

Condensation, damp, and mould policy

Housing Landlord Services

HLSPOL18

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1 Document history

Name of policy	Condensation, Damp, and Mould Policy
Document reference	HLSPOL19
Purpose of policy	<p>New Forest District Council is committed to its legal and moral obligations as a 'Landlord' for social housing within the District of the New Forest.</p> <p>This policy sets out the framework of guiding principles and arrangements for Housing Landlord Services in identifying and remedying damp, and mould in the home.</p>
Policy applies to	This policy and the subsequent arrangements apply to all directly and indirectly employed housing staff within New Forest District Council and, where appropriate, tenants, contractors, and members of the public.
Lead officer	Sophie Tuffin – Service Manager
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Update overview	October 2024, new Policy

2 Introduction

- 2.1 New Forest District Council ('The Council') is committed to its legal and moral obligations as a 'Landlord' for social housing within the District of the New Forest.
- 2.2 Everyone is vulnerable to the health impacts of damp and mould, but people with certain health conditions, children and older adults are at greater risk of more severe health impacts.
- 2.3 Every Tenant has the right to a warm, secure, and decent home and to be treated with dignity and fairness, alongside the Council's priority to provide safe homes, maximise our available resources, and protect the fabric of Council housing assets.

Understanding condensation, damp, and mould

- 2.4 Condensation is the process where water vapour becomes liquid. It is the reverse action of evaporation, where liquid becomes a vapour. Condensation happens one of two ways: Either the air is cooled to its dew point, or it becomes so saturated with water vapour that it cannot hold any more water.
- 2.5 Damp is the continued build-up of moisture in a property. It affects building materials (such as walls, floors, ceilings, foundations) and/or home furnishings and belongings (such as carpets, curtains, wallpaper, furniture, and clothing).
- 2.6 In addition to causing damage, damp and condensation can also lead to the growth of mould and other microorganisms. Damp can occur in homes for a variety of reasons irrespective of the type of damp (condensation, penetrating, rising or traumatic).
- 2.7 Mould is a fungus that grows on wet materials and requires moisture for its growth and reproduces from spores. Mould spores primarily affect the airways and lungs but can also affect the eyes and skin and, in cases of prolonged exposure, leading to severe respiratory illness. The presence of damp and mould in the home can also affect tenants' mental health due to worries about the health impacts of damp and mould, unpleasant living conditions, and destruction of property and belongings.

- 2.8 Condensation, damp, and mould is a complex issue requiring regular action from both the Council as housing provider and our tenants. The nature of diagnosis of many damp and mould issues means that diagnosis is not always possible at the first report.
- 2.9 This policy sets out the framework of guiding principles and arrangements how the Council, in line with current regulations will take every reasonable action to identify, remedy and where required, provide advice on condensation, damp, and mould in the home and will:-
- Provide clarity on the ways in which tenants can report such issues;
 - Provide staff with the ability to understand what is going on by providing them scripts to aid diagnosis;
 - Ensure that tenants are treated in a fair and consistent way;
 - Comply with statutory regulatory, legislative requirements, contractual requirements, and good practice;
 - Focus on working in partnership with tenants ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is reasonably possible to achieve;
 - Maximise available resources and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to deal with reports of damp, and mould;
 - Ensure that the fabric of Council owned properties are protected from deterioration and damage resulting from excessive condensation, damp, and mould.
- 2.10 The Council will ensure that tenants have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling condensation, damp, and mould in the home.
- 2.11 The Council will make reasonable attempts to access our housing properties to undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to make eradication of damp and mould possible. This includes using every visit opportunity to spot signs of damp and mould growth.

- 2.12 The Council will implement data collection and insight measures to assist with informing us of the possible risks to our properties so that we can undertake proactive measures to eliminate condensation, damp, and mould, before it becomes a problem for our tenants.

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3 Legislative and regulatory context

3.1 Social landlords must adhere to several regulations related to damp and mould. A lack of compliance can place tenants at risk of harm, and landlords at risk of prosecution or financial penalties. The legislation and standards are sometimes different for social and private rented landlords, but include:-

The Housing Act 2004

3.2 The Housing Act 2004 introduced the housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS). The HHSRS is a risk-based evaluation tool used to assess potential risks and hazards to the health and safety of occupants from deficiencies identified in residential properties in England and Wales.

- a) The assessment method focuses on the hazards that are present in housing and tackling these making housing healthier and safer to live in;
- b) The assessment covers 29 categories of hazard which includes damp and mould.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990

3.3 The Environmental Protection Act 1990 gives tenants and local councils powers to take legal action where homes contain a 'statutory nuisance', which includes where they are in such a state as to be prejudicial to health.

3.4 To be a statutory nuisance, the damp and mould must be harmful to the health of the tenant or a nuisance. All homes must not contain conditions that are prejudicial to health.

The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

3.5 New provisions in the **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985** added by the **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018** require that properties are free of hazards, including damp and mould, which are so serious that the dwelling is not reasonably suitable for occupation in that condition. The current occupier may be taken into consideration when determining whether the property is suitable.

- 3.6 A home that is fit for human habitation is safe and healthy, which would mean free from damp and mould that could cause significant harm.

The Decent Homes Standard

- 3.7 Social housing specifically must meet The Decent Homes Standard (DHS). To meet the Decent Home Standard, social housing must be free from dangerous 'category 1' hazards. But the DHS also states that social housing must be in a reasonable state of repair and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. Either disrepair or inadequate thermal comfort, or both, may result in damp and mould.

The Minimum Level of Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES)

- 3.8 Works to the heating and ventilation systems and replacement of windows are all controlled work. When undertaking controlled work, landlords must comply with the Building Regulations 2010.

Other Legislation, Approved Codes of Practice and Spotlight Reports from Housing Ombudsman

- 3.9 Other legislation, approved codes of practice and Spotlight Reports from Housing Ombudsman relating to condensation, damp, mould, decency, tenancies, and complaint handling , but which is not exhaustive:-

Legislation

- a) The Building Regulations 2010;
- b) The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985;
- c) The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

Approved Codes of Practices

- a) Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Guidance: Understanding and addressing the health risk of damp and mould in the home
- b) Property Care Association: Investigation and Control of Dampness in Buildings

Housing Ombudsman Service

- a) Spotlight on Damp and Mould, October 2021

- b) One Year On Follow Up Report, Spotlight on Damp and Mould - -It's not Lifestyle, February 2023

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4 Definitions

Capillary action

4.1 Capillary movement of water in masonry from below, to above, ground level.

Competent Person

4.2 Person(s), whilst not required to possess specific academic qualifications, but:-

- a) Understand the relevant housing legislation.
- b) Have appropriate education, training, knowledge, and experience in the principles of identifying damp and mould.
- c) Have an understanding of how condensation forms and disseminating clear guidance to residents, how to reduce condensation to mitigate the risks of mould developing.
- d) Understand the hazards, risk, and other relevant factors with occupants at special risk within the premises.
- e) If carrying out damp and mould surveys, have appropriate training/experience in this field.

Condensation

4.3 The process whereby water condenses from water vapour to liquid water when the temperature of air containing the water vapour drops to, or below, dewpoint.

Condensation damp

4.4 Condensation damp happens when moisture generated inside the home cools and condenses onto colder parts of the buildings (for example window frames, corners, and low points on walls behind sofas or wardrobes). This is the most common form of damp.

Damp-proof Course (DPC)

4.5 A continuous physical or chemical barrier to prevent capillary movement of water in walls.

Deliquescent

4.6 Becoming liquid due to the absorption of moisture.

Dew Point

4.7 Temperature at which 100% relative humidity is reached and air becomes saturated with water vapour (condenses).

Hygroscopic

4.8 Readily taking water vapour from the air.

Limitations

4.9 These are what are 'imposed' and agreed with the surveyor PRIOR to a survey, such as inspect ground floor only, roof only, no lifting carpets, do not 'damage' walls etc. Specific limits to the survey should be expressly stated in the surveyor's report.

Mould

4.10 Mould is a type of fungus which grows in moist environments. Mould can cause adverse health effects as well as damage to buildings and building contents.

Penetrating damp

4.11 Penetrating damp is water that gets into the building from outside due to defects in the walls, roofs, windows, or floors.

Relative Humidity

4.12 The amount of water vapour contained within a given volume of air compared with the maximum amount of water that could be in the same body of air, at the given temperature (usually expressed as % RH).

Restrictions

4.13 These are discovered by the Surveyor at the time of the survey and that had not been discussed or made aware prior to survey and restricts the inspection e.g. laminate floor to ground floor front room; fitted carpet to ground floor rear room; locked door to access. Specific restrictions should be expressly stated in the surveyor's report.

Rising damp

4.14 Rising damp is moisture from the ground that rises through parts of the building in contact with the ground (walls and floors); it is usually found in older properties and is often misdiagnosed. It can be identified through visual inspection; however chemical testing is the most appropriate way of confirming it. Often it is due to defective damp proof courses and membranes.

Salt Damp

4.15 Damage and contamination of decorative surfaces caused by the action of hygroscopic or deliquescent salts.

Thermal Bridge

4.16 Part of a construction with thermal resistance significantly lower than that of the surrounding construction e.g. a window lintel.

Traumatic damp

4.17 Traumatic damp can be caused by leaking water from waste and heating pipes, overflowing baths or sinks, burst pipes or defective water storage vessels inside the building. Traumatic damp can also originate from outside the property, for example from another building or from environmental flooding.

Triage

4.18 The preliminary assessment to determine the urgency of response or action.

Vapour Pressure

4.19 Pressure exerted due to the presence of water vapour.

5 Landlord roles and responsibilities

5.1 The Council will ensure that all our housing staff are fully aware of their role in order that the Council as 'Landlord':-

- Achieves legal maintenance and repairing obligations of its social housing assets;
- Minimise and prevent risks associated with damp and mould;
- Recognise and acknowledge the serious impact damp and mould can have on people, both physically and mentally and look to address these at the earliest opportunity.

Strategic Director Housing and Communities

5.2 The designated health and safety lead for the Council as a social housing provider under section 126A of The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.

Assistant Director - Housing

5.3 Strategic responsibility for the Council's approach to manage damp and mould in social housing controlled by the Council and is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of relevant social housing regulation are applied and implemented.

Service Manager – Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing

5.4 Operational responsibility for the overall effectiveness of the Housing Landlord Services Condensation, Damp, and Mould Policy, arrangements and action plan for social housing controlled by the Council.

Housing Service Managers

5.5 Responsible for the delivery of services within their respective areas that impact on the overall effectiveness of the Housing Landlord Services Condensation, Damp, and Mould Policy and will:-

- Support and assist the Service Manager for Housing Maintenance Programmes in discharging and undertaking their duties and respond to matters within their respective service areas.

Housing Maintenance Delivery Manager

5.6 Responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the arrangements set out within the Housing Landlord Services Condensation, Damp, and Mould Policy for social housing controlled by the Council.

Housing Decarbonisation and Programme Manager

5.7 Responsible for the delivery of capital decarbonisation and planned preventative maintenance programmes for social housing controlled by the Council.

Gas and Electrical Manager

5.8 Responsible for the delivery of mechanical and electrical cyclical safety inspections, repair and overhaul and planned preventative maintenance programmes covering gas, oil, solid fuel, air source and electrical plant and installations within the Council's housing stock, ensuring compliance with safety legislation and relevant standards.

Private Sector Housing Manager

5.9 Responsible for assisting residents to remain safe and independent in their homes through Disabled Facilities Grants and delivering the council's enforcement and regulatory services in relation to housing standards, licencing of housing in multiple occupation (HMO), bringing empty private properties back into use and overseeing the Council's private sector leasing scheme.

Repairs Supervisor

5.10 Responsible for the supervision of operational trade staff and contractors delivering day-to-day responsive repairs to the council's housing stock in accordance with Policies, technical and statutory standards, repair response times and resources, and actively engage with housing tenants on property repairs.

Maintenance Inspector

- 5.11 Undertake property inspections of the council's housing stock within inspection priority response times, identify repairing schedules that are the responsibility of the Landlord, assess risk and impact to occupants to determine repair priority and raise subsequent work orders for repair.

Stock Condition Surveyor

- 5.12 To undertake Stock Condition Surveys on the Council's housing and garage stock to accurately determine the condition and remaining life expectancy of key components, energy performance assessment, and Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) risk assessment.

Housing Customer Services and Planning Supervisor

- 5.13 Responsible for leading customer services contact triage on damp, mould, and disrepair reports to determine response priority based on assessment with tenants, arranging property inspections and/or subsequent repair and maintenance work orders.

Corporate Health and Safety Team

- 5.14 Responsible for providing support and guidance in respect of Health and Safety to Housing management and other relevant management for Council Properties and will:-
- Conduct audits to ensure that the provisions within the Condensation, Damp, and Mould Policy are to the standard required;
 - Investigate accidents and near miss incidents and subsequently make recommendations to management of controls to reduce the risk of such incidents recurring, to reduce financial loss and to improve health and safety standards;
 - Support management in identifying suitable and appropriate training to enable suitable competencies for condensation, damp, and mould assessment and management actions to prevent damp and mould occurring.

Employees

5.15 All employees of New Forest District Council, irrespective of their position, has a responsibility for safety, and will:-

- Take reasonable care for their own Health and Safety and that of other persons, including members of the public, tenants, visitors, and contractors;
- Co-operate with the Council and its managers to enable compliance with this policy and the legal duties it holds;
- Remove or reduce hazards that, in their opinion, may present a serious risk to health of themselves or others;
- Report hazards that have been removed or that may present a serious risk to users;
- If in the course of their normal duties, identify observable evidence of dampness in a building, such as visible mould, mould odour or water damage, including condensation, that they report such concerns, as this is sufficient to indicate a need to remedy to protect the health of tenants and prevent proliferation;
- Report concerns where vulnerable residents may be at additional risk.

6 Tenant responsibilities

6.1 The Tenancy Agreement is a legal Contract describing the conditions of tenancy, and sets out the Council's duties as Landlord, and rights and responsibilities of Tenants. Forming part of the Tenancy Agreement, Tenants must:-

- (a) Report any damage or repairs required to the property or common areas;
- (b) Upon reasonable notice, allow employees of the Council or Contractors into the property to inspect it or carry out required repairs;
- (c) To provide adequate access to the area of repair i.e. removal/replacement of carpet, laminate flooring, possessions, appliances, and furniture;
- (d) Use the house in a proper manner and keep it in good condition;
- (e) Ventilate and heat their home adequately and follow any advice given by the Council to prevent condensation (if condensation occurs, or they may be responsible for the cost of any repair work unless it occurs as a result of a fault in the building);
- (f) Take all reasonable precautions to protect the property against damage, dilapidation, or other harm resulting from fire, flood, decay, infestation, damp, freezing pipes or any other cause;
- (g) Keep the interior of the property clean and decorate the inside of the property, ensuring that the decorations are maintained to a reasonable standard;
- (h) To obtain written permission to carry out any alterations or additions to the property;
- (i) Pay for any damage caused by them, costs associated with neglect by them, members of their household, pets, or visitors;
- (j) Not allow anyone to damage, deface or remove any part of the property without lawful authority (permission);
- (k) Maintain anything installed or improved by them.

7 Responding to reports of damp and mould

7.1 When responding to reports of damp and mould the Council will:-

- a) Respond sensitively and assess the issue with urgency to identify the severity of condensation, damp and mould and potential risk posed to tenants;
- b) Identify and tackle the underlying root cause promptly, and act with urgency when concerns have been raised about medical conditions and impact to health;
- c) Provide tenants with condensation, damp, and mould guidance, including the importance of cleaning down early signs of mould growth and ongoing self-management tools;
- d) Ensure tenants are informed about the steps that will be taken to remove mould (if applicable) and address any underlying issues and establish the timeframes for the work;
- e) Prior to the removal of any mould, photograph and document the location of the mould, to aid monitoring and insight to help identify the source;
- f) In severe cases remove any mould, to address the health risk to tenants, using a qualified professional when appropriate;
- g) Identify and tackle the underlying causes of damp and mould, including building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation, and provide tenants with guidance on managing the build-up of condensation;
- h) Contact tenants who have reported damp and mould at least 6 weeks after guidance has been provided or remedial work has been carried out, to ensure that the issue has been fixed and damp and mould have not reappeared. If damp and mould have reappeared, carry out further investigation and intervention to remedy.

Taking a proactive approach to reduce the risk of damp and mould

- 7.2 The Council will adopt a proactive approach to the identification, tackling and remedy of damp and mould. This will include:-
- a) Record all reports of damp, mould, and remedy activity in order to provide insight on identifying common issues, repeated reports and trends within the Council's housing stock;
 - b) Undertake periodic 5 yearly stock condition surveys of all properties to identify the condition of our Council housing stock to inform future capital planned maintenance, preventive and decarbonisation programme investment;
 - c) The Council recognise that some homes are more difficult to heat, either due to their energy efficiency or cost of living pressures, and that this can lead to increased condensation occurring and the risk of damp and mould developing more likely. The Council will signpost tenants to relevant information to support tenants experiencing financial difficulties and provide guidance to understand what they can do to reduce condensation, and risk of damp and mould developing, where applicable and appropriate;
 - d) Utilise every activity of frontline staff working in tenants' homes to ensure that every opportunity to identify tenants living in homes with damp and mould is utilised, 'making every contact count';
 - e) Provide suitable and sufficient training to ensure staff are aware of the significant health risks associated with damp and mould, the need to address the underlying causes of the issue and not just remove visible mould, are aware of any processes associated with reporting and addressing damp and mould, and understand the importance of being sensitive to tenants' circumstances and vulnerabilities;
 - f) Foster a culture of building positive relationships with tenants, ensuring that tenants feel encouraged to report damp and mould.

Timeframe for investigating

- 7.3 The Council will triage all reports of damp or mould based upon an assessment with tenants to identify the risk and vulnerability of tenants and/or members of their household, and prioritise resources and endeavour to respond within the following targets :-
- a) Households identified as higher risk, where damp and mould is reported will be given a **Priority** response category and an inspection of the property carried out within 5 working days;
 - b) If following initial triage, the risk of damp and mould is identified as being low risk, information, and guidance on managing moisture and cleaning of mould will be provided. In addition, tenants will be asked to provide further photographic evidence to support remote assessment;
 - c) In all other cases, where damp and mould is reported, and determined an inspection is required, these will be given a **Routine** response category and an inspection of the property carried out within 20 working days.
- 7.4 Tenants can report concerns regarding damp, mould, or disrepair in the following ways:-
- During office hours by calling:- **(023) 8028 5222**. The Housing Support Hub is open on Monday to Thursday between 8.30am and 5.15pm, and on Friday between 8.30am and 4.45pm; or
 - Online via our website. More information and advice can be found here:- **Damp, mould, and condensation - New Forest District Council** and report any concerns via the online form **Damp and mould questionnaire**; or
 - Via email:- **HousingSupportHub@nfdc.gov.uk**

The investigation

- 7.5 Where a report of damp or mould has been received and the initial triage has identified the need for a physical inspection, the investigating Officer must sufficiently determine whether a hazard exists, and if so, the level of risk posed to a resident's health or safety.

- 7.6 All investigating Officers from initial triage, remote or physical investigation, will hold appropriate training, knowledge, and experience in the principles of identifying damp and mould.
- 7.7 A physical inspection may not be required in all cases. Where suitable and sufficient visual evidence has been provided by the Tenant, a remote investigation may be sufficient to determine any defect, underlying cause of mould and remedy.

Assessing risk

- 7.8 To determine whether a hazard is negatively affecting a resident's health and safety, or likely to negatively affect a resident's health and safety, Council staff must consider any vulnerabilities of the resident of which they are aware (including if a resident has made them aware).
- 7.9 The Council will triage all reports of damp and mould to determine the priority of response, giving priority to those residents with known or identified vulnerabilities and correlation between vulnerability and health effects of the reported hazard:-
- a) Residents with a pre-existing health condition (for example asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, other lung diseases and cardiovascular disease);
 - b) Residents of all ages who have a weakened immune system, such as residents with a cancer diagnosis, or are undergoing chemotherapy, or other people who are taking medications that suppress their immune system;
 - c) Pregnant women, their unborn babies and women who have recently given birth, who may have weakened immune systems;
 - d) The elderly and where households have members aged under 14;
 - e) Residents who are bedbound, housebound or have mobility problems making it more difficult for them to get out of the home.

Tenant engagement

- 7.10 The Council will respond proactively, sensitively and with urgency when engaging with resident's following a report of damp, or mould, to identify the severity and potential risk posed to tenants.

- 7.11 The Housing Service's activities will take account of our tenant engagement strategic priorities of '**listening to our tenants**', '**putting tenants first**', '**knowing our tenants**', and '**how we communicate with tenants**', to ensure everything we aim to achieve is supported by the tenants' voice, and those who will implement the actions.
- 7.12 Our values, LEAF, underpin the council's vision and priorities by shaping our behaviours and the way we work.

Learning

We learn from what we and others do well and where we need to improve, supporting staff development and organisational growth.

Empathy

We show kindness, actively seeking to understand people's different needs, and ensure our services are responsive.

Ambition

We are ambitious for our people and our place, embracing innovation and best practice.

Fairness

We act fairly, honestly, and openly in all that we do.

- 7.13 The Council **will not** place any requirement on residents who are suffering from health conditions to seek evidence from a regulated healthcare professional.

8 Investigation summary findings following report of damp and mould

- 8.1 Following the timeframe for investigating period as set out at Section 7.3, the Council will provide a written summary of findings to the Tenant that includes details of any hazard or building defect identified and (if applicable) next steps, including an anticipated timeline for repair and a schedule of works.
- 8.2 Tenants will be issued with a written summary within 2 working days of the investigation concluding. The written summary will specify, at minimum:-
1. How and when the investigation was conducted;
 2. Job title of the individual who conducted the investigation;
 3. Any follow up investigations that are required, and if so when they will take place;
 4. If a hazard was found and if so what;
 5. Whether the hazard is likely to pose a significant risk to residents' health or safety;
 6. If it does pose a risk:-
 - What temporary repairs are needed to make the property safe until the problem can be permanently rectified;
 - A schedule of works to permanently rectify the problem and the likely timescales to complete the work;
 - Contact details of the Officer who will lead remediation work for the tenant to contact with any queries.
- 8.3 The written summary will be issued to tenants electronically via email or by issuing a hard copy dispatched by postal service, depending on the tenants' communication preferences and needs.

- 8.4 In cases where no hazard was identified following investigation, the written summary will detail how the investigation was conducted and how the conclusion of no hazard was reached, so that tenants can be assured their home is safe and include further guidance on managing moisture within the home.
- 8.5 In cases where the investigation identifies a defect but does not find that the defect poses a significant risk to the tenant's health and safety, the written summary will explain why and that the Council will remedy the defect as a routine repair.
- 8.6 If, within 2 working days of the investigation, the Council is not able to set out full details of wider repair works, and only the immediate steps to be taken (i.e. temporary repairs), the Council will inform the tenant of when they can expect a full schedule of works (or estimated timeframe) where dates are dependent on external contractors' availability and follow up with specific timings. In cases for example:-
- Issues involving further building structural investigation;
 - Commissioning specialist damp survey;
 - Foul or surface water drainage survey.

9 Reparation

- 9.1 If the investigation indicates that any reported conditions of damp, or mould poses a significant risk to the health and safety of the tenant, the Council will endeavour to begin repair works within 7 calendar days of the written summary being issued.
- 9.2 The level of risk that any reported conditions of damp, or mould presents will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis and consider known vulnerabilities of the tenant or members of their household.
- 9.3 If the Council is unable to determine whether a hazard poses a significant risk to a resident’s health or safety, we will take a cautious approach and take any necessary action to mitigate health risks.
- 9.4 In some cases, the Council will need to take a phased approach to more complex remediation works, and temporary safety works will be required in the first instance before wider works are completed. For example, works to remove mould spores to mitigate the health risk, with wider repair works to follow. In such situations, the Council will still begin works within 7 calendar days, and details of further works will be included in the written summary of findings report set out in Section 8.

Completing repair works

- 9.5 The Council will satisfactorily complete repair works within a reasonable time period proportionate to the defect identified, and for the majority of generalised repairs, fall in line with the Council’s Maintenance and Repair policy response targets set out below:-

Category	Target	Response
E	3 hours	Emergency Response to make safe/temporary repair only
U	24 hours	Urgent Prevent suffering undue inconvenience or further damage to property
P	5 working days	Priority These are repairs that may affect the comfort of residents and likely to cause damage to the property if not carried out as a priority

R	20 working days	Routine Includes all other minor repairs
PW	90 working days	Programmed Works Major items of replacement or requiring weather or safety dependent work planning

9.6 In cases of complex remediation work it is impractical to set a fixed time limit for the completion of all repairs, i.e., those requiring further investigation, commissioning experts, structural damp or those requiring further detailed monitoring.

9.7 In such cases, our tenants will be kept regularly informed and timescales for completing repairs will be proportionate to the scale of the repair and consider the needs of tenants and be carried out as soon as reasonably practicable.

Shortage of labour and/or materials

9.8 In exceptional circumstances, where the Council experiences barriers to meeting timescales due to difficulties sourcing experts, skilled labour, or the required materials, the Council will keep tenants updated on delays and keep a record of the correspondence.

9.9 In such cases, and where a hazard has been identified that poses a significant risk to the health and safety of tenants, the Council will put in place temporary measures to ensure the property is safe, and where it is unable to do so, offer tenants suitable alternative accommodation until it is safe to return.

10 Decanting

- 10.1 If an investigation finds a hazard that poses a significant, or a significant and imminent, risk of harm or danger, and the property cannot be made safe within the specified timescales, the Council will offer to arrange for the occupant(s) to stay in suitable alternative accommodation until it is safe to return at the Council's expense.
- 10.2 Suitable alternative accommodation could include family, friends, vacant social housing stock, bed and breakfast establishment or hotels.
- 10.3 Temporary decanting will only be considered as a last resort and is intended to make sure that occupant(s) can be protected if dangerous hazards cannot be removed within the timescales set.
- 10.4 The Council recognise that some tenants will have reasons to resist being moved from their homes, even if temporarily. In those instances, the Council will take all reasonable steps to address tenants' concerns to aid temporary decant.
- 10.5 Where temporary decant is refused, the Council will provide tenants with clear information on how to keep themselves and their families safe ahead of the hazard being addressed, including if it is the Council's judgement that it is not possible to do so, and will record correspondence with tenants on offering alternative suitable accommodation.

11 Record-keeping

- 11.1 The Council will keep clear records of all attempts to respond to and remedy reports of damp and mould, including records of all correspondence with the tenant and any contractors.
- 11.2 In certain limited circumstances, it will not be possible for the Council to meet the timescales set out within this policy for reasons beyond our control but will take all reasonable steps to do so.
- 11.3 The Council will work with residents to arrange a suitable time for appointments to visit and take into account the needs of our tenants when offering timeslots to visit:-
- If we are unable to access the property within the agreed timeslot, our staff will leave a 'no access' card stating that an attempt was made and provide contact details;
 - The Council will make at least 3 attempts to contact tenants (or appointed representative) to arrange a suitable time to access the property;
 - If a tenant is unwilling or unable to provide access within the timescales, the Council will continue to actively engage and work with the tenant to secure entry.
- 11.4 Throughout this process, the Council will keep a record of all correspondence made with tenants, noting the date, time and actions attempted.

12 Equality and diversity

12.1 This policy recognises and acknowledges the serious impact damp and mould can have on people, both physically and mentally, and seeks to remedy this at the earliest opportunity.

12.2 Certain individuals may be at increased risk of the health impacts of damp and mould exposure. This could be due to health-related or age-related vulnerabilities, or because they are less able to report and act on guidance related to damp and mould, or fall with groups that are more likely to live in a home with damp and mould, including:-

- people with long term illness;
- people who struggle to heat their home and/or are experiencing fuel poverty;
- people on low incomes;
- people with disabilities;
- people from ethnic minority backgrounds and;
- people living in temporary accommodation.

12.3 While damp and mould poses a risk to anyone's health and should always be acted on quickly, it is particularly important that damp and mould is addressed with urgency for those more vulnerable to significant health impacts:-

- Residents with a pre-existing health condition (for example asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, other lung diseases and cardiovascular disease);
- Residents of all ages who have a weakened immune system, such as residents with a cancer diagnosis, or are undergoing chemotherapy, or other people who are taking medications that suppress their immune system;
- Pregnant women, their unborn babies and women who have recently given birth, who may have weakened immune systems;
- The elderly and those aged under 14;

- Residents who are bedbound, housebound or have mobility problems making it more difficult for them to get out of the home.

12.4 People who fall into more than one of these categories are likely to be particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of damp and mould, and this policy sets out the Council's approach to identify vulnerable residents, to prioritise our response within our available resources.

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13 Working in partnership with tenants

- 13.1 We will make it easy for tenants and officers to report damp and mould issues in our homes, building trust and working in partnership with tenants and stakeholders.
- 13.2 When we receive a report of damp or mould we will:-
- a) Respond sensitively and assess the issue with urgency to identify the severity of damp and mould and potential risk posed to tenants;
 - b) Risk assess each case using a triage risk matrix, and after risk assessing, adapt our approach in each case;
 - c) Identify and tackle the underlying causes of damp and mould, including building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation, and provide tenants with guidance on managing the build-up of condensation;
 - d) In more complex cases, seek the guidance from a qualified professional to avoid misdiagnosis;
 - e) Inspect the home at least 6 weeks after remedial work has been carried out, to ensure that the issue has been fixed and damp and mould have not reappeared. If damp and mould have reappeared, carry out further investigation and intervention to remedy.
- 13.3 We will offer a range of support depending on tenants' individual needs (including, but not limited to, help with language or cultural barriers).
- 13.4 Where vulnerable or disabled residents have no one to help them and are unable to carry out mould washes etc. themselves, we will consider how to support and assist them on a case-by-case basis.
- 13.5 We will approach each report of damp and mould with a 'no blame' culture – working with tenants in partnership, offering clarity on the responsibilities of both tenant and the Council as 'Landlord'.
- 13.6 We will work collaboratively with stakeholders and partners both in terms of addressing damp and mould and educating Officers and Tenants.

- 13.7 With our empty homes, at the time of a void inspection, check each room for damp and mould. If identified, it will be managed and rectified as part of the void maintenance works prior to reletting.
- 13.8 We are passionate about our tenants, their homes, and our communities. We're keen to hear what our tenants have to say about their home, where they live, and how our housing services affect them. We will actively engage with our Tenant Involvement Group when we regularly review this Policy. More information on tenant engagement and participation can be found here:- [Tenant engagement and participation - New Forest District Council](#)

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14 Prevention and monitoring

- 14.1 It is very important for our tenants to be able to spot the early signs of damp and mould, and how to tackle it. To support our tenants, our information guides give practical information on how to identify condensation, damp, and mould and how to manage moisture in the home.
- 14.2 The Council will implement data collection and insight measures to assist with informing us of the possible risks to our properties so that we can undertake proactive measures to eliminate the effects of damp and mould before it becomes a problem for our tenants.
- 14.3 In some cases, the Council may seek to install environmental sensors throughout the property to monitor and provide actionable insights into indoor environmental conditions. Environmental sensors are devices designed to measure and monitor various aspects of the surrounding environment, such as temperature, humidity, and indoor air quality. They work by utilising specialised sensors and technologies to detect specific environmental parameters, providing real-time data for analysis and decision-making for improving energy efficiency, monitoring damp and mould risk and identifying residents at risk of fuel poverty.

15 Complaints and learning

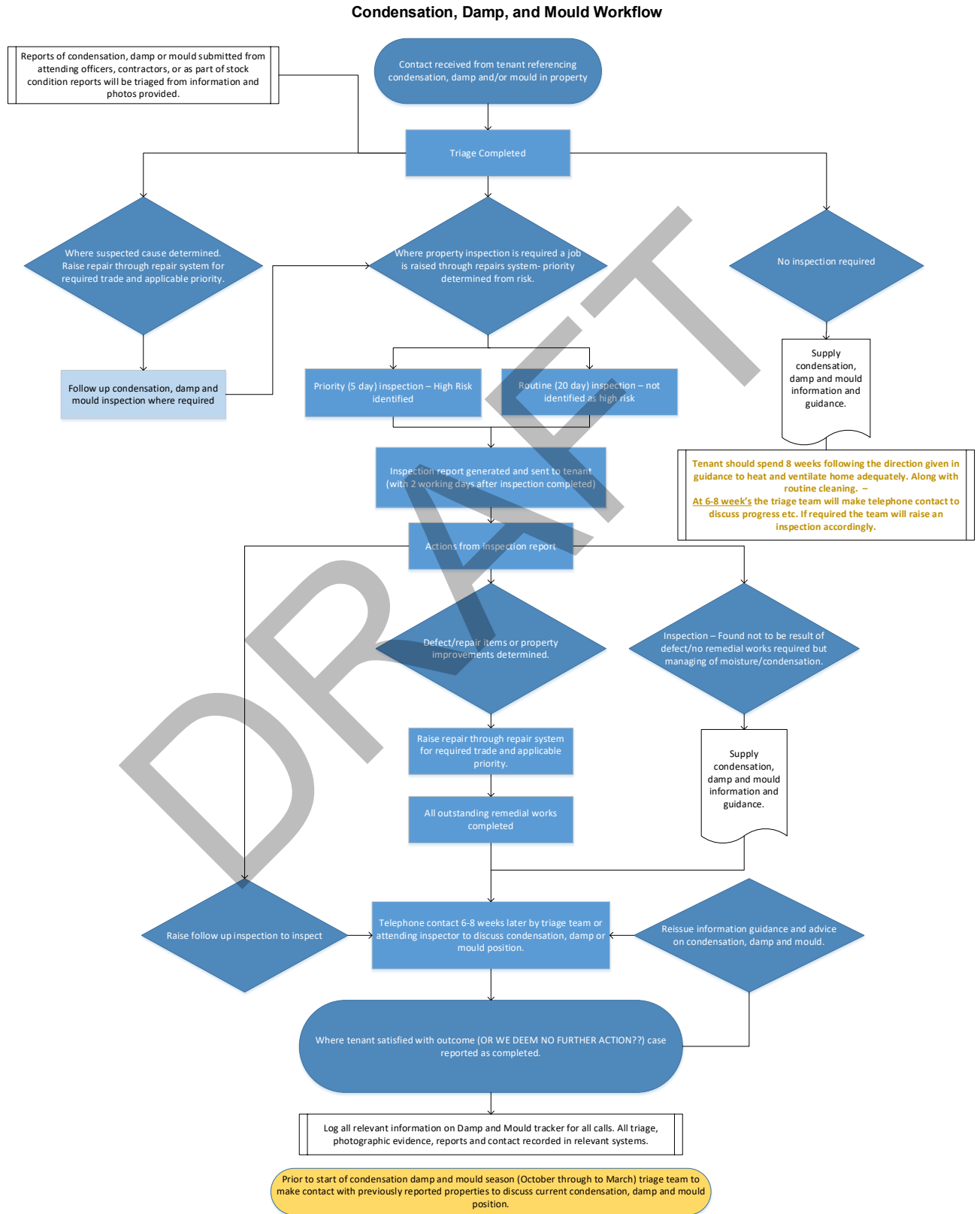
- 15.1 We are committed to providing our tenants with quality services. However, sometimes things do go wrong.
- 15.2 We encourage complainants to tell us when this happens so we can put things right, explain what has happened, learn from our mistakes, and improve our services.
- 15.3 Our aim is to swiftly investigate all corporate complaints impartially, finding solutions locally whenever possible to the satisfaction of both complainant and us.
- 15.4 The Council's complaint procedure has been aligned with the **Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code**
- 15.5 More information on feedback, comments and complaints can be found here:- **Feedback, comments, and complaints - New Forest District Council**

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16 Annexes

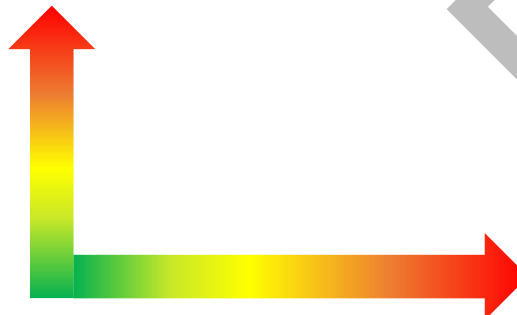
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Annex 1 Process map – condensation, damp, and mould triage



Annex 2 Condensation, damp, and mould risk matrix

Mould Risk	Combined mould surface area: (> the surface of 2 internal door faces)	Medium-High	High	High	High	High
	Combined mould surface area: (≤ the surface of 2 internal door faces)	Medium	Medium	Medium-High	Medium-High	High
	Combined mould surface area: (≤ the surface of 1 internal door face)	Low	Low-Medium	Low-Medium	Medium	Medium-High
	Mould spotting around window reveals/frames/silicon, corners of room or backs/behind furniture	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low-Medium
		No Health Concerns	Minor Health Concerns	Vulnerable Adult, over 80 or under 14	Immuno compromised	Severe Respiratory Disease
		Health Risk				



Annex 3 Tenant condensation, damp, and mould triage questionnaire

Our Council housing tenants can report early signs of damp or mould in several ways, including online via our website.

More information can be found here:-

[Damp, mould, and condensation - New Forest District Council](#)

[Condensation, Damp, and Mould Triage Questionnaire](#)

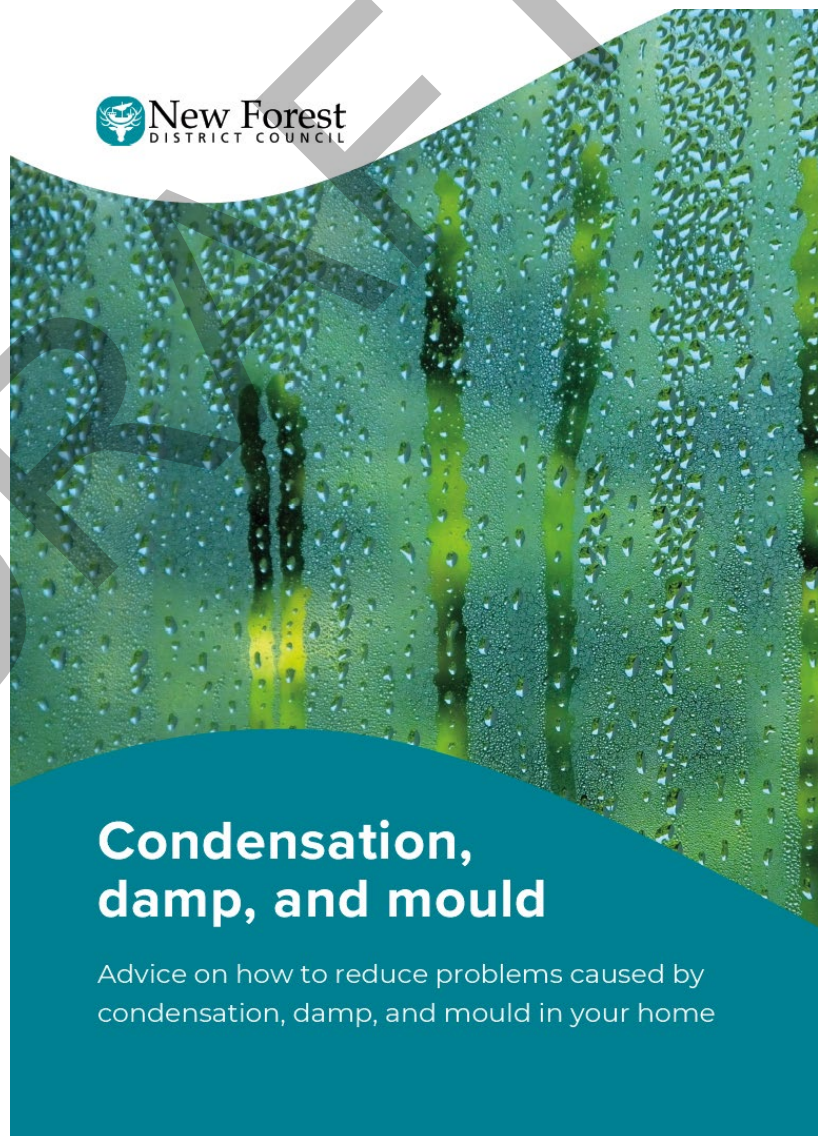
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Annex 4 Condensation, damp, and mould guide

Advice for our tenants on how to reduce problems caused by condensation, damp, and mould in their home, and how to report building defects or concerns can be found on our website.

More information can be found here:-

[Condensation, Damp, and Mould Guide](#)




Annex 5 Managing moisture in your home guide

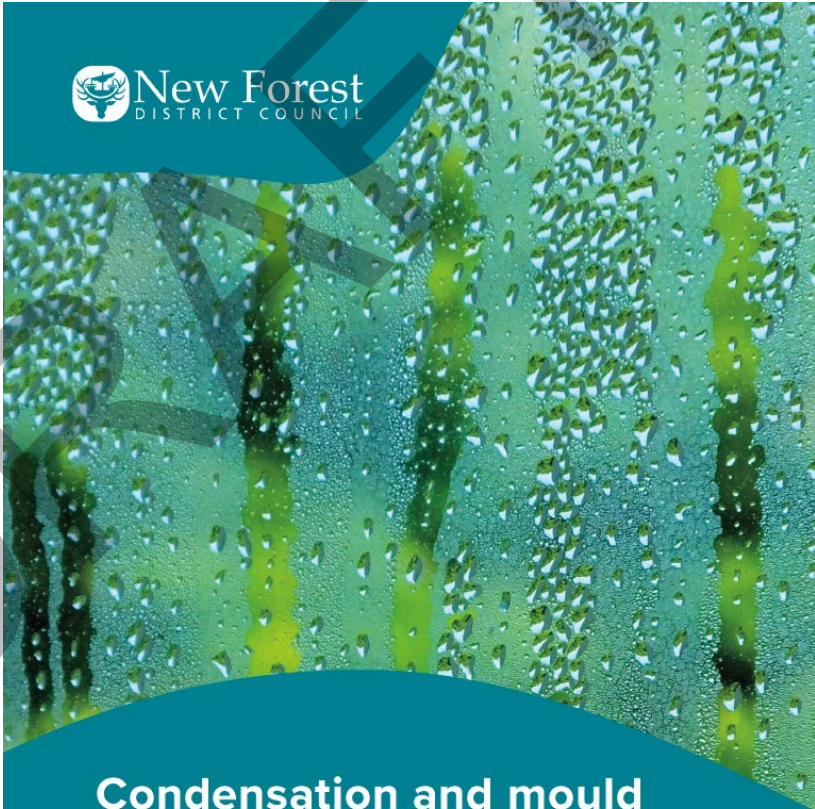
Advice for our tenants on how to manage moisture in their home can be found on our website.

More information can be found here:-

Managing moisture in your home guide






New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Condensation and mould

Report mould issues on our website or speak with our housing support team.

 www.newforest.gov.uk/dampandmould

 023 80 285222  housing.supporthub@nfdc.ov.uk

Annex 6 Guidance on condensation, damp, and mould resources

The following external resources are available and indicate how tenants can approach damp and mould in their rented home:-

- a) **Guide for tenants: Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018**:- guide for tenants in the social and private rented sectors on their rights under the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act.
- b) **Damp and mould: what tenants need to know - Shelter**:- includes information for tenants on damp and mould, covering answers to common questions. This covers the health impacts and causes of damp and mould as well as how to address issues.
- c) **Damp and mould in private rented homes - Shelter**:- advice and resources for private tenants who have identified damp and mould in their home, including advice on raising issues with landlords.
- d) Shelter provides housing advice for tenants on housing issues and **legal aid and free legal advice** for tenants who qualify for advice and representation to address serious housing problems.
- e) **Damp repairs in rented housing**:- advice for tenants on different types of damp, who's responsible for addressing them and how, as well as routes to escalate concerns if the landlord doesn't take action.
- f) **Dealing with damp and condensation, NEA leaflet**
- g) **Indoor air pollution (Asthma+Lung UK)**:- resources for people living with a lung condition, including information on the types of air pollution they might have in their home and how to manage allergies caused by indoor pollution at home.
- h) **Moisture in homes (UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings (UKCMB))**:- resource outlining causes of moisture build up in homes and how to manage this. This resource has been developed for homeowners. However, information on how moisture builds up and day-to-day methods for managing this will still be valuable to tenants.

Video on how to reduce damp and mould aimed at homeowners but may still be of interest to individuals who are renting:- **Moisture guidance for existing homeowners**

- i) **Advocacy in mental health**:- resource from Mind explaining what advocacy is and how it can help tenants who require it. This resource includes advice on the type of advocacy that could be sought for tenants who require it to address housing problems.

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