

TITLE OF REPORT: Damp & Mould Compliance

REPORT OF: Colin Huntington, Strategic Director, Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities

Purpose of Summary

1. To provide an overview of the Council's current approach towards ensuring homes in Gateshead are compliant with statutory and regulatory requirements relating to damp and mould.

Background

2. Following the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Report on Damp and Mould, a review of Gateshead Council's response to reports of damp and mould was undertaken to ensure compliance with guidance highlighted in the report.

Extent of damp and mould hazards in our housing stock

	Total number of Properties with Damp and Mould Inspection or Works Order Raised	Total number of Properties with Damp and Mould Inspection or Works Order Complete	No. of Mould Wash Downs Raised	No. of Mould Wash Downs Completed
November	345	213	122	27
December	554	465	183	110
January	808	683	261	186
February	1015	931	325	289
March	1275	1210	422	401
April	1418	1389	497	460
May	1618	1546	637	529
June	1810	1636	772	552
July	2140	1733	859	582
August	2295	1839	956	622
September	2475	2096	1063	941

2475 properties have reported damp, with 379 remaining in work. 1063 of these have reported mould with 122 in progress and included in the 379 in work above.

Approach to assessing extent of damp and mould

3. When a customer contacts Repairs to report damp mould or condensation, Construction Services raise an emergency order to wash down the mould and eliminate or reduce the risk to the customer. We aim to carry this out within 3 working days. Simple repairs will be raised on a 20-working day priority order. For those properties where it is difficult to diagnose, or appears to be more complex, a Building Technician/ Building Surveyor will attend depending on the

severity. All planned works orders are placed on a 40 working day priority order. The Council will commission from time to time a specialist damp contractor who provide further reports and facilitate required works.

4. As of March 2023, the Council has been trialling Positive Intake Ventilation (PIV) units and are rolling these out to properties where high levels of mould have been identified and void properties, where practicable, to assist with reducing the mould spore and humidity levels.
5. In instances where the install of the PIV units and other works to remedy building defects are unsuccessful in preventing the reoccurrence of damp mould or condensation in a property, the case is referred to the relevant housing management team for further customer liaison, advice, and support.
6. Depending upon the circumstances, the following actions may be undertaken:
 - Rehousing of the household, especially in cases where the damp mould or condensation is exacerbating existing health conditions. If deemed to be urgent, this may be carried out immediately and involve the use of temporary accommodation whilst a more permanent property is identified.
 - Continued engagement with the advice and support team to reduce impacts of fuel poverty on ability to heat the home sufficiently.
 - Appropriate formal or legal action taken where the reoccurrence of damp mould or condensation is identified as being linked to the customers inappropriate use of the property.
7. Alongside this, an options appraisal of the property may be required at this point if it is identified that the same issues are likely to emerge with any re-let to a new customer due to factors affecting the property.
8. The Council has recently reviewed its damp mould or condensation process and a new process is now in place. This has been introduced to allow for first time diagnosis of the issue and quicker response times for customers. A dedicated team has been set up within Construction Services to ensure efficient and effective responses to damp and mould.
9. Other processes are being reviewed and this is creating links with organisations such as the NHS to provide priority routes for reporting cases that involve vulnerable customers and those with breathing difficulties.

Reporting

10. Current repair systems and its collation of damp mould or condensation data will be used to produce a live report within Power BI software. This will enable borough wide accurate and current reports adding an additional layer to identifying trends as they occur.
11. Data and performance figures will be provided to Members as part of the compliance performance monitoring arrangements including periodic reports to Housing Portfolio, the Housing, Environment & Healthy Communities OSC, and Strategic Housing Board. The Resident Influence Panel will also receive

compliance performance reports, ensuring appropriate tenant and leaseholder scrutiny.

Communication, Advice and Support

12. The Council have reviewed their online literature and guidance around damp mould or condensation and updated documentation is now live.

13. The Council will introduce training workshops for damp mould or condensation to provide guidance and advice to customers. This will be alongside continued support from independent advice and support services such as Two-Way Tenancy Solutions CIC, Green Doctor, CAB; as well as the Council's own Advice and Support Team to offer guidance and financial support for those that are struggling with energy bills.

Recommendation

14. To consider this report and provide any questions and comments.

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