

Ms Ariane Burgess  
The Scottish Parliament Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

27 June 2025

Dear Ms Burgess

### **Damp and mould in council homes**

As a follow up to the two evidence sessions that the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee held to look at problems of damp and mould in social housing, I wanted to update you on the work that our members have been doing on this issue.

Before doing so however it does seem to me to be important to acknowledge the extent of the problem. Our members in their evidence on 25 March 2025 were clear that, based on actual complaints and repair activity, at any given time something between 3 and 5% of Council homes are subject to a report of damp and mould which the Council is responding too.

The upper end of this estimate would suggest that around 15,750 Council homes have an ongoing issue with some level of damp and mould. This is clearly far too high, though it is a matter of debate if this amounts to an “endemic” problem at “epidemic proportions” as one witness claimed.

Damp and mould are well understood across the sector as serious problems, they present a real risk to health particularly for children and older people and, as your academic witnesses made clear, can be technically complicated to resolve.

In the light of this I thought you would be interested to have some details of our work on this issue and the continuing efforts of Councils to eliminate it. We’ve held two “deep dive” sessions, the first in February 2023 focused on the day-to-day experience of responding to complaints and engaging with tenants. The proposals for a new “Awaab’s Law” notwithstanding, the law in this area has been clear for many years, damp and mould are a threat to health and landlords are required to understand this as it impacts on individual tenants (rather than the population on average) and to respond accordingly.

Our second session was held on 1 May this year as a direct follow up to your Committee’s discussion. It focused on internal air quality monitoring and the use of modern technology and sensors. It was clear from the discussion that the role out of these sensors is now well developed and there is a growing expertise in monitoring and responding to the information they provide.

The use of sensors does bring some privacy risks, councils are addressing this by building their approach with tenants and by developing apps that gives them full access to the data and provide advice in real time as air quality issues emerge.

The number of homes with air quality sensors installed is still small, but the experience so far has demonstrated that they can provide both a better insight into the causes of damp and mould and also provide an early warning of tenants struggling to cope with heating and other costs. They can also support better conversations about activities within the home that could avoid the risks without slipping into tenant blaming. I’ve attached a presentation provided by

Stirling Council about their experience which, I think, makes the point about the value of this approach.

We will follow up on these discussions later in the year but as things stand it is clear that the focus on damp and mould has increased, the range of tools in use to understand and respond to problems where they arise is improving and we are getting beyond tenant blaming whilst recognising that fuel poverty and underheating is a factor that landlords have to be able to respond to, not use as an excuse.

I hope this has provided a bit of additional detail on how councils are working to improve our response to damp and mould and given you some confidence that far from being complacent or not understanding the issues, as at least one witness claimed, councils have a good understanding of the nature of the problem and are actively improving the tools they use to address it. The sector is certainly not waiting for Awaab's Law, it is taking action now.

Should your committee wish to return to the issue at any point we will be happy to provide further evidence on the subject.

Yours Sincerely

Tony Cain  
ALACHO Policy Manager

cc ALACHO Co-Chairs:	John Mills
	John Kerr
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