

## Kirklees Council

### Homes and Neighbourhoods

# Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) Policy

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Date: July 2024

Review Date: July 2027

Approving body: Homes and Neighbourhoods, Senior Management Team

#### Policy Approval Details

Approved by:	
Approval Date:	
Minute Number:	
Ref:	DMCMP/24 V5

#### Policy Amendment and Version Schedule

Doc Ref	Version	Version Date	Reviewed by	Version Updates Summary
DMCMP/24	4	July 2024	General Manager - Assets	Full Policy Review
DMCMP/22	5	August	Service Manager Assets	

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## Purpose and Objectives

- 1.1 The primary purpose of this policy is to ensure that Kirklees Council is committed to putting resident's safety is at the core of service delivery. The policy will provide assurance that Kirklees Council will take appropriate action and provide a consistent approach to keeping residents safe when dealing with Damp, Mould & Condensation (DMC). It will ensure that every case will be dealt with thoroughly, fairly and with transparency.
- 1.2 This objective of this policy is to provide an approach to DMC which focuses on the residents as the single most important factor, rather than the buildings.
- 1.3 This policy will provide two key objectives
  1. The reactive approach to dealing with DMC is consistent and effective
  2. The proactive approach will help reduce and prevent future cases of DMC

This policy underpins Kirklees Council's commitment of '*Finding our Silence*' to systematically address current and reduce future cases of DMC issues residents' homes. This includes a proactive approach to identifying cases of DMC including those previously unreported cases.

The policy aims to remove the 'stigma' or negative perception of DMC in people's homes. This includes the removal of 'blame'. It demonstrates that Kirklees Council is taking responsibility will work with residents on an individual basis to find solutions to each case of DMC specific to that home.

The policy has been developed to actively encourage residents to report issues of DMC at the earliest opportunity and is providing the training, information and equipment to do this. This policy is underpinned by a change in procedure which will create significantly easier and more effective reporting mechanisms for residents.

It provides a clear focus on identifying individual resident's specific circumstances and vulnerabilities, which will be considered when working to provide the most effective solutions to DMC in a particular home. This will ensure a bespoke response to each case of DMC based on the specific requirements of the residents.

The policy will put effective communication with residents at the core of the approach. All residents will be asked to tell us what the issues are and how they are affecting their lives. This will be built into the individual response and actions for each case of DMC. The focus of the policy is on the resident in their home, rather than the 'property'

Residents will be kept informed of the progress of their case of DMC through every stage of the process and be provided with accurate timescales for each action (e.g. survey, repairs, mould treatment). They will receive regular updates and all actions will be confirmed in writing to each resident so that they are fully aware of the current position or next actions. Any delays or changes will also be communicated as soon as they arise.

The introduction of follow-up surveys will ensure that residents are assured that their case of DMC has been resolved to their satisfaction and provide them with the assurance that all issues, including root cause, have been resolved.

This policy embeds a coordinated and holistic approach to service delivery, including looking at previous repairs, disrepairs or other works (e.g specialist/structural) carried out to the property.

This policy provides a clear focus on prevention and identification of root causes rather than just treating the symptoms of DMC. The use of existing data, mapping, trends and property type will be used to inform and develop planned programmes of work to help prevent new and repeat occurrences of DMC.

It will introduce a more strategic approach to prevention of DMC In residents' homes and put preventative measures in place- (insulation/ ventilation/ energy advice and support)

This policy will embed a proactive approach to preventing cases of DMC, putting greater emphasis on feedback from residents and 3<sup>rd</sup> party agencies to provide information to inform where issues could arise, and enable preventative measures to be put in place.

Kirklees Council (KC) is committed to ensuring the health and safety of our residents, staff, contractors, and others who may be affected by damp, mould, and condensation (DMC) in the homes that we manage. We will ensure that our residents live in homes that are safe, secure, warm, and free from issues hazardous to health and that the Council's assets are protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp, mould, and condensation.

- 1.2 Kirklees Council has developed this policy to address the management of mould, damp, and condensation in our homes. The policy outlines our responsibilities in relation to completing necessary surveys, identified repairs and remedial works, collecting, reviewing, and managing relevant data as well as how we aim to protect residents' safety and wellbeing and ensure they are provided with a high-quality, responsive customer experience which is tailored to support their individual needs.
- 1.3 The well-being and structural integrity of our residents' homes can be severely affected by the presence of damp, mould, and condensation. Kirklees Council is committed to

meeting the objectives outlined in this policy, as well as adhering to the supporting operational procedures.

- 1.4 We are committed to the equitable treatment of residents experiencing damp, mould, and condensation issues, by ensuring fairness and consistency when addressing concerns. Kirklees Council will consider the Equality Act 2010 and make appropriate provisions for those with disabilities or support needs when implementing this policy. Whenever anyone reports issues with damp, mould, or condensation, we will approach the situation with compassion and respect, refraining from assigning blame or assuming the root cause.
- 1.5 It will ensure that staff, our contractors, and others are aware of, understand, and are equipped with the necessary information to deliver the requirements of our procedures in respect of issues relating to damp, mould, and condensation.
- 1.6 It is the shared responsibility of tenants, staff, contractors, and other relevant stakeholders to make sure that incidents of damp and mould are reported and acted upon in a timely manner. It is also a priority of this Policy to ensure that our residents are made aware of and understand our approach to the management of damp, mould, and condensation, as well as their own responsibilities, in a collective effort to minimise damp and mould in Council homes.

This Policy will meet the following requirements:

- Ensure staff are appropriately trained and this policy and its supporting procedures are adopted and embedded into service delivery.
- Comply with the relevant and applicable statutory, regulatory, and legislative obligations.
- Provide clarity on our overall approach to damp, mould, and condensation.
- Ensure that we are delivering a consistent service to our residents, whilst considering the Equality Act 2010.
- Ensure that residents have access to support, advice, and guidance on preventing, treating, and controlling damp, condensation, and mould as well as information on how to report issues to Kirklees Council.
- Treat anyone reporting damp and mould with respect and empathy and provide support where required.
- Respond effectively to individual reports of damp and mould, focusing on identifying the root cause and implementing the right solution.
- Communicate with our residents who are affected by this process to ensure they are fully aware of our procedures and protocols for taking timely and appropriate remedial action and how we will quickly respond if things go wrong.
- Set out our proactive approach to deal with wider issues around damp, mould and condensation.
- Provide assurance to our stakeholders that our approach to damp and mould is robust and effective.
- Focus on working in partnership by interacting with and listening to feedback from residents, staff, and contractors to help shape improved service delivery.
- Reviewing data to find our 'silence', where residents have not requested services from Kirklees Council, and therefore a proactive approach will be taken to visit such residencies.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy relates to all housing stock owned and/or managed by Kirklees Council.

2.2 This policy relates to all stakeholders, inclusive of residents, staff and contractors reporting instances of damp, mould, and condensation.

### 3. Statutory, Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

3.1 This policy supports Kirklees Council in complying with the following requirements:

- Defective Premises Act 1972 (Section 4)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- Housing Act 2004
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Home Standard Regulator of Social Housing 2015
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Pre Action-Protocol for Housing Condition Claims England 2021
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024

The Policy will be reviewed when there are any legislative changes that may impact on its operation.

### 4. Definitions

- 4.1 **Mould** is a fungus which spreads through spores which can quickly grow on surfaces where dampness persists, or moisture has formed on surfaces. Mould can often look like black, white, or green patches and when it is disturbed it can cause allergic reactions and irritations to people.
- 4.2 **Damp** is the presence of unwanted moisture in the structure of a building caused either by the intrusion of water from outside of the building or from internal elements such as leaks or caused by condensation within the structure. Damp can be caused by leaks from plumbing faults, failed appliances and poorly sealed baths and showers, as well as Rising Damp or Penetrating Damp.
- 4.3 **Rising Damp** is the movement of moisture from the ground rising up through the structure of the building through capillary action and can occur if the damp proof course (DPC) of a property has failed.
- 4.4 **Penetrating Damp** is caused by water ingress into properties from the outside. Examples include defective mortar with gaps/holes, broken roof tiles, leaking gutters, blocked drain/gulley, or floods.

4.5 **Moisture** describes very small drops of water, either in the air or on a surface. Every day activities produce moisture in a property, such as:

- Bathing or showering.
- Drying clothes indoors.
- Cooking and boiling a kettle.
- Washing the dishes; and
- Breathing, which also has an impact.

For reference, the average two-person household emits around nine litres of water vapour/moisture each day, and that moisture must go somewhere to prevent condensation.

4.6 **Condensation** is the natural output of the process of moisture in the air meeting cold surfaces like tiles, walls, windows, and worktops, and turns water vapour into liquid, as water droplets. It happens all the time, especially when it's colder outside. When air gets colder, it cannot hold a lot of moisture, so droplets of water may appear near windows or doors, in the corner of rooms, behind cupboards or wardrobes, or on other cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. It mainly occurs during cold weather and its more likely to happen in homes with more people in them.

4.7 **Humidity** is a measure of how much water vapour is in the air and a hygrometer can help measure humidity. A relative humidity rating between 40% to 60% on a hygrometer is considered ideal. High levels of humidity is typically recognised when the environment is warm with excessive water vapour in the air.

4.8 **HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System)** is a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. There are 29 categories including the hazard of damp and mould.

## 5. The Council's responsibilities

5.1 The Cabinet and Chief Executive Officer of Kirklees Council retains the overall accountability for the provision and operation of this policy.

5.2 The Service Director for Homes and Neighbourhoods has the responsibility for the consistent implementation and monitoring of this policy.

5.3 The Head of Assets and Development is responsible for the delivery of Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) surveys and for the collating and retention of property data including damp, mould and condensation.

5.4 The Service Manager Assets is responsible for appointing the contractor(s) (includes internal and external workers) to complete repairs and remedial works where building defects and failures have been identified by surveys, as well as the development of planned capital improvement programmes to eradicate the causes of damp and mould.

5.5 The General Manager Assets is responsible for resourcing and co-ordinating HHSRS property surveys, providing residents with hygrometers and information leaflets as well as raising the required repairs and remedial works.

- 5.6 The Head of Property Services is responsible for the delivery of repairs and maintenance services, including the application of mould treatments and the removal of building fabric issues creating damp, mould, and condensation hazards. They will utilise an internal workforce primarily, as well as a robust supply chain of third-party contractors to complete works where specialisms and/or additional capacity is required.
- 5.7 The Service Manager Property Services is responsible for resourcing and co-ordinating the required repairs and maintenance services.
- 5.8 Under delegated authority it is the responsibility of all staff and those working on behalf of Kirklees Council to ensure their work is carried out in accordance with this policy and related procedures.

## 6. Governance

- 6.1 The day-to-day operational governance of damp and mould will be managed by the Damp and Mould Action Group. This group will report to the Service Managers Operational Group and then to the Asset Management & Building Safety Steering Group.
- 6.2 Performance reports will be provided to the Cabinet, Senior Management Team (SMT) and Homes and Neighbourhoods Investment Board (HNIB) Building Safety Assurance Board (BSAB) to monitor the service delivery of damp, mould, and condensation activities.
- 6.2 To measure and monitor the effectiveness of damp, mould, and condensation activities, and provide stakeholders assurance, our performance reports will include the following key performance indicators (KPIs):

### Surveying

- Number of HHSRS hazards identified by severity.
- Number of surveys raised and appointed.
- Number of surveys completed.
- Average E2E (end to end, in days), reported to survey completed.
- Three month and six-month post works surveys raised and appointed.
- Three month and six-month post works surveys completed.
- % of Three month and six-month post works surveys completed.

### Repairs and Remedial Works

- Number of work orders raised and appointed.
- Number of work orders completed.
- Average E2E (end to end, in days), orders raised to works completed.
- Customer satisfaction.

The frequency of submitting the performance reports will depend on the governance forum, as well as the time parameters required i.e., weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually.

- 6.3 Kirklees Council will ensure that budgets are used effectively and efficiently to manage damp, mould and condensation hazards whilst provide a value for money (VFM) service to residents.

- 6.4 Resident satisfaction surveys will be completed to analyse our resident’s perspective of service delivery in relation to damp, mould, and condensation.
- 6.5 Staff and contractor feedback will be used to identify trends, common themes, and opportunities for improvement within service delivery.
- 6.6 Where relevant information is available, Kirklees Council will benchmark our performance against other social housing providers to review the effectiveness of this policy and supporting procedures.
- 6.7 The supporting procedural documents to this policy will provide greater detail, information and context for staff and contractors to deliver a robust and consistent damp, mould, and condensation service.

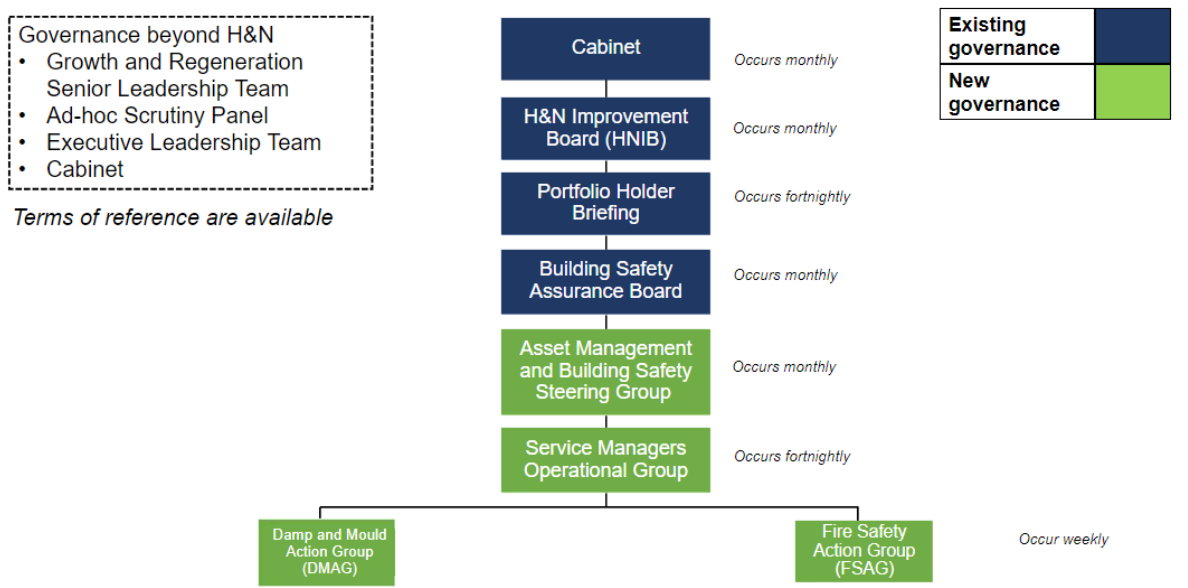
The DMC procedure will amplify the sequencing and delivery of the service, which includes the following elements:

- Reporting DMC.
- Prioritising DMC.
- Surveying DMC.
- Remedial Actions.
- Six-month post works visit.
- Recurring reports of DMC.
- Access.
- Complaints; and
- Asset Management.

6.8 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis; however, it may be reviewed earlier:

- If lessons learned and service feedback identifies changes which need to be adopted and embedded into service delivery; and
- There are changes to existing legislation, statutory or regulatory requirements, as well as the introduction of new requirements.

Below is the current governance arrangement structure





## 7. Reporting DMC

7.1 Anyone will be able to report damp, mould and condensation hazards using various methods:

- Phone - contact 01484 414800 (out of hours emergencies 01484 414850)
- Email – [dmc@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:dmc@kirklees.gov.uk)
- Online – [Report a repair](#)
- Face to face, with Homes and Neighbourhoods staff.

Residents are encouraged to provide as much information as possible to assist with the prioritisation of DMC activities.

## 8. Prioritising DMC

8.1 Staff will be trained to identify and triage the severity of the damp, mould and condensation hazards raised and be able to prioritise surveys effectively.

Residents' individual circumstances and vulnerabilities will be identified at the earliest possible stage and the information used to prioritise and order works accordingly

## 9. Surveying DMC

9.1 Surveys will be completed by competent staff, or suitably qualified independent surveyors, utilising the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to capture information to prioritise any required repairs and remedial works, as well as data to influence future planned capital improvement programmes.

9.2 Whilst at the property, upon the completion of the survey, we will ensure residents have access to:

- Guidance and information leaflets (without apportioning blame) on how to identify and reduce condensation to prevent the growth and spread of mould.
- A link to Kirklees Council's damp, mould and condensation webpage: [Damp, mould and condensation | Kirklees Council](#).
- A free hygrometer, for the resident to measure and monitor the humidity in the property.
- A free moisture absorber and odour neutraliser to assist with any excess moisture and condensation in the property.

9.3 From the survey findings, the necessary treatments and work orders will be raised and commissioned to the relevant contractor(s), who will make access arrangements with the resident.

9.4 An outcome letter from the survey, detailing what was identified, any necessary works and the next steps will be sent to the resident. A copy of the survey and outcome letter will be stored in the appropriate repository on Kirklees Council systems.

9.5 A three month check with the resident and six-month follow-up visit will be arranged with residents who have reported damp, mould, and condensation hazards where

repairs and remedial works have been completed. These will be carried out based on the scale of the original issue, risk and residents individual circumstances

## 10. Access and Decants

- 10.1 Kirklees Council, and its appointed contractors, will follow a robust and consistent access procedure to make reasonable attempts to access a property and carry out a survey, or repairs and remedial works.
- 10.2 All no access attempts will be recorded on Kirklees Council systems to provide evidence and adherence to procedural requirements.
- 10.3 Depending on the recommendations from the survey, the scale of works required, and the complexities associated with the property and resident, it may be identified that decanting the resident(s) would be a reasonable adjustment to eradicate the damp and mould hazard. Residents will be supported by Kirklees Council Homes and Neighbourhoods colleagues in these instances, who will adhere to the Council's [Housing Allocations Policy](#), which includes supporting information regarding decants.

## 11 Asset Management

- 11.1 Kirklees Council aims to identify and rectify the underlying causes of damp and mould, and will work with residents, staff and contractors to ensure that the fabric of its properties are free of defects and protected from deterioration and damage caused by damp, mould, and condensation.
- 11.2 Treatment, repairs and remedial works will be commissioned to suitable and competent contractor(s), who will ensure works are delivered safely and in accordance with this policy, other applicable policies and supporting procedures.
- 11.3 Data from completed DMC surveys, and stock condition surveys, will be collected and analysed to make evidence-based plans for future capital improvement programmes.
- 11.4 Should a property defect be identified through surveys that is either currently recurring or is likely to recur within other homes, works will be identified and carried out as a planned programme. This ensures a proactive approach to tackling defects that may result in damp, mould, or condensation in the future.

## 12 Complaints, Claims and Compliments

- 12.1 The Customer Experience Team handle all compliments and complaints associated to Homes and Neighbourhoods in relation to services provided to council residents and leaseholders. The team can be contacted using:
  - Phone - contact 01484 414800.
  - Online – [Compliments and Complaints webpage](#)
- 12.2 The [Housing Ombudsman code](#) sets out good practice that allows Kirklees Council to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

## 13 Related Policies and Procedures

13.1 This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with the following internal and external documents.

Internal

- Damp, mould and condensation (DMC) procedure.
- Tenant's guide to DMC.
- Homes and Neighbourhoods Complaints policy and procedure.
- Homes and Neighbourhoods Safety, Health, and Environmental policy.
- Homes and Neighbourhoods Repairs and Maintenance policy.
- Homes and Neighbourhoods, No Access policy and procedure
- Asbestos Management policy and procedure; and
- Decant policy procedure.

External

- Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Gap Analysis
- Housing Ombudsman Special Report on Rochdale Boroughwide Housing