

Partnership Information: Tackling Damp & Mould / Housing Condition in Bury.

Liz Cook – Director of Housing

1.0 Context

The report sets out how Bury Council and partners are taking steps to respond and react to mitigate against risks in Bury & the challenges and support required from partners to ensure early intervention and prevention.

2.0 Housing Responses to date

2.1 Council Housing

The Council is accountable for the council's stock managed by Six Town Housing and Springs TMO.

- Six Town Housing have reviewed all data and have developed an action plan to
- STH are collating all required information for submission which will be undertaken jointly and submitted to the regulator by the 19th December 2022
- The Council do not have homes which have structural defects / or are of construction types - essentially 'at risk properties'
- Bury Council / STH policy position and practice is to continue repairs whilst there is litigation ongoing.
- Legal Services have under-taken a review of disrepair claims
- Temporary Accommodation weekly property checks to highlight and record any concerns of mould, damp and take proactive steps.
- Damp mould & condensation will be integrated into compliance management in the same way as the big 6 (gas, electrical, fire etc.) and therefore included within the quarterly reporting through Performance and Improvement Group.

2.2 Six Town Housing -Action Plan

Six Town Housing have developed will focus on making changes that achieve the following four aims.

1. Ensure our customers and their families are kept safe in their home by establishing robust processes to remove the risk to human health by using a health and safety and risk-based approach where damp and mould is present in their home, whilst this is rapidly treated and eliminated:
2. To deal with damp and mould in our properties through enhanced inspection, repairs and surveying processes matched by investment in our stock and through partnership working with other agencies.
3. Treat damp and mould as we would with other health and safety obligations (such as gas safety, asbestos etc.) by gathering evidence of properties affected by damp and mould, establish a new suite of performance measurements, and hold ourselves accountable to them.
4. Share learning across the housing sector, as well as with GMCA and GMNHS to raise awareness of the progress we are making and the changes we need across the system to achieve our aims. This will include consideration of race, language, culture, and respect for our customers.

The Damp and Mould Action plan work has commenced on the short-term actions. Work with key GM partners will be undertaken to maximise opportunities to progress with solutions.

Six Town Housing are sending out a range of updates to tenants through a range of media including our website and newsletters.

3.3 Housing Association Stock

The Housing Association stock in the Borough is regulated, as is the council housing, by the Regulator of Social Housing. The Council has been proactive in requesting assurance from HA partners and a letter has been sent to all HA partners with stock in Bury to provide assurance. Discussions have taken place with the Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) who will also be coordinating the response of Housing Providers to all GM local authorities. All Housing Associations were required to make a submission to the Regulator by the 19th December 2022.

3.4 Private Housing – Owner Occupation and Private Rented Housing

Property conditions in the private rented sector stock & owner-occupied stock condition are reactive and responded to through the Private Sector Enforcement teams who respond and intervening to enforce standards. Resource and capacity of Private Rented Sector Enforcement is a risk in terms of our ability to respond as a Council and perform proactive interventions to inform.

The Council is has committed additional resources to Private Sector Housing regulation and will participate in the GM Good Landlord Scheme.

4.0 Partner Support and Action

There is significant information and advice regarding damp, mould and condensation here are some resources for sharing with frontline staff to support them identify risk and poor housing conditions to ensure early identification and prevention.

[Tackling damp and mould | Chartered Institute of Housing \(cih.org\)](#)

[Guidance on Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims and service complaints - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

[Damp and mould prevention - NFA National Federation of ALMOs](#)

5.0 What is the pathway of escalation through the housing provider? Social Rented Housing

The initial process is to report through the Housing Providers reporting process for repairs.

In Bury STH manage the Council homes (approx. 7,000 homes) and have a dedicated contact centre taking repair calls including web chat and social media options for report repairs including damp and mould. The requests will be prioritised, and an appointment booked with a trained damp inspector who will visit the home and provide a schedule of work for any remedial action required include advice on avoiding dampness in the home. The remedial works will be complete by their in-house repairs and maintenance service. A post inspection is carried out to check the remedial work has been effective. The Business Manager for Repair Direct is responsible for ensuring repairs are carried out effectively and efficiently. STH operate a complaints process for tenants to let us know if we have not delivered the required level of service as well as tenant satisfaction questionnaires. Should the tenant remain unhappy with our response, the complaint will be escalated and reviewed by an independent Executive with the final stage of escalation being the housing ombudsman. In addition, we have a number of committees and a Board who have specific responsibility for ensure policies and procedures are in place as well as performance information which is reviewed for compliance and corrective action taken should performance be below expectation. The performance of Six Town Housing is also reviewed by

the Council to ensure satisfactory delivery of the management of the housing stock on behalf of the Council.

There are a number of Housing Association Providers operating in the Borough (approx. 7,000 homes) – All HA's will have their own reporting and escalation processes through their complaints processes up to the Housing Ombudsman. All HA's operating in Bury have formally responded to Housing Service to give assurance of actions and all were required to submit a questionnaire to the Regulator of Social Housing. However, if there are concerns of in action a referral into myself would be appropriate to raise at CEO level with the provider.

6.0 What is the pathway of escalation through the housing provider? Owner occupation / Private Rented Sector

Tackling housing conditions in the private sector is more challenging, this would be reported through Private Sector Housing Team, Public Protection who have introduced a risk-based prioritisation process. The team will work with vulnerable owners and private landlords to effective intervention.