

# Damp and Mould Strategy and Action Plan 2023-25



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# Introduction

Damp and mould causes serious concern because of its serious health and wellbeing impacts but is a particular issue for residents living in accommodation that is either rented, Council owned or temporary. This strategy sets out how the Council is tackling this issue to both immediately improve the experience of residents and how this issue is dealt with into the future. It defines both how we will strengthen our rapid response to reports of damp and mould, but also the proactive, holistic and long term actions we will take to prevent its appearance and recurrence. In this way, our strategy will contribute to our overarching aim of enhancing the health and wellbeing of all residents by improving provision of housing in Newham, reducing the prevalence of damp and mould in the housing sector.

Our Damp and Mould Strategy will achieve lasting improvement in how we tackle damp and mould. It is, in part, a direct response to the increased level of scrutiny of how Councils tackle damp and mould as a landlord and a social housing provider following the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, which in November 2022 a coroner's report found was a result of prolonged exposure to damp and mould. Issues of damp and mould are not new, but the result of long-term, entrenched issues within the housing system that require innovative approaches to resolve. Our Damp and Mould Strategy and Action Plan presents the first stage of such a response.

## Purpose of the strategy

There are three purposes to this new Damp and Mould Strategy and Action Plan:

1. To formalise the established operational processes we already have, bringing together activity across different housing tenures into a single strategy
2. To set out our ambitions to ramp up our efforts to tackle damp and mould in order to reduce the rate of damp and mould
3. To provide assurances for residents of the processes in place to take action against damp and mould, and the causes of damp and mould

## Measuring performance

The performance measures identified within the action plan will be used to quantify performance on an annual basis, but monitoring will not be limited to an annual review. This strategy will be monitored by a dedicated officer group meeting monthly, which will also report on performance regularly to the relevant lead members and Cabinet. This will ensure the strategy is effective and up to date with the changing environment.

# National context

## Statutory duties which apply to Newham Council

### Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985

Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires landlords to carry out basic repairs. It states that landlords must keep in repair and proper working order the structure and exterior of the building (including internal walls and plasterwork); the installations for water, gas and electricity including sinks and toilets; and the installations for space and water heating.

### Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

This new law, which came into force on 20th March 2019 requires all social or privately rented houses and flats to be safe, healthy and free from things that could cause serious harm. It amends the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Landlords are required to ensure that any dwelling they rent out is free of serious hazards from which a risk of harm may arise to the health or safety of the tenant or another occupier of the property. It does not contain a definition of fitness for human habitation but mentions freedom from damp as a condition to consider, alongside other prescribed hazards.

Where a landlord fails to do so, the tenant has the right to take action in the courts for breach of contract on the grounds that the property is unfit for human habitation. They can take legal action against landlords directly rather than relying on their council to prosecute on their behalf. However it does require a tenant to elect to sue their landlord which can be costly and time-consuming.

The Homes Act does not cover people who have 'licences to occupy', instead of tenancy agreements. This may include lodgers (people who live with their landlord), some people who live in temporary accommodation, and some, but not all, property guardians.

### Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004

Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which can be applied to any tenure. It requires the HHSRS to be used in the enforcement of housing standards, particularly in relation to the private rented sector.

The HHSRS is as a risk based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. This assessment method focuses on the hazards that are present in housing and means a higher burden can be placed upon landlords generally to minimise or avoid potential hazards and to review conditions regularly including to rectify damp and mould in properties. Category 1 hazards are the most serious, followed by Category 2.

Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 introduces a duty on the local authority to take appropriate enforcement action if it assesses that a Category 1 hazard is present in a property. It also empowers the local authority to take a number of other actions if a Category 2 hazard is assessed as being present and the Council decides to take action.

### The Environmental Protection Act 1990

Section 79 and 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 controls some "statutory nuisances" where the conditions of a property are "...in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance". It is primarily focussed on the impacts of poor housing conditions, rather than the conditions themselves. Dampness, condensation or mould growth are examples of defects in premises which are considered prejudicial to health. It applies to private and social sector housing. Private and housing association tenants can request an inspection by a local authority environmental health officer (EHO). Where a statutory nuisance is identified, the EHO must serve an abatement notice requiring the nuisance to be addressed. Tenants can also take their own legal action under section 82.



## Section 4 of the Defective Premises Act 1972

Under section 4 of the Defective Premises Act 1972, a landlord owes a duty of care to ensure that tenants (and their household) and visitors are reasonably safe from personal injury or damage to their property resulting from the defects.

The duty is triggered if the landlord ‘knows or ought to know of the relevant defect’ regardless of whether or not the occupier had informed the landlord of it. ‘Relevant defects’ are items of disrepair arising or continuing on or after 1 January 1974. Where damage or injury results from a landlord’s failure to meet repairing obligations, actions under the Defective Premises Act 1972 can be brought alongside actions in negligence and actions for breach of contractual rights. However injury (whether physical or financial) must arise in order for a claim to be brought, and whether the landlord is liable will depend on the circumstances of each case.

## Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

This new piece of legislation aims to take a new and proactive approach to regulating social housing and taking action against landlords who do not meet standards. Of most significance to the issue of damp and mould, it introduces new consumer standards and strengthens the enforcement powers of the Regulator of Social Housing.

## Decent Homes Standard (DHS)

The Decent Homes Standard (DHS) applies to the social rented sector, and was introduced in 2000 to provide a minimum standard of housing conditions. It was updated in 2006 to take account of the introduction of the HHSRS. It is a non-statutory standard which requires that a “decent home”:

1. Meets the current statutory minimum standard (being free from category 1 hazards)
2. Is in a reasonable state of repair
3. Has reasonably modern facilities and services (kitchen being less than 20 years old, bathroom being less than 30 years old, adequate noise insulation and kitchen space, and an adequately located toilet)
4. A reasonable degree of thermal comfort



## Guidance on damp and mould for rented housing providers

This guidance for private and social landlords, published in September 2023, follows engagement with the housing and health sectors and met a Government commitment made in response to the Coroner’s report on the death of Awaab Ishak. It sets out the health risks associated with damp and mould and sets out expectations of how landlords should respond to reports of damp and mould.

## Forthcoming legislation and guidance

### Renters’ Reform Bill

In May 2023 the Government introduced the Renters (Reform) Bill which aims to introduce a number of reforms to the sector set out in a white paper in 2022. This is expected to include the introduction of a Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector.

### Awaab’s Law

The Government has also announced “Awaab’s Law”, which will be implemented through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 to specify timeframes within which social landlords will have to respond to reports of damp and mould and other hazards. A consultation will be launched with social housing providers to determine the timeframes for investigating hazards and making repairs, but at the time of publication this has not been announced.

## Tackling damp and mould in Newham: alignment to the Council's strategic priorities

### Building a Fairer Newham (2022)

Newham's latest Corporate Plan, Building a Fairer Newham, has at its heart a commitment to supporting residents to live happy, healthy and well. This Damp and Mould Strategy and Action Plan carries these values throughout, and particularly aims to deliver the outcome measure that that people live in quality homes that are conducive of a healthy lifestyle. It is also closely aligned with the performance measures set out in the Corporate Plan, in particular ensuring that repairs are fixed the first time, and increasing satisfaction with repairs.

### Climate Emergency Action Plan (2019)

Many of the preventative measures being delivered by the capital works and retrofit programmes to minimise the conditions that allow damp and mould to develop are also key to delivering the Council's climate emergency agenda. This was originally set out in the Climate Emergency Action Plan progress against which has been set out in two annual reports.

### Homes for People: Newham's Housing Delivery Strategy (2021)

A number of key actions from Newham's Housing Delivery Strategy are closely aligned with the actions in this strategy to tackle damp and mould. This includes those associated with addressing the climate emergency (3.1-3.5)), putting people at the heart of housing (2.1-2.4), working towards a safe and secure private rented sector (4.1-4.17) investing in our Council properties (5.2) and improving the quality of temporary accommodation (6.4).

### 50 Steps to a Healthier Newham (2020)

Priority 11 in the 50 Steps strategy aims to build a borough of health-promoting housing. A number of the steps within priority 11 are closely linked with and support this strategy, including 43: Address fuel poverty and help Newham residents live in warm homes, 44: Tackled levels of overcrowding in Newham homes, and 47: Support the design of health promoting and inclusive homes.

This strategy is currently being refreshed, and will include a specific step around tackling damp and mould in housing. The new strategy is expected to be published in 2024.



## The housing challenge for Newham

Newham faces a significant challenge in terms of tackling damp and mould because of a number of structural factors that shape housing in the borough. Many of these are common across other councils and London Boroughs, but the issues are accentuated in Newham's housing stock as a result of a pressurised housing market and high housing costs, compounded by high rates of deprivation. Many of the older, pre-1919 properties are in the private rented sector and have very poor thermal efficiency, an issue which is likely to continue as improvements to properties are often costly and subsidies for landlords are limited. The Council stock is also ageing, and has been affected by the legacy of underinvestment which is common across many councils and social housing providers.

# Understanding damp and mould

Dampness is the result of excess moisture, which can originate from:

- Leaking pipes, wastes, drainage and overflows
- Rainwater from defective roof coverings, blocked or leaking gutters and broken pipes
- Penetrating dampness around windows, through walls and due to raised ground levels
- Rising damp due to lack of, or no effective, damp proof course

Another type of dampness is condensation, which is particularly common in homes which are poorly heated, poorly ventilated and poorly insulated and usually gets worse in the colder winter months. There is always some moisture present in the air, even if you cannot see it. Moisture is released into the air through normal daily activities in these areas such as breathing, washing, cooking, drying clothes, showering and bathing. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and the water condenses on cold surfaces like windows or external walls, or other cold surfaces within the fabric of the property.

Ventilation is key to removing the moist air and preventing condensation. This should be provided through extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens, air bricks, and trickle vents in windows. However when these ventilation systems are absent or not performing as they should, condensation can result in damp and mould growth.

The development of mould growth is the most tell-tale sign associated with condensation dampness. The appearance of mould may be black, white, yellow or green in colour, depending on the specific type of mould and the surface that it grows on. It can often be found in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It often forms on cold, north-facing walls. Because steam is often generated through cooking and washing, condensation-related damp and mould can often develop in kitchens and bathrooms where ventilation is inadequate. The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate the cause of the dampness, for example by increasing insulation to the structure, increasing ventilation and other measures.



## What are the health impacts?

If you have damp and mould in your home, you're more likely to have respiratory problems, respiratory infections, allergies or asthma. Damp and mould can also affect the immune system.<sup>1</sup> Mould can also cause allergic reactions, and skin contact with mould can also cause rashes or exacerbate skin conditions.

This is often the result of inhaling the tiny spores produced by the mould, and the higher numbers of dust mites in damp homes. Mould also produces allergens, irritants and toxins which can cause reactions like skin rashes, asthma attacks and runny noses in people living in a home affected by mould.

Many of the most serious health impacts of damp and mould occur gradually, over a long period of time. However in some vulnerable groups the short term impacts can be more severe, which is why it is important to respond to the issue quickly.

<sup>1</sup> NHS, 2023. Can damp and mould affect my health?

## Who is most vulnerable?

Some people are more sensitive than others, including:

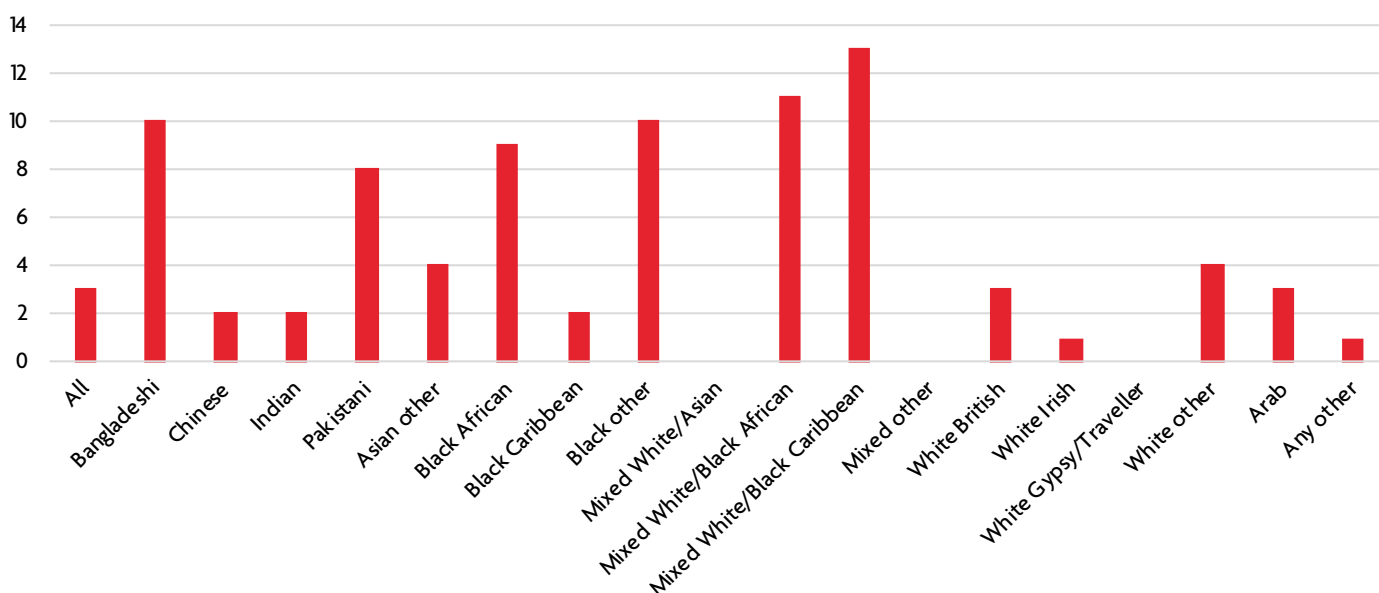
- babies and children
- older people
- those with existing skin problems, such as atopic eczema
- those with respiratory problems, such as allergies and asthma
- those with a weakened immune system, such as those having chemotherapy

Damp and mould also intersects with racial, social and income disparities, particularly poverty and deprivation; people on lower incomes are more likely to live in a property that is affected by damp and mould. The inability to heat your home due to high fuel costs (fuel poverty) can exacerbate damp and mould issues, and make it harder to prevent condensation-related damp. People who are fuel-poor may also be unable to afford the costs of some other solutions such as dehumidifiers. Overcrowding, often the result of poverty and a lack of housing affordability, can also increase humidity and condensation, making damp and mould more likely.<sup>2</sup>

Age is another existing inequality which affects the prevalence of damp and mould. Older people who are unable to keep their home warm and dry, whether through fuel poverty or as a result of structural issues with their property, can not only experience a greater likelihood of damp and mould, but will also be more vulnerable to illnesses. They are also less likely to report damp, mould and excess cold to their landlord.

Damp is also more likely to affect households from an ethnically diverse background. The Government's figures indicate that households where the head tenant is from a White British background have a much lower likelihood of living in a property affected by damp (3%) than households where the head tenant is from a mixed Black Caribbean and white background (13%), mixed Black African and white background (11%), Black other (10%) or Bangladeshi (10%).<sup>3</sup>

% of different ethnic groups living in a house affected by damp



<sup>2</sup> London Assembly Environment Committee, 2019. Keeping out the chill: fixing London's cold, damp and mouldy homes. [www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/keeping\\_out\\_the\\_chill\\_-\\_final.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/keeping_out_the_chill_-_final.pdf) [accessed 22.02.23]

<sup>3</sup> English Housing Survey, 2020. Housing with damp problems. [www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/housing-with-damp-problems/latest](http://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/housing-with-damp-problems/latest) [accessed 14.02.23]



# Tackling damp and mould: our approach

## Principles

To achieve lasting improvement in dealing with damp and mould, including reducing conditions that promote its cause, the Council's Strategy and Action Plan are guided by principles that align to the Housing Ombudsman Service's 2021 report, Spotlight on: Damp and Mould.

1. Ensure that a thorough assessment is undertaken to identify the cause of damp and mould, with all options being considered including disrepair. The way in which tenants occupy the property should never be the default explanation and all other causes should be explored fully first.
2. Ensure that an effective response to damp and mould is provided to tenants regardless of the route through which we are made aware, including making referrals between Council teams where necessary.
3. Provide information about reducing condensation to residents in a sensitive way that avoids blaming and stigmatising tenants
4. Take a proactive approach to identifying and resolving cases of damp and mould in Council owned properties, and ensure that other landlords do the same
5. Treat all residents who report issues with damp and mould with respect, empathy and with an appreciation of the seriousness of the problem.

## Awareness-raising and campaigning

We will accelerate the reach and impact of our Damp and Mould Strategy by investing in a dedicated awareness campaign aimed at supporting residents to understand the issue and where they can get help; prompting private landlords and housing providers to act to mitigate damp and mould; and calling on voluntary sector partners and stakeholders to join in our effort to achieve lasting improvement.



Communications activity will include: media relations, policy engagement, partner engagement using materials that both make clear the scale of the issue but also prompt behaviour change to improve awareness, understanding, and above all, access to support.

## The role of tenure

We recognise that the issues of damp and mould including identification, response and mitigation require a response – and action plan – that is defined according to the tenure of the property. We have different levers at our disposal to tackle damp and mould depending on the tenure of the property – whether it is rented from a private landlord, from the Council, occupied as temporary accommodation or owned. This strategy focuses on rented housing: Council homes, the private rented sector, and temporary accommodation. It is set out in chapters that cover each of these three tenure types.

## 1. Council homes



### 1.1 Responding effectively to reports of damp and mould

The Council's primary response to reports of damp and mould comes via its Damp and Mould Taskforce. In October 2021, prior to the publication of the Social Housing Ombudsman's report, the Council established its Damp and Mould Taskforce. The taskforce was established to intervene in cases of damp and mould early before they become serious disrepair cases that can be costly to the Council and detrimental to the health and wellbeing of residents. Council tenants and leaseholders are eligible to use the service, as well as temporary accommodation tenants that are housed in Council properties.

The page provides an email address and online contact form, the latter including a short survey where tenants can submit descriptions and photographs of the issues. Officers then triage each case and contact all tenants based on their assessment of the urgency of their damp or mould issues, and a visit to the property is scheduled to assess the cause of the problem.

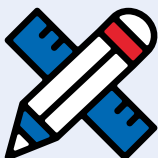
Council specialists conduct a damp survey, to assess the cause of the issue as soon as possible. In cases where leaks or disrepair is a factor, the Council takes action to resolve the cause of the damp and mould, and may also need to undertake additional general repairs – this has been the case in around one in three cases to date. Where kitchens and bathrooms have been the cause of, or badly damaged by damp and mould these may be replaced.

Where all other factors have been ruled out and condensation is determined to be the cause, the performance of mechanical ventilation is checked, and a review of occupancy and living arrangements may be undertaken. In such cases, the mould is safely removed and tenants are provided with practical advice to reduce the risk of mould and damp problems persisting. Information and advice is based on what is practicable for the tenants' home and circumstances, for example having the heating running at all times may not be affordable for some households, or they may be forced to dry washing indoors due to a lack of outdoor space. Overcrowding is also an issue affecting many households in Council properties, as a shortage of supply means long waiting times for larger homes.

Following completion of the works, tenants are asked to sign off and provide feedback on the works and their experience of the service. A closed case is not the end of our engagement. All cases are subject to review and fresh contact with the resident at a maximum of 6 months after the last contact.

Between the taskforce's establishment in 2021 and September 2023, over 2,100 enquiries have been made to the taskforce, around half of which have been since November 2022 when the issue of damp and mould gained huge public prominence. From October 2021 to September 2023 the Council has undertaken works to the value of more than £8 million to resolve issues of damp and mould in our homes. The Damp and Mould Taskforce is currently responding to around 80 cases per month during the summer months, and around 150 per month during winter when colder temperatures increase the risk of damp and mould. We view as an indicator of the taskforce's success that the number of reports by residents has been increasing and that Council advertising of the taskforce and word of mouth is encouraging people living with damp and mould to come forward.

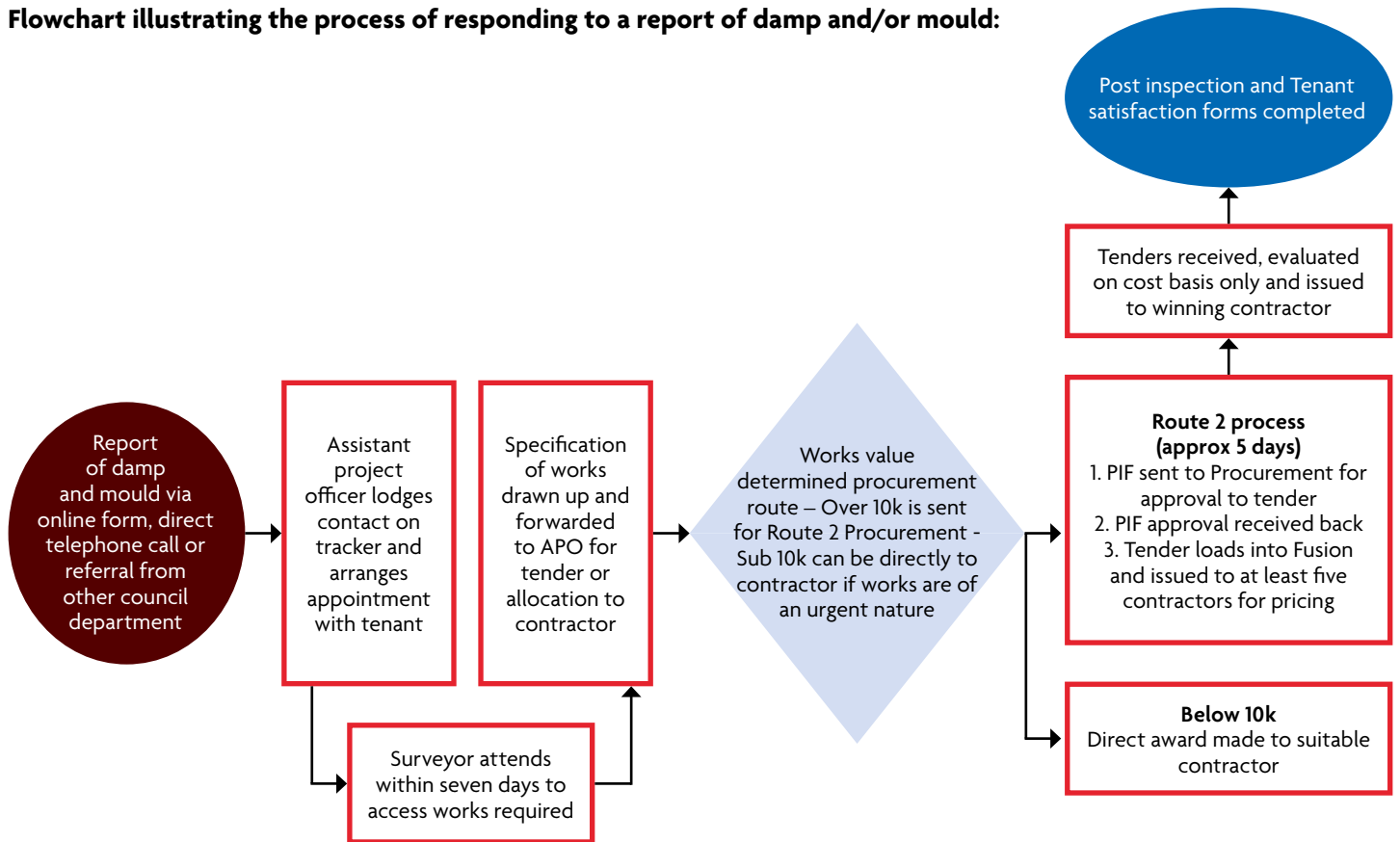
#### Worried about damp, mould or condensation in your Council home?



Visit the webpage at [newham.gov.uk/housing-homes-homelessness/damp-condensation-mould](https://newham.gov.uk/housing-homes-homelessness/damp-condensation-mould) for advice and to book a survey

Alternatively, you can email at [dampandmouldtaskforce@newham.gov.uk](mailto:dampandmouldtaskforce@newham.gov.uk)

**Flowchart illustrating the process of responding to a report of damp and/or mould:**



The Council will build on the success of the first years of the taskforce by improving the accessibility and efficacy of the taskforce. This will include reviewing the user interface to ensure that it is as accessible and easy to use as possible, including exploring offline options for reporting, such as through the Council’s newly-established Housing Hubs and the repairs telephone line. We will also review the wider system, such as identifying improvements to the case management and data collection systems used by the task force. This will enable us to ensure that issues of damp and mould are responded to the first time.

We will also develop our processes for referring cases to the damp and mould taskforce. A number of pathways have already been established for referrals to the taskforce. In some cases, issues are raised through other routes such as via Housing Liaison Officers, who are trained to identify cases of damp and mould, or by residents in person through the Council’s Tenants and Leaseholder Forums and referred through to the taskforce. The gas team, who service around 16,000 properties every year, have been trained to identify signs of disrepair including damp and mould, and report properties of concern back to the Damp and Mould Taskforce. A similar scheme is being rolled out across other resident-facing officers. We have also developed strong links between the Damp and Mould

Taskforce and our housing and corporate complaints processes so that every case reported in those channels is referred into the Damp and Mould Taskforce for a comprehensive assessment. We will continue to deliver training across staff within the housing directorate and explore opportunities for training and awareness-raising with officers from other directorates (for example, social workers) and the voluntary, community and faith sector.

From 2023, the Council will be rolling out mandatory training on damp and mould for officers in the housing directorate. Staff who enter residents’ homes, such as repairs and maintenance operatives, independent living officers and housing liaison officers will be required to undertake a one-day course specifically focussed on damp and mould. Additionally, technical staff working within the dedicated Damp and Mould Taskforce team will be required to attend three-day training on damp and mould, in order to ensure they have the latest information about legislation and guidance. The one-day training will be rolled out later in the year to other Council officers who work with groups who are particularly vulnerable to damp and mould such as older people and very young children. This will include health visitors and social workers.

Finally, we are continuing to develop our resident involvement framework, which ensures that residents

### Spotlight on staff training:

Around **400 officers** will receive mandatory training on identifying and responding to damp and mould.

Approximately 360 officers will attend a one-day course and approximately 40 officers will attend a three day course .



are able to raise building-wide maintenance and disrepair issues and provide feedback on the Council's performance in resolving issues. The Repairs and Maintenance Scrutiny Group formed in summer 2023 and is made up of eight of our housing residents. It's focus is on improving the operation of the service and the resident experience. The initial focus has been on the development of an online repairs portal. It is likely that damp and mould will be one of the issues the group covers in the year ahead. The Council's new housing hubs, regular local area forums and summer fun days also provide opportunities to raise awareness for residents of the issue and how to report it, as well as providing opportunities to report issues in-person for those not confident using the online or telephone reporting.

## 1.2 Improving our collection and use of data

A team has been established to undertake a programme of proactive inspections of our own stock, targeting 200-250 properties per week, subject to access being permitted. As well as identifying cases which can be resolved through immediate repairs, this will enable us to better understand the rate of damp and mould in our own stock and inform our planned works programme. The surveys will include the building fabric as well as internal issues. This information might include, for example, building an evidence base of building materials or typologies that are particularly vulnerable to damp and mould and prioritising these for replacement or renovation.. Immediate damp and mould issues in these properties will be resolved, with long-term future work to the building fabric being rolled into the Council's longer-term retrofit programme. External wall insulation would be one example of such an intervention.

By taking a proactive approach to inspecting properties, we reduce the pressure on tenants to report issues to the Council. We know from our private rented sector licensing schemes that proactive inspections for property conditions tend to benefit the most vulnerable, as groups such as elderly people or people who do not have English as a first language tend to report issues to the Council less frequently. Our targeted work with older Council tenants (see 1.3 below) has already indicated to us that proactive visits work in reducing issues of disrepair in Council properties, and can also make the Council aware of other issues which can be referred on to other services such as Social Care.

Around 7,000 properties have been surveyed by consultants for the stock conditions survey. This includes system and component condition, remaining lifespans, decency and HHSRS issues (such as damp) as part of the

## Highlights

**The Damp and Mould Taskforce has responded to over 2,100 reports of damp and mould, making repairs to the value of £8 million**

**The taskforce will make fresh contact with closed cases within six months to ensure the issue has not returned**

**Over 400 officers within the housing directorate will be trained to identify cases of damp and mould**



internal surveys. These are checked to see whether major works or repairs have orders raised in relation to the issues and if not these are raised. In tandem with these c.7,000 properties, data relating to the c.7,700 properties on the EPC register which have an EPC of D, E and F is being cleansed and analysed by our consultants to assist in the formulation of the remainder of the current capital programme over the next three years, and to inform the development of the 30 year programme. The outputs will assist in identifying the properties best benefitting from a fabric-first approach, which will direct the imminent commission of the next stock condition survey (forming 25% of the stock).

In addition to the stock condition survey, information reported by the rolling EPC surveys, major works surveyors and by resident reporting help to inform a cohesive, collaborative dataset. This allows us to identify where multiple cases of damp and mould in a single building may be the result of issues with ventilation, poor heating systems or building fabric. By pin-pointing the worst-performing buildings, we can prioritise blocks for external works, as well as building a picture of the building types that are most likely to experience structural damp and mould.

We have also begun to use new technology to identify cases of damp and mould. Humidity monitors have been installed in a high rise block of 124 sheltered homes as part of a pilot in collaboration with the University of East London. The monitors both provide live data on the presence of damp and mould and identify whether the issue is caused by a structural defect. The installation of monitors is being planned for two further blocks, comprising 248 additional homes. The data emerging from these pilots is being used to inform the programmed installation of further monitors and the consideration of the use of other technologies.



We recognise that property data is only half of the equation. Of equal importance is the data we hold about residents. This data can help to identify residents who might be at higher risk of damp and mould due to overcrowding; who might face additional challenges in engaging with us (for example language barriers) or who rarely contact their landlord. We are in the early stages of our work on intersecting risks, and our targeted inspections of households headed by older people is a key example of where this work is already underway. By cross referencing data on our residents with property related data, such as property archetypes with high levels of damp and mould reports, we can target our proactive work where intersecting risks arise. We are overlaying property data with the data collated through inspections already undertaken, the independent living team and resident complaints to help identify residents at high risk of experiencing the negative impacts of damp and mould.

## Highlights

**We will undertake proactive inspections of 200-250 Council properties per week**

**We are using data we hold from over 7,700 buildings which have undergone stock conditions survey and EPC surveys to identify the most at-risk buildings**

**We are trialling the use of humidity monitors in high rise blocks**



### 1.3 Investing in our stock to prevent damp and mould

The Council has an ongoing programme of work to improve the conditions of its properties, which will reduce the risk of damp and mould, both from structural issues and as a result of poor heating and ventilation. Our multifaceted approach includes a number of established, interrelated workstreams which are closely linked to prevent the formation of silos. A key aspect of our approach is ensuring that works are undertaken in compliance with PAS 2030 technical standards to ensure that retrofit works are holistic and sequenced to avoid temporarily worsening issues like damp and mould. This can happen as an unintended by-product of energy efficiency measures, for example where new insulation is not accompanied by additional ventilation and heating. Taken together over the next 3 years we are planning to invest £53m on the capital programme and £21 on fabric-first investments to improve Council properties and in doing so, drive up living conditions for our tenants and leaseholders.

#### 1.3.1 External works

Both tenants and leaseholders in Council owned blocks will benefit from the programme of external works to the buildings which will reduce the likelihood of damp and mould arising through leaks and cracks. In autumn 2022, Cabinet approved £12m for the first phase of procurement of fabric-first upgrades to our buildings, alongside works related to the outcomes of fire risk assessments. This programme takes a fabric-first approach (in line with building regulations), ensuring that the existing components and materials of the building's envelope are performing

well, and replacing elements like windows, roofs and external wall systems where necessary. For example, old timber framed and single glazed windows are being replaced with modern UPVC, double-glazed windows. Our current specification of glass is “Low E” and the Council has recently also changed the material used in the spacer between double glazing panels to deliver improved U Values (this is the rating that is given to a window based on how much heat loss it allows). The spacer was previously aluminium but as aluminium is highly conductive the new approach is to use a synthetic material reducing heat loss and improving thermal efficiency.

The Council also undertakes cyclical preventative works to ensure that buildings continue to perform. We have undertaken proactive works in specific areas and estates that have faced historic underinvestment and where this is resulting in damp and mould in multiple properties. It has carried out works to over 300 properties across Canning Town and Custom House regeneration areas, refurbishing them to a high standard to proactively address damp and mould issues and reverse historic underinvestment. Tenants of these properties are a mixture of temporary accommodation and Council secure tenants.

Additionally the Estate Improvement Programme, a resident led estate improvement initiative, uses resident engagement on specific estates to help the Council to proactively identify issues with building fabric that cause damp and mould at the earliest opportunity. In undertaking resident consultation for the estate works, the capital team take the opportunity to pick up on issues residents are experiencing within their homes. Issues such as internal repairs, heating, kitchens, bathrooms, damp and mould, which will be passed on from the Estate

Refurbishment team to the relevant teams to be followed up and remedied. In March 2023, the programme had made improvements to 20 estates and 73 blocks. It is also an opportunity for residents to share their first-hand knowledge of the issues on their own estates.

We have also launched a programme of planned estate maintenance which will proactively identify issues on buildings and estates likely to result in damp and mould. A key example of such maintenance works includes ensuring that guttering is cleared, which can be a key cause of moisture entering a building through external walls becoming wet.

### 1.3.2 Internal works

Another aspect of this programme is the internal works, such as renewing kitchens and bathrooms. This programme has created opportunities to replace or clean extractor fans where these are either not functioning or not working at an optimal rate. Extractor fans are important for reducing damp as they facilitate the removal of excess moisture from causes like cooking and showering which are key causes of condensation. When replacing or redecorating kitchens that have existing signs of mould, this is treated with a fungicidal product prior to redecorating to prevent the mould reappearing.

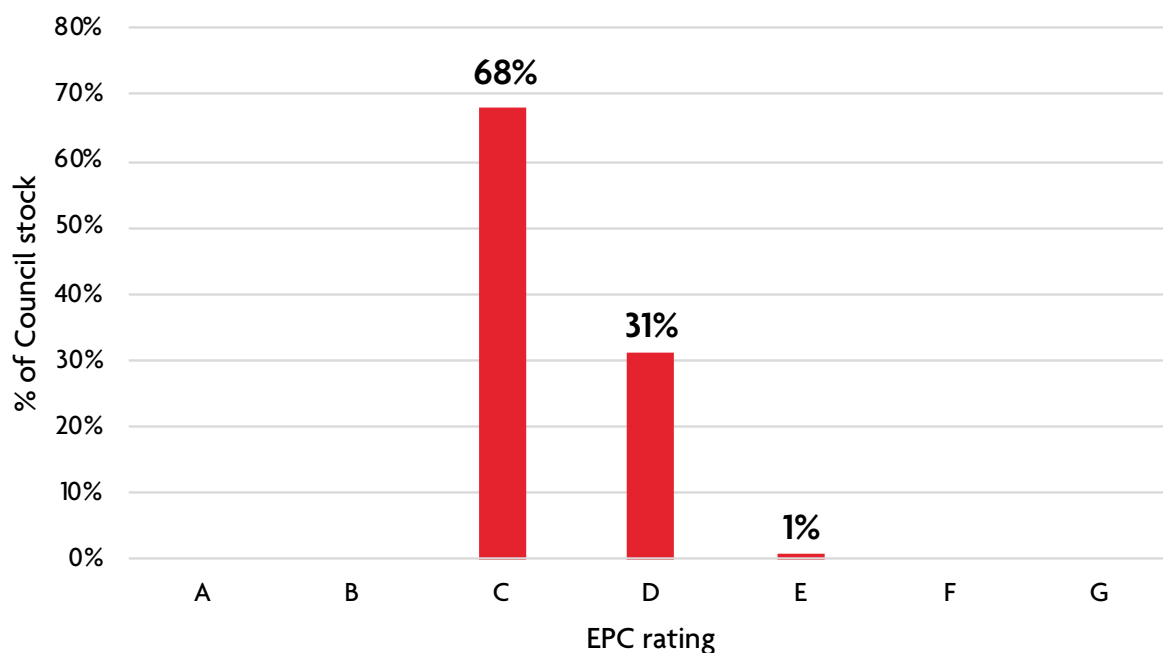
Heating systems can also play an important role in preventing damp and mould, particularly in Newham where rates of fuel poverty are high and residents struggle to afford the cost of heating their homes. Our ongoing boiler replacement programme has upgraded 93% of our

boilers to an EPC C standard to date, reducing the cold, damp conditions that are conducive to condensation-related mould. This also has the additional benefit of helping tackle fuel poverty, an issue which affects 17.8% of Newham’s residents, with modern boilers being cheaper to run and giving tenants more control over the heating of their homes as room controls will be introduced alongside upgraded boilers. The Council’s Fuel Poverty Action Group has published guidance on how to make best use of heating controls to keep homes at suitable temperature in light of high energy costs. The boiler replacement programme is also looking to introduce future-proofed, hydrogen-ready boilers. A pilot infrared heating system is being used in staff and communal areas in a high-rise sheltered block, which aims to reduce the occurrence of damp. If successful this may be considered for other similar spaces.

### 1.3.3 Void programme

When Council properties become void, they are now pre-treated to tackle the major causes of damp and mould. The team that undertakes void works has also been brought into the same team as the Damp and Mould Taskforce to ensure close working. Initial assessments of all voids are followed, where existing conditions require, by a full refurbishment, including major works such as installing new kitchens and bathrooms, new heating systems and electrics. Preventative measures are put in place including additional ventilation and internal wall insulation to improve the thermal performance.

Chart showing estimated EPC ratings in Council homes, 2023



### 1.3.4 Energy efficiency

More efficient properties are less likely to experience damp and mould. Well-insulated properties are warmer and less likely to have cold external walls where damp and mould can form. In addition to building new homes that meet stringent efficiency standards, the Council is also undertaking a programme of work to retrofit its existing stock, which will be guided by a blueprint for the next five years.

The graph above shows current estimates of EPC ratings within the Council's own stock. It is estimated the 68% of our stock has an EPC of C or higher. The energy performance assessments are being undertaken on a rolling basis as the survey retrofit works are being undertaken and, as noted in 1.2 above, are being used to guide the programme of planned works. The Council's target date for all Council stock reaching EPC C or higher is 2030, to align with the Government's target. The Council has undertaken two pilots to retrofit older properties to an EPC of A to gain insight into how to deliver our retrofit programme. The first property, a 1920s end-of-terrace home, has been completed and the second, a mid-terrace Victorian home, is due to be complete in spring 2023.

A technical subgroup to the retrofit steering group sits monthly to discuss new heating systems and other forms of new technology. The Council has recruited a retrofit lead and a retrofit project manager, and a retrofit roadmap, commissioned from external consultants, is nearing completion. The roadmap will be used to guide the future retrofit programme.

## Highlights

**We are investing £21m in fabric-first works to the external fabric of Council blocks, as part of a £53m capital programme**

**New kitchens and bathrooms will help reduce the risk of damp and mould through inadequate ventilation**

## 1.4 Supporting those most vulnerable

### 1.4.1 Proactive inspections for older Council tenants

Elderly people and people with pre-existing health conditions are particularly vulnerable to the negative health impacts of damp and mould. Despite this, damp and mould can go unnoticed or fail to be raised, particularly if residents only use part of their property, for example due to mobility issues.

We have established a multi-agency programme to identify and resolve issues of disrepair in Council properties, targeting households that are headed by older people. Over 2,300 properties in the Council stock properties have a lead resident over 70 and all are to be included in the project. The programme aims to take a proactive approach to identifying such cases and taking action to make the property safe for occupation or, where necessary, moving vulnerable older people out of unsafe homes. It offers highly focussed support for residents and guides them through the process of moving, with an emphasis on communication and raising awareness of the risks of disrepair issues.

In the six months between May and October 2022, the programme undertook a total of 344 inspections of properties, of which 239 properties resulted in works orders or reports being raised.

Promoting the importance of inspections is a key route to resolving the issue of tenants not providing access. Addresses where access has been refused are passed to the gas team to make them aware that their reporting will have heightened importance.

**We have launched a programme of planned maintenance on estates and are working with residents to identify problems on their estates**

**We are aiming for all our Council properties to have an EPC of C or higher by 2030.**





A range of actions taken following inspection, depending on the state of the property and the needs of the tenant. Actions taken include repairs, redecoration works, the installation of aids and adaptations, new kitchens and bathrooms, and referrals to Independent Living.

In addition, our Independent Living team, which is comprised of specially trained housing officers who work closely with vulnerable residents, also plays a pivotal role in referring cases of damp and mould to the taskforce alongside referrals to other support services. This team has seen 275 cases in the 12 months to September 2023, and currently has 103 open cases.

### 1.4.2 Overcrowding

We recognise that those most vulnerable to damp and mould are those living in overcrowded housing. To better understand the scale of the issue, the Council commissioned research to gain insights into an issue which affects over 20% of Newham's households and is linked to the lack of supply of larger properties and high costs of renting that mean households are often forced to occupy homes smaller than their needs for significant lengths of time. The research will look at Council homes and the private rented sector, and was jointly commissioned by housing and public health teams with the aim of identifying practical interventions to mitigate the harmful physical and mental health impacts of overcrowding, one of which is increased likelihood of condensation, damp and mould. It is particularly concerned with mitigating the poor health and wellbeing outcomes that affect children and young children and will consider the role of youth centres, homework clubs and libraries in providing alternatives to being indoors.

### 1.4.3 Raising awareness and providing advice

We are working with the Public Health and Children's Services directorates to raise awareness of the risk of damp and mould, and what can be done to mitigate it, among the most vulnerable groups: older people, young children and people with existing health conditions, particularly respiratory conditions and allergies. Guidance is being produced jointly between Housing and Public Health directorates for health and social care practitioners such as GPs to ensure that they know how best to support residents who are concerned about damp and mould in their homes.

The Council has also been conducting training for Council staff and voluntary sector partners via the Social Welfare Alliance, helping front-line workers to identify damp, mould and other disrepair issues in private rented sector properties that they visit in the course of their duties. This training covers:

- Summary of the private rented sector;
- Summary of council powers to regulate this sector;
- Guidance on what to look out for in peoples' homes;
- Advice to give to residents in poor condition properties and
- Case studies.

The Council is supporting community energy champion programmes that provide information, training and support to community members so that they can also help raise awareness around action to reduce health impacts of fuel poverty and encourage help seeking when needed. This builds on the model of community health champions activated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This cross-Council work is supported by the Council's health and wellbeing strategy, **50 Steps to a Healthier Newham 2020-2023** which sets out the aims of addressing the wide ranging impacts of fuel poverty and overcrowding (steps 43 and 44). This strategy is currently being reviewed, with an updated strategy due to be published in 2024. A key element within the housing section will be tackling damp and mould across all housing tenures. Raising awareness and accessing support to address issues of damp and mould is also part of the Council's cost of living response including the Cost of Living Older People's Action Plan and Cost of Living Crisis Response Action Plan.

#### **1.4.4 Improving communications with the Council**

The Council provides information on its website around identifying damp and mould, safely cleaning or removing mould and reporting it to the Council or private landlords. In response to issues raised during the consultation, it will also include details on how to protect belongings from the impacts of damp and mould.

It also includes information in offline publications like the Newham Mag and Housing Newsletter in order to ensure that those who are digitally excluded also have access to this important information. Residents in high-rise blocks which are more vulnerable to damp and mould have also been sent letters making them aware of reporting mechanisms.

We also recognise that many residents prefer to contact the Council by telephone rather than via the online portal. This may be because they are digitally excluded, because they are more confident speaking English than reading or writing it, or simply because they prefer to speak to an officer. As a result we have changed the webpage to include the telephone number for the repairs service have improved the performance of the call centre. Ongoing training is also being provided to staff in the contact centre to improve call waiting time and overall customer service.

A key part of the ongoing training being rolled out to technical staff (surveyors) and housing liaison officers is around improving listening and communication with residents, with an emphasis on empathy and care. This is in addition to being able to identify and report issues.

## **Highlights**

**We are targeting the 2,300 Council homes with a lead tenant over the age of 70 for inspections**

**We are publishing guidance and working with partners in health and education to ensure residents have access to the right information**

**We are undertaking research to understand how to mitigate the most harmful impacts of overcrowding**

**We are making it easier to contact the Council to report damp and mould by telephone and publishing guidance in non-digital formats**

## 2. Homes in the private rented sector



### 2.1 Take enforcement action against cases of damp and mould

Over the past three years, damp and mould has been cited in over 1,000 requests for support made to the Council's private rented sector team. In these cases, it was either the reason for contacting the Council or as an additional concern that was identified upon inspection. Nationally, the private rented sector has the highest rates of damp and mould, which makes enforcement of the issue crucial, particularly as over half of Newham's residents live in the private rented sector.

#### 2.1.1 Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

In response to a direct complaint or referral, the Council can undertake an inspection of a property and assessing the conditions using the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This system assesses if the poor conditions present lead to 1 of 29 possible hazards. These are then determined as either serious Category 1 hazards or lower scoring Category 2 hazards. Damp and mould and excess cold are all conditions that are covered by the HHSRS, although damp and mould would usually have to be very serious to meet the threshold of a Category 1 hazard.

When a hazard or hazards have been identified and the landlord has failed to act to resolve the issue, the Council can then serve a legal document, called an Improvement Notice, on the landlord to make repairs. In more serious cases we can prohibit the use of a property, sometimes suspended until the current tenancy comes to an end to avoid making households homeless. Where a landlord fails to make improvements or improve poor management then the council can issue a financial penalty notice (FPN) of up to £30,000. For serious breaches, or where there is previous history of non-compliance, the Council can also prosecute the landlord.

The Council sometimes uses alternative legislation like environmental health and nuisance laws, as detailed in pp.2-4 of this strategy. In particular 'statutory nuisance' under section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act is a useful tool that can be used speedily to respond to these issues. A large share of cases are also resolved informally, without the Council having to take formal action against the landlord or managing agent.

### Worried about damp, mould or condensation in your privately-rented home?



Contact your landlord in writing first, and make sure you save a copy.

If you don't hear back or they refuse to take action in a reasonable amount of time, contact the Private Sector Housing Standards team at **020 3373 1950** or **privatehousing@newham.gov.uk**

#### 2.1.2 Property licensing

The Council has two types of private rented sector property licensing schemes in place across the majority of wards in the Borough; they were first introduced in 2013. These are a selective licensing scheme, which regulates single family properties, and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing schemes (a mandatory scheme and additional scheme), which regulate properties occupied by three or more unrelated occupants. The most recent schemes were approved by Government in November 2022 with the additional HMO scheme coming into effect on 1st January 2023 and the selective scheme coming into effect on 1st June 2023 – both schemes last five years.

The licence conditions require landlords to keep their properties in a good state of repair and ensure that they respond to disrepair when they are made aware of it. This includes preventing and responding to damp and mould. Where action is not duly taken, the Council has a range of enforcement powers at its disposal.

Licence conditions also allow the Council to set a maximum occupancy for properties, which can help to tackle the problem of some landlords knowingly overcrowding properties to maximise rent. Overcrowding can exacerbate damp and mould by increasing the moisture in the property due to showering, cooking and even breathing. A property with too many tenants may also be overcrowded with belongings, limiting the potential for air circulation and ventilation.

Property licensing also allows the Council to undertake proactive inspections to ensure that landlords are complying with the terms of the licence. A key benefit is that the Council is able to identify issues proactively, rather than waiting for tenants to raise an issue. This is crucial as

tenants in the private rented sector have limited security of tenure and are vulnerable to a range of responses from landlords if they report damp and mould, ranging from inaction to revenge evictions or harassment. They also give the Council the ability to tackle less severe cases of damp and mould, alongside other disrepair issues.

A shortage of low-cost private rented sector properties also means that many tenants opt to occupy unsafe housing with poor conditions as it is cheaper than decent housing – a situation which directly benefits rogue landlords. The lack of supply of PRS properties and soaring rents at present compounds this issue. Moreover, structural inequalities, language barriers and a lack of access to clear information about tenants' rights make it particularly likely that tenants living in poor conditions come from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

A referral mechanism has also been established to ensure that the private rented sector properties of housing register applicants who cite issues of damp and mould in their existing properties are investigated by the private sector enforcement team. The Council is also developing and implementing a cross-council referral and monitoring system for damp and mould cases to work alongside the systems used within housing. In this way, the Council seeks to ensure that even where we are not informed of damp and mould issues through the intended channels, we are still able to deliver a fast, effective response.

## Highlights

**At present we are undertaking an average of 719 proactive compliance inspections of privately-rented properties per month through the property licensing scheme, plus additional reactive inspections**

**We take enforcement action against landlords who fail to ensure their properties are free from damp and mould, including imposing financial penalties where necessary**

**In 2021, 341 enforcement actions were taken against landlords or managing agents of properties with damp and mould**

## 2.2 Improve our data collection around the extent of damp and mould

The Government's 2021 estimates, set out in the graph below, indicate that damp in particular is more prevalent in the private rented sector than other housing tenures<sup>4</sup>. This is in line with the findings that the share of non-decent dwellings is the highest in the private rented sector, and the energy efficiency is worst in the private rented sector.<sup>5</sup> These figures are modelled based on reports of damp, which means they may be underestimates as residents in the private rented sector often choose not to report damp and mould issues.

Given the transient nature of the sector, this means that many more private renters are likely to have experienced damp and mould at some point. A study by Citizens Advice found that 70% of renters surveyed had experienced cold, damp or mould in a property they had rented<sup>6</sup>. 40% of renters surveyed had felt stressed as a result of damp and mould<sup>7</sup>.

Data collected through the private sector licensing schemes are also key to understanding the extent of damp and mould issues in the sector. We have developed a predictive model to identify properties at risk of disrepair, based on the age of the property and the results of inspections undertaken to date. This in turn informs our programme of future inspections.

<sup>4</sup> DLUHC, 2022. English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022: headline report. [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2021-to-2022-headline-report/english-housing-survey-2021-to-2022-headline-report](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2021-to-2022-headline-report/english-housing-survey-2021-to-2022-headline-report) [accessed 16.02.23]

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

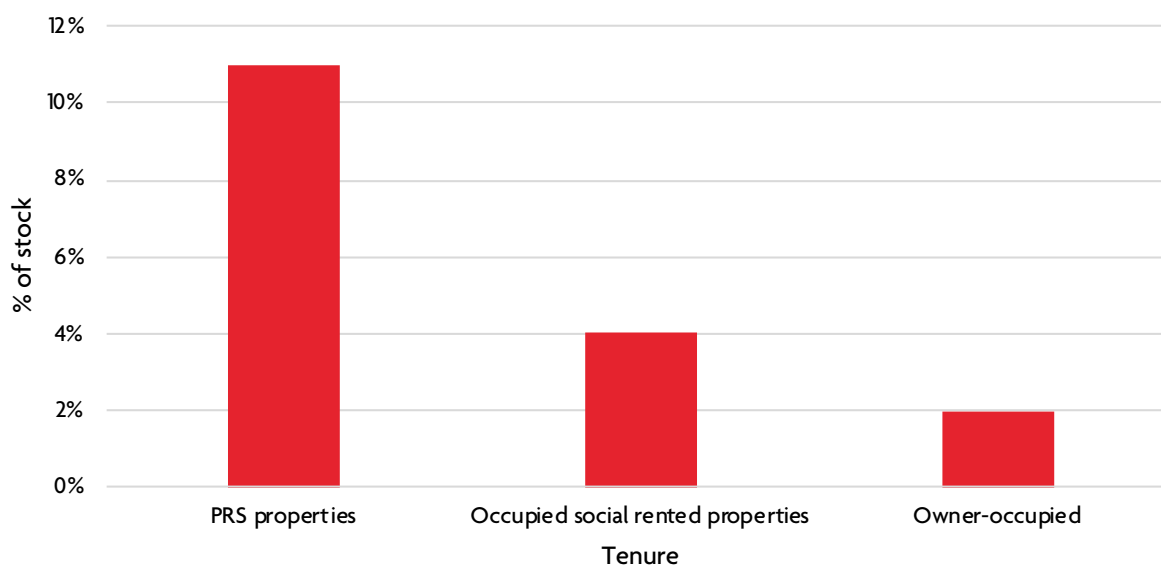
<sup>6</sup> Citizens Advice, 2023. Damp, cold and full of mould: The reality of housing in the private rented sector, p6.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Energy/Damp,%20cold%20and%20full%20of%20mould%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Energy/Damp,%20cold%20and%20full%20of%20mould%20(1).pdf) [accessed 21.02.23]

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p6.



Chart showing prevalence of damp in England's housing stock (modelled), 2021



Our field officers are well trained in assessment of damp and mould, and the basic epidemiology behind it, as part of their professional qualifications as environmental health officers. Those that make assessments using HHSRS are also required to have gained the formal HHSRS qualification, obtained through a two-day training course.

In the past our data collection around the specific issues of damp and mould has been limited, as it was not recorded as a distinct sub-type of disrepair. We are implementing new recording processes for specific types of disrepair, including damp and mould that will include updates from the initial reporting, right through to investigation and closure of a case. The rollout in summer 2023 will be accompanied by training for officers.

## 2.3 Energy efficiency

There is a strong link between homes with poor energy efficiency and damp and mould. A home with uninsulated walls or single glazing, for example, is more likely to experience condensation, one cause of mould, especially if tenants cannot afford to keep the heating on constantly. 58% of properties in Newham's private rented sector have an EPC of D or below, which indicates poor energy efficiency, marginally higher than the England-wide figure of 56%<sup>8</sup>. Renters in homes with an EPC D-G are 73% more likely to experience damp than those with an EPC of A-C<sup>9</sup>.

### 2.3.1 Enforcement of minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES)

Enforcement of energy-efficiency standards are the primary legal tool through which the Council takes proactive action to prevent damp and mould in homes in the private rented sector. Private rented sector properties are required to have an EPC of E or higher under minimum

## Highlights

**We are implementing new systems for recording cases of damp and mould**

**28 officers have formal training in identifying damp and mould as part of their professional qualifications**

<sup>8</sup> Citizens Advice, 2023. Damp, cold and full of mould: The reality of housing in the private rented sector, p4.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Energy/Damp,%20cold%20and%20full%20of%20mould%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Energy/Damp,%20cold%20and%20full%20of%20mould%20(1).pdf) [accessed 21.02.23]

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p7.

energy efficiency standards (MEES) regulations. Unless they qualify for an exemption (for example if the property is a listed building), landlords letting out properties with EPCs of F or G may be subject to enforcement action. The Council's enforcement officers have been trained to assess EPCs in properties that they visit, to ensure that properties meet the legal standard of EPC E or higher.

As of September 2023, we have issued over 100 penalties to substandard properties (EPC Band F or G rated properties) under the MEES regulations. When landlords are issued with Penalties they are given 6 months to improve the property. In the same period, 42 properties have been improved to above a substandard level (EPC E or higher). Landlords have conducted works such as boiler installation, loft insulation and replacing bulbs with LEDs.

### 2.3.2 Schemes and Grants

The Council has established an energy-efficiency team within the private sector housing team who work on securing grant funding and facilitating improvements to private rented sector properties. They have run four drop-in sessions for landlords to ask questions about the standards and support available. We also refer landlords and tenants to advice services such as the pan London SHINE helpline.

As of March 2023, the Council has achieved the following:

- The team has supported 533 applications, 79 of which have been confirmed eligible for the Mayor of London's Warmer Homes Scheme. This has provided grants of between £5,000 and £25,000 for energy-saving measures to households with a low income (household income below £31,000) or in receipt of means-tested benefits. We are no longer taking referrals for this scheme and the work is ongoing.
- It has made 369 referrals for the West London Green Homes Grant (Newham is part of the West London consortium for this grant funding), 120 of which were social housing. We are no longer taking referrals for this

scheme and the work is ongoing.

- 31 properties received improvements work through the ECO3 scheme last year
- We are currently running a pilot scheme with 10 properties for energy efficiency inspections and improvement works through the ECO4.
- A pilot scheme is planned with EON through ECO4 funding focusing on Canning Town North

The most recent property licensing schemes also offer a discounted licence fee for properties where the property's EPC has been brought up to a C or higher. This applies to both HMOs and single-family homes.

As part of the Council's co-ordinated response to the cost of living crisis, a fuel poverty action group has been established, made up of officers from a range of service areas including Public Health, Housing and Children and Young People. Newham has the second-highest rate of fuel poverty in London and this issue is likely to be exacerbated as part of the cost of living crisis. A key focus for the group has been on building awareness of how condensation, damp and mould can be unintended consequences of reducing energy use, tips on how to reduce the risks and signposting to further advice and support. A number of infographics have been produced and are being shared through a range of channels. These are currently being reviewed to ensure that it is clear to readers that tenant behaviour is not the only factor influencing the presence of damp and mould. The Newham Cost of Living taskforce also shares leaflets and communications relating to fuel poverty and available support. The Cadent Foundation also funds the Stay Warm in Newham scheme, working with the Council, Groundwork London and the Renewal Programme, and are developing their own network of community energy advisor volunteers who will be based at the Renewal Programme. Groundwork also provides a Green Doctors service through this scheme which residents can apply to for support and advice to improve the energy-efficiency of their properties.

## Highlights

**As of September 2023, we have issued over 100 penalties to properties that fail to meet minimum energy-efficiency standards (EPC Band F or G rated properties)**

**We have supported over 900 households to apply for a range of schemes to improve the energy efficiency of their properties**



### 3. Temporary accommodation



There are three main types of temporary accommodation used by the Council:

1. Properties owned and managed by the Council used for temporary accommodation.
2. Nightly-paid, spot-booked accommodation procured through the Council's compliant dynamic purchasing system
3. Accommodation provided by long-term lease arrangements with Local Space Ltd.

#### 3.1 Tackling damp and mould in temporary accommodation properties owned by the Council

We are committed to ensuring every resident concerned by damp and mould can access the help they need. This includes residents in temporary accommodation in a Council property who are eligible to use the damp and mould taskforce. They will receive the same level of service as other Council tenants using the service.

#### 3.2 Tackling damp and mould in temporary accommodation properties in the private rented sector

We require all private rented sector properties that are sourced through our dynamic purchasing system (DPS) for use as temporary accommodation to meet a set of

#### Worried about damp, mould or condensation in your temporary accommodation?



If your landlord is the Council, contact us at [newham.gov.uk/housing-homes-homelessness/damp-condensation-mould](https://www.newham.gov.uk/housing-homes-homelessness/damp-condensation-mould)

If you have another landlord or managing agent, contact them first. If they fail to respond within a reasonable timeframe, contact the Council's Contract and Compliance Team by emailing [LLsupport@newham.gov.uk](mailto:LLsupport@newham.gov.uk).

standards, which includes being free from damp and mould. Prospective temporary accommodation properties secured through this route, including nightly-paid accommodation, are also visited by Council officers prior to a household moving in. We have an ongoing inspection programme for legacy temporary accommodation properties which was launched in 2018, targeting 25 inspections per week. We are in the process of expanding the team and the new target will be 40 inspections per week, and 2,000 per year.

Additionally, nightly-booked temporary accommodation will now be subject to the new private rented sector licensing scheme, and must meet the property and management conditions detailed above, or landlords face enforcement action.



Studio and shared accommodation is also subject to Setting the Standard, a London-wide inspection service for temporary accommodation, of which Newham is a member. The service ensures that properties meet a decent level of quality and management standards.

The Council's Contract and Compliance Team are available to work with landlords to ensure that standards are met and that any required disrepair works are completed.

We also source temporary accommodation that can be provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. This is sourced on behalf of Children's Services and is expected to be free of damp and mould prior to a contract being issued. However in cases where issues do arise, residents should contact their social worker in the first instance, who will refer the issue to the appropriate housing team to liaise with the landlord and ensure that issues are resolved.

Out of borough accommodation is managed in the exactly the same way as in borough accommodation, and the same standards expected of accommodation providers. They must adhere to the accommodation standards and the council will liaise with them to ensure that repairs are undertaken accordingly when we become aware of an issue.

## Highlights

**We are increasing the rate of inspections of legacy temporary accommodation from 25 to 40 properties per week, targeting 2,000 per year.**

**Nightly-booked temporary accommodation will be subject to the selective property licensing scheme from summer 2023**

### 3.3 Tackling damp and mould in temporary accommodation with other providers

Local Space is a housing association that provides around 2,500 properties for the Council to use as temporary accommodation.

Temporary accommodation sourced through Local Space is covered by their processes. In 2021, Local Space began proactive outreach with residents (including those in general purpose accommodation properties managed by the Council) to solicit reports of mould cases. Residents have also been encouraged to report issues of damp and mould, for example through articles in their regular newsletter.

The Council has a dedicated and specialist resource in place specifically for the purpose of ensuring that temporary accommodation supplied by other housing providers used by the Council meets high standards, predominantly responding to issues raised with Local Space.



# Summary: Damp and Mould Action plan

The following section sets out the actions that the Council is taking, or will take going forward, to comprehensively and holistically tackle the issue of damp and mould. Responsive works will of course be the Council's top priority to ensure that issues are responded to quickly and effectively. The second priority will be data collection, including proactive inspections of Council properties, which will inform all the Council's targeted proactive and preventative works.



## 1. Council homes

Action	New or existing initiative?	How we will measure performance	Performance April 2022 – March 2023	
<b>1.1 Responding effectively to reports of damp and mould</b>	1.1.1 Continue to respond to enquiries through the damp and mould taskforce	Existing	Number of enquiries resolved per year	830 (October 2021-October 2022)
	1.1.2 Aim to resolve issues of damp and mould the first time	New	Share of enquiries resolved per year the first time	N/A
	1.1.3 Set up effective referral and reporting mechanisms with other Council operatives	New	Number of referrals made from other parts of the Council per year	129 referrals from Mayor and councillors, referrals from other teams not currently recorded.
	1.1.4 Upskill staff in the housing directorate to ensure they are able to deliver an exemplary response to damp and mould	New	Number of staff who have attended one-day or three-day training courses	N/A



Action		New or existing initiative?	How we will measure performance	Performance April 2022 – March 2023
<b>1.2 Improving our collection and use of data</b>	1.2.1 Programme of proactive inspections of Council properties	New	Number of properties inspected per year	N/A
	1.2.2 Use stock conditions surveys to collect data on the rate of damp and mould in our stock	New	Number of properties surveyed	N/A – new survey not yet commissioned but intended to cover c.4,000 properties
	1.2.3 Install humidity monitors in at-risk buildings	Existing	Number of properties with monitors installed	124
<b>1.3 Investing in our stock to prevent damp and mould</b>	1.3.1 External works to building fabric	Existing	Number of properties (units) improved per year	408
	1.3.2 Internal works to kitchens and bathrooms	Existing	Number of properties (units) improved per year	369
	1.3.3 Undertake preventative works to void properties	Existing	Number of voids upgraded per year	500 completed, 100 work in progress
	1.3.4 Increase energy efficiency of our stock	Existing	Share of Council stock with an EPC of C or above	Approximately 68%
<b>1.4 Focussing on vulnerable groups</b>	1.4.1 Continue with the programme of proactive inspections of households headed by older people	Existing	Number of properties inspected per year	599
	1.4.2 Outreach and awareness-raising with GPs, children’s centres and other locations	New	Number of outreach events held	Cost of Living one-stop shops: 5 sessions held in March 2023



## 2. PRS

Action		New or existing initiative?	How we will measure performance	Performance April 2022 – March 2023
<b>2.1 Enforce against cases of damp and mould</b>	2.1.1 Continue to enforce against cases of damp and mould	Existing	Number of formal and informal enforcement actions taken per year	431 (during 2021)
	2.1.2 Use property licensing to proactively identify cases of damp and mould	Existing	Number of inspections of properties per year	9,000
	2.1.3 Ensuring reports are responded to regardless of how we are made aware	New	Number of referrals made from other parts of the Council per year	N/A
<b>2.2 Improve data collection</b>	2.2.1 Record damp and mould cases as a subcategory of disrepair cases	New	Number of new damp and mould cases recorded per year	N/A
<b>2.3 Improve energy efficiency</b>	2.3.1 Enforce MEES legislation to drive up energy efficiency	Existing	Share of privately-rented properties with an EPC of C or above	Approximately 42%
			Number of properties previously with an EPC of F or G where improvements have been made to an E or above per year	76
	2.3.2 Supporting landlords to improve their properties	Existing	Number of eligible applications made through schemes and grants	Sustainable Warmth 351 Mayor of London's Warmer Homes Scheme 533
	2.3.3 Tackling fuel poverty through raising awareness and making referrals	Existing	Number of households supported through SHINE and Green Doctors	147 through SHINE



### 3. Temporary Accommodation

Action		New or existing initiative?	How we will measure performance	Performance April 2022 – March 2023
<b>3.1 Tackling damp and mould in temporary accommodation properties owned by the Council</b>	1.1.1 See 1.1.1 above	Existing	See 1.1.1 above	See 1.1.1 above
<b>3.2 Tackling damp and mould in temporary accommodation properties in the private rented sector</b>	3.2.1 Inspect legacy temporary accommodation to ensure properties are free from damp and mould	Existing	Number of inspections carried out per year	820
<b>3.3 Tackling damp and mould in temporary accommodation with other providers</b>	1.1.1 Responding effectively to cases of damp and mould in Local Space properties	New	Number of cases resolved per year	69

