of tenant participation – the project team will work with existing local authority forums/groups, DBC Housing Engagement Team and the DBC Communications Team (social media and marketing), to enhance awareness of the project (and the opportunity to learn more about action in reducing condensation issues). The team will also collaborate with and join existing DBC community events and initiatives with links to the project. The team will also work with and consult with the DBC EDI Officer.

### **How will you evaluate your project? (Include criteria if applicable)**

- Stakeholder numbers and engagement data.
- Qualitative data obtained from targeted research/knowledge-sharing events to inform the approaches and method for the toolkit specification (and guidance on condensation action).
- Workshop feedback (participant surveys) to evaluate the methodology/approach to the delivery of the events, and facilitation of discussions/knowledge-exchange.
- Regular review and monitoring meetings with the project team and key stakeholders
- Production of an evidence-based condensation-action toolkit specification.
- Collection of feedback data (surveys) 6-12 months after the completion of the project to evaluate:
  - The experiences of local authority staff in tackling condensation issues, following their involvement in the NZIP project (events) and potential changes in approaches/behaviours.
  - The experiences of social housing tenants in minimising condensation issues in their homes, following their involvement in the NZIP project (events) and potential changes in approaches/behaviours.

### **How will you ensure key elements of the project (e.g. tools, outputs, learnings) are scalable beyond your local area?**

The project team will engage with key stakeholders from other regional local authorities who have specific roles/interests linked to the project (outcomes), during the delivery of the project.

This will help initiate partnerships and collaborative relationships with other local authorities around condensation (and the associated links to Net Zero), and start to evaluate the potential adoption of the project findings and outputs on a wider-scale.

**Housing and Community OSC**

**Actions arising – 2022**

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Action point</b>	<b>Responsible for action</b>	<b>Date action completed</b>	<b>Update on action point</b>
<u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/014/22</u>	Officer to provide timescale on Herts Cultural Education Partnership for feedback.	A Care	22/06/22	Due to staffing and capacity issues my action has not moved
<u>HC/52/22</u> <u>02/11/2022</u>	Cllr Banks to raise question with officers regarding drop in Healthy Hub referrals and what is being done to encourage growth	Cllr Banks		Hi Kayley  James Doe is picking up the Healthy Hub action point and I have asked him to look at Alex' one too. Kind Regards
<u>HC/062/22</u> <u>06/12/2022</u>	look into how to present percentage of personal spending on council tax.	F Jump		
<u>HC/062/22</u> <u>06/12/2022</u>	Councillor Griffith to as Member Support to send out the link for the 'Support Website'.	Cllr Griffiths		Information was sent out in Members News.

# Agenda Item 10

## Housing and Community OSC: Work Programme 2022-23

**When reminders are sent to officers for the report deadline: can we include Cllr Imarni (Chair) and Cllr Adeleke (Vice-Chair) to the email so they are aware of what items are on the agenda please?**

### OSC Chair meetings.

Next meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2023 6:30pm

Arrange the next one for end of Feb, June, Oct

Meeting Date	Report Deadline	Items	Contact Details	Background information
Wed 11 Jan 2023	Friday 31 Dec 2022			
		<b>Domestic Abuse Policy</b>	Natasha Beresford <a href="mailto:Natasha.beresford@dacorum.gov.uk">Natasha.beresford@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
		Damp and Mould	Mark Pinnell	
		Total Asset management (TAM) Contract – Benchmark and Recommission Update	Mark Pinnell	
		new list of KPIs	James Wilson	
1 Feb 2023		<b>Chairs and Vice Chairs OSC meeting</b>	Booked	
Wed 1 Feb 2023  Joint Budget	Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan	*****JOINT BUDGET*****  *****  NO FURTHER ITEMS TO BE ADDED	JOINT BUDGET	

		Decant Policy	Oliver Jackson, Head of Housing Operations	
		Old Town Hall Refurbishment	<a href="mailto:Tom.dewey@dacorum.gov.uk">Tom.dewey@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Wed 15 March 2023</b>	<b>Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023</b>	<b>Action Points (from previous meeting)</b>		
		Q3 Budget Monitoring Report	Head of Financial Services <a href="mailto:Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk">Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Q3 Performance Report - Housing	Assistant Director - Housing Operations <a href="mailto:jon.maxwell@dacorum.gov.uk">jon.maxwell@dacorum.gov.uk</a> Assistant Director – PropertyMark.pinnell@dacorum.gov.uk Assistant Director Strategic Housing <a href="mailto:Natasha.Beresford@dacorum.gov.uk">Natasha.Beresford@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Q3 Performance Report – People & Communities	Head of Community Safety <a href="mailto:Tom.dewey@dacorum.gov.uk">Tom.dewey@dacorum.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:James.wilson@dacorum.gov.uk">James.wilson@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
		Rent Policy update	Jon Maxwell	
		Supported Housing Review	Jon Maxwell	
		Strategy Housing (New)	Natasha Beresford	

\*\*\*\*\* No Further items to be added to March \*\*\*\*\*

Tenancy Management policy (new)	Housing Operations	Oliver Jackson	N/A	25/5/23	TBC	TBC
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Tenants policy

action point from jan date tbc NB

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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