



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 14TH JULY 2015

SUBJECT: HANDLING OF DAMP AND CONDENSATION COMPLAINTS – UPDATE REPORT

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the previous report on Handling of Damp and Condensation Complaints submitted on 30th September 2014 as requested by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The original report considered the incidence of damp and condensation in the Council's housing stock and was based on data for the last six years. This report provides an update following the winter period of October 2014 to March 2015.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The response Repair Policy will assist the council in meeting the aims and priorities detailed in the following strategies:
- 3.2 **National Housing Strategy:** The Welsh Assembly Government's National Housing Strategy 'Better Homes for People in Wales' (2001) has key themes of quality and choice. The WAG vision for housing "*wants everyone in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing*".
- 3.3 **Single Integrated Plan** (*Prosperous Caerphilly – P2*) "*Improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the County Borough*"
- 3.4 **Local Housing Strategy:** Property Theme: "*Providing the opportunity for everyone to live in affordable, sustainable, good quality housing, regardless of tenure.*"
And links specifically to Strategic Aim 6: Housing Management, "*To provide good quality, well-managed homes in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.*"

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 During the period October 2014 to March 2015 the Council's housing Surveyors visited 650 individual properties carrying out 748 inspections this resulted in 366 works orders for damp related problems 52 (14%) of which were repeat visits. This compares with the previous report which stated 45% were repeat visits.

4.2 The previous report highlighted the difficulty identifying the common causes of dampness. This was identified as an area for improvement. A simple coding system has been devised and implemented at the point the repair is reported and/or inspected and is employed in Table 1. This provides a breakdown of the total number and type of works order related to dampness which have been received during this period and compares it with the same period last year.

Table 1

| Category | Description | Number 13/14 | Number 14/15 |
|-----------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>D1</i> | <i>Condensation/mould due to tenants lifestyle</i> | 220 | 158 |
| <i>D2</i> | <i>Condensation due to structural issues (Cold Bridge) voids in CWI</i> | 132 | 128 |
| <i>D3</i> | <i>Penetrating damp, salting, rubble in cavity</i> | 6 | 13 |
| <i>D4</i> | <i>Rising damp</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>D5</i> | <i>Wet Cavity Insulation</i> | 124 | 24 |
| <i>D6</i> | <i>Roof Leak e.g. missing tile, perished felt, defective flashings</i> | 40 | 16 |
| <i>D7</i> | <i>Chimney leak</i> | 34 | 15 |
| <i>D8</i> | <i>Door/window leak</i> | 40 | 9 |
| <i>D9</i> | <i>Render failure</i> | 14 | 2 |
| TOTAL: | | 610 | 366 |

4.3 It will be noted from Table 1 that damp issues are reported most frequently when all categories are grouped together, i.e. D2-9 however, there is still a high incidence of condensation related to tenants' life-styles.

4.4 To provide assistance in this area the damp and condensation information leaflet has been improved with revised text and the addition of pictures to illustrate typical problems. This is issued and explained to all tenants who experience such problems and is included within the tenant's handbook for all new housing allocations. A short video has also been put together which can be accessed from the housing website and YouTube channel. This provides a simple animated explanation of damp and condensation issues as a means of helping tenants to identify the possible cause of such problems and how they can be overcome. The leaflet and video were both developed in consultation with our tenants and feedback has been extremely positive. A copy of the revised leaflet has been provided as Appendix 1.

4.5 The other causes of dampness are related to building defects often highlighted by energy improvement works where cold bridging in various forms becomes more pronounced, e.g. concrete lintels, blocked cavities, missing or incorrectly fitted insulation.

4.6 Damp related to leaks from the plumbing in the property or other types of leak e.g. gas leaks have been removed from the data in order to provide as clear a picture as is possible, as in addition to leaks from the plumbing in the property it included other types of leaks, e.g. gas leaks. Table 2 provides a breakdown of damp and condensation related complaints based on ward for winter 2013/14 and winter 2014/15 and Appendix 2 provides the same information broken down to street and area level for 2014/15.

4.7 In order to improve the way we deal with this area of our service, additional training has been provided to our Surveyors, Tenant Liaison Officers, Tenant Support Officers and Estate Management Officers in order that they can better diagnose the causes of damp related problems, as well as identifying the contributing factors for condensation. This has also equipped officers to better advise and guide tenants on how they can help to overcome such problems.

Table 2

| Ward | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| ABER VALLEY | 9 | 14 |
| ABERBARGOED | 20 | 12 |
| ABERCARN | 15 | 15 |
| ARGOED | 12 | 4 |
| BARGOED | 32 | 23 |
| BEDWAS TRETTHOM MACHN | 27 | 22 |
| BLACKWOOD | 22 | 13 |
| CEFN FFOREST | 33 | 14 |
| CROSSKEYS | 8 | 4 |
| CRUMLIN | 16 | 7 |
| DARREN VALLEY | 3 | 1 |
| GILFACH | 6 | 3 |
| HENGOED | 24 | 18 |
| LLANBRADACH | 3 | 2 |
| MAESYCWMMER | 5 | 3 |
| MORGAN JONES | 17 | 12 |
| MORIAH | 23 | 11 |
| NELSON | 5 | 3 |
| NEW TREDEGAR | 39 | 25 |
| NEWBRIDGE | 18 | 5 |
| PENGAM | 7 | 4 |
| PENMAEN | 5 | 1 |
| PENYRHEOL | 36 | 18 |
| PONTLLANFRAITH | 42 | 16 |
| PONTLOTTYN | 15 | 14 |
| RISCA EAST | 26 | 14 |
| RISCA WEST | 16 | 13 |
| ST CATTWG | 34 | 25 |
| ST JAMES | 26 | 18 |
| ST MARTINS | 7 | 0 |
| TWYN CARNO | 50 | 25 |
| YNYSDDU | 5 | 4 |
| YSTRAD MYNACH | 4 | 3 |
| Grand Total | 610 | 366 |

4.8 Data Analysis

- 4.8.1 Since the external wall insulation and render system scheme was completed to the blocks of flats in Gelligaer, we have seen a fall in calls to this estate (33 calls resulting in 18 works orders in 2014/15 as opposed 59 calls resulting in 21 works orders in 2013/14). Similar schemes have been carried out in other parts of the borough notably Fochriw where it has been reported that substantial savings in energy bills have been achieved. In addition tenants have reported their homes are cooler in the summer months. Significantly, only one report of dampness was received during 2014/15 compared to 102 complaints received over the preceding six years.
- 4.8.2 In the last report it was stated we had submitted a bid to the Welsh Government for grant funding to a number of areas, including Phillipstown, to carry out energy efficiency works, which would include over-cladding. This work is now on site and nearing completion.

- 4.8.3 The remainder of the properties in Gelligaer are also included for an over-clad system as part of the WHQS external works programme and a bid for ECO funding has been submitted to undertake this work.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not needed because the issues covered are for information purposes only, therefore the Council's full EIA process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The response repair budget over the last 3 years has been set £7.8m. Over the past 10 years it has fluctuated to address demands on various priorities, but overall has increased by 5% since 2004/5 to 2014/15.
- 6.2 Any increase in works to address dampness related issues will obviously impact on the repairs budget, so it is pleasing to note that the energy efficiency works undertaken are having a positive impact, not just on reducing pressure on the budget, but also assisting to address instances of fuel poverty by reducing tenants' energy bills.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Consultation has taken place with relevant officers, Cabinet Member for Housing, Chair and Vice Chair of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and the Repairs and Improvement Group, all views and opinions have been included in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 This report is for information purposes only and advises Members of the Policy and Resources Committee on the progress being made to tackle damp and condensation issues to the Council's housing stock.

10. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 This report has been submitted at the request of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and provides an update on the report submitted the previous year in relation to damp and condensation in council housing. The report is for information.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Section 80 – Environmental Protection Act 1990, Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: 'Keeping your Home Free from Damp & Condensation' leaflet
Appendix 2: Data Analysis based on Street and Area level