



Broxtowe
Borough
COUNCIL

DAMP AND MOULD POLICY

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1.0 Scope

The policy applies to all Council housing properties, both General Needs and Independent Living. Leaseholders have different obligations with regards to maintaining their homes. However, we will always provide relevant support and advice.

Reports received about properties not owned by the Council will be investigated by the Council's Private Sector Housing team.

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the Damp and Mould procedure, which sets out timescales for completion of works and roles and responsibilities.

2.0 Purpose

The policy outlines the approach that the Council will take in regards to reports of damp and mould. The policy and associated procedure will ensure that effective investigations are undertaken to identify that cause of the problem and that all reasonable repair solutions are implemented to resolve it.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

The Policy will:

- Ensure that all reports of damp and mould are responded to promptly, and that the Council works pro-actively to identify issues
- Provide a safe and healthy home for our tenants
- Ensure that the Council protects our assets from deterioration and damage resulting from damp
- Comply with all relevant guidance, statutory requirements and good practice

4.0 Regulatory Code and Legal Framework

The policy is aligned with the regulatory framework of the Regulator of Social Housing.

The recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman report 'Spotlight on Damp and Mould, It's not lifestyle' have also been considered.

Relevant legislation has been considered:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System within the Housing Act 2004
- Decent Homes Guidance, particularly Section 5

5.0 Policy Outline

5.1 Risk management

It is important to recognise that not all damp and mould presents the same risk. The most immediate and serious risk relates to severe mould growth which presents airborne toxicity. The risk is higher if mould growth is found in multiple areas or if the mould growth is in bedrooms.

Minor instances of mould such as around window frames and in silicone is considered lower risk and should be treated as not urgent. Once mould appears in any degree on ceilings walls and soft furnishing it becomes higher risk.

Repairs Inspectors will complete an assessment form and consider the risk to the tenant when ordering works. Cases where a higher risk has been identified will be prioritised.

5.2 Types of damp

To be able to treat the damp and mould correctly and completely resolve the issue, the type of damp must be identified correctly. External specialist advice will be sought, and a full range of tests will be completed to support diagnosis. Tests may include a carbide test and hygrometer salt analysis. If the external specialist advice recommended further tests, these will also be completed.

Rising Damp

This is the movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building. This is caused by building defects, such as a breakdown of a damp proof course, which allows moisture to enter the property. This can be identified by wet patches on walls; flaking or bubbling plaster and rotting skirting boards. If a damp proof course has broken down, there may also be a tide mark line around the perimeter of the room.

Penetrating Damp

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

Traumatic Damp

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.

Condensation

Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. The conditions that can increase the risk of condensation include:

- Inadequate heating, including undersized radiators and tenant not using the heating
- Inadequate ventilation, including lack of vents and mechanical extraction and these not being used correctly
- Inadequate insulation, including missing or defective cavity wall insulation or loft insulation
- High humidity, including not covering pans when cooking or drying laundry inside
- Overcrowding, which increases moisture levels

5.3 Mould

Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions. Mould will only grow on damp surfaces. It is often present in situation where there is condensation. If moisture accumulates, mould growth will often occur on indoor surfaces.

In order to reproduce, mould produces tiny particles called spores. Spores are carried in the air and may cause health problems if inhaled by people who are sensitive or allergic to them. It is important to note that most people will not experience any health problems from coming into contact with mould. However, mould exposure can cause a runny or blocked nose and irritation of the eyes and skin.

5.4 Tenants with additional support needs

The most at risk tenants are the very young, elderly and those with certain health conditions. Those with medical vulnerabilities such as asthma and allergies and those undergoing some medical treatments require urgent attention. Cases of damp and mould in properties where someone is at higher risk will be prioritised.

The Council will be supportive and responsive to the needs of our tenants, including adapting our approach when required to ensure that the issue is fully resolved.

5.5 Information and support for tenants

Information regarding damp and mould will be available in a variety of formats, including online and on paper. Information will be translated into different languages when required to ensure that it is understood.

When a damp survey is completed by an external specialist company the tenant will be provided with a copy of the survey and the recommendations.

When the lack of use of heating is identified as a contributing factor, a referral to the Financial Inclusion service will be made to offer advice to offer solutions, which may include increasing household income or reducing utility bills.

When overcrowding is identified as a contributing factor, our tenant will be supported to make a housing application and register their interest for a mutual exchange.

5.6 Offer of temporary accommodation

In some circumstances it may be necessary for the tenant to move out of their home whilst works are completed. This will only be in extreme cases. Wherever possible the tenant will be offered a decant to another property. In these circumstances the Decant Policy will be followed.

If a suitable decant is not available, or if the tenant needs to move out of the property quicker than a decant will be ready then other temporary accommodation will be offered. This may be in Council owned accommodation, bed and breakfast or a hotel.

5.7 Training

Training will be provided to visiting officers to help them identify damp and mould issues. Repairs Inspectors will be fully trained to complete inspections and undertake initial tests.

5.8 Complaints and compensation

If the tenant wishes to make a complaint, or request compensation from the Council in regards to the damp and mould in their home then a formal stage one complaint will be raised. This is to ensure that all complaints and compensation payments are recorded and so that the Council can ensure that trends are identified and learning points are shared.

5.9 Quality assurance

The Housing Repairs and Compliance Manager is responsible for monitoring the work of the Repairs Inspectors and checking that inspections and follow up work are completed. This will be completed using management reports and dip sampling on a monthly basis. The Council's response to damp and mould will be included in the Council's internal audit programme.

6.0 Related Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- Repairs Policy
- Reports of damp and mould procedure
- Customers with Additional Support Needs Policy
- Financial Inclusion Policy
- Allocations Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Decant Policy
- Compensation Policy

7.0 Review

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years, unless changes to legislation or guidance require an earlier review.

8.0 Document History and Approval

Date	Version	Committee Name
7/12/2023	1.0	Cabinet