

**Report for:** **Scrutiny Committee**

detailing some of the main standards and regulations we must adhere to and also demonstrate the numerous aspects of this service.

**Recommendation(s):**

**1. To note the report.**

**Section 2 – Report**

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 MDH recognises that the efficient and effective repair and maintenance of its housing stock is an important service to tenants and leaseholders and an essential part of a much wider asset management function. The service works within a clear framework to deliver an effective maintenance service which fulfils MDH's statutory obligations, protects Council assets, and offers value for money. MDH is committed to ensure tenant's homes are well maintained by an efficient and effective repairs and maintenance service.
- 1.2 To support, MDH operates a detailed social housing property management system (Orchard MRI and Integrator) which underpins its planned maintenance programmes alongside its reactive, responsive works. It also provides key data for the overarching 40-year business plan for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and its rolling MTFP budget. This comprehensive approach sits at the core of the housing service where an in-depth knowledge of stock condition and compliance with standards is directly aligned to resource and budget allocation.
- 1.3 This report provides more detail on what Members' and tenants' can expect of MDH in relation to servicing, repairs and planned works. There are a range of legislative and regulatory responsibilities which inform the delivery of both our planned and responsive works as set out below.

**2 Regulation and standards**

**Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) consumer standards**

- 2.1 The RSH introduced new, mandatory consumer standards in April 2024. One of these standards is the Safety and Quality Standard which sets out the following requirements specifically relating to repairs and maintenance:
  - A. Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible;
  - B. Registered providers must enable repairs and maintenance issues to be reported easily;
  - C. Registered providers must set timescales for the completion of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements, clearly communicate them to tenants and take appropriate steps to deliver to them;

- D. Registered providers must keep tenants informed about repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to their homes with clear and timely communication;
- E. Registered providers must understand and fulfil their maintenance responsibilities in respect of communal areas, and;
- F. Registered providers must ensure that the delivery of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to homes and communal areas is informed by the needs of tenants and provides value for money

### **Awaab's law**

2.2 Awaab's law is effective from 27<sup>th</sup> October 2025 and mandates social landlords in England address serious housing hazards, particularly damp and mould, within strict timeframes to ensure tenant safety. This law - named after toddler Awaab Ishak who sadly died in 2020 from a severe respiratory condition directly related to mould and dampness in his Rochdale home - applies to all social housing occupied under a tenancy and let by a RP. RPs will need to follow the guidance to ensure compliance with the requirements.

2.3 The statutory guidance within this new legislative requirement defines the type of hazards and the time frames for response:

- **Significant hazards** pose a 'significant risk to harm' to the health and safety of a tenant, and a reasonable landlord with the relevant knowledge would act as a matter of urgency
- **Emergency hazards** pose an 'imminent and significant risk of harm' to the health and safety of a tenant, so a reasonable landlord would act within 24 hours

2.3 Under these new requirements social landlords must:

- Investigate any potential emergency hazards and, if confirmed, undertake relevant safety work within 24 hours of becoming aware of them;
- Investigate any potential significant hazards within 10 working days of becoming aware;
- Produce a written summary of the investigations findings and provide this to the named tenant within 3 working days;
- Undertake relevant safety work within 5 working days of the investigations conclusion if it identifies a significant hazard;
- Begin, or make preparations for, any further required works within 5 working days of the end of the investigation, if this has identified a significant or emergency hazard; if preparations cannot be made to begin works within 5 working days, this must still be done as soon as possible and physically start within 12 weeks;
- Satisfactorily complete works in a reasonable time;

- Secure the provision of suitable alternative accommodation for the household, at the social landlords expense, if relevant safety work cannot be completed within the specified time frames, and;
- Keep the named tenant updated throughout the process and provide them with information on how to keep safe.
- For a hazard to be in the scope of the repair requirements under Awaab's law, it must:
  - Be a part of buildings or land for which the social landlord is responsible
  - Be the landlord's responsibility to fix
  - Result from defects, disrepair or lack of maintenance
  - Be a significant or emergency hazard
  - Not be damage that is a result of the breach of contract by the tenant

2.4 Such hazards include issues that could cause immediate harm to the health or safety of tenants if not addressed quickly, including gas leaks, broken boilers, a total loss of water supply and, notably, prevalent damp or mould that is having a material impact on a tenant's health.

2.5 To help landlords determine whether damp or mould is a significant or emergency hazard, the draft guidance advises that factors such as the findings of a contractor's investigation, a tenant's medical symptoms and vulnerability, and the location of the mould should all be considered.

2.6 Recent restructuring changes within MDH and some additional staffing resource have been specifically implemented to prepare for Awaab's law and the wider new consumer standards requirements.

## Decent Homes Standard

2.9 The current Decent Homes Standard (DHS) was introduced in the year 2000 and updated in June 2006 and is to ensure that all properties meet four criteria:

1. **Structural integrity:** Free from hazards (e.g. damp, electrical faults)
2. **Modern facilities:** Reasonably modern kitchens (20+ years old) and bathrooms (30+ years old).
3. **Thermal comfort:** Efficient heating and insulation.
4. **Good repair:** No major defects in walls, roofs, or windows.

2.10 Currently, over 99% of MDH stock meets the present DHS standard. The residual properties are typically non-access situations where a formal process is underway to secure access in order to undertake essential health and safety checks, inspections and/or works. More information and context around the current DHS standard is set out in paragraph 2.11.

2.11 In the last compliance statistics released in 2022, 15% of dwellings in the UK were reported as non-decent, which translates to approximately 3.5 million homes. Among these, 8% had Category 1 hazards which are serious health and safety risks. The private rented sector had the highest non-compliance rate

of 22% with social housing better at 10%, currently MDH has only 17 properties which are categorised as non-decent which equates to 0.68% of our stock.

- 2.12 The key to our strong performance is a planned maintenance programme which is produced by utilisation of a stock condition software system (Integrator) that indicates when any aspect of a property is due for replacement and enables us to budget for the next 30-40 years of required maintenance.
- 2.13 The DHS is under review and coming towards the end of its consultation period (September 25), there are a number of key recommendations within the proposals that will affect the way we maintain our properties if implemented.
- Updating the definition of disrepair; removing the age requirement and updating thresholds;
  - Revising the list of building components which must be kept in a reasonable state of repair;
  - Revising our approach to facilities so that landlords need to provide three out of the four facilities;
  - Introducing a window restrictor requirement;
  - Considering a new home security requirement;
  - Considering a requirement for floor coverings for new tenancies;
  - Streamlining and updating the thermal comfort requirements, and;
  - Introducing a new standard for damp and mould.
- 2.14 Delivery of decent homes should be seen as part of a wider goal to improve public service delivery and the standard of living for vulnerable people and disadvantaged groups. It makes a major contribution to wider objectives by tackling fuel poverty, reducing health inequalities and addressing child poverty. The continued review and implementation of a mandated DHS is firmly linked to delivery of these wider objectives.
- 2.15 Once the new DHS requirements have been confirmed ahead of translation into legislation then MDH will commence a detailed review of planned maintenance programmes and the potential resource implications of these together with our transition to full compliance over the relevant implementation period(s).

### **3 Planned maintenance**

- 3.1 The MDH planned maintenance team plays a key role in meeting the DHS and is responsible for the majority of works that achieve this. The planned maintenance programme is closely aligned to MDH's asset management strategy and the key milestones that DHS set out.
- 3.2 MDH have prioritised planned maintenance over responsive maintenance for a number of years and whilst both planned and reactive maintenance are essential strategies, planned maintenance forms the backbone of ours, reducing the risk of failures and more expensive reactive works. Planned maintenance, involves routine inspections, replacements and servicing to catch issues early, before they become costly emergencies. It's a proactive approach

that helps extend the lifespan of assets, improve performance, and keep us compliant with regulations.

- 3.3 The service aims for a budgetary split of 60/40% with planned and responsive maintenance and for this financial year this equates to a planned maintenance budget of £4.8m, the works within this programme include;

- Re-roofing
- Double Glazed unit replacement
- Fire safety works
- Structural repairs
- Windows/door replacement
- Heating replacements
- Renewable energy works
- Kitchens
- Bathrooms
- Asbestos removal
- Gas and Electrical servicing and testing
- Solid Fuel removal
- Legionella testing and remedial works

- 3.4 All planned works identified as part of the 30 year plan were completed within budget in 2024/25 and we are on target after Q1 this financial year. Satisfaction forms returned by tenants who have had works carried out remains high, with 97% stating they are satisfied with the service they received.

- 3.5 Health and safety plays a key role in all of our planned works with compliance testing being a main focus. The recent changes to Electrical compliance bringing social housing under the same regulations that have been in place for the private rented sector for many years has meant that we have had to implement a new programme which will see us meet the requirements by the end of 2027/28. This programme is now in place and underway, with a target of 60% compliance by the end of 2025/26. The following are the compliance statistics for 2024/25:

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Gas Safety Checks      | 99.99% with a target of 100% |
| • Fire safety Checks     | 100% with a target of 100%   |
| • Asbestos safety checks | 82.8% with a target of 80%   |
| • Legionella tests       | 100% with a target of 100%   |
| • Electrical Tests       | 44% with a target of 40 %    |
| • Solid Fuel Checks      | 98% with a target of 100%    |
| • Lift safety checks     | 100% with a target of 100%   |

- 3.6 The electrical safety changes, together with ongoing compliance with wider safety legislation, and the proposed changes to DHS will closely shape future iterations of our rolling maintenance programmes and our short-long term budget planning.

## **4 Voids**

- 4.1 The strategic approach to void management now sits within the planned maintenance teams as of the start of 2025/26 and is set out with our recently updated, adopted Voids Management Policy. This has been done to ensure we have effective measures in place to manage our empty stock as efficiently as possible by minimising rent loss by reducing the length of the void period; identifying works that are part of the future planned maintenance programme to make the most cost effective use of resources and to carry out both Decent Homes upgrades and decarbonisation works.
- 4.2 When a property is empty it enables us to also carry out works that can be challenging to complete when a tenant is in place, these include major structural works and asbestos removal. Unfortunately these type of works can affect the length of time a property is void, but are done at this time for both financial and tenants comfort reasons. We also retain some voids that are part of future developments or that have been identified for potential new homes for tenants that we need to decant to enable this.
- 4.3 All of this can contribute to the overall average length of time we classify a property as void. To make this clearer, we implemented a new performance monitoring target in 2024/25 which shows the occupancy rate of our stock rather than focusing on individual voids which can be longer than expected for the reasons above. This target of >97% was achieved in 2024/25 with a 97.49% average despite a record high number of voids throughout the year at 189.
- 4.4 Another factor which affects the time a property remains void can be previous tenant damage and unauthorised alterations to the property. This not only affects the time taken to re-let but also adds to the cost of the repairs. During 2024/25 we issued recharges to outgoing tenants in excess of £70k.
- 4.5 The new DHS when implemented will undoubtedly create new challenges for the void process with expected changes to damp and mould regulations, amendments to age replacement requirements, new components added to the list of required replacements and potential floor coverings for all new tenancies. This is something we are currently working on to ensure we would be ready if any changes are implemented when the new standards are released.

## **5 Responsive maintenance**

- 5.1 Notwithstanding a clear, proactive budgetary focus on planned maintenance, responsive maintenance is one of our key services. It will always be vital for our tenants and can be one of the most important aspects of their overall satisfaction within their tenancy and with MDH as a landlord.
- 5.2 Responsive repairs are categorised into three main classifications and the published, adopted response targets/times are measured from the time a repair is reported to us.
- **Emergency. We will respond within 4 hours.** For repairs that remove immediate danger to people, avoid flooding or major damage to the property, make the property secure, or restore total loss of heating in winter (31<sup>st</sup> Oct-1<sup>st</sup> May) we will complete the repair at the time, if we can.

If we can't, we will make the situation safe and carry out any follow up work as an urgent or routine repair.

- **Urgent. We will complete within 7 working days.** For work to restore full or partial failure of sanitation, water or electrical supply, or heating systems. Also for urgent works to prevent immediate damage to the property, to overcome serious inconvenience to the household or where there is a possible health, safety or security risk.
- **Routine. We will complete the repair within 35 working days.** For work where the fault or failure does not cause inconvenience or present a danger to occupants or the public. We may need to extend the timescale for certain repairs, for example if materials or parts are needed to be ordered.

5.3 During 2024/25, the internal responsive team dealt with nearly 8,000 repairs with 98.3% being completed within target, (see Annex C). They also completed an additional 3,000 jobs during the financial year that fall within other categories with over 97% of these also being completed within target. This equates to nearly **43 jobs a day** throughout the year.

## **6 Performance monitoring**

6.1 Performance monitoring is crucial to help identify areas for improvement. By tracking KPIs we are able to identify areas where we need to make adjustments to our performance and focus. It is a clear measurable way for us to see how we are performing and whether we are meeting our key objectives. The data collected from performance monitoring also helps us to make informed decisions around resource allocation and risk management, whilst also holding us accountable for our performance and able to demonstrate our value to stakeholders.

6.2 As a service we hold monthly performance review meetings where all aspects of the service are reported on, this data which includes all types of repairs, voids, Health and Safety, tenant satisfaction as well as complaints received and is also reported to the Homes Policy Development Group, which now includes co-opted tenants, on a quarterly basis.

## **7 Complaints**

7.1 Increased tenant satisfaction is at the heart of major changes to the regulatory landscape for social housing that have been implemented by the Government. Central to this change is an enhanced complaints handling approach required of social housing providers by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). Overall, it puts in place one of the most comprehensive, proactive consumer regulation regimes covering local government and private social landlords. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 placed the Complaints Handling Code (the Code) onto a statutory footing. It also put a duty on the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) to monitor compliance with the Code. With a statutory Code, there is a legal duty on landlords to comply with it. The HOS will be able to intervene with a landlord on the Code even when the HOS have not received a complaint.



- 7.2 We receive a number of complaints to MDH each year, and of the 210 Stage 1 complaints received in 2024/25, 46 of these were in relation to Repairs and Maintenance, which against approximately 8,000 jobs carried out, gives a high level of assurance that tenants are happy with the service they receive.
- 7.3 Complaints handling performance is reviewed each month at a strategic level with the aim of identifying high risk areas of work, systemic issues, and any issues which need to be escalated for discussion at a more senior level. Of the 120 complaints, we were able to see that more than 50% were complaints around a single contract, which enabled us to use this data to issue a number of default notices to the incumbent contractor and helped us decide that we would not be looking to extend the contract past its earliest end date.
- 7.4 An overview of complaints, including handling and response data, is included in the regular quarterly service reports to Homes PDG and an in-depth annual report including a self-assessment against the HOS handling codes is also provided. Cllr Lock is the formal complaints Member Champion for the service under the HOS requirements and is briefed monthly by the complaints team.

## **8 Satisfaction metrics**

- 8.1 The statutory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) were introduced by the RSH in April 2023 as part of the new consumer regulation framework. They are a set of standardised performance measures which all registered providers with more than 1,000 homes must collect and publish annually. The TSMs cover a broad range of service areas including repairs, building safety, complaints handling and neighbourhood management. Some measures are based on tenant perception surveys, while others come from landlord performance data. The 2024/25 TSM perception survey results for MDH in relation to repairs show:
- 72.5% of tenants were satisfied with the overall repairs service over the last 12 months (increase of 8.2% from 23/24)
  - 71% were satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair (increase of 13.5% from 23/24)
  - 73% were satisfied that MDH provides a home that is well maintained (increase of 7.7% from 23/24)
  - 79% were satisfied that MDH provides a home that is safe (increase of 7.4% from 23/24).

These are all upper quartile performance for the sector.

- 8.2 The TSM perception surveys are completed quarterly. Each quarter the Tenant Involvement team follow up with tenants who have indicated they are happy to be contacted regarding their response. This allows us to gather a deeper insight into the results, understand reasons behind satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and use this information to drive service improvements.
- 8.3 In addition to the TSMs, since October 2024, MDH have been carrying out post repair transactional satisfaction surveys to capture more timely feedback and to complement the TSMs, giving a more current actionable view of tenant

satisfaction. Given repairs and maintenance consistently ranks as a top priority for tenants, a separate monthly meeting takes place to review repairs satisfaction data, allowing early identification of any patterns or areas of concern. Similarly to the TSMs, follow up calls are made to tenants where appropriate to understand their experience in details and resolve any outstanding issues.

- 8.4 As previously mentioned, satisfaction surveys are also sent to tenants after planned maintenance works are completed. The results for these surveys has remained consistently high for a number of years. With the 2024/25 survey results sitting at 97% and Q1 of the current financial year at 99.1% satisfaction.
- 8.5 Overall, TSM data provides an important benchmark for repairs and maintenance performance alongside further data relevant across other aspects of our housing service. The data highlights both strengths and areas for improvement. The post repair survey results alongside the planned maintenance surveys, combined with the monthly reviews demonstrate that tenant satisfaction is improving and that feedback is being actively used to inform ongoing service improvements.
- 8.6 In summary, MDH carry out the most extensive mandatory and voluntary range of customer satisfaction measurements of any service within the Council with strong performance across the board. However, the service is not complacent and is constantly striving to achieve full satisfaction for every tenant on every occasion where these measurements are a strong baseline and springboard for further service review and development.

## **9 Innovation within repairs and maintenance**

- 9.1 One of the ways that we are introducing innovation into our home safety is through the use of AICO Environmental Sensors which enable us to create better-maintained, healthier, energy-efficient homes.
- 9.2 These sensors can be placed throughout a property with the full awareness and support from tenants to monitor carbon dioxide, temperature and humidity and provide us with actionable insights into indoor environmental conditions enabling us to identify potential problems before they become an issue.
- 9.3 For instance this proactive approach means we are able to see if any particular property may be at risk of damp and mould for example before there are actual physical signs in the property, and we can contact the tenant and arrange an inspection as well as providing them with guidance on how they could make lifestyle changes that will improve the situation. We are targeting properties of specific age, design and type more vulnerable to damp mould based on our detailed assessment work and proactive approach to understanding and addressing damp and mould in our properties as set out in the adopted Damp and Mould Policy.
- 9.4 Some example sensor measurements graphs are shown in Figures 1- 3.

Figure 1 – AICO sensors humidity parameter

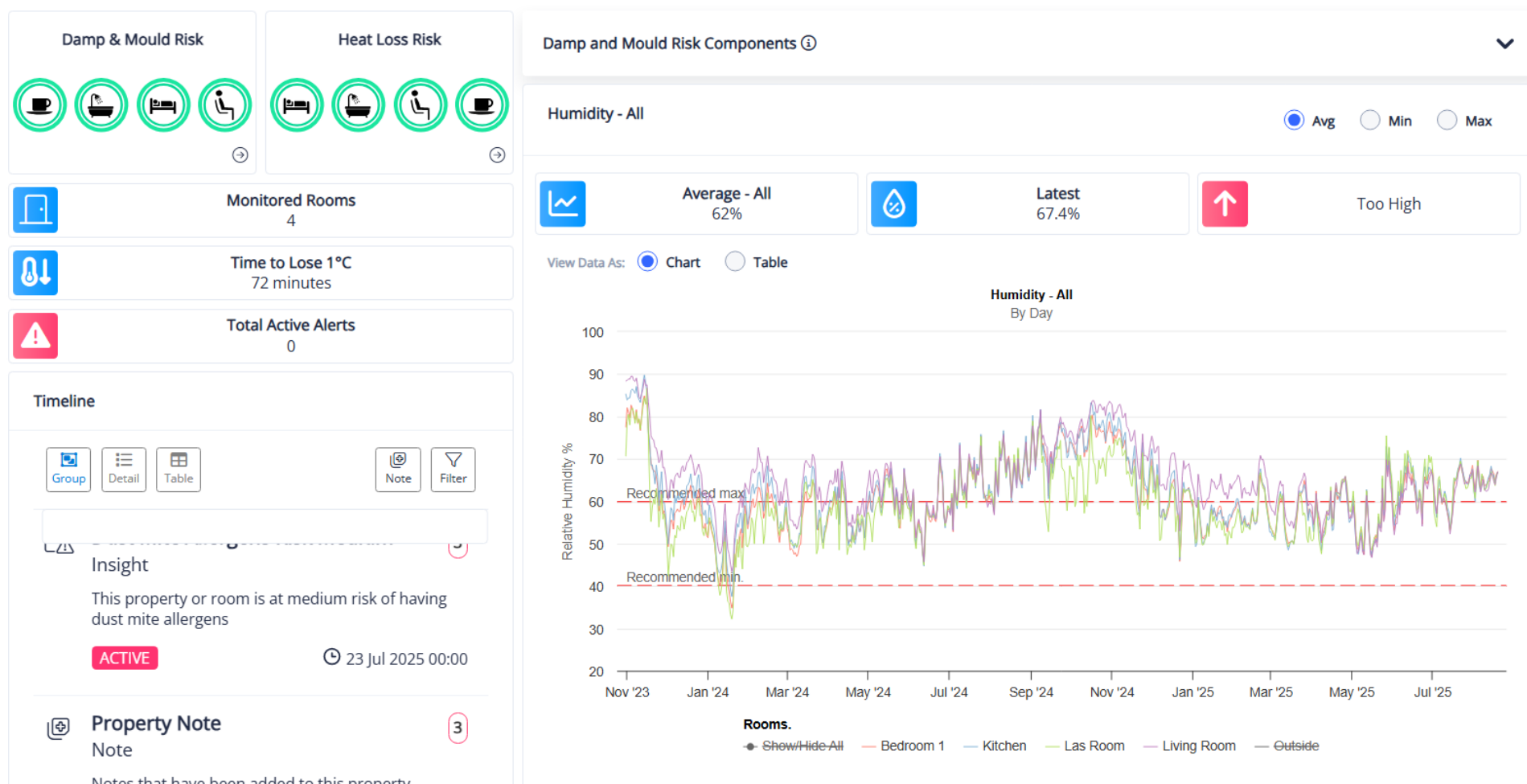


Figure 2 – AICO sensors Carbon Dioxide parameter

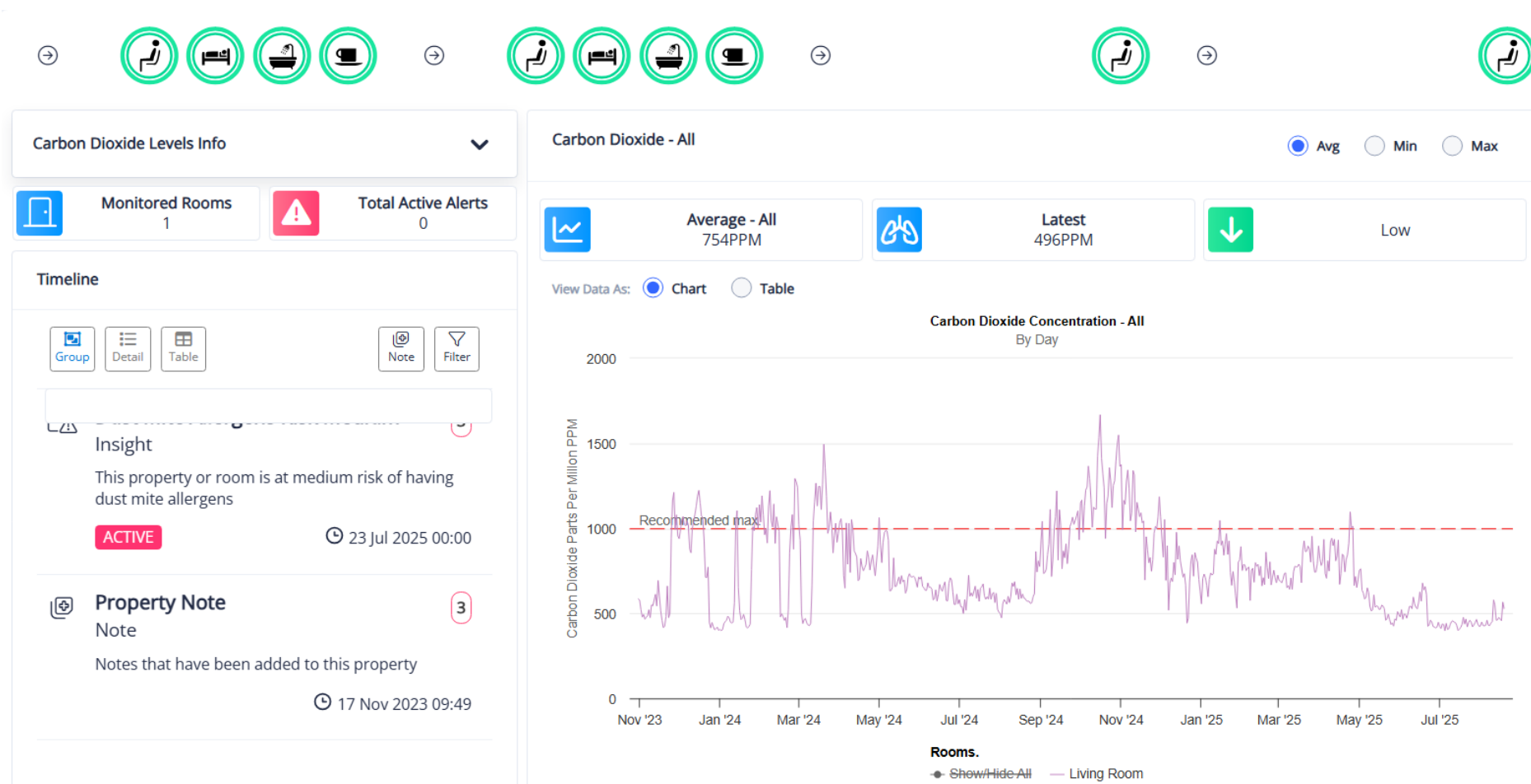


Figure 3 – AICO sensors heat parameter



- 9.5 As well as this environmental monitoring benefit, the system also monitors the smoke and carbon dioxide detectors within the property as well as within our communal areas of flats and inside of leaseholder flats and issues alerts for circumstances such as head removal and activations.
- 9.6 This can assist us in identifying tenants who may be struggling to maintain an electrical supply to their property when they are not able to add additional funds to the meter which enables us to make early contact and discuss if they are having financial problems and suffering from fuel poverty.
- 9.7 We have also fitted this system to all of our blocks of flats and additional detectors within leaseholder flats (with leaseholders not having the same legal requirement for detection as social housing providers). This has already proved a huge success. For example, the service had a case where an alert from within a leaseholder flat was received indicating deadly levels of carbon dioxide only a few hours of the system being commissioned as was able to act accordingly.

## **10 Conclusion**

- 10.1 The report sets out the comprehensive asset management and repairs & maintenance service operated by MDH to ensure its homes are decent, safe and meet current legislative standards. Our tenants are generally happy with this service and our performance against legislative or local service standards is high. This goes to the very core of an effective housing service.
- 10.2 We continue to be responsive to legislative changes and proposed new safety standards, investing in our stock and our capabilities in order to ensure we will continue our strong performance and meet the needs of our tenants going forward.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report, aside from highlighting the wider short and long-term budget implications for the HRA of managing an effective housing repairs and maintenance service.

MDH is obliged by the RSH, Financial Regulations and Corporate Plan to deliver value for money within the HRA budget.

The financial forecasts are taken from Integrator, the asset maintenance database, which are smoothed to both deliver the works, fit with the available budgets and avoid any significant spikes in future expenditure.

Overall, the HRA 40-year business plan is currently under review and being updated to ensure MDH continue to provide assurance of a sustainable, compliant and safe housing stock in the long-term and meet the overarching asset management aims set out within the Strategy.

## **Legal Implications**

As a registered provider of social housing, the Council is obliged to take account of the standards contained within the revised regulatory framework which is administered by the RSH as well as The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and other building safety legislation. This places a duty on MDH to maintain legal compliance within its housing stock.

There are further overarching legal responsibilities under the new consumer regulation regime regulated by the RSH as set out in the report.

Specific legislative new and pending legislative requirements are set out within the body of the report.

### **Risk Assessment**

Failure to meet our legal requirements as they relate to safety legislation and mandatory consumer standards presents specific risks around legal action by the RSH and tenants via regulator action and disrepair claims respectively. It would also fall short of the aims and objectives of MDH as a responsible and caring housing provider and present reputational risk.

The principal risk is failing to limit costs due to additional works and delivery of the adopted Asset Management Strategy for the service. The performance of the individual work streams within the strategy will be monitored monthly and corrective action will be taken where performance falls below any Key Performance Indicator.

### **Impact on Climate Change**

None directly arising directly from the report. A climate impact consideration has been part of the adoption of the all recent policies underpinning the MDH Asset Management Strategy and the Strategy itself.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

No relevant impacts arising directly from the report. All staff have received Equality and Diversity awareness training and all recent policies underpinning the MDH Asset Management Strategy and the Strategy itself have been subject to Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to ensure the public sector equality duty is met.

### **Relationship to Corporate Plan**

To contribute towards meeting our obligations relating to Health and Safety and by contributing to the Decent Homes Standard.

Homes are a priority for the Council under the Corporate Plan and in this context it includes supporting the delivery of several key objectives including ensuring our tenants feel safe, secure and happy in our homes as well as delivering new affordable social homes and maintaining the existing stock to the highest standards.

## **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

### **Statutory Officer:**

**Statutory Officer:** Maria de Leburne  
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer  
**Date:** 19 September 2025

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford  
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director  
**Date:** 19 September 2025

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr  
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager  
**Date:** 18/09/2025

**Cabinet member notified:** Yes

#### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Mike Lowman, Operations Lead for Housing or Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing and Health  
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#### **Background information:**

RSH Consumer Standards Code of Practice  
[Consumer Standards Code of Practice](#)

MDH Asset Management Strategy  
[MDH Asset Management Strategy](#)

All other MDH strategies and policies  
[Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)