



HOUSING & COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Report for:	Housing & Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy 2023 - 2026
Date:	8 November 2023
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	None
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	SLT – Senior Leadership Team TLC - Tenant and Leasehold Committee

Report Author / Responsible Officer

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Corporate Priorities	<p>A clean, safe and enjoyable environment</p> <p>Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need</p> <p>Building strong and vibrant communities</p> <p>Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery</p> <p>Climate and ecological emergency</p>
Wards affected	All Borough wards.
Purpose of the report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To present a new draft Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy 2023 - 2026 to committee members.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To support the approval of the Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy 2023 - 2026
Period for post policy/project review:	<p>The overview of damp, condensation and mould is reported to SLT each month as part of the overall compliance reporting structure. It is proposed that an annual report demonstrating adherence to the policy is presented to the committee for noting. If industry advice and guidance is altered the policy may need to be reviewed and amended, if this is the case it is proposed that a report is submitted to committee, to identify the changes made.</p>

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 Following the coroners report into the death of 2 year old Awaab Ishak in December 2020, the government announced plans to make major changes to the law on damp and mould.
- 1.2 The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced in February 2023 that new measures on damp and mould would be introduced. This will be known as 'Awaab's law' due to be introduced through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, with other regulations already planned for the private rented sector.
- 1.3 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act received royal assent on the 20 July 2023. This Act is intended to be the catalyst for a new proactive approach to regulating social housing, ensuring standards are met and taking action against failing landlords.
- 1.4 'Awaab's law' will require landlords to fix reported health hazards within specified timeframes and become an implied term in social housing tenancy agreements. These measures, along with other provisions from the Act, are expected to come into force in 2024.

In summary the Council will need to evidence that we;

- Know where the major cases of damp, condensation and mould are;
- That we have a plan in place to remediate the cause;

- That the works to remediate will be completed within a reasonable timeline
- That we have process in place to review cases to ensure the issue has been resolved;
- That we continue to collect data to inform and improve our approach.

2 Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy 2023 - 2026

2.1 **Appendix 1** is the draft policy. The policy has been written with a joint audience in mind, including our Staff, tenants, residents etc. The document outlines how the Council will deal with instances of damp, condensation and mould in our customers homes whilst also providing additional narrative, relating to the causes and types of damp and mould.

2.2 The policy reflects best practice and current guidance issued from the Government on the 7 September 2023; in summary:

All landlords should:

- Respond sensitively and urgently to identify the severity of any damp and mould and risks to tenants.
- Tackle the underlying issue promptly and act with urgency on concerns around tenant health.
- Ensure tenants are kept informed on steps to address damp and mould.
- Document and photograph the location of the mould.
- Remove mould using qualified professionals where appropriate.
- Identify and tackle the underlying cause(s) including building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation, and condensation – simply removing surface mould does not prevent re-appearance.
- Undertake timely inspection following remedial work to ensure the underlying issue has been addressed, undertaking further investigation and intervention for any re-appearance.

Taking a proactive approach to reduce the risk of damp and mould

All landlords should:

- Have clear processes in place to document, manage and act on reports of damp and mould.
- Understand the condition of their housing stock and proactively undertake the necessary interventions to ventilation, energy efficiency and building deficiencies before damp and mould occurs.
- Understand that some tenants may struggle to heat their homes, making damp and mould more likely to occur, wherein they should consider what support they can provide or signpost tenants to.
- Support tenants to understand what they can do, where appropriate, to reduce damp and mould, but never instead of addressing the underlying cause.
- Build relationships with health and social care and other frontline professionals supporting tenants, to ensure that every opportunity to identify tenants living in homes with damp and mould is utilised, "making every contact count".
- Ensure staff and external contractors are aware of the health risks of damp and mould, the need to address the underlying cause(s) - not just remove visible mould, are aware of any processes for reporting and addressing damp and mould, and are sensitive to tenants' circumstances and vulnerabilities.
- Build relationships with tenants, ensuring they feel encouraged to report damp and mould.

2.3 The policy is the first step to promoting to our residents how we will address issues relating to condensation, damp and mould. We are also developing an easy read 'self help' booklet that will be posted onto the website. The booklet will provide pictorial reference to the types of damp and mould and provide further guidance on what actions can be taken once discovered and what actions will contribute towards prevention of the issues starting.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 The policy has been pulled together to set out how we will respond to reported issues of Damp, Condensation and Mould, once approved the policy will be presented to TLC and communicated out via our website, social media etc.

4 Financial and value for money implications:

- 4.1 The financial impact of damp, condensation and mould is significant and to an extent, unknown due to seasonal variation and demand. In addition to these factors the severity of cases can also vary from working with a customer to educate and support, through to extensive repairs.
- 4.2 The number of surveyors has been increased to cope with the expected seasonal demand of reported issues. In addition to this we are procuring the services of additional contractors to support Osborne Property Services (OPSL) to meet the demand of remedial repairs.
- 4.3 There will be continued scrutiny and oversight of spend in line with existing financial governance procedures.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None arising from this report

6 Risk implications:

- 6.1 None arising from this report

7 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

- 7.1 None

8 Sustainability implications

- 8.1 None

9 Council infrastructure

- 9.1 None

10 Conclusions:

- 10.1 In conclusion the committee is invited to approve the Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy 2023-2026.