



The Social Housing Safety Network Scotland



E-BULLETIN: DAMP AND MOULD

Dealing with damp & mould cases

This e-bulletin brings you some learning from 'South of the Border' where the Housing Ombudsman Service have reviewed a number of cases relating to damp and mould.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent and impartial service that considers complaints from residents living in social housing (in England). All local authorities and registered social housing providers must be members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

The Housing Ombudsman's approach to investigating and determining complaints is to decide what is fair in all the circumstances of the case. This is set out in the Housing Act 1996 and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme (the Scheme) and the Ombudsman considers the evidence and looks to see if there has been any 'maladministration', for example whether the landlord has failed to keep to the law, followed proper procedure, followed good practice or behaved in a reasonable and competent manner.

Orbit Group

An independent review ordered by the Ombudsman into how Orbit Group handled damp and mould made 13 recommendations to the landlord.

The review was independent of both the Ombudsman and the landlord and is one of the first uses of the Ombudsman's new powers under the Social Housing Regulation Act (England) to order wider reviews into a landlord's policy, practice and root causes of complaints. The power to make a wider order goes beyond providing redress on individual complaints and extends fairness and protection to other residents.

The review involved seven cases of damp and mould where the Ombudsman had found maladministration, including severe maladministration. The landlord has published its independent review which **provides learning that all landlords can use to improve their approach to disrepair and damp.**



The report, entitled 'Driving Improvement', sets out the findings from an independent review of Orbit Group's complaints, repairs, and maintenance operations with a special focus on issues caused by damp, mould, and condensation (DMC).

Overall, the independent review made 13 recommendations based broadly on the following learnings:

- The management of DMC cases
- Compliance with the Ombudsman's Spotlight report on Knowledge and Information Management
- Learning and development
- Embedding a holistic approach

The report clearly sets out the recommendations and Orbit Group's response which can be used to provide further learning to other social housing providers.

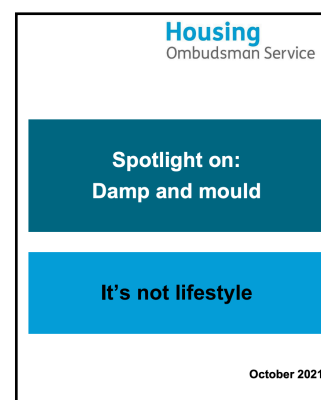
You can find a copy of the full report, including the action plan containing recommendations, [here](#).

The information contained within this e-bulletin is publicly available, and whilst we recognise that this case is outwith Scotland, we have chosen to share the details with Network members as an opportunity to learn from an independent review.

Spotlight on Damp & Mould Report

The independent review recommended that 'Orbit should consider enhancing its self-assessment against the Ombudsman Spotlight on damp and mould to provide more detail such as policies, process maps and practices for handling damp and mould cases'.

The opening section of the Ombudsman's 'Spotlight on Damp & Mould' report provides a detailed 'summary of recommendations for senior management' which can be used as a self-assessment checklist to carry out a review of your own policies, procedures and actions.



Further into the report, chapters 1 to 4 provide more information and good practice examples and case studies for landlords to consider. [The report can be downloaded here](#).

Whilst we recognise that this is an English-based report, it's important to note that this document aligns with the content of '[Putting Safety First – a briefing note on damp and mould for social housing practitioners](#)' and provides a raft of useful information.

Learning and development

As highlighted above, the review identified three key recommendations relating to learning and development, including the requirement to prioritise the implementation of 'a robust learning and development programme, ensuring that there is a consistent approach to skill matrixes, training needs analysis, future learning priorities and continued professional development across the organisation'.

In addition, the recommendations stated that 'Orbit should consider its organisational structure for learning and development to provide a more consistent learning and development offer across the whole organisation and target appropriate learning interventions based on identified learning priorities and outcomes, and which supports the continuing professional development of individuals'.

Of course, learning and development is only one key aspect of managing damp and mould, however, there is a link between receiving appropriate training to enable the effective dealing with repair requests, including damp and mould cases, and handling of formal complaints and performance levels.

There is a requirement to develop a strategic solution to learning and development with a consistent approach across the organisation. Training should be appropriate to job roles to ensure there are no inconsistencies for job specific learning and development and there should be ongoing and planned learning that will ensure colleagues are kept fully updated on any future changes.

Training from HHSC Learning

We have the following 'live online' training courses scheduled (as always, members of the Social Housing Safety Network Scotland get a discounted rate).

Condensation, Damp & Mould for Non-Technical Staff – 25th June 2024

This half-day session challenges understanding and ensures delegates go away with the confidence and understanding needed to protect the relevant parties' interests. It is ideally suited to housing officers, customer contact centre staff, estate and neighbourhood staff and everyone from a non-technical background who requires an understanding of this subject area. Click the banner for more details.

Condensation, Damp and Mould for Non-Technical Staff

'Live online' public course

25th June 2024

[Click the banner for more info and to book places...](#)



Condensation, Damp and Mould: Causes & Cures (Technical Officers) – 9th July 2024

This full day course, aimed at technical officers, is a 'must attend' session that builds on existing understanding, dispels myths associated with the subject and considers sometimes inappropriate 'general' advice given to interested parties, including tenants and residents.

Often utilising a 'generic' and outdated understanding of a number of factors and conditions responsible, the specific issues of individuals are not always identified/addressed. We know that recent 'improvements to stock have compounded the condensation problem and clouded 'non-culpable/culpable' responsibility issues, so we take a look at what we should consider in today's ever-changing world.

This session challenges understanding and ensures delegates go away with the confidence and understanding needed to protect the relevant parties' interests. It is ideally suited to building surveyors, maintenance surveyors and inspectors, asset officers, housing colleagues and everyone from a more technical background who requires an understanding of this subject area. Click the banner for more details.



Condensation, Damp and Mould:
Causes & Cures (Technical Officers)

'Live online' public course

9th July 2024

Click the banner for more info and to book places...

These courses can also be run on an in-house basis, should you have several colleagues who wish to attend. For more information or a quote, please email training@housingcompliance.co.uk

e-Learning: Damp and Mould Basics

The root cause of damp or mould in properties can vary and this course explores the main causes of damp and mould, how it can occur, how to recognise and identify damp and mould and the health effects that it can bring.

The course will provide general awareness and a basic overview of damp and mould and help learners to understand the key issues and support them to recognise when action should be taken.

For more information, [visit the HHSC Learning website](#).