



Cabinet Housing Panel

30 October 2023

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Service Director (Resident and
Neighbourhood)



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Damp and Mould Policy and Self- Assessment



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Damp and Mould Policy

- The policy explains our approach towards damp and mould in council homes
- Provision of a damp and mould policy is a strong recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman in their national spotlight reports (2021 and 2023) on complaints they upheld by social housing tenants (*none of which were WHBC cases*), especially following the tragic death of the toddler Awabb Ishak in Rochdale (the coroner's finding that death caused by exposure to damp and mould)
- The policy also helps towards demonstrating our compliance towards the Home Standard and Consumer Regulations set by the Regulator of Social Housing

Formulation of the Policy

- The Policy was developed by a group of officers from various teams across the council, using relevant guidance
- The draft damp and mould policy and self-assessment was discussed at the Housing Maintenance Cross Party Group on 23/8/23
- The Resident's Panel have also reviewed it and provided helpful suggestions and feedback

Residents' Panel feedback

- **Process Map (page 23 in the report):**
- Suggested we ask the tenant to provide photos when they report the damp and mould
- Queries and it was clarified that the actions of booking a mould wash and booking a surveyor appointment are concurrent rather than consecutive
- In terms of a follow up inspection/visit after 6 months – queries and clarified that ‘if necessary’ means a visit for those damp and mould issues that are not straightforward
- Queried and clarified that for a leak reported damp - for diagnosing and undertaking the repair, the timescales are in accordance with the standard repair timelines (which depends on the nature of the repair required) and that if redecoration is required that it will be included in the repair when that job is raised

- **Damp and mould policy:**
- Page 1 last bullet point. Add of after move out.
- Page 2 section 1.2 - Delete 'are to' (repeated). Should also mention Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Page 2 section 2.1 - Add in 'or from stock condition surveys'
- Page 2 section 2.3 - What is the situation if it is a window problem in a Leaseholder property? *In most cases it will be the leaseholder's responsibility but depends on the lease and which part of the window is the issue, but we will endeavour to help leaseholders where we can*
- Page 3 section 2.4 - What does sufficient response mean? – *this means in accordance with the policy and process map in terms of actions taken and timescales*
- Page 3 section 3.1 - Add 'and meet Decent Homes Standards'.
- Page 5 section 4.8 - Replace 'a few' with 'relevant. New sentence after 'needs of the resident'.



Damp and Mould Policy

- The policy outlines how we will implement processes designed to:
 - Ensure a suitable and sufficient response to initial reports of damp, mould or condensation
 - Identify the cause of damp
 - Take steps to address the damp and mould where required; such as ordering remedial works
 - Keep the resident informed of the remedial works and timescales
 - We will follow up with the resident at 1 and 6 months on conclusion of the damp and mould case to ensure no recurrence
 - Provide advice or other assistance to residents, where there is condensation present in their home
 - Increase awareness for residents through a range of communications and information on how to manage/prevent condensation in their home
 - Ensure staff have adequate training and knowledge
 - Monitor performance and reporting to enable us to review damp and mould related complaint and repairs and target proactive remedial work and targeted interventions.

Damp and Mould Self-Assessment

- We have assessed ourselves against the Housing Ombudsman's damp and mould self-assessment tool
- Many of the recommendations in the toolkit are already in place
- We have identified some measures to improve our approach further:
 - Review our complaints policy, repairs handbook, mutual exchange and voids process to ensure they are aligned with the damp and mould policy
 - Look at further ways to engage harder to reach residents to be aware of and report damp and mould
 - Review our tenancy audits to ensure they capture issues relevant to damp and mould
 - Annual analysis of our damp and mould cases for trends (we also review them monthly)
 - Further training of staff and members
 - Develop plans for net zero carbon homes

Questions?

Proposal to end flexible (5 year) tenancies



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Proposal to end flexible (5 year fixed term) tenancies

- The Localism Act 2011 introduced the ability for Councils and social housing providers to offer flexible fixed term tenancies
- The overall objective was to make best use of housing stock against a backdrop of shortage in supply
- The key aims of flexible tenancies were to:
 - Make the best use of council stock
 - Increase mobility
 - Target social housing for those in genuine need
 - Support tenants to take up work
 - Support tenants into other housing options
 - Support vulnerable/young people to develop skills to maintain tenancies
 - Tackle ASB and other tenancy issues

Proposal to end flexible (5 year fixed term) tenancies

- We granted the first flexible tenancies in 2013
- There have been 2,375 offered and there are 1,502 remaining
- Government research has found that flexible tenancies have not achieved the aims that were intended
- Flexible tenancies are no longer being supported by Government and social housing providers have/are moving away from them

Proposal to end flexible (5 year fixed term) tenancies

- Findings from our own review of flexible tenancies identified some significant challenges experienced in using them
- The gains in social mobility and making better use of our housing stock have not been realised and have not had the success that was envisaged
- Only 2 properties of the 850 flexible tenancies that have ended have been available for re-letting
- We have found flexible tenancies to be administratively complex to manage and resource intensive with no real positive outcomes for the Council or tenants

Proposal to end flexible (5 year fixed term) tenancies

- A public consultation was undertaken between 5 June and 3 July 2023 on proposal to end flexible (5 year fixed term) tenancies and issue secure tenancies in their place
- A short survey was undertaken of existing council housing tenants and prospective tenants on the housing needs register
- Feedback from the public consultation was that there was overwhelming support (over 90%) to end these and move to secure tenancies
- If this recommendation is agreed, tenants currently on 5 year flexible fixed-term tenancy will be notified in writing of this change, informing them that their tenancy will automatically transition to a periodic secure tenancy once their 5-year term expires

Questions?

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and ASB Strategy 2023-2025



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Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Strategy

- The current policy has been revised
- The Policy applies to council housing tenants, leaseholders and all tenures
- Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, there is a duty for the council to work with named partner agencies (eg Police) to tackle crime, ASB and drug misuse
- In addition, in the Regulatory Standards published by the Regulator of Social Housing there is a requirement for social housing landlords, like Councils, to have an ASB policy
- The Policy and Strategy align with the 4 key themes in the Community Partnership Action plan:
 - Help people to feel safe within their homes & local community
 - Safeguard vulnerable people
 - Support and protect victims of domestic abuse and prevent future harm
 - Working in partnership to prevent and tackle serious violence

ASB Policy

- The updated draft ASB Policy will tackle anti-social behaviour through a framework of prevention, early intervention, support and enforcement.
- The Policy reflects changes to the previous policy in the following areas:
 - Review of legislation and regulatory standards (*now also refers to the 'Respect Standard'*)
 - Clarification on what is considered ASB (*under para 5.2 makes reference to behaviour may not be considered to be ASB if it is not persistent – as well as no pattern, as well as behaviour not being unreasonable if it is accidental damage*)
 - *A new paragraph 5.4 about where there are repeated, unfounded reports that we believe to be either false, exaggerated or dishonest which are being made to cause detriment to another person, we reserve the right not to investigate them. Where necessary, we will apply our Vexatious and Persistent Behaviour Policy*
 - *Added into para 15.3 that a victim of ASB can request a review through the ASB review process, as well as the Community Trigger process*
 - Minor typos amendments
- The ASB Policy underpins how the ASB strategy will be delivered operationally

ASB Policy

- The ASB Policy sets out:
 - what the Council considers to be ASB with reference to legislation
 - what powers we have available to prevent ASB from occurring, and what action we can take when it does occur
 - is clear about safeguarding and supporting vulnerable groups, victims and witnesses, as well as dealing robustly with issues such as Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse
 - provides for a consistent and proportionate response to all behaviour we define as being anti-social
 - is clear on the council's commitment to delivering a preventative and harm centred approach to tackling ASB

ASB Strategy 2023-2025

- The overarching Strategy outlines our priorities for the next three years:
 - Maintain a **harm-centred and accessible ‘victim first’ service**
 - Achieve communities where people feel safe through **preventing anti-social behaviour** and taking action that is proportionate and timely
 - Maintain effective partnership responses and information sharing to combat **county lines, cuckooing and associated serious violence** and criminality within the Community Safety Partnership
 - Identify improvements in our partnership response to the increasing demand of individuals with **substance misuse issues, serious mental health problems/complex needs and dual diagnosis**
 - Provide a robust response to **domestic abuse, violence against women and girls (VAWG), hate crime and any other form of harassment and or intimidation**
 - Tackle the issue of **Youth ASB** and the relationship and involvement that some of those young people have with county lines

Questions?



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Pet Policy

Pet Policy

- Requirement of our tenancy agreements that tenants must seek permission before keeping pets in their home
- The pet policy has been prepared to formalise arrangements and provide greater clarity to council housing tenants about:
 - their obligation to request permission to keep pets in their home, and
 - clarity of their responsibilities and circumstances where we might require them to rehome their pet, or where we might need to take enforcement action against them
- The Resident's Panel were asked to review and provided helpful feedback

Pet Policy

- The health and wellbeing benefits of pet ownership are well known, but we also have to acknowledge that irresponsible pet ownership can cause a nuisance to others living nearby and, in some cases, present a health and safety or fire risk
- Applications (new form) for new requests for pets. Not retrospective – unless had not previously sought permission
- The Policy sets out factors that we will consider when determining an application. This includes factors such as:
 - Size and type of animal
 - Size and type of property
 - Proximity to outdoor space
 - Other animals already present in the home

Pet Policy

- The Policy sets out responsibilities and expectations for responsible pet ownership such as:
 - Contingency arrangements should the tenant need to leave their home temporarily
 - Microchipping and collar and tag – if relevant
 - Responsible ownership ('duty of care') under the Animal Welfare Act
 - Cleaning up of any fouling in communal etc areas
- The Policy sets out the timescales for consideration of the application (usually within 10 days or up to 28 days in more complicated situations)

Questions?