



## Report of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

Cabinet – 18 January 2024

### Damp & Mould Policy for Council Properties

<b>Purpose:</b>	This report provides details regarding a new proposed damp and mould policy for council properties. It is now a Welsh Government requirement that all social housing providers have such a policy. The policy outlines how the Authority prevents the occurrence of damp and mould, how it responds to reported cases and the timeframes for inspecting and treating it.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Local Housing Strategy
<b>Consultation:</b>	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that Cabinet:  1) Approve The Damp & Mould Policy.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Peter Williams
<b>Finance Officer:</b>	Ben Smith
<b>Legal Officer:</b>	Adrian Jeremiah
<b>Access to Services Officer:</b>	Rhian Millar

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Welsh Government (WG) has increased both the profile and importance of addressing and preventing damp and mould in the social housing sector since the tragic death of a child in a social housing property in Rochdale in 2020 following exposure to extreme damp and mould.
- 1.2 All social housing providers in Wales are now required by WG to publish a damp and mould policy, which clearly sets out how the organisation will prevent, treat and record cases of damp and mould in

social housing properties. Swansea Council's draft policy is attached to this report at Appendix A

## **2. Key Elements of the Policy**

2.1 The Damp & Mould Policy is divided up into a number of elements. These are:-

- The Council's and Contract Holders' responsibilities
- Staff training
- Preventative works
- Responsive works
- Planned works

2.2 **The Responsibilities of the Council and tenants** -The Council is responsible for insulating and provision of means to properly ventilate properties to reduce the likelihood of condensation occurring. This is achieved, via planned repairs to properties to ensure all properties continue to meet Welsh Housing Quality Standard requirements.

2.2.1 Contract holders are required to follow the advice given to them by the Council to keep their homes ventilated. In addition, contract holders must report to the Council any signs of damp and mould they encounter in their property.

2.3 **Staff Training** - The Council will ensure that training is provided to relevant staff, so they have a good understanding of the policy. All Inspectors will receive relevant training such as Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and specific training related to damp and mould in order to carry out their roles effectively.

2.3.1 The Council will ensure that any visiting staff can offer advice on managing moisture within the home to reduce condensation and will be able to arrange technical inspections if they suspect a property has signs of damp or mould.

2.4 **Preventative Works** - The Council will aim to prevent damp and mould occurring in its properties in the first place by:\_

- Ensuring information on how to combat damp and mould is widely communicated to all of its contract holders and leaseholders.
- Arranging follow up visits to properties where damp and mould work has been undertaken to confirm that the repair has been effective.
- Undertaking tenancy inspections with staff being trained to identify the signs damp and mould.
- Signposting to relevant advice where contract-holders are struggling with the cost of living and fuel prices. The Council can provide advice on benefit entitlement and income maximisation.

- 2.5 **Responsive works** - When notified of the presence of damp and mould whether directly from a tenant, or leaseholder via the Council's call centre or via a different source, the Council will undertake an inspection within 5 working days of being informed. The inspection will be holistic in nature and look at underlying structural repairs issues as well as the effects of humidity and condensation. The Council will aim to complete damp and mould remedial work 20 working days after inspection where practical, and to deliver different types of works required within the time frames specified within the Repairs Policy.
- 2.5.1 Where damp and mould is identified and additional to the relevant repairs being logged, the inspector will also look to provide tenants with guidance around how they can help reduce the occurrence of damp and mould relative to living conditions. The issuing of this guidance is formalised internally, and a follow up visit triggered with Neighbourhood Officers so that guidance can be reiterated, and tenants can be signposted to additional support as and where necessary.
- 2.6 **Planned works** - The Council delivers a wide range of damp and mould prevention measures under its annual Capital Repairs programme. Examples of such works include thermal efficiency measures such as insulation in attic space, the installation of double glazed windows, extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms and positive input ventilation installations.

### 3. **Integrated Assessment Implications**

The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- 3.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG) mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by

taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

3.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

3.2 An Integrated Impact screening exercise was undertaken in relation to this new policy with all the impacts identified being positive or neutral (see Appendix B). The policy impacted positively, especially in relation to the young, the elderly and those with respiratory based medical conditions.

3.2.1 The Authority's Tenant Consultative Panel have discussed the proposed new policy and regard it as a positive development. Comments received from the Panel have been incorporated into the policy.

3.2.2 The proposed policy complements the WFG Act. The 5 ways of working are also addressed.

3.2.3 No risks have been identified and any possible extra expenditure has been factored into the HRA Business Plan.

3.2.4 The cumulative impact is overwhelmingly positive for all tenants.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

#### **5. Legal Implications**

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

**Background Papers:** None

#### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Damp & Mould Policy

Appendix B – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form