

# Damp and Condensation Policy

**Approved by:** Executive Committee

**Date of approval:** 11 March 2020

**Author:** Andy Sowden – Investment Programme Manager

**Owner:** Jaine Cresser – Assistant Director, Housing & Investment

**Live from:** 1 April 2020

**Review date:** 1 April 2023

## 1.0 Aims of the policy

1.1 The policy aims to assist in the delivery of a damp and condensation service that will be able to:

- Ensure that tenants are treated in a fair and consistent way.
- 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 managing and controlling damp and condensation.
- Comply with statutory requirements and good practice.
- Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp and condensation problems.
- Ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and condensation.

## 2.0 Scope of the policy

2.1 The scope of this policy covers how the council's Investment team (damp and condensation) and our tenants are able to jointly control, manage and eradicate damp and condensation. This includes:

- All housing properties that are tenanted and communal areas. It also includes emergency / temporary accommodation.
- Identifying the types of damp: rising, penetrating and condensation damp, including internal leaks.
- Identifying the council's responsibilities for dealing with damp and condensation.
- Identifying the tenants' responsibilities for dealing with damp and condensation.
- Offering guidance, advice and assistance throughout the process to all tenants living in council properties.
- Identifies situations where the council will not be able to undertake works to rectify condensation damp.

### **3.0 Responsibilities**

3.1 The Assistant Director of Housing and Investment has overall responsibility for the policy, ensuring that it is fully implemented.

3.2 The Operations Manager and Investment Programme Manager is responsible for :

- The effective implementation and delivery of the policy
- Monitoring the performance and delivery
- Reviewing the policy

3.3 The Principal Building Surveyor (Specialist Works) Damp and Condensation is responsible for:

- Developing the processes and procedures that are in line with the policy.
- Ensure that the policy aims and terms are adhered to

### **4.0 Policy**

#### **4.1 Types of Damp**

4.1.1 The types of damp covered by the policy:

##### **a) Rising Damp**

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

##### **b) 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.

##### **c) 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 e.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.

4.1.2 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.

## **4.2 The council's responsibilities**

- 4.2.1 The council shall investigate to determine the cause of damp and condensation and carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with the tenancy agreement.
- 4.2.2 Diagnose the cause of damp correctly and deliver effective solutions based on the ethos of dealing with the cause of the damp not just the symptom and wherever possible “fixing first time”
- 4.2.3 Promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to manage damp and condensation.
- 4.2.4 The council will ensure that all of our staff have training and are aware of and understand the delivery of the service that will meet the aims of this policy.
- 4.2.5 The council will ensure that only competent contractors will be employed to carry out any works and that the tenant's possessions are adequately protected during the works.
- 4.2.6 The council will inform the tenant of the findings of the investigations following a house visit. 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.

- 4.2.7 When the council is satisfied that in partnership with the tenant all reasonable efforts in managing condensation damp has been carried out and this has not been successful, the council will visit the property and investigate the matter further.
- 4.2.8 The council is responsible for insulating the tenants home in accordance with Decent Homes Standard to help reduce the likelihood of condensation occurring.
- 4.2.9 The council is responsible for maintaining a tenant's home to avoid penetrating and rising damp and for carrying out remedial action if these do occur.
- 4.2.10 The council will undertake reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation damp, for example installation of mechanical extract fans, fresh air vents, repairing existing insulation, etc.
- 4.2.11 Remedial works will only be carried out where it is reasonable and practical to do so. The council will have regard to the constraints of the existing building design and structure and will take a pragmatic approach in finding appropriate solutions.
- 4.2.12 The council will make good internal surfaces following any remedial work carried out ensuring that surfaces are prepared to a condition ready for the tenant to redecorate.
- 4.2.13 Mould wash will only be carried out where this is found to be persistent or extensive and cannot be controlled by the tenant.
- 4.2.14 In some cases remedial work may not be necessary requiring additional support and advice to be given to the tenant on managing and controlling the occurrences of condensation damp.
- 4.2.15 The council will make reasonable attempts to access the property to inspect and carry out the works.
- 4.2.16 The council will not be able to control condensation damp where it is unreasonable or impractical to do so or if any remedial action would be ineffective for example:
- Poor construction / design (not meeting current construction and living standards) for example:
    - Cold bridging areas in the fabric of the building that cannot be eliminated.
  - Non habitable rooms / structures. For example:
    - Out –buildings / sheds that have been converted including linking buildings between the house and out building and other add-on structures.
    - Unheated / uninsulated semi external toilets and store rooms
- 4.2.17 The council 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.
- 4.2.18 Under certain exceptional circumstances where the tenant is unable to carry out mould washes or redecoration the council will provide support and assistance.
- 4.2.19 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 or are preventing inspections or remedial works being carried out, the

council will provide support and assistance to review the tenant's options that may include moving to more appropriate alternative suitable accommodation.

- 4.2.20 Effective remedial action will not be possible in these instances until the situation(s) has been resolved.
- 4.2.21 If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day by day basis or a temporary decant to an alternative property. The tenant will be supported through this process to find suitable accommodation.

### **4.3 Tenant responsibilities**

- 4.3.1 The tenant shall regularly check for damp and immediately report to the council evidence of rising and penetrating damp and also faulty equipment that will hamper the management and control of damp and condensation (faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, lack of heating etc.) in accordance with the tenancy agreement conditions (3.9 – 3.12). This can be reported via the Stevenage Housing online account, telephone 01438 242242 or the council website:
- 4.3.2 The tenant shall regularly check for mould and clean signs of mould as soon as they are discovered. Manage condensation damp following the council's guidance. Tenants can also help reduce the conditions that lead to condensation damp by:
- a) Keeping the presence of moisture to a minimum e.g. Covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outside, keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.
  - b) Adequately heating rooms – ideally between 18 and 21C and keeping humidity between 40-60%
  - c) Keep the house well ventilated e.g. opening windows when cooking / bathing, turning on and ensuring that the extractor fan is working if applicable, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture.
- 4.3.3 Clean mould from clothes, fabrics, carpets and furnishings etc.
- 4.3.4 Follow all advice and guidance issued by the council on managing and controlling damp and condensation. This information can be found on Stevenage Housing Online account, or the council website.
- 4.3.5 If all reasonable efforts have been made to manage and control condensation and mould, and this has not been successful contact the council.
- 4.3.6 If following an inspection by the council's surveyor the outcome shows that all reasonable measures are in place for the tenant to adequately manage the condensation damp further advice and support will be given to the tenant.
- 4.3.7 If the tenant fails to take the advice and reasonable steps to reduce damp the tenant may be recharged for any resulting repairs required which are considered to be result of this neglect.
- 4.3.8 The tenancy agreement (3.8) recommends that the tenant arranges adequate household contents insurance which should include cover against flood damage.
- 4.3.9 Where tenants are considering converting / using non – habitable buildings and spaces/rooms they can seek advice and permission from the council in accordance with the tenancy agreement conditions

#### 4.3.10 Redecoration:

Where remedial works and mould wash treatments have been undertaken by the council, the tenant is responsible for redecoration. It is recommended that anti - fungal paint is used.

#### 4.3.11 Allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of remedial works (in accordance with the tenancy agreement).

### 4.4 Leaseholder responsibilities

4.4.1 Leaseholders shall manage and maintain their properties including damp and condensation in accordance with their lease agreement. The council do not carry out damp and condensation remedial works to leasehold properties

4.4.2 Any neglect by the leaseholder to manage or carry out repairs for which they are responsible for that as a consequence has a direct impact on the condition of a council owned property will be dealt with in accordance with the lease.

### 4.5 Private Rented Accommodation

4.5.1 Where the council assists with placing an applicant into the private rented sector the council will provide support and assistance that may involve carrying out a site inspection, identifying the cause of the damp and condensation and notifying the landlord of the findings. If the landlord does not respond in a satisfactory manner further support will be provided and legal advice will be sought.

### 5.0 Monitoring

The Damp and Condensation Manager will monitor the effectiveness of the policy in terms of the delivery and whether the policy aims have been met. This will be reported to the Operations Manager on a six monthly basis.

### 6.0 Review

The Policy will be reviewed every three years and also in response to:

- Legislative changes.
- Council strategy or policy changes.
- Ineffective policy terms.

### 7.0 Links (Internal)

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Tenancy Agreement

#### Links (External)

- Housing Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for Human habitation) Act 2018
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 Section 11 - Repairs and Maintenance
- Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
- Decent Homes standards