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# Damp & Mould Policy

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Housing Services

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Purpose and scope

This Damp & Mould Policy sets out how Stroud District Council ('the Council') will address and respond to reports of condensation, damp and mould in Council owned homes and to leaseholders where the Council has a responsibility for the maintenance of the external fabric of the building and where issues with the external fabric are the cause of damp or mould.

The Council are committed to taking proactive measures to tackle and reduce issues of condensation in our properties and to respond proactively to all reports of damp and mould.

## 1.2 Aims of the policy

The aim of the policy is to ensure that the Council meets its obligations as a landlord and provides assurance that damp and mould is adequately managed to ensure the safety of our tenants and leaseholders.

The key objectives of the policy will assist in the delivery of a damp and mould service that:

- Complies with statutory requirements and good practice
- Is proactive in responding to reports of damp and mould
- Is proactive in identifying properties which may be at a higher risk of damp and mould to ensure early intervention and prevention.
- Undertakes effective investigations into the root cause of damp and mould
- Takes appropriate and timely remedial action
- Correctly documents and records all cases of condensation, damp and mould
- Ensures tenant and leaseholder homes are safe and structurally sound
- Ensures that tenants and leaseholders have access to advice and guidance on controlling condensation in their home
- Ensures the fabric of our properties is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould
- Works in partnership with tenants to resolve the issues of damp, mould and condensation in their homes
- Ensures the service is accessible to all so that everyone can easily report damp and mould
- Ensures tenants and leaseholders are treated in a fair, respectful and consistent way

# 2 CAUSES OF CONDENSATION, DAMP AND MOULD

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## 2.1 Condensation

Condensation is the process in which water vapor in the air changes into liquid water. It occurs when the moisture in the air gets colder and water droplets appear on surfaces, typically around windows, behind furniture or in colder parts of a property. If this is left untreated, mould will begin to grow. Causes of condensation include:

- Inadequate heating: For example, undersized radiators or inappropriately used heating systems

- Poor ventilation: For example, where windows are not opened, trickle vents are closed, extractor fans are not used and/or where furniture is placed too close to external walls
- Excess humidity: For example, cooking without putting lids on the pan or drying washing inside without adequate ventilation
- Defective or insufficient insulation
- Overcrowding

## 2.2 Damp

Damp occurs when there is the presence of excess moisture in a room, for example due to a fault in the building's structure that lets in water from outside or where condensation has formed and has not been treated. Damp can be a serious problem as it can cause damage to a building's infrastructure. As well as damp created by condensation, damp can be the result of:

- Rising Damp: This can occur if there is a problem with the damp proof course, which is a barrier built into floors and walls to stop moisture rising through the property from the ground. Rising damp often leaves a 'tide mark' on the walls that shows how high it has risen (typically approximately 1M high)
- Penetrating Damp: This can occur if water is coming in through the walls, roof or through external cracks. Penetrating damp is often identified by a discolouration of internal walls or ceilings and blown or blistered plaster.

Causes of penetrating damp include:

- Defective components such as external roof coverings, external wall doors and windows
- Defective or blocked rainwater gutter and pipes
- Defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems
- Water ingress through brickwork, leaks or defective design of the structure
- Flooding, for example due to a burst pipe

## 2.3 Mould

Mould spores are everywhere and can lead to mould growth on any surface that has sufficient moisture. Mould develops in damp conditions and will grow on damp surfaces. It is important to reduce condensation and moisture in a home in order to reduce damp conditions that allow mould to thrive.

# 3 TENANT & LEASEHOLDERS

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## 3.1 Tenants

Tenants can help to prevent and reduce any conditions that can lead to condensation, damp or mould, by:

- Managing humidity levels in the home by keeping levels of moisture to a minimum. For example, covering pans when cooking, drying washing outside and keeping kitchen and bathroom doors closed when cooking or bathing.

- Ensuring adequate heating in the home. A home should ideally be heated between 18 and 22C.
- Keeping the property well ventilated by keeping trickle vents open, opening windows when cooking or bathing, allowing air to circulate around furniture and turning on extractor fans.
- Wiping down condensation if it forms in the property with a cloth.

Tenants are responsible for reporting evidence of rising and penetrating damp to the Council. Tenants, or representatives on their behalf, should report issues with damp and mould as soon as it is identified. This includes reporting any faulty equipment that is used to help to reduce condensation, for example faulty trickle vents or extractor fans.

Tenants must allow the Council access to inspect the property and to carry out remedial work, in accordance with the Council's no-access procedures..

Tenants should follow all advice and guidance issued by the Council or a Council appointed contractor on managing and controlling condensation, damp and mould.

If a tenant fails to take the advice and reasonable steps to reduce condensation and damp, the tenant may be recharged for any resulting repairs required which are considered to be the result of this neglect in accordance with the Council's recharge policy.

### **3.2 Leaseholders**

Leaseholders are responsible for managing and maintaining their properties, including condensation and damp in accordance with their lease agreement. Neglect by the leaseholder to manage or carry out repairs for which they are responsible and where this has a direct impact on the condition of a Council owned property, will be dealt with in accordance with the lease.

## **4 COUNCIL SERVICE STANDARDS**

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### **4.1 Prevention**

The Council will use stock condition surveys and ongoing monitoring of the condition of our housing stock, to ensure a proactive data-driven, risk-based approach to condensation, damp and mould. Stock condition surveys are carried out on a rolling 5-yearly cycle. The Council are committed to improving the condition of our housing stock and have a programme of planned work, including a programme of retrofit work to improve the fabric of our buildings, increase energy efficiencies and reduce carbon. These improvement works aim to reduce the risk of damp and mould and the likelihood of condensation occurring by:

- Improving insulation both internally and externally
- External wall insulation
- Replacement roofs
- Replacement windows
- PV Solar Panels
- Upgrading heating systems, such as the installation of heat pumps
- Upgrading ventilation

In accordance with the Repairs and Maintenance Policy, the Council will maintain properties to the Decent Homes Standard as a minimum quality standard.

## 4.2 Diagnosis

The Council is responsible for maintaining the structure of its properties to avoid penetrating and rising damp, including carrying out remedial action if these do occur. Officers will be provided with training to recognise condensation, damp and mould related issues and causes. Operatives and Officers have a responsibility to report all signs of condensation, damp and mould to the Council's repairs team.

When a tenant reports condensation, damp or mould in their home the Council will ask questions to establish the extent of the issue in order to classify the urgency and type of response required. All reports of damp and mould will be treated with sensitivity and a record will be kept.

Where the Council is notified of a penetrating or rising damp issue, the Council will investigate to determine the cause. Surveyors will inform the resident of the results of any investigations, and where remedial works are necessary, the surveyor will provide details of what works will be required. Remedial works include, but are not limited to, mould treatment works.

## 4.3 Improvement Works

The Council will investigate reports of damp and mould to determine the cause and will complete remedial works within a reasonable timescale in accordance with our processes and procedures. This will depend on the severity, urgency of the problem and on the complexity of the solution. The Council will prioritise works based on risk and will carry out remedial repairs in accordance with the tenancy agreement and repairs and planned maintenance policy.

The Council will respond to the severity of damp and mould reported as follows:

Critical	Emergency attendance within 24 hours
High	Urgent attendance within 5 working days
Medium	Attendance within 28 working days
Low	Attendance within 28 working days

The Council will undertake reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation including installing mechanical extract fans, fresh air vents, replacing existing insulation where appropriate and installation of monitoring technology where applicable.

Where extensive works are required, the Council will consider these on a case-by-case basis, in-line with its planned works programme. If it is appropriate, residents will be offered temporary accommodation while work is undertaken, particularly if there is a vulnerable member of the household, in accordance with the Decant Policy.

In some instances, remedial work may not be required. Additional support and advice will be provided to the tenant on managing and controlling the occurrences of condensation and damp.

## 4.4 Aftercare

The Council will contact the tenant or leaseholder following damp and mould remedial works to establish the effectiveness of the works.

## 4.5 Empty Council Homes

In accordance with the Councils Empty Council Home Policy, the Council will carry out extensive checks to all Council properties that become empty, for example when a tenant moves out. The purpose of the check is to minimise the risk of condensation, damp and mould forming once the property is occupied and will involve:

- Using damp meters on external walls to check for penetrating and rising damp;
- Checking that windows and doors are watertight;
- Checking that airbricks are free from obstruction and are fully functioning;
- Checking that there is sufficient ventilation in the home, and that ventilation units are fully functioning;
- Checking that the heating system is sufficient and fully functioning;
- Removing any mould and if necessary applying anti-fungicidal paint to vulnerable walls;
- Providing new tenants with anti-mould decoration packs.

## 5 COMPLAINTS

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Stroud District Council is committed to providing a high standard of service to all residents and take all complaints extremely seriously. Any tenant that is dissatisfied with our approach in assessing and managing their condensation, damp and mould concerns can make a formal complaint in accordance with the Council's Corporate Complaints and Feedback Policy.

## 6 RELATED DOCUMENTS AND LEGISLATION

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### 6.1 Related documents

This policy and its delivery are linked to the following Council policies and documents:

- Decant Policy: a policy that sets out the circumstances where a Council tenant may be moved from their home either temporarily or permanently
- Tenancy Agreement: a contract between the tenant and landlord setting out the legal terms and conditions of the tenancy
- The Council Plan 2021-26: a strategy document that sets out the strategic vision, direction and aims of the authority. The plan includes a strategic objective for community resilience and wellbeing, to strengthen and support our communities
- Recharge Policy: a policy that sets out where the Council will charge tenants for works carried out to remedy an issue caused by the tenant and is included in the Repairs and Planned Maintenance policy
- Empty Council Homes Policy: the policy outlining the Councils approach to managing void properties
- Void Standard: the standard all void properties will be let to
- Repairs & Planned Maintenance Policy: sets out the responsibilities of the Council to repair and maintain Council owned stock

### 6.2 Relevant legislation and regulatory compliance

The policy complies with the relevant legislation and regulation, such as:

- Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018: Enhances protections for tenants against hazards in rented properties
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11 – Repairs and Maintenance): the Council are required to carry out repairs as required to maintain homes, including remedial action to damp and mould
- Housing Act 2004 (Housing Health and Safety Rating System): The Council must take into account the impact of health and safety hazards in housing
- The Home Standard: sets expectations for register providers of social housing to provide tenants with quality accommodation and cost-effective repairs and maintenance service
- Decent Homes Standard 2001: sets expectations for the maintenance standards of homes which should be let by Local Authorities
- Children Act 2004 (Section 11): the Council has a duty to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- The Equality Act, 2010: protects people against discrimination, harassment, or victimisation in employment, and as users of private and public services based on nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

## 7 APPENDIX 1: DAMP AND MOULD PROCESS FLOWCHART

