

## **NHS GM Response to Damp, Mould and Poor Condition Homes**

### **1. Context**

The tragic case of Awaab Ishak and the subsequent inquest into his death has highlighted the urgent need to respond to the health risk, and risk to life, of poor-quality homes.

Correspondence has been received across system partners, clearly setting out expected action along with advisory responses to ensure this is prevented from happening again. This includes:

- Letter from the Coroners Court to NHS GM Integrated Care
- Regulation 28 Notice to Department of Health and Social Care (shared with NHS GM Integrated Care)
- Letter to all providers of social housing from the Secretary of State
- Letter from the Regulator of Social Housing to all Housing Provider Chief Executives
- Letter to Chief Executives and Leaders of Local Authorities (including GMCA) from the Secretary of State

In recent days further restrictions have been announced for Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, Awaab's housing provider, and other poor performing social landlords, removing government funding for development of new homes.

NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care has a formalised relationship with Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP), 24 of the biggest housing organisations in GM, through the GM Tripartite Agreement. This relationship has been the platform for the immediate cross-sector response proposed in this note.

### **2. Our proposed NHS Greater Manchester response**

This note sets out a series of actions that NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care is committed to taking, both as an individual organisation, and working in partnership with the housing sector more broadly. The activity set out here, taken in conjunction with the action of the wider sector, responds to all of the mandated tasks set out in the correspondence we have received, and in some instances, goes further to drive better connectivity, relationships and common understanding across housing and health.

1. Supporting specific action taken by GM Housing Providers
2. Refresh and reinforce information on health impacts of damp, mould and poor-quality living environments
3. Connect through Primary Care Networks
4. Develop a single point of contact for front line health and care professionals
5. Make better use of our data
6. Share 'Warm Homes' activity and initiatives
7. Connect to the Private Rented Sector response

#### **2.1 Supporting specific action taken by GM Housing Providers**

GMHP members will individually respond to the actions set out in the letter from the Secretary of State and the letter from the Regulator of Social Housing, which ask for:

- Current approach to assessing for damp and mould

- Detailed recent assessments of damp and mould issues (HHSRS Cat 1 and 2)
- Detail of action taken to remediate and ensure the Decent Homes Standard is met
- Clarity on escalation processes employed for complaints

A response is required nationally by 19<sup>th</sup> December.

The GMHP partnership will also pursue a wider Response Plan, that seeks to draw on the collective efforts of the Partnership to make further improvements to the way they operate. An overview of this plan will be shared with all relevant system partners in due course.

Activity mandated in these letters such as better understanding the condition of stock, will be used to inform other action we are committed to taking set out below.

## **2.2 Refresh and reinforce information on health impacts of damp, mould and poor-quality living environments**

As advised in correspondence from the Coroner's office, NHS GM will refresh our information and understanding of the health impacts of damp, mould and poor-quality living environments, and reinforce this through proactive communications and sharing resources with front line health and care staff and with the housing sector. Where this can be used to inform reviews of housing standards, policies and processes, we will work with GMHP members to do this.

Communications campaigns similar to campaigns on gas safety and legionnaires have been suggested and we will review our approach in line with this.

## **2.3 Connect through Primary Care Networks**

Based on individual housing provider responses, the GMHP Response Plan, and other actions set out in this note, GMHP members will connect proactively with the 66 Primary Care Networks across GM to ensure referral mechanisms are in place between PCN's and housing providers and to share information on properties where risk factors to families are most likely to be present.

We will coordinate this initial connection at a GM level and support development of relationships in localities where needed.

## **2.4 Develop a dedicated point of contact in GMHP for front line health and care professionals**

To ensure that any issues related to damp and mould are escalated in an appropriate manner, each member organisation within GMHP will set up a dedicated email address for correspondence on this specific issue, which will be available to tenants and to health professionals who may have a concern. In addition to this, a GM wide 'portal' for all housing condition complaints is also to be considered longer term.

The details of these referral routes will be publicly available and proactively promoted to tenants and will be shared extensively with health professionals who routinely make home visits and with particular focus on CYP respiratory professionals.

## **2.5 Make better use of our collective data**

The letter from the Coroner's Office highlighted the lack of information sharing between health agencies, and between housing and health, as something which should be considered by NHS Greater Manchester.

We will connect information held on CYP asthma with our improved understanding of GMHP stock condition to identify areas of high risk and share with localities to undertake targeted interventions accordingly. This exercise can also be replicated with private rented homes.

GM NHS Intelligence and Analytics Team are already advising Rochdale Boroughwide Housing on opportunities for sharing data between housing and health, in direct response to specific actions they have been mandated to undertake. A DPIA is under development, led by a third party, which will provide the legal framework for connecting housing and health records and this will be used as a blue-print for other GMHP members.

## **2.6 Private rented sector response**

Local Authorities are responding to a letter from the Secretary of State regarding their private rented housing stock, with a response is required by 27<sup>th</sup> of January. We know this is where the greatest issues are in terms of poor quality and ongoing risk. The letter asks that LA's:

- Submit an assessment of damp and mould issues affecting privately rented properties including prevalence of damp and mould hazards
- Submit an assessment of action that may need to be taken in relation to damp and mould issues affecting privately rented properties
- Submit specific data for the last three years around enforcement, prosecutions and remediation activity related to damp and mould

GMCA recently commissioned a review of private sector housing stock condition across GM and this modelled data is being utilised to support LA's in responding to the above. Additional funding has been announced for GM (£2.12m) to increase the use of fines where a landlord is found to have committed an offence.

## **2.7 Share 'Warm Homes' activity and initiatives**

There is activity already in our GM system that seeks to respond to the health issues caused and developed as a consequence of cold and damp homes. Each locality has some form of warm homes offer for residents living in the private sector. For some this is part of a comprehensive Home Improvement Agency service, offering wider home improvement interventions, along with warm homes. In others it is limited to connectivity into any available national schemes.

NHS GM have recently partnered with five LA's to co-fund five 'warm homes pilots'. The investment is supporting identification of adults who are at increased risk of poor health (stroke, CVD, hypertension) due to or exacerbated by their living circumstances. This is providing interventions that keep homes safe, warm and dry and alleviate fuel poverty, and also to develop improved pathways between housing and health services.

We will proactively share information on the provision of warm homes scheme availability across GM and highlight examples of good and innovative practice.

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