
Report of Chief Officer, Property and Contracts

Report to Housing Advisory Board

Date: 28th February 2017

Subject: Disrepair Case Analysis and Prevention Strategies

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Armley; Burmantofts and Richmond Hill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Summary

- 1.1. The report has been prepared in response to a request from HAB for an update on the work that Housing Leeds has done in establishing causality for disrepair claims.
- 1.2. The report outlines the analysis that has been undertaken by location, property type and commonalities and the themes that have been identified. Analysis has also been undertaken on the pattern of repairs requests for damp related matters and this informs how the repairs service responds.
- 1.3. The report concludes that the analysis has identified causal links and that Housing Leeds has programmes and procedures either in detailed planning or being implemented to address the matters raised, and that this work is ongoing.
- 1.4. The report recommends HAB to note the contents of the report and to provide feedback.

2. Purpose of the Report

2.1. The report is presented to HAB to provide the following information

- Progress made in reducing the disrepair caseload and the significant reduction achieved in costs following the change to processes implemented from November 16.

- The analysis work undertaken by Housing Leeds in establishing the causes of Disrepair and their location and property archetype.
- The link between ongoing repair requests and disrepair cases, mainly in relation to damp
- The actions Housing Leeds has in place to both effectively target its response to damp and to focus investment on difficult to treat properties.

3. Background Information

- 3.1. Housing Leeds has received 1,636 claims for Disrepair under section 11 of the Housing Act since 1st April 2013.
- 3.2. Of these claims, 1,031 have led to a settlement. Over this period, the average cost of compensation payment was £2,567 in 2013/14, £1,897 in 2014/15, £1,600 in 2015/16 and £1,483 in 2016/17.
- 3.3. The total number of open claims has reduced from 762 in June 2015 to 336 in January 2017.
- 3.4. The average cost of claimant's solicitor's fees over this period has been between £3, 181 in 13/14 to £2,800 in 15/16. The average cost for the first 7 months of 16/17 was in this range.
- 3.5. In November 2017 a revised methodology was implemented which significantly reducing the time period taken to process claims. Housing Leeds has reached settlement on 18 claims since this process was implemented, with the average compensation cost falling to £1336 and the average cost to the Council of solicitors' fees reducing to £639.
- 3.6. Housing Leeds has introduced a mediation process that offers tenants the opportunity to raise damp issues with the Council under the terms of the Disrepair legislation without the need to engage with external lawyers.
- 3.7. Housing Leeds has undertaken analysis of the claims received since April 2013 to identify trends and to inform the repairs strategy and investment decisions.

4. Main Issues

4.1. Causality

- 4.1.1. In excess of 90% of claims quote damp as the primary cause of Disrepair.
- 4.1.2. Housing Leeds has undertaken detailed analysis of the caseload and locations where cases arise.

4.2. Commonalities and Themes

- 4.2.1. Housing Leeds attends all reports of damp, mould and condensation. The repair work ordered has not always proven successful in remedying the defect. Housing Leeds has reviewed the data on all properties that have received one or more damp-

related repair requests and this has informed the Repairs Strategy as identified in 4.3 below.

- 4.2.2. Taking into consideration the evidence which we have of the causes of disrepair, the locations where it is most prevalent and the property type where disrepair has most frequently arisen enables us to identify a profile of the properties which are at the greatest risk and the locations where those properties are concentrated.
- 4.2.3. The analysis has identified two high priority property types; back to back terraces and purpose built flats.
- 4.2.4. The assessment has focused on those property types where the Council has received a high proportion of claims, either in relation to the total received, archetype or concentration of cases in geographic area.
- 4.2.5. Pre-war back to back properties are particularly at risk of disrepair claims. Back to back properties have generated claims in 15-22% of that property type. The vulnerability of this stock is reflected by the disrepair survey findings which regularly report failure to roofs (especially dormers) pointing and brickwork issues and DPC failure/absence.
- 4.2.6. This is consistent with the high numbers of claims recorded in the Armley area where this property type is prevalent. It also correlates to the disrepair causation information for Armley where structural damp is a common cause.
- 4.2.7. Purpose built flats account for the greatest proportion of total claims made at 31%. Further analysis indicates that claims are concentrated in certain areas and types of flat with just two areas; Halton Moor and Osmondthorpe (mostly low rise) and Burmantofts areas accounting for 30% of claims for this archetype.
- 4.2.8. Thus a high proportion of ground floor flats have generated claims. This is reflected in the total number of claims for Halton Moor and Osmondthorpe which is affected by the claims emanating from the Wykebeck estate.

4.3. Actions Arising

4.3.1. Repairs Strategy

- 4.3.1.1. Housing Leeds has undertaken analysis of the volume and type of repairs recorded within Orchard to identify patterns and relationships with Disrepair claims for the period 2013 to 2015.
- 4.3.1.2. Housing Leeds uses the Annual Home Visit process to check if repairs are outstanding
- 4.3.1.3. Housing Leeds uses the data it collects to identify properties where there are repeating instances of damp and targets those cases to rectify problems.

4.3.2. Investment Strategy

- 4.3.2.1. The Housing Leeds Capital Programme is focusing investment on property types with difficult to treat issues.
- 4.3.2.2. A programme is underway in Armley to survey and implement remedial works on all Council owned back to back and Victorian Terrace properties in the area.

4.3.2.3. The first fifty properties have been surveyed and works will commence in this financial year.

4.3.2.4. Housing Leeds are undertaking a full options appraisal of the properties on the Wykebeck Estate in Osmondthorpe to establish the sustainability of the construction type and identify the most cost effective solution to prevent further claims. The options appraisal and associated works have been included within the capital programme for 2017/18 and 2018/19.

4.3.2.5. Housing Leeds has identified funds within the investment programme for the next three years and will continue to analyse and direct the funds to those areas that reflect the greatest need.

4.3.3. Empty Properties

4.3.3.1. All properties are checked for damp and condensation during the void period. Where high moisture readings are found then remedial works are undertaken.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Housing Leeds has undertaken a significant level of causal analysis of disrepair claims. The analysis has identified the following

- Localities where claims originate
- Property Types susceptible to damp
- Properties where one or more reports of damp have been received

5.2. Housing Leeds has used this data to both introduce proactive measures within the Repairs Team and to inform the investment programme. The measures target the direct cause of over 90% of claims and are intended to reduce the susceptibility of the estate to legal action.

6. Recommendations

6.1. That HAB note the work undertaken by Housing Leeds in taking remedial action and addressing the root cause of Disrepair Claims.

6.2. That HAB provide comments on the content of the report.