

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SERVICES, HEALTH AND HOUSING
DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2024

**DAMP AND MOULD POLICY FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION
FOR BRACKNELL FOREST**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PEOPLE

1. PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 To inform the Executive Member of the Housing Service's "Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy" for Temporary Accommodation homes within the Council's stock.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **The Executive Member is asked to:**
(i) **Note the new policy for information**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The Housing Service is committed to delivering a proactive approach to tackling condensation, damp and mould within its temporary accommodation stock.
- 3.2 The policy sets out a comprehensive approach to damp and mould which ensures that the Council complies with the Government's latest published guidance, and meets its obligations under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and the Decent Homes Standard.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Not having a clear, up to date, policy on damp and mould is not an option, given the Council's ownership and management of homes and the expectations and legal standards put in place by the Government.

5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The development of a damp and mould policy for properties in our temporary accommodation stock follows the tragic death of 2-year-old Awaab Ishak in 2020, due to mould in his family home.
- 5.2 There are a number of regulations in place relating to damp and mould. They include the [Decent Homes Standard \(DHS\)](#) which requires that social housing must be in a reasonable state of repair and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort, to avoid damp and mould. Housing must also be free of dangerous 'category 1' hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), including damp and cold hazards.
- 5.3 These regulations have been strengthened by new government guidance on damp and mould published on 7 September 2023. This assigns clear legal responsibilities to landlords (including Councils) to identify and address the underlying causes of damp and mould, such as structural issues or inadequate ventilation. They must treat

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cases of damp and mould with the utmost seriousness and act promptly to protect their tenants' health.

5.4 The guidance sets out landlords' responsibilities as follows:

- Ensure clear processes in place to document, manage and act on reports of damp and mould and to identify common issues and trends in their housing stock.
- Develop an understanding the condition of their homes and use this to adopt a preventative approach to dealing with damp and mould, making the necessary interventions to ventilation, energy efficiency and building deficiencies before damp and mould occur.
- Support tenants to understand what they can do to reduce damp and mould, recognising that some homes are more difficult to heat, either due to their energy efficiency or cost of living pressures; this must never be a substitute for addressing the underlying causes of damp and mould
- Ensure staff and any external contractors are aware of the significant health risks associated with damp and mould, the need to address the underlying causes of the issue and not just remove visible mould, reporting processes and the need to be sensitive to tenants' circumstances and vulnerabilities
- Build relationships with tenants and, for social landlords, with health and social care and other frontline professionals, to ensure that every opportunity to identify tenants living in homes with damp and mould is utilised.

5.5 The Housing Service has developed a new Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy (see Appendix One). The measures contained in the policy to ensure that temporary accommodation residents live in a safe and healthy environment are:

- Providing easy and accessible ways to report cases of condensation, damp, and mould.
- Ensuring a consistent and excellent service in response to all reports of condensation, damp, and mould.
- Ensuring empathetic and timely communication with residents and minimising any distress caused by condensation, damp and mould.
- Maintaining the fabric of the Council's temporary accommodation homes and ensuring that a preventative approach is applied to tackle the risk of condensation, damp and mould in the temporary accommodation stock portfolio.
- Embedding a working culture where all colleagues are trained to see safety as their responsibility and do not simply blame lifestyle for condensation, damp and mould.

5.6 The policy covers the key areas set out in the Government's guidance, ensuring that the policy is comprehensive and up to date, including:

- The minimum legal and regulatory standards to which we must maintain our properties.
- The definitions and causes of condensation, damp and mould that we will use to address damp and mould.
- Our approach to addressing the causes of condensation, damp and mould.
- Our responsibility to provide a prompt, excellent service in responding to condensation, damp and mould including diagnosis, remedial work, communication and monitoring cases.
- Our responsibility to manage condensation, damp and mould.

- Our responsibility to support residents on how to manage and prevent condensation.

6.0 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The policy complies with the recently published code of guidance which was published on 7 September 2023 see [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-of-damp-and-mould-in-the-home)

The Council has a legal duty to mitigate damp and mould hazards. In response to the Secretary of State's call and anticipated legislation, the Council is taking a proactive approach, implementing policy, training and process changes which prioritises mould removal and supports tenants under the legal duties. Linking this policy to a Disrepair policy and procedure is highly advisable. Ongoing monitoring, assessment and coordination between Housing Management, Insurance and other relevant teams will help ensure robust implementation of the policy to comply with duties.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There is a element of this work within capital programme submissions (PAD) to treat damp and mould and carry out associated remedial repairs. A provision will also be made to ensure all staff receive relevant training.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 This policy will be implemented in accordance with Bracknell Forest Council's equality and diversity policy.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Not applicable

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The Housing Service is working closely with the Borough's Energy Sustainability Officer to identify opportunities to access grant funding to improve thermal efficiency and reduce fuel costs for occupants.

Background Papers / Information

[Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-of-damp-and-mould-in-the-home)

Appendix One

CONDENSATION, DAMP AND MOULD IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION Policy 2023

Contact for further information

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