



REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	Tuesday, 26 th March 2024
SUBJECT:	Housing Damp Condensation and Mould Policy (DC&M)
PURPOSE:	To adopt the Housing Damp Condensation and Mould Policy, risk assessment and to delegate minor and operational changes to the Assistant Director Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Operational Housing.
KEY DECISION:	No
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Tracey Carter
REPORT OF:	Jason King, Assistant Director- Housing
REPORT AUTHOR:	Chris Hale, Housing Property Services Manager
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All Wards
EXEMPT REPORT?	No

SUMMARY

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

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. The sector has recently seen an increased 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.

Cabinet is asked to note the feedback from the Policy Development Panel on the 6 February 2024 and adopt the policy and its supporting appendix, Damp Condensation and Mould Risk Assessment tool for use in providing Housing Landlord services as registered provider of social housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet adopt the Housing Damp Condensation and Mould Policy.
2. That the Cabinet adopt the Damp Condensation and Mould Risk Assessment tool.
3. That the Cabinet 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.

The proposed policy and accompanying risk assessment were presented to the Policy Development Panel on the 6 February 2024. The Panel noted there had been a shift in the sector to ensure robust arrangements were in place to effectively manage and control damp condensation and mould. The panel noted that pathways for reporting issues should be centrally triaged to ensure an appropriate response.

It was widely noted that several property factors could be contributing towards damp condensation and mould issues identified within Council owned properties. Therefore, it was important to ensure the Councils response is robust and consistent. Members of the panel expressed that literature on how to tackle damp condensation and mould should be widely available to new and existing tenants. The panel supported the recommendations the Cabinet are asked to approve.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Do nothing – do not adopt the Damp Condensation and Mould Policy. This option is not recommended – it is good practice to have a Policy in place to ensure that Officers, Members and Tenants understand the priorities and objectives and the reasoning behind them.

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 shows 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.
- 2.4 The proposed policy and accompanying risk assessment were presented to the Policy Development Panel on the 6 February 2024. The Panel noted there had been a shift in the sector to ensure robust arrangements were in place to effectively manage and control damp condensation and mould. The panel noted that pathways for reporting issues should be centrally triaged to ensure an appropriate response.
- 2.5 It was widely noted that several property factors could be contributing towards damp condensation and mould issues identified within Council owned properties. Therefore, it was important to ensure the Councils response is robust and consistent. Members of the panel expressed that literature on how to tackle damp condensation and mould should be widely available to new and existing tenants. The panel supported the recommendations the Cabinet are asked to approve.

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 for 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 or regulator, ensuring that 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 – using the latest affordable technology in heating and ventilation we will improve the efficiency of our housing stock.

5.3 STAFFING

5.3.1 Contractors will support the current level of staffing, 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 It is proposed that approval of minor changes to the Policy are delegated to the Assistant Director Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Operational Housing. It is considered necessary for this arrangement to be in place due to the changing environment.

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 prosecution for damp condensation and mould complaints.

5.9 STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

5.9.1 We have consulted the following:

- All Housing managers 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 prosecution 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 applicant 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	Damp Condensation and Mould Risk Assessment.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
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Housing Ombudsman service- Spotlight on Damp and Mould.	Housing Ombudsman Spotlight report on damp and mould (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
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CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT
Considered by the Policy Development Panel on the 6 February 2024.

REPORT APPROVAL	
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