

Appendix C

An Approach to Damp and Mould within Council Housing Properties

Background

The tragic death of Awaab Ishak in November 2022, who died from exposure to damp and mould, brought to the fore the risk and consequences of the effects of damp and mould within the home. Requirements imposed by the Social Housing Regulation Act that came into force into July 2023 now compel registered social landlords to:

- Manage their data well, have access to up to date information about tenants' homes, resolve problems proactively.
- That homes are free from serious hazards, including damp and mould, and that homes are fit for habitation.
- That there is strong oversight from boards and councillors, to ensure that concerns are well managed at the earliest point.

Appendix 1 provides the proposed revised Damp and Mould policy. The policy has been drafted in consultation with tenants as co-production principles are encouraged by the Regulator of Social Housing. The policy aims to reflect both the responsibilities of the council as the landlord and those of the tenant. The policy reflects revisions to working practices, which are reflected below.

Process Review

Following a review of the housing service's approach to managing damp and mould, the following processes and practices are now in place:

- Prioritised inspections to undertake survey of concerns reported
- Assessment of household vulnerabilities to ensure our response is adequate to the risks identified.
- Assessment of the cause of the issue
- Remedial action such as mould treatment, repairs, or renewed ventilation systems
- A robust process to ensure that non access cases are revisited
- Advice and guidance on how to reduce damp and mould within the home
- Damp and Mould and Repairs advice events.
- Tenant Newsletter – Housing Hub includes regular featured articles on damp and mould, practical advice, and tips.
- Focus on encouraging tenants to report issues
- Referral/signposting to welfare services to assist with cost-of-living concerns and impacts
- Introduced trigger points for front line staff to escalate to a housing officer or manager, in cases of persistent mould problems.
- Escalation processes for risky cases
- Reduced over-reliance on tenant ventilating the property, considering the cost-of-living concerns and mitigating circumstances. Additional installation of ventilation systems where needed.
- Training for all frontline housing officers on the impacts of damp and mould
- Maintenance of data base to ensure concerns are recorded

- Revisit to all damp and mould cases a year after the report.
- Work to decarbonise all council homes to ensure efficacy of energy efficiency within our housing stock.

Proactive approach

The housing service actively encourages reporting. Following a report of damp and mould a response will be actioned within 24 hours. Mould treatments have been reclassified as an urgent repair and are now inspected within a 7-day period. Any resulting works are prioritised and carried out within 7 days of an order being raised, wherever possible. Appendix 2 provides flow chart, which is included in the policy, setting out the process.

Responding to reports of damp and mould

Over the last 12 months the housing service have received 422 reports of damp and mould across our housing stock. Further analysis of the data is also included in Appendix 3 including an overview of the types of damp and mould repairs completed.

The data allows the service to determine where preventive measures are most needed to reduce the number of repairs required. By focusing on proactive measures, we can effectively prevent these problems from arising in the first place.

In September 2023 processes in relation to non-access jobs were revised. Adapting existing non access processes for jobs relating to damp and mould has helped to ensure that case notes reflect the attempts and methods of contact progressed including letters, text messaging and phone calls.

Tenancy Support and Access

To effectively overcome access obstacles, that could obstruct critical repairs, the repairs service is actively collaborating with tenancy management officers from an early stage. Tenancy Management Officers will closely work with the repairs team to secure access while prioritising the needs of tenants and maintaining the safety and security of their homes.

Communication

The service have instigated a follow up scheme, which creates more dialogue between the tenant and us as their landlord. From 1 January 2024 processes were again revised so that tenants are sent a letter, 3 months after the completion of a repair concerning damp or mould. This encourages tenants to let us know if they are struggling to manage condensation or experiencing any recurring issues.

On a 12-month rolling period letters are also sent to tenants where works were carried out between the 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2023. This approach encourages communication from tenants to establish whether they have had any further issues with damp and mould prior to the implementation of the current follow up scheme. So far 99 letters have been issued.

Following Up with Tenants

Three months after a repair relating to mould issues has been completed, tenants receive a follow up call to ascertain whether any problems have resurfaced, to order any remedial work or further inspections, and to provide advice and encouragement for further reporting if they do experience any issues.

Investing in Housing Stock

The service has 3200 dwellings and following a recent Energy Performance review, it was identified that a third of our stock is below the required standard, EPC C. Properties below EPC C are more at risk of excess cold as they are less efficient. Excess cold can lead to damp and mould. As part of the review the worst performing architypes have been identified and include solid walled properties built pre-1945. These properties are predominantly located within the main areas of Hinckley, Burbage, Earl Shilton and Barwell. To achieve a minimum band C rating, external wall insulation has been identified as the solution to achieving this rating for these properties. In addition, improving ventilation will help reduce and minimise condensation that can lead to damp and mould concerns.

Funding via the Local Authority Delivery 2 scheme (LAD2) and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) has enabled works to be progressed that has reduced heat loss, benefiting tenants with lower energy bills, at a time when the cost of gas and electricity is significant. Damp and mould issues arising from excess cold have also been reduced in these properties.

In addition to the capital budgets required to maintain the decency of our properties, funds are included within the 30-year business plan to improve ventilation, energy efficiency and decarbonisation. This is investment above the requirement needed to meet the decent homes standard.

Housing and Health pilot project

The council is currently leading a project on behalf of the district and borough councils in Leicestershire. The project aims to provide a consistent approach to the identification and subsequent response to damp and mould concerns, identified across all tenures, by upskilling both housing and health frontline officers.



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

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Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy in Council Owned Properties

Version	Reviewed By	Date
1	Lois Hodgkins and Madeline Shellard	
2	Tenant Involvement Review	24.08.2023

Background

This Policy sets out the activities and responsibilities involved in the management of, and response to reports of Damp and Mould within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council’s Housing Service. The Council aims to provide a consistently high-quality repair and maintenance service for all our customers and to maintain our properties to provide a well-functioning and safe environment.

Sufficient evidence has been found to link exposure to indoor mould with upper respiratory tract symptoms, coughing, and wheezing in otherwise healthy people. Numbers of dust mites are elevated by damp indoor environments; dust mites affect allergies and asthma. Studies have shown that dampness and mould are associated with approximately 30-50% increases in respiratory and asthma related health outcomes. People living in homes with damp and mould may also experience depression and anxiety due to the conditions.

Key Principles

- To provide dry, well-functioning, energy efficient homes that are well maintained and safe for tenants to live in.
- To ensure that the fabric of council owned properties is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould.
- To ensure the Council achieve high standards of workmanship and customer satisfaction.
- The council recognises the Homes (fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 and Free from Hazards (HHSRS) legislation.
- To consult with tenants on this policy and any associated documents, to gather insight, feedback, and scrutiny.

Our Objectives

- Invest in proactive and reactive measures to tackling condensation, damp, and mould.
- Maintain a minimum standard by meeting the Decent Homes Standard (2005)

- Maximise intervention including void standards, communication with residents and reducing over-reliance on residents to report.
- Train staff and operatives to spot signs of condensation, damp and mould and carry out maintenance to reduce its occurrence.
- Working collaboratively with residents and any relevant departments within the Council to manage the immediate issue and the ongoing management of condensation and mould.

Responsibility and Legislation

- We will take a joint approach with residents, led by the Housing Service.
- The Council is responsible for maintaining the property to avoid penetrating and rising damp.
- The Council is responsible for carrying out remedial action if these do occur.
- The Council is responsible for insulating the property in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard.
- A list of the current legislation that is applicable to this policy is available in appendix A.

Damp and Mould Responsive Repair Works

A request may be received from a customer or employee to inspect issues experienced with excessive or unmanageable amounts of condensation, or instances of damp or mould inside a property.

The Officer from the Housing Service will take pictures of any effected area in your home, or if you are reporting an issue to us, we will ask if you can send photographs to us. This helps us risk assess the prevalence of the issue in your home and we will prioritise on a case by case basis.

The Officer will ask if any member(s) of the household are vulnerable, such as elderly, young children or has a health condition. This also forms part of our triage of requests to prioritise accordingly.

We will arrange for a property survey to assess and identify any possible causes of mould or damp.

During the visit our inspector will look at all rooms where damp and mould has been identified. They will look at causes which could be a range of structural, leaks or condensation. They will also ask the tenant for information about any existing actions in place to reduce moisture within the property.

Depending on the cause of the mould, our inspector will review existing methods of managing condensation and order any remedial works that the Council are responsible for.

The inspector will also, depending on the cause of the mould, give advice to the tenant on managing condensation and provide guidance based on industry standards and best practices.

The inspector will also give the tenant a booklet with practical and helpful tips and demonstrations on how to work together in the management of condensation, damp, and mould.

The inspection will be evaluated to identify factors leading to the growth of damp or mould to establish the cause of the problem.

If damp is found to be present, we will carry out repair works to areas that are the responsibility of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.

Tenants are responsible for any redecoration following repair works carried out for damp and mould issues.

If the outcome of the inspection shows that condensation is causing the problem, we will liaise with the tenant and evaluate what mitigations we can put in place to support tenants. This could include support from Repairs, Tenancy Support Officers, and Welfare Support Officers.

Damp and Mould Preventative Action

The council will take steps to intervene in the prevalence of damp and mould in its homes by:

- Carrying out ventilation works to void properties, so that newly let properties are in a good state of repair and any potential causes of damp and mould are rectified prior to being let.
- We will continue to invest in our Council homes and direct spending to maintain our existing high level of homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard.
- Our Asset Management Strategy is aligned with our objectives in reducing occurrences of excess cold in homes and obtaining up to date EPC certificates for all council owned properties. This will help us identify planned work to improve the energy efficiency of our homes.
- Produce and regularly review literature (both printed and online) of the management of condensation, damp and mould in council owned properties. Including advice and guidance from current best practice standards and what tenants need to do, in line with their responsibilities to properly ventilate and heat their home.
- We understand that tenants may have circumstances which makes it difficult for them financially to heat and ventilate their home. Where this is identified, we will engage with Tenancy Support Services.
- Maintain a log of all reported damp & mould issues along with actions taken and advice given that is accessible to all officers.
- Each year, the council will assess cases reported the previous winter and arrange follow up action where necessary ahead of the incoming colder months.
- The council will carry out awareness training to enable officers to spot signs of condensation, damp, and mould, and give advice or request an inspection.

Customer Experiences

We regularly review our process and practices to ensure that we are not just meeting our obligations as a Social Landlord but are striving to provide an excellent service that our customers are satisfied with.

We will manage assessments of cases by utilising other services, contractors, private sector housing and using data loggers and diaries.

Where there are persistent issues or concerns, we will escalate cases to managers.

The tenant can request that their case is escalated to a senior officer if they are not satisfied with how their case is being dealt with. A senior officer within the Housing team will review the case and discuss the experience directly with the tenant.

If the tenant is not satisfied with how their report is being dealt with, there are several routes to escalation that can be easily accessed. We encourage our tenants to let us know at any stage of the process if they are dissatisfied. If a concern, complaint, or even formal complaint is raised, the council will continue to carry out necessary inspections and work to remedy the issue. Letting us know about dissatisfaction will not stop progress on remedying the issue and we would encourage tenants with any concerns to get in touch with us.

The councils' formal complaints process can be accessed at any stage, using any of the below points of contact:

[<friendly URL to be added here>](#)

Contact Committee Services

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Hinckley Hub

Rugby Road

Hinckley LE10 0FR

Telephone: 01455 238141

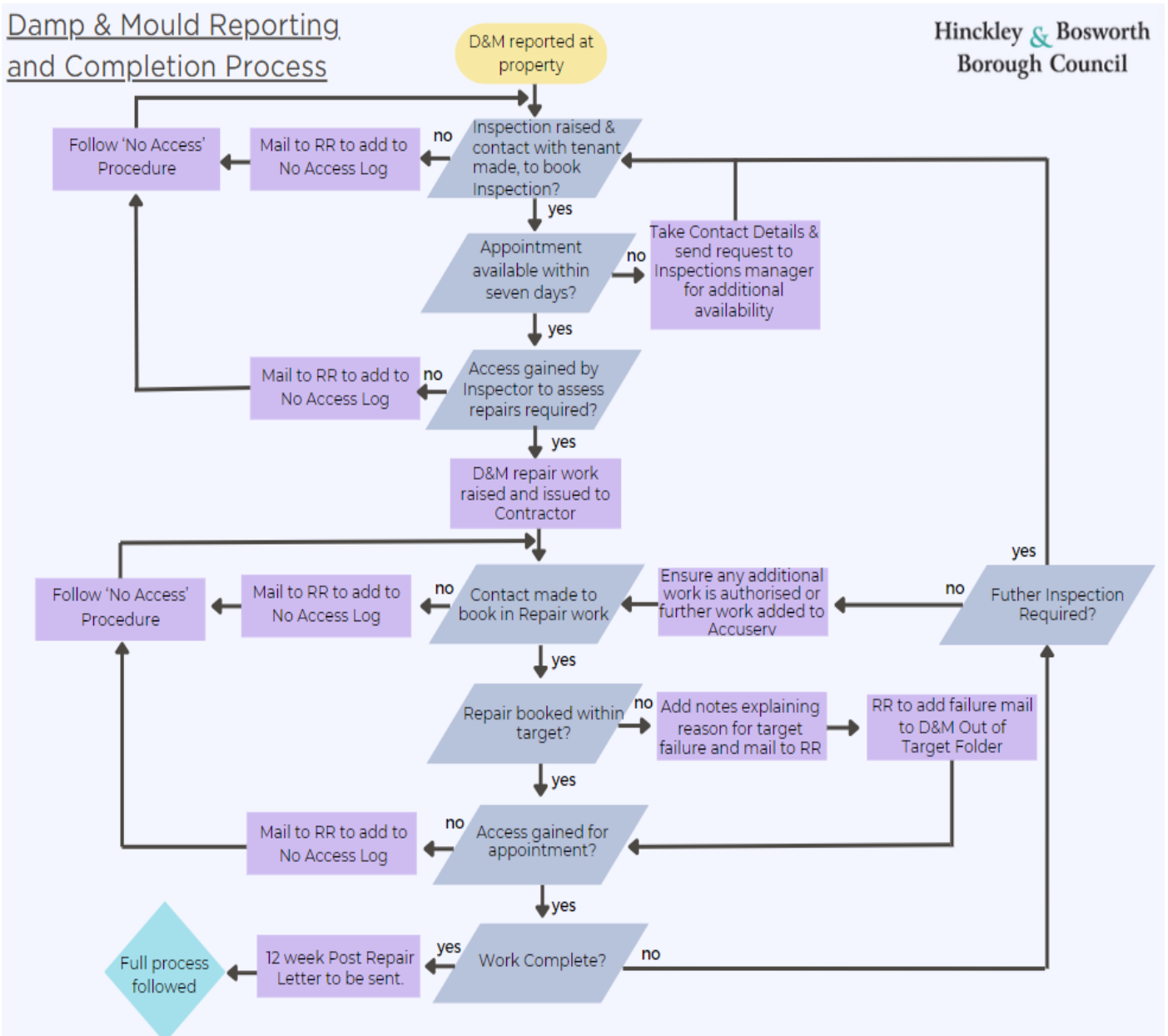
The following is a list of the current legislation that is applicable to this policy:

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Right to Repair Regulations 1994
- Building Regulations
- The Housing Acts 1985 & 1996
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System

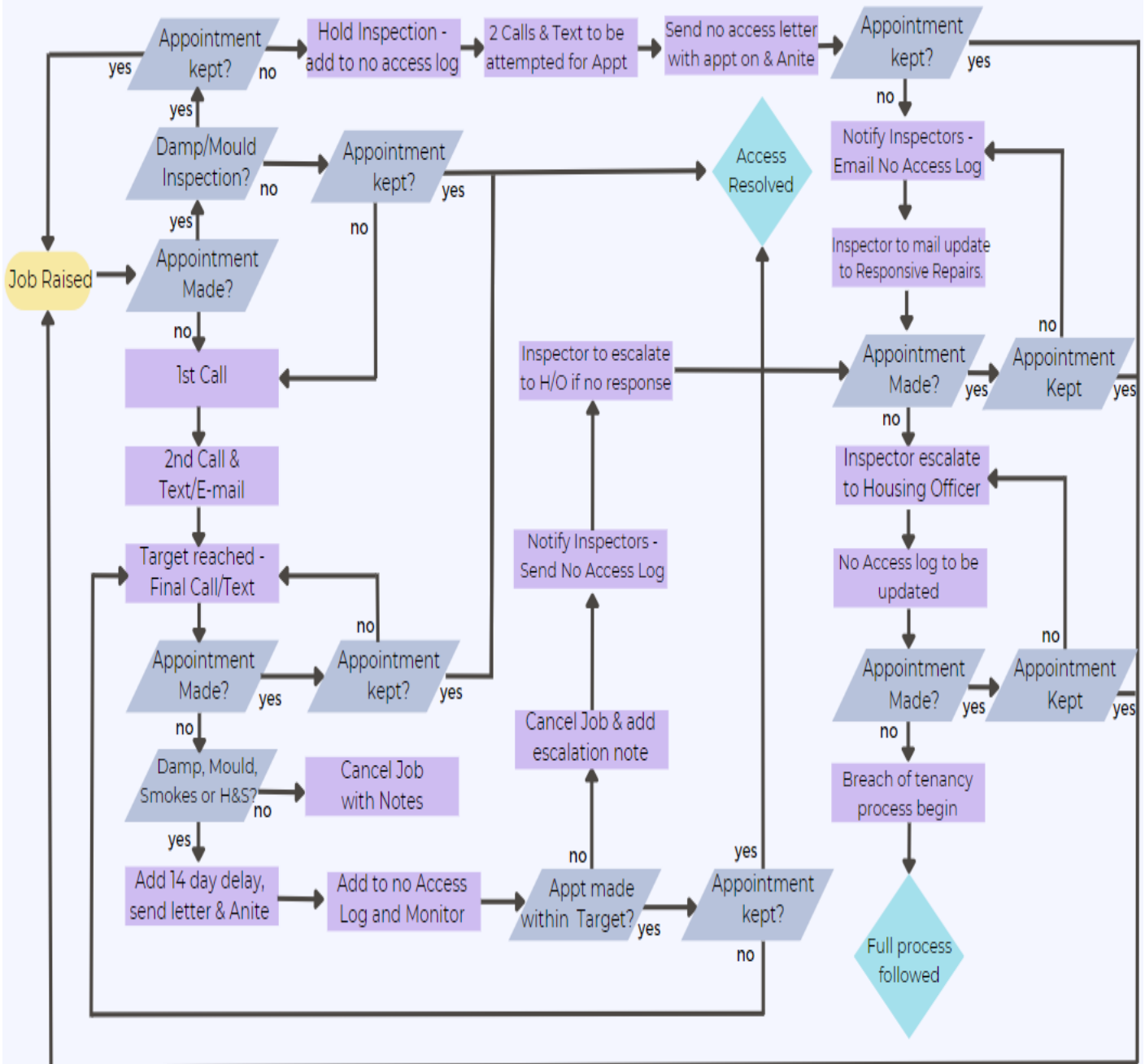
Appendix B

Damp and Mould reporting and completion process (to be included)

Damp & Mould Reporting
and Completion Process



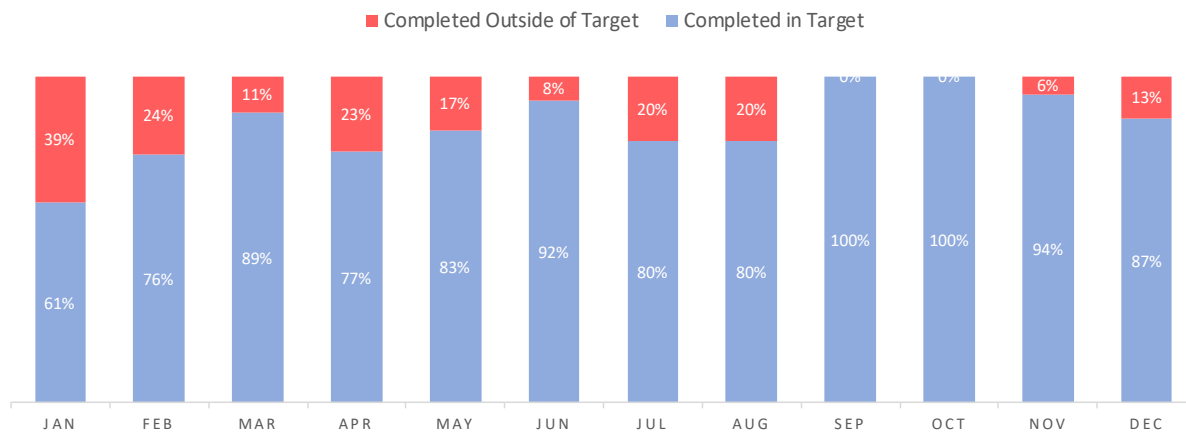
Damp & Mould No Access Process



Damp and Mould Data for Council Housing Service

The following graph shows performance in relation to the completion of works in relation to damp and mould. Following revision to practises most jobs are now on target, and those that are outside of target are likely to be due to lack of access.

Graph A - Mould Treatments in Target



The next chart illustrates the type of damp and mould repairs progressed.

Chart B Types of Damp and Mould Repairs being completed

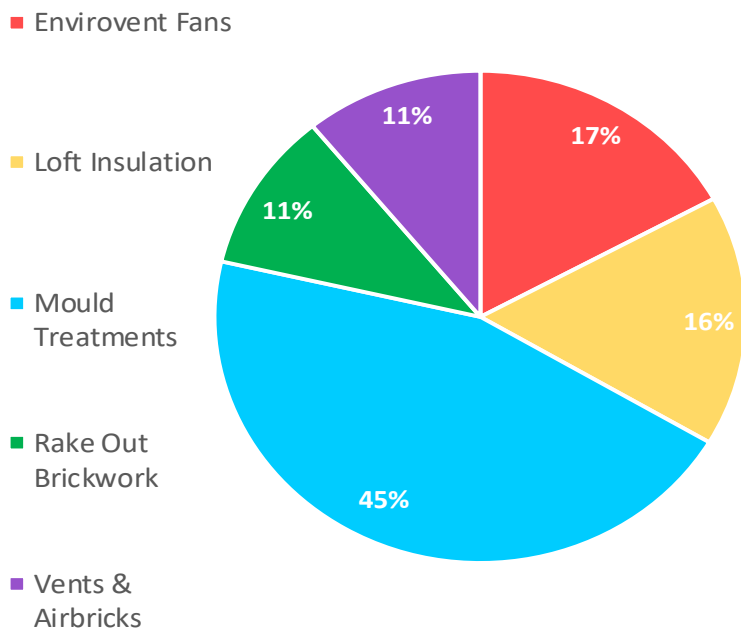


Table 3 provides an insight into seasonal trends. Damp and mould concerns are more prevalent in the colder months into the early spring. Analysis of seasonal trends and specific numbers allows us to target resources to carry out treatment and remedial actions.

Table 3 Identifying Seasonal Trends - Completed Damp and Mould Repairs 2023

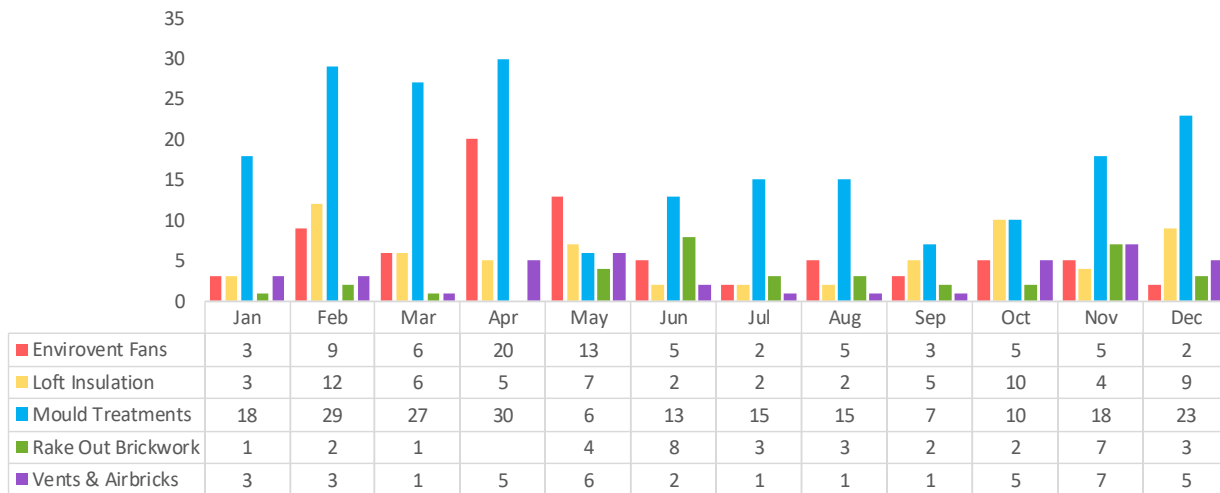
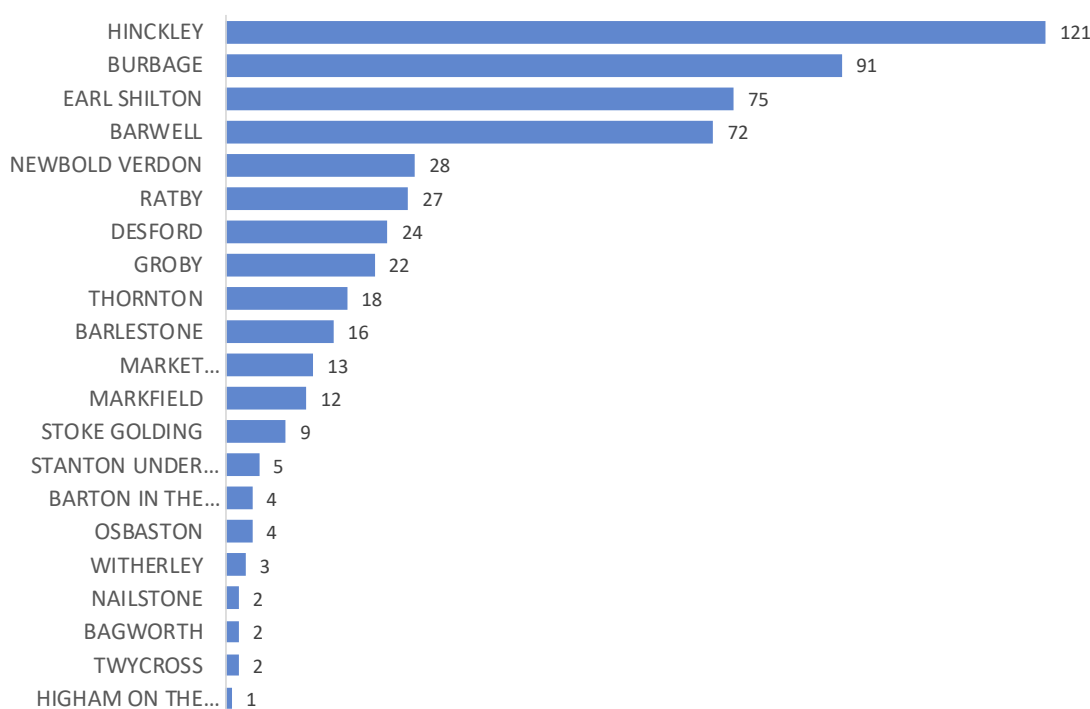


Table 4 identifies the number of reports in relation to damp and mould by location.



This data enables the service to proactively target campaigns to assist tenants in relation to damp and mould. As such, damp and mould events have been held in key locations across the borough.

