

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Performance Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> March 2023</b>
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	<b>Rhys Thomas - Lead Member for Housing &amp; Communities</b>
<b>Head of Service</b>	<b>Liz Grieve - Head of Communities &amp; Customers</b>
<b>Report author</b>	<b>Geoff Davies – Lead Officer - Community Housing</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Mould &amp; Condensation in Denbighshire’s Council Housing Stock</b>

## **What is the report about?**

- 1.1. The Coroner’s report following the tragic death of 8-year-old Awaab Ishak in Rochdale was released on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022.
- 1.2. The report concluded that Awaab died from prolonged exposure to mould in his family’s housing association flat. The coroner said this should be a “defining moment” for the housing sector.
- 1.3. Welsh Government subsequently wrote to all social landlords in Wales (This is Councils with retained housing stock and Registered Social Landlords), on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022 asking for assurance on how landlords are responding to the case. A response was required by 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1. Welsh Government asked for feedback from organisations about how they will scrutinise this issue within their own governance structures. In addition, it is vital that the Housing and Property services are fully scrutinised on this issue to ensure we support households in council homes to prevent and tackle mould and condensation.

- 2.2. To seek members' observations on the actions taken by the Council to deal with mould and condensation in its housing stock.

### **3. What are the Recommendations?**

That the Committee considers:

- 3.1. the information provided and comments accordingly;
- 3.2. whether it is satisfied that the Council's systems and processes are robust and appropriate to ensure that damp and mould issues are dealt with promptly and effectively; and
- 3.3. whether any future monitoring of the systems and processes are required.

### **4. Report details**

- 4.1. Following national media coverage of the tragic death of Awaab Ishak there has understandably been a focus on mould and condensation in social housing.
- 4.2. The causes of mould and condensation are complex. In many cases the appearance of mould and condensation does not mean there is a building defect that can be fixed, however this can be impacted by the energy performance of the building as well as how heating and ventilation is managed within a home.
- 4.3. This increased focus on mould and condensation came at a time of rising energy prices when adequate heating is vital to ensure there is a constant and moderate temperature maintained within a home.
- 4.4. The report to Welsh Government in appendix 1 outlines in detail our response to reports of mould and condensation from our tenants. This report fully explains our approach to supporting households and therefore is appropriate for further internal Scrutiny. The report has been updated to ensure all data is up to date to the end of February 2023.
- 4.5. The report includes information on our response to reports of mould, damp or condensation and on-going work to raise awareness of preventing condensation and managing humidity within the home.

- 4.6. The report also includes information data on the volume of mould cases reported by customers, complaints and disrepair claims. We can give reassurance that reports of mould and condensation are relatively low in relation to overall repair requests.
- 4.7. We have also carried out targeted work to support our tenants with the cost of living crisis and the additional risk this poses for the conditions that causes mould and condensation.
- 4.8. In addition to the main report, we included a number of appendices which demonstrate the information we have routinely provided to support households.
- 4.9. The test of the effectiveness of our response will be in the impact this has on households who have reported mould and / or condensation to us. Once the milder Spring season arrives, we propose to contact all households who have reported an issue with damp, mould or condensation during this Autumn and Winter and ask for feedback on the effectiveness of the advice we provided, any additional support we offered and confirm that the problem has been cured.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Themes?**

- 5.1. Housing is a Corporate Priority to “Ensure sufficient good quality housing is available, meeting the needs of all Denbighshire residents”. This report outlines our approach to ensure that homes are “safe, secure and well maintained”.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1. The costs of supporting council tenants in their homes and ensuring that their homes are well maintained are contained within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

- 7.1. No well-being impact assessment has been completed as this is not a request for decision on a proposal or change in policy.

## **8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

8.1. This matter has been self-referred to the Performance Scrutiny Committee to seek challenge on our approach and to give reassurance that we are responding effectively to these important issues.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1. There are no additional costs incurred with this report

## **10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1. The risk with failure to properly respond effectively to reports from tenants about mould and condensation can lead to health issues within households in council homes and also potential reputational damage to the council.

## **11. Power to make the decision**

11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

11.2. Section 7 of the Council's Constitution.