



REPORT TO:	Policy Development Panel
DATE:	Tuesday, 6 February 2024
SUBJECT:	Housing Damp Condensation and Mould Policy (DC&M)
PURPOSE:	To provide feedback on the proposed new Housing Damp Condensation and Mould Policy.
KEY DECISION:	No
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Portfolio Holder for Communities and Operational Housing
REPORT OF:	Jason King, Assistant Director Housing
REPORT AUTHOR:	Chris Hale, Housing Property Services Manager Chris Hale
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	(All Wards);
EXEMPT REPORT?	No

SUMMARY

The Damp Condensation & Mould Policy sets out the approach the Council intends to take as a landlord when dealing with all reports of damp, condensation and mould from its tenants and leaseholders.

The Council has proactively responded to reports of damp, condensation and mould as part of our ongoing commitment to repairs and maintenance of Council properties. More recently there has been a focus on damp, condensation and mould with the Housing Ombudsman developing a spotlight report focussed on the social housing sectors response. The Regulator of Social Housing will also focus on providers arrangements for addressing damp, condensation and mould during their forthcoming inspections. It is strongly encouraged that a clear policy is developed, setting out how damp, condensation and mould will be managed.

The Policy Development Panel is therefore asked to consider the Policy and its supporting appendix, Damp Condensation and Mould Risk Assessment tool and provide feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Policy Development Panel considers and provides feedback on the draft Housing Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy (DC&M) and recommends it to Cabinet for adoption.
2. That Panel supports the recommendation to Cabinet to delegate minor operational amendments to the Assistant Director- Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Operational Housing.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the Council has a clear approach for the management and control of damp, condensation, and mould across the housing stock for the welfare and safety of tenants. Ensuring that the Councils housing stock remains decent and does not deteriorate through failure to address issues arising from damp, condensation and mould is also a priority.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Do nothing – do not adopt the DC&M Policy. This option is not recommended, it is good practice and a clear expectation of the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman to have a Policy in place to ensure that Officers, Members and Tenants understand the clear approach and objectives to addressing damp, condensation and mould.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Managing over 3,700 properties, South Holland District Council is the largest Registered Provider in the district. Expectations on Registered Providers are changing, with a focus on property condition, tenant experience and accountability. Registered Providers face the challenge of ensuring they get the basics right whilst contributing to the wellbeing of tenants and communities. Balanced with an increase in oversight and scrutiny from the media, the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 1.2 Following the death of Awaab Ishak Damp Condensation and Mould has become the forefront of the press and this has raised the awareness of people across the country. This has led to a substantial increase in the reporting of mould in our properties alongside the wider housing sector which needs to be fully investigated and resolved as quickly as possible. The Housing Ombudsman's spotlight report on damp, condensation and mould sets out a clear policy expectation. It is considered that existing policies covering tenancy and property management do not go into sufficient detail to meet this expectation.
- 1.3 This Policy covers areas of service delivery related to landlord functions and how the Council shapes, engages, and improves services for tenants who are suffering from damp, condensation and mould.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Policy sets out how the Council will assess all reports of damp, condensation and mould, using a triage tool for each case to determine the extent of the issue and a suitable survey and remedy. Property attributes and the vulnerability of the tenants are considered as part of this approach.
- 2.2 Changing legislation, best practice and findings from self-assessments have supported the drafting of the Policy.
- 2.3 A series of key performance indicators will be established to record the progress of the Policy including time to initial visit, repair requirements, inspection outcomes and repair times.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Policy will provide transparency on the Councils approach to damp, condensation and mould. Setting out a clear approach as to how initial reports are triaged together with managing cases and repairs. Data will also be captured to ensure the Council can analyse issues within its stock and inform long term investment programmes.

4. EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

- 4.1 None.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

- 5.1.1 The policy will support a partner council against potential fines from the ombudsman and ensure the housing stock remains in good condition by proactively managing issues related to damp, condensation and mould within the properties it owns.

5.2 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 5.2.1 The Policy will support the following South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Sub-Regional Strategy priorities:
- Healthy Lives – removing all the causes of damp, condensation and mould from our housing stock will lead to the better health of our tenants and everyone that stays or visits the properties.
 - Environment – by ensuring that our properties are watertight and have good natural and mechanical ventilation and by ensuring the heating systems are working to the most efficient that they can we will help to cut the energy use in use in these properties.
 - Efficiency and Effectiveness – through the use of the latest affordable technology in heating and ventilation we will improve the efficiency of our housing stock.

5.3 STAFFING

5.3.1 The current level of staffing will be supported by Contractors, as required, to carry out the initial surveys as damp and mould reports come into the Council. We also have in place a contractor who will work of a tendered schedule of rates to carry out the repairs that cannot be completed by the repairs team.

5.4 WORKFORCE CAPACITY IMPLICATIONS

5.4.1 The Property Services Team will manage demand generated by this policy together with specialist contractors which have been procured to support the Councils response to damp, condensation and mould.

5.5 CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.5.1 None.

5.6 DATA PROTECTION

5.6.1 None.

5.7 FINANCIAL

5.7.1 There are no immediate financial implications resulting from the adoption of this policy. Repairs budgets to deal with reports of damp, condensation and mould have been reviewed to take account of demand driven by the increased media profile of damp, condensation and mould.

5.8 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.8.1 This policy will assist the team in reducing/removing the risk of future complaints, disrepair claims and housing ombudsman investigations for damp, condensation and mould complaints.

5.9 STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

5.9.1 We have consulted the following:

- All Housing Mangers and the Damp, Condensation and Mould working group.
- Portfolio Holder - Communities and Operational Housing

5.10 REPUTATION

5.10.1 This policy will assist the team in reducing/removing the risk of future complaints, disrepair claims and housing ombudsman investigation for damp, condensation and mould complaints.

5.11 CONTRACTS

5.11.1 This policy will support existing contracts for surveying and repairs with specialist damp, condensation and mould contractors.

5.12 CRIME AND DISORDER

5.12.1 None.

5.13 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

5.13.1 The Council promotes equal opportunities and aims to implement and maintain services that ensure no tenant is treated unfairly on the grounds of age, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, race, religious belief or disability or disadvantaged by the application of criteria that has a direct or indirect discriminatory effect that cannot be justified by law.

5.14 HEALTH AND WELL BEING

5.14.1 Assisting tenants to ensure they live in homes free of damp, condensation and mould will positively contribute to their health and wellbeing.

5.15 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

5.15.1 None.

5.16 LINKS TO 12 MISSIONS IN THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

5.16.1 None.

6. ACRONYMS

6.1 DC&M- damp, condensation and mould.

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

APPENDIX A	Damp Condensation and Mould Policy
APPENDIX B	DCM Risk Assessment document

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Housing Ombudsman service. Spotlight on Damp and Mould.	www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Spotlight-report-Damp-and-mould-final.pdf

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

None.

REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	Housing Property Services Manager
----------------	-----------------------------------

	Chris.hale@sholland.gov.uk
Signed off by:	Assistant Director - Housing jasonking@sholland.gov.uk
Approved for publication:	Portfolio Holder for Communities and Operational Housing