

Executive Member Response To Damp, Mould & Condensation Scrutiny Review

Date Recommendations agreed by Scrutiny Select Committee:

Community Select Committee, Wednesday 11 January 2017
(circulated Friday 13 January 2017)

Date responses should be made by:

Executive responses on behalf of the Executive Portfolio Holders for Housing, Health & Older People should be received by Friday 10 March 2017

Recommendations:	Executive Response March 2017:	Executive update October 2018:
<p>1. That the Community Select Committee considers the findings of the review, contained within this report and the recommendations below be presented to the Portfolio Holder and the Strategic Director (Community) and that a</p>	<p>Agreed that the implementation of the strategy would be fed back to the CSC in Autumn 2017.</p> <p>Scrutiny Officer to advise of available dates for CSC from September 2017.</p>	<p>Following the appointment of the Housing Operations Manager early this year and the strengthened management support, a review has been undertaken of the previous recommendations and what progress has been made. An improvement and action plan</p>

<p>response be provided from these and any other named officers and partners within two months of the publishing of this report. In addition, the Community Select Committee will consider an update report on the performance of the service following improved monitoring arrangements and delivery of the Damp and Condensation Strategy (which largely was instigated as result of the review investigation) in the autumn of 2017.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>		<p>(attached) has been developed that incorporates these recommendations, aspects and the outcomes of the Damp and Condensation strategy and further actions identified to ensure continued improvements. Initial priority has been given to dealing with the backlog cases and ensuring that the cause of the problem is dealt with.</p> <p>The plan continues to be updated and developed to ensure continued ongoing improvement.</p>
<p>2. That officers who come into contact with people who report damp, mould and condensation all undergo adequate training to mitigate some of the previous inappropriate initial responses to tenants. This training to include moving away from the previous default position of citing tenants lifestyle as the primary cause of damp, mould and condensation in properties. Officers must demonstrate a sympathetic approach to tenants who report problems with damp and mould, following a corporate, agreed script. The Tenant Feedback Form should also be redesigned to include the issue of damp</p>	<p>This is an action in the damp and condensation strategy. A suitable training programme will be devised. Neil Wilson Prior will publish the training schedule. Neil has already given training to the customer scrutiny panel and had positive feedback.</p> <p>The first session of training will be delivered to HILT (Housing and Investment Leadership team). Training will then be rolled out to the teams by end of March 2017.</p> <p>As the housing management transformation programme is reviewing how we interact with our customers, pushing a more digital</p>	<p>General awareness training and briefings have been carried out to ensure that the Surveyors are fully aware of how they should conduct themselves in a sympathetic way when visiting our tenants. They are also tasked to take ownership of the enquiry and to ensure that they deal with the cause of damp and condensation.</p> <p>Experiences and lessons learnt are also discussed at the regular team meetings to ensure continued improvement.</p> <p>Some specific training and attendance at</p>

<p>and condensation/ mould.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>	<p>approach to service delivery the team will review whether capturing this information on a form is the best way to record this. The outcome of this will be fed back in Autumn 2017. In the short term a question will be added to the tenancy Audit form.</p>	<p>seminars have been carried out to help improve diagnosis and implementation of appropriate solutions and actions. Training and development needs of the team will be continually reviewed through discussions and during the 'REAL conversations' process</p> <p>During the initial visit the Surveyors will help and give advice to the customers / tenants on how they may be able to manage Condensation. If necessary the leaflet 'How to avoid Condensation and Mould in your home' is left with the tenant.</p>
<p>3. As part of a communications strategy to promote the new damp and condensation strategy, officers should invite tenants to come forward with current and historical cases of damp and mould to help the authority to record the number of properties with damp and mould for accurate analysis. This data to then be recorded/classified for stock condition data.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-</p>	<p>As part of the "connecting with our customers" FTFC work stream we will work with colleagues around a customer portal that will enable customers to report damp and condensation (Time scales yet to be determined).</p> <p>We will be organising an event for customers to come along and meet with technical officers about their individual cases.</p> <p>We will use the rent charge notification – going out in the third week of February 2017 to advertise this and encourage customers to feedback to us. We will develop a form on the website that is easily found giving customers an idea about what information</p>	<p>Not all of the recommendations have been implemented and/or the proposed timescales met. Please see progress update above – item 1</p> <p>The council website is in place that includes guidelines on reporting damp and Mould.</p>

<p>Prior</p>	<p>we require from them so that we can capture this. This will be by the end of February</p>	
<p>4. That the issue of damp and mould be included in housing matters events publicising how tenants can mitigate the effects of damp and mould in their properties, this should be linked to a Communications campaign with appropriate information and reporting on the web site. Tenants who suffer from this problem need to know it's appropriate to highlight concerns (and expect that something will be done about it where possible) and they should also know what to expect with transparent procedures in place.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>	<p>No Housing matters events are currently planned, however if there is a need to run one this will be included.</p> <p>Information recorded through the actions identified above, may provide evidence that a larger event is required and if this is the case this will be organised. We intend to publish the damp and condensation strategy and presentation on line by the end of February.</p> <p>The strategy will be clear that officers and customers will be honest about how the situation has arisen to ensure that the appropriate remedial activity is specified. This will include the use of data loggers to see how properties are being used, and how the property is responding to this use.</p>	<p>Not all of the recommendations have been fully implemented and/or the proposed timescales met. Please see progress update above – item 1</p> <p>The council website includes guidelines on reporting and dealing with damp and Mould and FAQ's. Additional information is also available to download via a leaflet on 'how to avoid condensation and mould in your home'.</p> <p>Data loggers are available and being installed where the use of the property will assist with the resolving the issue / problem. The data logging process is rigorous and provides comprehensive information which is analysed on an individual case basis to formulate realistic proposals for possible solutions and improvements. This data will also highlights the environmental conditions and tenants lifestyle, providing us with a balanced view of the condition in the property.</p>
<p>5. That officers all work to an agreed timeframe for responding to reports of damp and mould from the initial response and for a realistic timeframe for resolving</p>	<p>Northgate will be used to monitor this.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this will be set up by end of January 2017 and will from part of the</p>	<p>The 3 week response time to carry out the initial inspection and the 6 month target date to resolve the issue is now embedded in the</p>

<p>these issues. An initial target of 3 weeks is set as the response time to carry out an initial inspection and a 6 month target period be set for resolution to the issue, subject to the complexity of the repair. There should also be a flagging mechanism in place for those repairs taking longer than 6 months.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>	<p>performance monitoring of the team, and individuals.</p>	<p>delivery process. This is currently monitored via the tracker and is flagged when these timescales are not met. This is monitored at the regular team meetings.</p> <p>The development of Northgate to capture this and other data relating to improving Damp and Mould monitoring and management arrangements needs to be carried out.</p>
<p>6. That through the HRA Budget process appropriate levels of resources is allocated to invest in repairs to alleviate cases of damp and mould. Specific housing blocks that officers are aware that suffer from structural defaults and cause these conditions, are systematically worked on to alleviate the problems, with particular emphasis during the void process. This would avoid subsequent complaints issues.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>	<p>This will be built into the flat block programme and the link to void properties will be picked up through the training programme.</p>	<p>The Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC) programme has commenced. The MRC and Damp and mould teams are working closely together learning from historic and new damp and mould cases that will inform the programme of works to the flat block and other properties. Feedback of information is ongoing.</p>
<p>7. That officers record the problems and state the process of repair following the first visit and identify the cause rather</p>	<p>Agreed and built into the procedure.</p>	<p>Following every initial site visit the Surveyors record their findings and the actions required to rectify the cause of the problem. This</p>

<p>than the symptom to be addressed.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>		<p>includes identifying any actions the tenant may also be able to undertake to assist in resolving the problem and help reduce the conditions that will help minimise the conditions that may lead to damp and condensation. This data is included on the tracker. It is the intention that the data will be contained in a report format and will be issued to the tenant following the initial visit.</p>
<p>8. That officers establish a tangible system of recording data which illustrates the priority/severity of each case.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>	<p>Links to the use of Northgate to identify the severity and priority. In place by the end of Jan.</p>	<p>The priority / severity of each case is established at the initial visit / inspection (within 3 weeks of the enquiry) and recorded on the “live tracker”. This is monitored at the weekly meetings to consider the actions and procurement options that are required to meet the priority rating. There is currently a 6 month target date set to resolve the enquiry / issue. We are looking to develop the priority classification to see if this target completion date is reduced depending on the priority rating.</p> <p>The development of Northgate to capture this and other data relating to improving Damp and Mould monitoring and management arrangements needs to be carried out.</p>

<p>9. We recommend that a system of allocating serial number/case number/customer/property unique number reference be used to record first time complaints to avoid follow up complaints being logged individually and to avoid customer/tenants having to re-explain case/issue.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>	<p>We will use the Northgate system to record complaints from customers cross referenced through the Yoursay records on complaints.</p> <p>Portfolio holder to meet AD on a regular basis to go through customer complaints.</p>	<p>All Damp, mould and condensation enquiries are entered onto a live Tracker and each enquiry is assigned a unique reference number, this is cross referenced to any complaint cases Yoursay ref number. This keeps track of all enquires and complaint's providing progress updates if requested from customers / tenants and minimising any duplication of enquiries.</p> <p>Further development of the Northgate system will follow to implement cross reference between systems</p>
<p>10. That the housing department recognises the impact of damp and mould on people with respiratory conditions, particularly those with young children and the elderly, and this be considered as part of the planned forthcoming Housing Allocation Policy review.</p> <p>Action: Matthew Partridge/Neil Wilson-Prior</p>	<p>The Independent medical adviser will be asked to comment on the impact of the living conditions for the tenant or a member of their household and will award medical priority as appropriate.</p>	<p>Wherever possible it is the intention that the damp and mould problem will be resolved. However if this is not possible then the case can be referred to the Allocations panel for review and consideration seeking the Independent medical advisors advise.</p> <p>There is a priority / severity rating system in place that recognises the impact of damp and mould on people with respiratory problems, the young and elderly. This will be refined to consider how the timescales can differ for high priority cases.</p>