



Glasgow City Council

Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration  
City Policy Committee

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**Item 2**

1st October 2024

**Update on Dampness, Condensation and Mould and its Impact on the  
Housing Stock**

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide an update on how Glasgow responds to reports of dampness, condensation and mould within the social and private housing sectors.

**Recommendations:**

Committee is asked to:-

1. consider the contents of this report.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes  No

consulted: Yes  No

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide members with an update on partners' activities in Glasgow since the previous report to the [Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee in September 2023](#).
- 1.2 The aim of the previous report was to identify the scale of the problem within the city's housing stock and improve current reporting mechanisms to ensure that all complaints are being recorded, investigated and outcomes monitored.
- 1.3 Procedures are now in place to ensure that all complaints received by council services regarding dampness, condensation, and mould are referred to Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability (NRS) Environmental Health.
- 1.4 Officers from NRS Housing Services and Environmental Health were asked to report back to committee in 12 months' time to update Members on a number of identified actions which are covered within the following sections of this report.

## **2. Referral Process/ Recording and Monitoring of Complaints**

- 2.1 A new internal referral process and procedure is now in place. NRS Housing Services Private Sector Repairs and the Private Rented Sector Hub teams now forward all complaints concerning dampness and mould directly to NRS Environmental Health. All complaints are recorded and investigated by their Public Health team.
- 2.2 Table 1 below, provides information on the numbers of service requests received by Environmental Health over the last five years. Service requests in 2020 and 2021 are likely to be under reported due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of service requests specifically highlighting condensation and mould are shown in column (ii) and those highlighting dampness and water ingress are shown in column (iv).

Year	Number of Service Requests <u>highlighting</u> condensation or mould	Percentage of Condensation /mould service requests vs the total number of received	Number of Water/Rain/Dampness service requests received	Percentage of Water/Rain/Dampness service requests vs the total number received	Total number of service requests received for all service types by Public Health	Number of Statutory Notices Served for Dampness related issues
(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(vii)
2020	53	1.2%	983	22%	4486	188
2021	118	2.1%	1065	19.3%	5507	159
2022	111	1.8%	1181	19.2%	6133	166
2023	186	2.6%	1436	20%	7179	174
2024*	119	2.6%	821	18%	4540	105

**Table 1- The number of service requests received by Environmental Health (Public Health) in relation to dampness and water penetration complaints across all tenures.**

\*(1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024)

2.3 The percentage of dampness related service requests compared to all service requests, as shown in column (v), has remained broadly the same. The number of requests mentioning condensation and/or mould as an issue has increased in the past 2 years as shown in column (ii). Residents are more likely to report these issues now due to heightened media awareness and the reporting of high-profile cases in recent years which have outlined the dangers and health risks of dampness and mould. Albeit most of these complaints are not critical, it is acknowledged that these can still have a negative impact on a person's health and wellbeing.

2.4 Environmental Health will investigate each service request and take formal action where required in terms of Section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, where a statutory nuisance exists or is likely to occur/recur, or undertake emergency remedial works, such as repairing a burst pipe that has caused flooding, under Section 87(3) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

2.5 Environmental Health frequently carry out the necessary repair works in default, where owners have failed to do so within the prescribed timescale and where the costs are not prohibitive. In most cases, officers will provide advice and guidance to residents where there is no obvious cause for condensation dampness within the home.

- 2.6 Officers from NRS Public Health and Housing Private Sector teams attended a workshop in May 2024 the purpose of which was to establish a closer working relationship between the teams and to provide staff training and awareness and a sharing of knowledge of their respective roles. The teams were given a number of different scenarios to consider, including complex cases, in order to demonstrate that through effective joint working and the sharing of resources, better outcomes can be achieved.
- 2.7 Joint working between the teams has resulted in solutions being found for larger scale complex cases, for example:
- Public Health investigated a complaint of dampness/mould in a ground floor flat which was privately let. Severe mould growth was found in most rooms of the flat. Officers could find no obvious defects which had caused the problem other than a lack of heating /ventilation within. A vulnerable family was living in sub-standard conditions and officers were unable to make contact with the owner of the property. Housing Services Private Sector teams became involved and arranged for the family to be immediately rehoused by a Registered Social Landlord who was able to offer the family a tenancy. The property was subsequently repossessed and a report was provided to the mortgage lenders to allow them to address the condition of the property prior to it being re-sold. Officers are monitoring this property to ensure that all necessary works are carried out prior to it being re-occupied.
  - In another difficult case, Public Health had to arrange for the water supply to be turned off in one side of a close due to a leaking water tank that had partially come through the ceiling of a top floor flat. Housing Services was able to arrange for the property to be inspected to ensure the safety of the water tank and the tenants residing in the flat. A quote had been received to replace the water tank on one side of the property. A less expensive solution was found which resulted in the draining of the defective water tank and also the tank supplying the other flats on the other side of the property as this was also found to be in poor condition. All flats were then connected into the mains water supply which was a more cost effective solution, and provided a better outcome in terms of health benefits for the residents.
- 2.8 Private Sector Housing is currently working with the Service Development team to progress changes to the current Housing modules on the Uniform System to improve the recording of enquiries and reported outcomes.

### **3. Home Energy Advice Mentor**

- 3.1 It was recognised that in many cases, more bespoke advice is required to support residents in heating their property as this is often linked with fuel cost poverty. Following discussions with Glasgow's Financial Inclusion team and the Glasgow Home Energy Advice Team (G-HEAT) a dedicated home energy advice mentor was appointed to assist vulnerable citizens within the private rented sector who are affected by damp and mould within the home. Tenants would also be provided with for help and advice on fuel poverty.
- 3.2 This was administered via NRS Housing Private Sector Hub who referred 91 vulnerable tenants/families to the Home Energy Advice Mentor between September 2023 and March 2024. In all cases, advice and information was provided to tenants on how they could heat their homes and help reduce energy costs or debt which had been incurred. While it was hoped that additional funding would be found to extend the post beyond the initial 12 month period, funding for the post ended in March 2024.

### **4. Whole House Retrofit Approach**

- 4.1 Officers previously reported that an approach to retrofitting homes was currently being developed for housing in Glasgow which will inform the long-term strategy for the insulation and heating of existing homes. The aim of a Whole House Retrofit (WHR) approach is to deliver a range of measures which have been successfully tested, to improve performance, and reduce maintenance and fuel bills for residents. NRS Housing Services Retrofit team continue to work with a range of partners to test a range of approaches for specific building archetypes and in particular our older Pre 1919 tenement properties. It is acknowledged that the WHR approach will be a long-term programme, with the need for investment and legislation to take approaches forward within the private housing sector.
- 4.2 An update on the progress of the retrofit approach was presented to the [Net Zero and Climate Progress Monitoring City Policy Committee on the 13th August 2024](#). This includes key next steps and outputs during the next 12 months, some of which are:
- Progressing homeowner guidance for pre-1919 tenement repair and retrofit through the provision of technical specifications for individual fabric energy efficiency measures and clean heating options as interim milestones (Q1 25/26).
  - Developing the heat pump accelerator initiative. This includes producing a matrix of property types and households suitable for heat pump deployment and the identification of monitored pathfinder projects as interim milestones (Q2 25/26).
  - Continuing to enable the 'fabric first' repair and retrofit of private sector housing through the administration of grant programmes and, where possible, align with Registered Social Landlord initiatives (ongoing).

## **5. Systems in place for Registered Social Landlords (RSL)**

- 5.1 In December 2022, The Social Housing Regulator wrote to all Scottish Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to ask that they consider the systems they have in place to ensure their tenants' homes are not affected by mould and dampness and that they have appropriate, systems in place to identify and deal with reported cases, timeously and effectively.
- 5.2 Although there is no requirement for RSLs to keep or submit data on dampness or mould. The Regulator set up an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) Advisory Groups to review the existing indicators and to consider adding new ones on damp and mould along with other tenant and resident safety issues. A working group meeting was held in May 2024 to discuss future reporting. Officers will monitor the progress of the working group and reported outcomes.
- 5.3 Officers from NRS Housing and Environmental Health jointly wrote to all of Glasgow's RSLs to request information on the systems which have been put in place to identify and deal with reported cases of dampness and mould. The vast majority of RSLs who were contacted, provided dedicated written policies and procedures on how they address complaints about dampness and mould within their housing stock. 67% (28) of those who responded have dedicated dampness/mould policies in place. 33% (14) of RSLs who have yet to respond to the Council request, have limited information on their website in relation to their policies/procedures on dampness and mould. Officers will continue to engage with these RSLs separately to ensure that robust measures are in place or are in the process of being put in place.
- 5.4 Some of the key processes which RSLs have adopted include (this list is not exhaustive):
- Robust procedures specifically for damp and mould
  - The use of a damp and mould registers
  - Thermal imaging equipment
  - The use of consultants, invasive surveys and air quality monitoring sensors for properties where the root cause cannot be easily identified.
  - Providing domestic dehumidifiers where appropriate
  - Robust training for staff
  - Proactive inspections/internal audits
  - The use of kits to manage mould growth in minor cases.
  - A risk-based approach for responding to complaints of mould/damp, which can range from an emergency call out to 3 working days. The average timescale indicates a 2 working day response time for general damp/mould enquiries, which is similar to Glasgow City Council's response time for water penetration/ dampness complaints. However, in

many circumstances the call out timescale for severe cases of mould would be treated as an emergency and incur a same day response.

- 5.5 One RSL, shared their good practice approach with officers and advised; *'Our RSL took the proactive decision in early 2023 to create a Damp and Mould prevention team consisting of two officers who would contact all tenants over an 18-month period to identify and resolve damp and mould concerns. The team is multi skilled and consists of an officer with technical expertise in relation to damp and mould, and an officer with experience of delivering person centered customer care and wellbeing services. The combination of these skills has enabled a three-pronged approach to be taken: immediate technical and structural causes of damp and mould are addressed; support and assistance in relation to heating and ventilation of the home is provided to the household (including energy vouchers and direct assistance), and longer-term stock investment needs are identified to inform our future Asset Management plans.'*

## **6. Smart Home Technology**

- 6.1 The Council is working in partnership with RSLs to trial new smart home technology to help combat dampness within their housing stock. Environmental sensors measure the humidity, temperature and differential vapour pressure within the home, and this is linked to a database which can monitor these outputs pro-actively to determine if there is a risk of the development of mould and dampness in homes.
- 6.2 It is understood that while the sensors have highlighted a number of positive outcomes, to have these operating in significant numbers of properties, simultaneously, would be cost prohibitive. It is likely that a more targeted approach will be adopted for more difficult cases as this could produce better value.
- 6.3 From the information which was received from RSLs a number appear to be using environmental sensors as part of their everyday tools for addressing mould/damp within their housing stock. Another approach, which has shown real success in eradicating mould and dampness from properties, is the use of electric wallpaper, which works using infra-red technology. There are two Glasgow RSLs who are currently piloting this technology within their own tenement stock. The outcomes of these pilots will be included in a future Retrofit report to the Council.

## **7. Future Actions**

- 7.1 An awareness campaign of the impact of dampness and mould will be carried out in the lead up to winter. This will involve a review of the present leaflet on condensation dampness which is currently being distributed by officers and awareness raising through social media channels.
- 7.2 Private Landlords will be separately targeted via a dedicated environmental newsletter highlighting their responsibilities to their tenants and providing contact details should they need to obtain advice and support.
- 7.3 Due to the rise in dampness/mould complaints officers in both Environmental Health and Housing Services will look to improve their current recording and monitoring mechanisms which are in place to provide a breakdown of reported outcomes in future reports.
- 7.4 Where the Council is required to intervene and carry out works in default there is a cost attached to this. Owners are billed for recovery of these costs on completion of the works, however, in some instances the Council may have to wait for the house to be sold before it can recover the debt. Expenditure will be monitored closely in the next 12 months.
- 7.5 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is consulting on proposed changes to the Annual Return on the charter (ARC) indicators. Following consultation the Regulator will finalise the revised ARC indicators by January 2025 with the new ARC being in place for collection in 2025/2026. Officers will closely monitor the findings from these Returns.
- 7.6 During the next 12 months officers look to develop the Council's website to ensure that information on dampness and mould is readily available to the general public. Advice and information will be provided along with the contact details for reporting all incidents. Officers will link in with Under One Roof Scotland to ensure that the information reported on both websites is up to date and consistent.
- 7.7 Council officers will continue to pursue those RSLs who have failed to confirm if they have policies and procedures in place for dealing with cases of damp and mould. There is also the opportunity for closer joint working where an RSL property is experiencing damp/mould issues and the source of the problem may be coming from a privately owned flat.
- 7.8 Officers will report back on the outcome from the pilots being undertaken by the RSLs using infrared technology.
- 7.9 New links will be explored with other local authorities on in work training opportunities for officers dealing with damp/ mould complaints along with



establishing a forum for best practice through the Scottish Housing Network Group.

- 7.10 The Society of Chief Environmental Health Officers has highlighted a need for national guidance to be published by the Scottish Government/Public Health Scotland on dampness/mould. The Council will support their representations and contribute to discussions as necessary.

## 8 Policy and Resource Implications

### Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	Any funding required will be met from existing budgets.
<i>Legal:</i>	None
<i>Personnel:</i>	Staff input will be met from existing resources.
<i>Procurement:</i>	Works and services would be met from existing frameworks.

### Council Strategic Plan

The measures outlined in the report will contribute towards the following all 4 Grand Challenges:-

Grand Challenge 1 – Mission 3-Improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities.  
Grand Challenge 2 – Mission 2 -Support the growth of an innovative, resilient & net zero carbon economy.  
Grand Challenge 3 – Mission 2 – Become a net zero carbon city by 2030  
Grand Challenge 4 – Mission 1 – Create safe, clean and thriving neighbourhoods

### Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.</i>	Yes – This initiative will help deliver key strategic outcomes of Glasgow's Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028, which has been subject to an <a href="#">EQIA</a> .
<i>What are the potential equality</i>	The Council's approach to improving the housing stock will improve living standards and bring associated benefits to many residents.

*impacts as a result of this report?*

*Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.*

Yes. Council intervention where required will improve the standard of accommodation for all residents in the city.

### **Climate Impacts:**

*Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:*

Encouraging retrofit of existing housing to higher EPC rating (Action No.39)  
Upgrade insulation and heating of all building stock in the city (Action 41)

*What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?*

Reduced climate impact by maintaining the current housing stock for longer, leading to less need for demolition and newbuild.

*Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?*

Yes. Improving the insulation and heating in existing housing stock will contribute to carbon savings.

### **Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:**

This report has no impact upon privacy and data protection.

## **7 Recommendations**

Committee is asked to:-

1. consider the contents of this report.