

**RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING
MINUTES
Tuesday 25 July 2023 6-8pm on Teams**

Present: Members
Alex Tuckwell (AT)
Kirsty East (KE)
Natalieann Leadbetter (NL)
Paul Evans (PE)
Steve Hill (StH)
Valerie George (VG)
Teresa Godden-O'Callaghan (TGO'C)
Adam Field (AF)
Abdul Kader (AK)
Kevin Dodds (KD)

In attendance
Sarah Holden (SH), Resident Scrutiny Manager
Katherine Parker (KP), Independent Chair
Lara Sotak (LS), Homeownership Officer
Amanda Mankelow, (AM) Resident Scrutiny Administrative Assistant (Minutes)

| 1. Welcome & apologies for absence | Actions |
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| 1.1 NL, PE and TGO'C were having difficulty joining the meeting so KP commenced without them present. | |
| 1.2 It was not anticipated that Sue Masters (SM) would be able to join. | |
| 2. Declarations of interest | |
| 2.1 None. | |
| 3. Minutes of last meeting (Tuesday 30 May) & matters arising | |
| 3.1 The suggestions discussed by the panel at the last meeting had been collated and would be discussed later in item 7. | |
| 3.2 The two pieces of information relating to a community safety and a tenancy sustainment recommendation had been circulated to the panel following the last meeting. | |
| 3.3 The panel agreed that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting held on 30 May. | |
| 5. Recap on damp & mould activities undertaken to date | |
| 5.1 As the meeting was slightly ahead of time the panel began to look at item 5 of the agenda. | |
| 5.2 SH acknowledged that the panel had been sent a lot of information and may not have yet read it all. She suggested possibly meeting at the end of August, giving members a bit more time to look at, to decide what to do next. This may be talking to residents and considering interim recommendations. | |

- 5.3 SH and AM were working on trying to get the other panel members into the meeting.
- 4. Insight into damp & mould welfare calls with Lara Sotak, homeownership officer 6.10 – 6.30pm**
- 4.1 SH advised that LS is part of the lettings team and had been conducting welfare calls about damp & mould.
- 4.2 LS joined the meeting. KP welcomed her and requested that she introduce herself. LS did this and spoke about her role in homeownership.
- 4.3 She explained how she had used some of her Peabody Promise (volunteering) days to conduct damp & mould welfare calls, stating that details of residents needing contact were pulled off TCH systems by the damp & mould officer. LS went on to say that in her day-to-day role, she doesn't often get chance to focus on the social responsibility aspects of social housing.
- 4.4 She explained that there was a script to follow for the calls and that in some cases she was the only person that the resident had spoken to that day. LS felt that communication about the project could have been better from the beginning, so colleagues knew to expect contact from call takers about it. She also felt that ownership about following up from the calls could have been better, stating that the expectation seemed to be that the welfare call takers would for example deal with any referrals needed.
- 4.5 NL and PE managed to join the meeting at this point.
- 4.6 SH asked how the list of potential callers was generated. LS said that the list was taken from the data TCH holds about resident vulnerabilities as well as property types. She explained that she had a spreadsheet to fill in and send back to the damp & mould project officer to follow up issues and raise repairs.
- 4.7 TGO'C managed to join the meeting at this point
- 4.8 SH advised the panel of the damp & mould project officer's role and noted that NL had shadowed her (Emily Kimber) last week.
- 4.9 StH asked if the calls would still have been made if staff hadn't been asked to volunteer to do them, as he felt it sounded like it was a 'nice to have' piece of work rather than something that needed to happen. LS advised that she understood the damp & mould officer had a longer-term aim to work through the list of those needing support with damp & mould but that it became a matter of urgency because of what was happening in the sector, and she was unable to cover this all on her own. She advised she believed it was about managing the workload as each call often resulted in multiple internal referrals and jobs for TCHR.
- 4.10 SH asked how many other staff had volunteered. LS advised that there had been 7-8 volunteers going at different speeds and using different amounts of their Peabody Promise time (two days).
- 4.11 SH asked how many of those residents LS had needed a damp & mould intervention because of the call. LS advised that roughly 70-80% needed an intervention of some kind, for example extractors fitted or a job raised for repairs.
- 4.12 LS wanted to note that for all the negative comments made about the repairs service, she had heard some very positive stories around repairs being actioned. She noted TCH was able to make some early interventions too

following discussions, as the extent of resident vulnerabilities hadn't previously been known.

- 4.13 VG asked if LS was able to track a damp & mould complaint from the problem to the resolution. LS advised that it wasn't her role to see the resolution. SH added that complaints of any kind were dealt with in a formal, prescriptive process and by a dedicated team.
- 4.14 AK asked if there was a timeframe for each call. LS stated that she had used two half days and took whatever time was needed, the preface being a five-minute call but she didn't hurry people off the phone if it was helpful/relevant for them to talk longer.
- 4.15 KP thanked LS for joining and stated that if the panel had any further questions these would be sent to her through AM/SH.
- 4.16 LS left the meeting.

All

5. Recap on damp & mould activities undertaken to date (cont)

- 5.1 SH spoke for the benefit of those who joined the meeting a bit late, about the amount of information they had already been sent and the possibility of meeting again in August.
- 5.2 TGO'C advised that she for one had not been able to access Sharepoint or the complaint information sent via email.
- 5.3 SH advised that since the last meeting, NL had shadowed the damp & mould officer and that KE had been to a development in East Kent. She advised that the panel would be able to hear from them later.
- 5.4 SH advised of two planned estate days in August and September which the panel could attend and which would involve contractors carrying out damp & mould interventions on estates with potential damp & mould issues.
- 5.5 KE explained that she had been out on a visit to Westwood Lodge, an estate with an EPC rating A and solar panels on all properties - social housing, shared ownership and private sale. She explained that the properties are modular so come onto site as shells and are built relatively quickly. She said that the properties had air source heat pumps, cylinder stores for the hot water and trickle vents to eliminate moisture. KE advised that the properties had huge radiators with a maximum temperature of 55 degrees, vents in the bathroom and survey meter readings showing which homes are most efficient. SH advised that the point of visiting was to see a property that in theory should never get damp & mould. KE acknowledged that amazing technology was being used.
- 5.6 NL had been shadowing the damp & mould officer. She advised that she had found it interesting and eye opening. She stated that Emily's workload is high, with cases categorised by severity. NL recalled one example of small damp & mould issues not reported by the tenant which escalated into disrepair of the property, with the tenant moved out as a result. NL noted the influx of cases from November 2022 onwards and stated the team was currently clearing the backlog. She acknowledged that she had learnt things, for example that grout on tiles should be checked each year. NL suggested that TCH should have self-help videos available as lots of advice is in written format. NL advised that she was surprised by the number of residents not allowing access when an inspection has been arranged: 6-7%. SH also advised that there are reports of operatives not turning up for appointments as well.

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| 5.7 | SH stated that herself and AM would be in touch about estate days. AM will put dates/times on WhatsApp. | AM |
| 5.8 | SH reiterated that everyone needed more time to look at the information they had been sent, and to sort out the Sharepoint access issues. She stated that the panel could discuss the information in August and think about interim recommendations too. | |
| 6. | Research findings – all panel members to present for 2-3 minutes | |
| 6.1 | KP asked the panel members to keep to the timing of 2-3 minutes. | |
| 6.2 | SH asked for highlights only, and to send through everything else to AM and SH to be collated. | All |
| 6.3 | AT stated her information came from the TPAS conference. Firstly the sponsors Echelon had given out hygrometers. SH asked if AT could take a photo stating that it would likely be a more sophisticated device than she has. AT felt that a version of that for every tenant would be good as it gives readings of moisture. She advised of Swindon Borough Council who have two priorities when it comes to responding to damp & mould; next day for those with vulnerabilities or ten days for anyone else. She advised also that they had cleared their backlog of damp & mould cases in six months, so appreciate volunteers like Lara but what they are doing just won't cover it all. AT then mentioned Croydon Council who had been on the news for their damp & mould issues, she advised they have a new team and are going out to all vulnerable tenants even if no mould has been reported, and where an issue is corrected following it up in six months. | |
| 6.4 | KD left the meeting as he wasn't feeling well. | |
| 6.5 | AK advised of finding out about a hygrometer also. He also advised of another provider, Cadwyn giving out a leaflet explaining how much moisture is generated in pints through different daily activities like boiling the kettle. AK had also found that Hackney Council had produced a video with contractors in it, explaining how moisture and mould occur and tips to reduce it. SH stated she liked the idea of the leaflet detailing moisture in pints. AK advised he could share details on the WhatsApp group. | |
| 6.6 | StH stated that he had found lots of information about Croydon Council; they had trialled giving out a protimeter to measure moisture in walls for those who have recurring problems. He felt that Croydon had a great website with information including infographics. StH stated that there was only a one liner on TCH for shared owners, and it was very vague, whereas other websites contained more information for shared owners. SH acknowledged that our website is still under development stating that TCH still needs to get to the bottom of the issues for shared owners. StH felt he would be very worried if he got a damp & mould issue in his property as he wouldn't know what to do. | |
| 6.7 | AF's microphone wasn't working so he contacted to say he would put details of his research into the chat. | |
| 6.8 | PE had looked at Clarion Housing who had indicated that too much ventilation could also cause a problem. He advised that they gave advice on their website, such as that residents are to note what areas are affected and for how long, whether there is a discolouration or smell. SH asked if Clarion presented information well as don't believe we have very much on TCH website. PE felt it was useful to troubleshoot the problem. | |

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| 6.9 | TGO'C had conducted some case studies but said that the best information came from the TPAS conference. She referenced a leaflet from Echelon group aimed at the housing association not the tenant. TGO'C to send round. She noted the change in description from damp & mould to condensation mould, stating that it was not about curing but controlling it. She noted Echelon asked if the housing association knows for instance what type of heating is in the property and how many occupants there are. The advice was to open a window for just five seconds to combat moisture, and to help residents with fuel poverty, that would in turn help with damp & mould, instead of unsuccessfully spending money on insulation for example. | TGO'C |
| 6.10 | VG had put together a presentation following her visit to the TPAS conference, and this was shared on screen as she went through it. KP suggested it could then be shared with everyone. She too noted Croydon's issues which were shared at the conference. SH stated she found it admirable that Croydon have been honest and transparent and shared their failings. | |
| 6.11 | As SM was not in attendance, AM read her key findings to the panel. She stated that Medway Council uses a datalogger to record, for instance, moisture and then goes in to investigate the problem following that. | |
| 6.12 | KE had looked at Orbit housing association who had an easy read leaflet designed for users with additional needs. KE found this leaflet appropriate for all, it stated treating damp & mould as separate things, and detailed a step-by-step process and timescales, however KE felt that the language on their website was aimed at tenants to sort the problem rather than a joint approach. | |
| 6.13 | SH/KP agreed that everyone had provided loads of good information and potential recommendations. | |
| 6.14 | NL referred to Moat Housing's useful guide produced by Morgan Tinder which had tips around preventing moisture. She stated it was a ten page leaflet, and that all the information she'd seen had been in writing. She advised she would like different formats, more accessible. | |
| 6.15 | SH agreed with the video idea. | |
| 6.16 | TGO'C referred again to the Echelon leaflet which said that giving the wrong information in the first place is one of the main causes an escalation. She stated that tenants don't know how things in their homework, where the thermostat is, how to use boiler and trickle vents, and that for example, putting in new windows as has been done in one of her case studies, only seals in the problem. Cavity wall insulation isn't going to solve the problem. | |
| 6.17 | SH requested that TGO'C share her case studies with personal information redacted. | TGO'C |
| 6.18 | <p>TGO'C went briefly through the case studies she had conducted with people she knows who have experienced damp & mould.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first was a Moat Housing tenant who had had problems for four years in just one corner and had to get a solicitor involved. She stated that the issue had been sorted now but the tenant is waiting for winter to see if the problem recurs. 2. The second was a TCH tenant who has given up and just deals with it herself. 3. The second was a TCH tenant who also ended up getting solicitors involved. They had a leak. Re-rendering was done but the damp wasn't cleaned first and a gap was left allowing moisture in again which resulted in the render falling off. | |

4. The third was a tenant who was moved to another property (decanted) as their home was being demolished. After four days of being in the new property, it began to smell of damp. It took the tenant four months to get the issue sorted, again they are waiting until winter to see if the problem has been fixed for good.

TGO'C felt that contractors need to look at causes and housing associations need to stop blaming tenants.

6.19 SH advised KD had left the meeting and had sent across his research findings.

7. **Next steps – what else would you like to do? Who else would you like to hear from?**

7.1 SH reiterated that the panel should take another month to review the information sent and asked what they wanted to look at next. She acknowledged again that there were lots of potential recommendations highlighted in the meeting and agreed the next step, as the panel had previously suggested, would likely be to speak to TCH residents who had received a damp & mould intervention to find out what their experience had been.

7.2 NL felt that it would be useful to speak to someone in the repairs service to find out what process is taken with leaks, particularly in terms of checking the problem has been resolved. SH suggested the estate days could help answer this point as the whole team will be present, including senior staff from the repairs service.

7.3 TGO'C expressed a wish to meet with contractors and find out what their policy is. She asked who are TCH's contractors and how does the process work. SH explained the estate days would provide an opportunity to walk round with contractors and ask questions. She explained that the repairs team are separate to TCH and have a damp & mould team within, then sub contract to specialists as needed. TGO'C advised that the referral process depends on what problems are discovered, a structural problem is the last reason to be considered when looking for cause of damp & mould. TGO'C suggested the process should be reversed, with structural problems ruled out first.

7.4 The panel agreed that speaking to residents who have had a damp & mould intervention should be the next step.

8. **AOB**

8.1 AM reminded the panel about giving permission for photos and quotes to be used in the annual report for tenants, stating that the PR & Marketing team are waiting for these.

8.2 AT suggested the panel members make a video for residents about damp & mould, instead of simply written information on the website. SH stated that she loved this idea.

9 **Date of next meeting on Teams (Tuesday 26 September 2023 6–7.30pm)**

9.1 The panel agreed to a short one-hour meeting on Tuesday 22 August on Teams between 6-7pm.

9.2 SH confirmed that herself and AM would find out estate day times and locations and make the panel aware.

All

AM

9.3 SH asked the panel to start thinking about their next review. She stated that the latest KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) would go out to them in the meantime to help inform their decision.

All

9.4 KP thanked everyone for joining and for their input and research.