



Name of meeting: Cabinet

Date: 15 August 2023

Title of report: Damp, Mould and Condensation

Purpose of report: To inform Cabinet of the current situation with damp, mould and condensation in Council Homes, actions taken to date to respond and next steps for change and improvement to approach

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards? Decisions having a particularly significant effect on a single ward may also be treated as if they were key decisions.	Not Applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)</u>?	Key Decision – No Private Report/Private Appendix – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes/No or Not Applicable
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance? Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	David Shepherd 21 June 2023 Dean Langton Julie Muscroft 3 July 2023
Cabinet member portfolio	Councillor Cathy Scott, Housing and Democracy

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: No

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

1. Summary

- 1.1. In November and December 2022, a rapid review of the council's approach to damp, mould and condensation was undertaken and a report setting out the issues and an action plan to address these was produced.
- 1.2. The rapid review and action plan identified three main areas for improvement, communication, data and intelligence and process. In January 2023 a task and finish group was formed with officers from across the council. The group has been meeting weekly since January, delivering changes to the short-term approach to damp, mould and condensation with a focus on dealing with and resolving the current caseload. The group have also begun work on the redesign of processes for the longer term.
- 1.3. An update report was presented to SLT, Portfolio Holder and LMT in February and HAB in March. This showed that job volumes for damp, mould and condensation had increased considerably over the period from December. The total number of jobs at that time was equivalent to the average annual total for the preceding three years. Case numbers continue to increase through April and reached a peak in May.
- 1.4. This report provides an update on the delivery of the action plan and sets out the current situation in relation to damp, mould and condensation in council homes.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.1. Progress to date

- 2.1.1. In December 2022 the review identified the need for a more streamlined approach to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of damp, mould and condensation services. This is being addressed through short term changes to processes and service delivery to support management of current cases. The learning from activity to date has been used to inform the requirements for the long-term redesign of the damp, mould and condensation process.
- 2.1.2. There is now a dedicated IT system, where all relevant information about damp, mould and condensation is brought together in one place. All officers in Homes and Neighbourhoods and Kirklees Direct have access to this system and have received guidance on how to use it. Details of all contacts with residents relating to damp, mould and condensation are recorded in the system along with other data to help improve our response (such as vulnerabilities and whether there is mechanical ventilation in the home). This system is used to provide information to a dashboard that enables management oversight of case information and supports intelligence-led delivery of activities.
- 2.1.3. The intention was to further extend the dedicated system to include information from the mould treatment contractor's system and on complaints. It has not been possible to pull in data from the contractor's system and to mitigate for this, a number of officers have been given access through a portal to enable oversight and management of cases

and to support communication with residents. The interfaces associated with the complaints system are being looked at, to understand what information they can provide and whether they are compatible with the dedicated system.

- 2.1.4. There is now a dedicated Single Point of Contact (SPoC) made up of officers from Housing Management and Assets who deal with all incoming calls about damp, mould and condensation. Calls received through the main Kirklees switchboard can select an option which directs their call to the SPoC. Call volumes have fluctuated since the SPoC was put in place, the average call wait time is reducing and call resolution times are improving as officers become more familiar with systems and the subject matter of damp, mould and condensation calls.
- 2.1.5. Outbound calls are being made to residents with open cases to understand the current situation with their home and to pursue access where it has not been gained for works to be undertaken. These calls are being made by staff from across Homes and Neighbourhoods and Kirklees Direct. Kirklees Direct are making calls out of hours and this has helped to improve the success rate of contacts made. The updated information along with the other information held in the system is being used to triage and categorise cases and to make the necessary checks to ensure that other related works such as repairs of leaks have been completed. Figures for completions are reviewed each week and follow-up actions such as calls to make appointments for no-access properties are prioritised by the project team. Where two calls have been made to a resident but officers have not spoken to them, a letter is sent out asking them to contact the SPoC.
- 2.1.6. Where the triage process identifies the need for a surveyor call or visit, a process is in place to contact the resident and make an appointment. Video call technology being used by Property Services is being extended for use by Assets Surveyors. Surveyors will call and be able to look at the home and decide whether they need to visit or whether other courses of action are required. Where surveyor visits have already taken place a range of issues and actions have been identified, these are mainly mould treatments, outstanding repairs and building improvements, one home has been scheduled for further investigation for a possible breach of the damp proof course and two residents have been referred for further support from other parts of the Council.
- 2.1.7. A team of temporary decorators is in place in Property Services and are delivering mould treatments. Capacity in the team has gradually increased since commencement in March and jobs are currently being completed at an average rate of 48 per week since the beginning of May (there have been three 4-day weeks during this period). There is an average weekly no-access rate of 20 and the week ending 12 May saw the highest level of abortive or cancelled visits at 46. The system put in place for the SPoC to call residents where access cannot be gained is helping to improve access rates.

- 2.1.8. The decorating team in Property Services has implemented a 3 no-access process for mould treatment cases. The team work with the SPoC and Housing Management teams to maximise access by visiting homes and contacting residents by telephone to make appointments. When there have been 3 unsuccessful attempts to access the home, a letter is sent to the resident asking them to contact the SPoC.
- 2.1.9. A process has been implemented to group together follow-on works from mould treatment visits for individual homes. This enables management of works to be coordinated and provides greater oversight of delivery. Reports produced by the mould treatment contractor for previously attended and closed jobs are being reviewed and checks undertaken that, where follow-on works or inspections were recommended, these have been completed.
- 2.1.10. A leaflet has been produced for distribution to all residents to aid identification of damp, mould and condensation issues and to encourage them to report these to the Council. A short film is also being developed to provide information for residents and will be added to the page on the council's website where residents can access short films on the 'big six' areas of compliance. The leaflet is available in several languages and the short film lets residents know how to access translations. Officers are looking at how this type of information can be communicated to residents who are blind or have visual impairments. A plan for the roll-out of leaflets and the video is being developed with the aim of maximising the number of residents to be reached.
- 2.1.11. Calling cards for damp, mould and condensation visits to be left at homes where the resident was not in have been produced and are being used by staff across Homes and Neighbourhoods. These cards provide details of how to contact the SPoC so that we can deal with these types of contacts more efficiently.
- 2.1.12. The materials left with residents following a mould treatment visit are being redesigned to support them in reducing the likelihood and impact of condensation where this is something they are able to influence. The materials also ensure that residents know when and how to escalate and report issues to the Council.
- 2.1.13. A programme to extract and refill cavity wall insulation in 100 – 110 homes has been developed for delivery in 2023/24. Homes included in this programme have been identified through Green Doctor visits, damp, mould and condensation cases and complaints. This programme will be partially funded by WYCA through their Retrofit Accelerator Scheme.
- 2.1.14. A training matrix for all officers in Homes and Neighbourhoods has been developed and gap analysis and costing is being carried out. West Yorkshire Housing Partnership (WYHP) has purchased an e-learning module on damp, mould and condensation for use by all members. This

learning module is currently being rebranded and tailored for member use and once this is complete, we will add the training to My Learning. The e-learning training will be mandatory for all officers in Homes and Neighbourhoods and it is proposed that it be made available across the Council and be mandatory for all staff who have contact with residents.

2.1.15. Contract management discussions with the external mould treatment contractor have identified issues that have contributed to the backlog of cases. They experience high levels of no-access visits, to assist with this, officers are following the process set out at 2.1.7 when the contractor makes the Council aware of no-access issues. The contractor currently delivers a three-stage process to homes (clean, treat, paint) following a surveyor inspection and the timescales for completion are 4- 6 weeks. The turnaround time and closure rates for jobs needs to be improved to ensure the current caseload is brought down to manageable levels by October. Officers are meeting with the contractor on a weekly basis to discuss service delivery and deal with issues arising.

2.1.16. The activity to develop service standards for ventilation has identified that the time from identifying the need for the installation of fans to completing the work is protracted by building survey requirements. A workstream group are reviewing processes and requirements associated with this to identify opportunities to reduce the time to complete, whilst complying with health and safety requirements.

2.1.17. An officer from the Partnerships team in Homes and Neighbourhoods has recently joined the task and finish group to help connect up with Public Health work on health and housing. Public Health is delivering a pilot study on asthma and working with Groundworks and Green Doctors in one Primary Care Network to assess and monitor the environment in homes. A process for referrals received through this scheme is in place to enable works to be managed and coordinated and to help identify learning to be applied more widely. Council data on health conditions will be overlaid on damp, mould and condensation case information. This information is for the whole population, not specifically those living in council homes, but will still help in identifying geographical trends and areas where more in-depth investigation should be carried out.

2.1.18. As the action plan has been delivered, the tasks carried out have responded to the changing situation and need. The action plan is currently being reviewed to ensure that the right activities are being delivered and that the right capacity is in place to support this. Revisions to the project plan and approach will be completed by the end of June and then implemented immediately.

2.2. Case volumes

2.2.1. The table below shows volumes of cases at points in time concurrent with reporting dates. Case volumes continued to grow following the report in February 2023 and reached a peak at 1892 in May 2023.

	1 December 2022	13 February 2023	2 August 2023
Ordered mould treatment jobs waiting to be passed to contractor	321	778	0
Open mould treatment jobs with external contractor	423	1285	891
Open mould treatment jobs with Property Services			117
Open case awaiting surveyor call or visit			227
Completed jobs awaiting closure on Total		103	0
Duplicate jobs on Total		222	0
Open jobs where follow-on/ improvement works or repairs are required			482
Total no. of jobs awaiting resolution	744	1738	1717

2.2.2. Damp, mould and condensation cases continue to be received and the weekly average job rate required to bring the caseload down to a manageable level (no more than 100 open jobs) by October is 115. The number of jobs completed weekly vary considerably for both the external and in-house contractors but generally the average completed is half of that required now. The project team are now urgently looking at options for additional capacity to deliver mould treatments to bring case numbers down to a manageable level.

2.2.3. For those cases that require a surveyor call or visit the outcomes could result in the need for a mould treatment, follow-on or specialist works or repairs. Processes are in place to ensure that as surveyors complete a visit, the actions required are managed and delivered to completion. Actions arising are overseen by the project team and where a mould treatment is needed, the impact of this on weekly completion rates required will be assessed and managed. Surveyor visits should be completed by the end of August.

2.2.4. Analysis of damp, mould and condensation cases over the last 4 years shows that normally reports start to rise in October, reach a peak in November and then gradually reduce from November to April, flattening out over the spring and summer months. Levels of reports are high and based on treatment costs for individual jobs it appears that a high proportion of jobs are small in scale and extent (size of area affected). This would seem to suggest that residents report damp, mould and condensation issues promptly.

- 2.2.5. There are 13 specialist damp jobs being delivered at present. 30 specialist jobs have been completed since February and 6 new cases have been received. There are 29 specialist jobs awaiting a survey at present, at least half of these are damp related.
- 2.2.6. 18 households were decanted between February and June to enable specialist works to be delivered. There are currently a total of 83 households awaiting decant of which 49 relate to specialist works mainly related to damp. The longest wait for a decant for specialist works is 3 years, this is because it has not yet been possible to find a suitable property for the household based on their allocation banding and specific needs. This case was put forward to decant panel on 20 and 27 June but a matching property has not yet been found. Of the 49 households requiring a decant, 32 await consideration by panel, 8 have accepted a property, 1 has been offered a decant property, 2 have had decant properties identified, 3 are on hold, 1 is in a legal process, 2 are being re-surveyed.
- 2.2.7. All residents with outstanding specialist work where a decant is required are being contacted by telephone to ask for updated information on their situation and the list is being reassessed to RAG rate properties based on condition and the risk to residents. A surveyor will visit homes where the condition needs to be reviewed due to the duration the work has been outstanding or if the call with the resident suggests this is needed. This activity will be completed by 21 July.
- 2.2.8. Since the last report in March 2023 there have been 43 complaints about damp, mould and condensation, 40 of these were resolved at Stage 1 and 3 at Stage 2. The majority of stage 1 complaints were related to the waiting time for a mould treatment to be undertaken or because a mould problem had reoccurred.
- 2.2.9. As at 2/8/23 there are currently 472 live housing conditions (disrepair) claims, the majority of which are related to damp from leaks and other sources. Of these 472 cases, 57 are open and in litigation, 37 have been resolved either at trial or by pre-trial settlement and 378 are cases where we have received a letter of claim from solicitors acting for the tenant(s) where the claim is still live (legal cases such as housing conditions claims (disrepair cases) remain open for 6 years following the issuing of a letter of claim). There are disrepair related works ongoing in 70 homes.
- 2.2.10. Analysis has identified 20 homes with a high number of damp, mould and condensation reports over the last four years and 443 homes with an above average number of reports. The history of reports of damp, mould and condensation and other repairs and asset data for these homes is being investigated along with the need for further surveys to inform understanding of the underlying issues and proposals for remedial works.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People

3.1.1 This work will improve the living conditions and safety of tenants and residents. The principles created for the redesign work put customer experience first and aim to design processes and approaches that ensure residents receive a high-quality service which resolves issues promptly and fully. Resident and member involvement in the redesign is key to creating a service offer that addresses their everyday issues and concerns and provides safe homes.

3.2 Working with Partners

3.2.1 Work to date has not involved partners. There will be a number of partners who work with residents and who are aware of the state of their homes and how this may be impacting on their health and wellbeing. As the redesign progresses it will look for opportunities to engage with and involve partners.

3.3 Place Based Working

3.3.1 This work is moving the delivery of reactive and proactive responses to mould, damp and condensation and the underlying causes to one that is intelligence led. It embeds learning to support continuous improvement and will involve members and residents.

3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

3.4.1 Works carried out to homes will have a climate impact through the removal of existing construction components and materials and the provision of new. The carbon footprint of activity is not yet understood. Once new delivery models are embedded and case numbers have stabilised methods to measure climate impact will be developed.

3.5 Improving outcomes for children

3.5.1 For children living in homes affected by the works their safety and living conditions will be improved. This should in turn lead to better physical and mental health.

3.6 Financial Implications for the people living or working in Kirklees

3.6.1 Works that improve the fabric of homes (such as insulation provision or renewal) should improve thermal performance and help residents to keep their homes warm at a lower cost.

3.7 Other (eg Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)/Legal/Financial or Human Resources) Consultees and their opinions

3.7.1 A Stage 1 IIA has been carried out for the process redesign activity and at this point, a Stage 2 assessment is not required.

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Theme	Calculated Scores						Stage 2 Assessment Required
	Proposal	Impact	P + I	Mitigation	Evidence	M + E	
Equalities	6	3.5	9.5	0	2	2	No
Environment		4.1	4.1	5	2	7	No

3.7.2 The service changes are currently considered likely to have either a positive or neutral effect on equalities and the environment.

3.7.3 The Stage 1 IIA will be reviewed and revised once proposals are more fully developed and following engagement with residents. If there are changes that indicate a requirement for a Stage 2 assessment or changes to project approach then these will be acted upon.

4. Consultation and Engagement

- 4.3 The principles for the redesign of damp, mould and condensation processes are resident focussed and aim to improve communication and resident experience. A proposal for engagement with residents to understand their experience of the current approach to damp, mould and condensation and to take forward a coproduced redesign has been developed and the proposed approach will be discussed with TAGP on 28 June for input. Residents to approach for involvement in the redesign activity are being drawn from case lists for damp, mould and condensation and the aim is to have a group with experience of the service prior to and post the changes outlined in this report.
- 4.4 A further proposal will be drawn up to ensure residents and members are involved in assessing the success of the redesign process, as well as the review and measurement of future service delivery.
- 4.5 The task and finish group are working with the Corporate Transformation Team to incorporate the principles from the Access to Services programme into the redesign approach.

5. Next steps and timelines

- 5.1 The review of the current service delivery model with the external mould treatment contractor will be completed by 7 July. If any changes are needed it will be necessary to join this work up with other ongoing service change and transformation activity in Homes and Neighbourhoods relating to decorating provision for residents.
- 5.2 The scoping and definition of requirements for a new delivery model will commence on 3 July. The exercise will appraise options for in-house delivery and external commissioning of mould treatment services to support a zero-tolerance approach to damp, mould and condensation. This work will be completed by the middle of August. The current contracts for mould treatment services expire in September 2023 and include the ability to extend for 12 months. The need to extend these contracts for a short period to allow a new model to be introduced is being considered and tied in with ongoing contract discussions about the current service being delivered.
- 5.3 A programme of servicing for ventilation will be developed for commencement in 2024/25. The initial activity to produce a comprehensive data set in the

Assets system will be completed by the end of August. The training matrix identifies qualifications and competencies needed by electricians to support servicing and maintenance of ventilation installations.

- 5.4 E-learning on damp, mould and condensation will be rolled out as described at 2.1.12 in July (subject to completion and issue of the module by WYHP).
- 5.5 The gap analysis and costing of the training matrix will be completed by the end of July.
- 5.6 A strategy for dealing with and responding to damp, mould and condensation will be developed to align with the emerging Asset Strategy.
- 5.7 The redesign of damp, mould and condensation processes will continue to the next stage, resident engagement. Once engagement is completed new processes will be implemented and review mechanisms put in place. This will be completed before October when case numbers are likely to rise towards a seasonal peak.
- 5.8 The connections between Public Health work on health and housing and the approach to damp, mould and condensation will be developed.
- 5.9 Service standards for ventilation will be developed to help tackle the underlying causes of damp, mould and condensation. Learning from the activities described at 2.1.5, 2.1.8 and 2.1.14 will inform the standards and help to develop processes to support their implementation and management.
- 5.10 Data sets to support an intelligence led approach to damp, mould and condensation and investment plans to address the underlying causes will be further developed. The opportunity to incorporate learning from current activities, further triage and survey and other data sources will be investigated.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

- 6.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - 6.1.1 agree that damp, mould and condensation e-learning be mandatory for staff across the council who speak with or visit residents
 - 6.1.2 note the contents of this report and the status of the action plan
 - 6.1.3 receive regular updates on progress with the action plan

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder agrees with the Officer Recommendations, as set out in Section 6 above.

8. Contact officer

Hannah Elliott, Head of Assets and Development, Homes and Neighbourhoods

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9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Not applicable

10. Service Director responsible

Naz Parkar, Director Homes and Neighbourhoods