North Warwickshire
Borough Council

DAMP & MOULD

Policy for Dealing with Damp and Mould Conditions in Council Owned Domestic Stock

TO REPORT A REPAIR TELEPHONE
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REVIEW

This policy will normally be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, unless an earlier review is required due to regulatory, statutory, or other requirements.

If you require a version of this document in large print, audiotape, or in another language, please contact us.

INTRODUCTION

This policy states how the Council intends to deliver effective management and maintenance services to address and improve property conditions that cause damp and mould. It accords with the requirements of Awaabs Law 2025.

The delivery of this policy is closely aligned to the procedures followed by the Maintenance Service when responding to reports of damp and/ or mould. It is supported by the Council's Decant Policy which gives financial assistance to tenants if they need to move out of their tenancy whilst remedial work is undertaken.

We respond promptly when a tenant reports an issue of damp, mould or condensation. Our conditions of tenancy insist that tenants report repairs and concerns to us. When they do so with a concern about damp, mould and/ or condensation a Surveyor visits to do an assessment following a discussion about the problem reported and household effected by our designated Planner.

A technical Surveyor visits within 10 working days of a report about concerns by a tenant. If the report indicates the circumstances needed to be treated as an emergency we will visit as soon as the tenant can allow access. Following the investigation we will write to the tenant in 3 working days to tell them about our proposed actions. Works will begin in 12 weeks by agreement. When specialist works to address conditions of damp and mould are delivered a Surveyor will do a follow up visit after to ensure they have been effective.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- To promote a 'report it' culture so that tenants are encouraged to tell the Council about their concerns and we are sensitive to their circumstances.
- To adopt a whole team approach to improving the condition of a property with damp and mould with a make every contact count attitude.
- To use all home visits to seek out information on property conditions – including those that cause damp and mould
- Ensure that tenants are treated in a fair and consistent way.
- To use information about property types and conditions as well as tenant reports to be proactive in providing interventions to deal with damp and mould conditions.
- Comply with statutory requirements and good practice and act to ensure properties are free from serious hazards.

- Focus on working in partnership with tenants ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is provided.
- Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to eradicate damp including, managing and controlling condensation.
- Ensure that tenants have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on reporting and controlling damp and condensation.
- Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp and condensation problems.
- Deliver major programmes of work that prevent and/ or tackle the causes of damp.
- Ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and condensation.

SCOPE OF POLICY

The scope of this policy covers how the Council and our tenants are able to jointly control, manage and eradicate damp and this includes:

- All domestic properties including emergency / temporary accommodation.
- Identifying the types of damp: rising, penetrating and condensation damp, including internal leaks.
- Offering guidance, advice and assistance throughout the process to tenants living in a property in which damp and/ or mould conditions have been found.

TYPES OF DAMP COVERED BY THIS POLICY

All properties in which damp and/ or mould conditions have been found are covered by this policy. For clarity some of the causes of damp are listed below.

Rising Damp
The movement of moisture from the ground rising up through the structure of the building through capillary action.

Penetrating Damp (including internal leaks)
Water penetrating the external structure of the building or internal leaks causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure. The cause can be the result of, for example:

- Water ingress due to defective or poor original design / workmanship of the structure.
- Defective components for example roof coverings, external wall doors and windows.
- Defective or blocked rainwater gutters and pipes.
- Defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems.
- Flooding due to burst pipes.

Condensation Damp
Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. This can take two main forms:

- Surface condensation arising when the inner surface of the structure is cooler than the room air.
- Condensation inside the structure (interstitial) where vapour pressure forces water vapour through porous materials (e.g. walls), which then condenses when it reaches colder conditions within the structure.

The conditions that can increase the risk of condensation are:

- Inadequate ventilation e.g. natural opening windows and trickle / background vents and mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens.
- Inadequate heating g. undersized boilers and radiators, draught stripping.
- Inadequate thermal insulation. e.g. Missing or defective wall and loft insulation.
- High humidity e.g. presence of rising and penetrating damp.
- Poor building design and construction – specific cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction.

Conditions that can lead to condensation are:

- Poor ventilation – not opening windows, blocking up vents not turning on extract fans, not allowing air to circulate around furniture.
- Poor heating – not heating the house which can be a result of fuel poverty.
- Defective insulation –dislodged insulation in lofts.
- High humidity - not covering pans when cooking and drying laundry inside the house can contribute to this.
- Overcrowding.

Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation damp is present.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY EXPECTATIONS

The Council complies with relevant legislation and regulation, including:

- Housing Act 1985
- Awaabs Law 2025
- Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 Section 11 – Repairs and Maintenance
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating
- Decent Homes Standard
- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Equality Act 2010
- Right to Repair Regulations 1994

Related Policies and Procedures

- Tenancy Agreement
- Maintenance Service Roles & Responsibilities

THE COUNCILS RESPONSIBILITIES

The Council is responsible for the structure, fabric and fixtures and fittings of the property.

The Decent Homes Standard provides statutory guidance for social landlords regarding the condition of their properties. Our repairs and maintenance service aims to ensure that the Council's properties meet the Decent Homes Standard criteria for a property:

- That it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- It is in a reasonable state of repair
- It has reasonably modern facilities and services
- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

Property data is used to understand our stock, archetypes and components of properties that are likely to suffer from damp and mould. We use software which provides a real time dashboard indicating where damp and/or mould has been reported and linked repairing activity such as leaks and drains. The software present premises to staff and managers that have reported concerns about damp, mould and disrepair issues that could be the cause.

We draw component data information regularly and specifically annually to develop our programmes of work.

Information about the maintenance service is available on the Council's website. We encourage tenants to report repairs.

PROACTIVE AND DATA LED

We will ensure that all our staff and contractors are aware of this policy so that we can and create a good understanding of the issue and encourage reporting of damp and mould conditions.

We hold information about our stock on our maintenance database. The data is accessible and reportable. We use it to inform our asset management priorities. It is kept current by a designated planned investment resource and intermittent stock condition surveys. We have information on EPC grading for all of our stock and this is updated when planned works are completed. The data indicates the condition of our stock as it relates to the Decent Homes Standard.

SERVICE STANDARDS

We will promptly investigate to determine the cause of damp and condensation and carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with the tenancy agreement and repairs standard.

We will act in accordance with Awaabs Law which gives fixed timeframes for our response to a report. Emergency hazards will be investigated within 24 hours of the report. We will investigate significant hazards within 10 working days of the report. We will provide a written summary of investigation findings within 3 working days of the conclusion of the investigation. We will take steps to alleviate the emergency hazard in 5 working days and will start works within 12 weeks.

Our approach will be to find the root cause of the problem and address it.

We will promote our services and actively encourage tenants to report concerns about damp and/ or mould in their tenancies. We will be sensitive to their circumstances.

We will inform the tenant of the findings of the investigations. This will include identifying the possible causes of damp, recommending effective solutions and all necessary remedial works / actions / enhancements and the estimated timescales to complete the works /measures. This will be communicated to the tenant keeping them up to date with their enquiry through the process from inception to completion.

We will respond to a report of damp and condensation and complete any remedial works/measures within a reasonable timescale in accordance with the processes and procedures. This will be dependent on the severity and urgency of the problem and on the complexity of the solution of the remedial works/actions required. Serious hazards will be removed as urgent works.

When specialist remedial work is completed to address damp and mould conditions we will visit after 6 week to ensure its effectiveness.

We will provide effective heating and ventilation systems to help tenants prevent the conditions which cause condensation/ mould conditions.

We will provide an effective response repairs service so that disrepair which can lead to penetrating damp is addressed promptly.

The Council will undertake improvement programmes that will help to prevent the causes of damp and mould.

The Council will make good internal surfaces following any remedial work carried out ensuring that surfaces are prepared to a condition ready redecoration.

We will ensure that all relevant staff have training and are aware of and understand the delivery of the service that will meet the aims of this policy.

Where Internal conditions within a home for example, overcrowding and excessive hoarding of personal belongs are having an effect on health and wellbeing of the occupants support will be provided to improve the situation.

If it is unsafe or impractical for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made.

OVERSIGHT

The Director of Housing meets with the Surveyors and Managers at least monthly to review how we are acting to address damp, condensation and mould in our properties. This includes both improvement programmes and response repairs.

The housing service is overseen by the Resources Board. Councillors receive reports about the maintenance service and performance at least annually.

The Resources Board is supported in its oversight by a Housing Task Group of Councillors which have a particular focus on the services we provide to tenants. This includes the performance of the repairs and maintenance service – including reports of damp, condensation and mould.

The Borough Wide Tenants Forum receives performance reports quarterly which includes information about the maintenance service – including matters relating to reports of damp and/ or mould. Our Borough Wide Tenants Forum is encouraged to offer challenge and supports us to scrutinise service delivery. We encourage tenants to report repairs

COMPLAINTS

If a tenant or leaseholder is not satisfied by the way in which their repair has been dealt with, or in the way in which the work has been carried out, a formal complaint may be raised.

Concerns and complaints can be raised in the following ways:

Website northwarks.gov.uk
By emailing Customer Services
customerservices@northwarks.gov.uk
By contacting a Local Councillor

Matters should be resolved as soon as possible and within 10 days of the acknowledgement; for complex cases this may be extended for a further 10 working days. If matters cannot be resolved within the maximum timescale of 20 working days, we will contact the complainant to let them know of the delay and advise when we will be able to respond by.

The Housing Ombudsman can also be contacted any at point to offer free, impartial advice to tenants and leaseholders. The Council will advise tenants and leaseholders of the Housing Ombudsman's contact details in all regular and other correspondence. Their contact details are as follows:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 111 3000

CONTACT US

Email: housingservices@northwarks.gov.uk

Telephone: 01827 715341 (between 8.30am and 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Out of Hours Emergency Repairs Telephone: 01827 715341 (calls will be directed to the lifeline centre which is manned 24 hours a day)

Write to: Housing Division North Warwickshire Borough Council, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire, CV9 1DE

Website: www.northwarks.gov.uk