



Places to live. Space to grow.

Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

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CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction and purpose	3
Responsibilities	3
Regulation	4
Policy Statement	4
Reporting	9
Consultation	9
Communication	9

1 Introduction and purpose

1.1 This policy details West Kent's approach to managing the risk of damp, mould, and condensation (DMC). It sets out how West Kent will respond to reports of damp, mould, and condensation within its homes, from residents, or which become apparent to staff as part of their daily duties. Occurrences of damp and condensation can lead to mould growth and subsequent detriment to homes and poor living conditions for residents.

1.2 Our promise when dealing with damp, mould and condensation:

- **Have an embedded culture of zero tolerance in our response to the occurrence of DMC across West Kent**
- **Build trust and confidence – no blame and no shame in our response**
- **Ensure health and wellbeing – understand our residents needs**
- **Governance – performance reporting to the Executive Team and Board, learning from complaints/faults and being accountable to residents.**

1.3 It is important that causes of damp, mould and condensation are diagnosed and understood to effectively fix the problem. This includes a proactive approach to addressing reports, providing relevant information, and signposting to residents where appropriate.

1.4 West Kent will aim to proactively manage the risk through:

- Five yearly stock condition surveys
- Reactive repairs
- Planned preventative investment
- Providing information and guidance to residents.
- Monitoring themes and trends with cases of DCM and complete lessons learnt on complaints and Housing Ombudsman published findings

1.5 West Kent will tailor responses to ensure the individual needs of residents are taken into consideration where possible.

1.6 This document should be used by all employees, residents, and stakeholders of West Kent. It has been written to explain the responsibilities placed upon West Kent to maintain a safe environment for their residents and employees within all homes and buildings. This policy applies to all buildings within West Kent's portfolio where West Kent has the responsibility to maintain the asset, it does not apply to shared owners or leaseholders.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Landlord Responsibilities

- 2.1.1 Within Decent Homes legislation, West Kent as a landlord is responsible for keeping its homes in good repair. West Kent is responsible for those works or installations that are fitted by us, or which have been adopted by us.
- 2.1.2 West Kent complete initial investigations, surveys, and repairs in accordance with our home standard.
- 2.1.3 West Kent will ensure all our homes meet the Social Housing Regulators Decent Homes Standard which includes issues relating to damp and mould under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which is one of the criteria of the above standard.
- 2.1.4 West Kent will ensure all our contractors/consultants are competent and experienced to work on damp, mould and condensation orders and hold them fully accountable via our contracts and contract management framework for the timelines and quality of the work completed.

2.2 Resident Responsibilities

- 2.2.1 A Residents responsibilities are set out in their tenancy agreement. When moving into the home guidance and advice will be provided by West Kent.
- 2.2.2 Further information is provided in the tenancy handbook and on our website.
- 2.2.3 If residents start to see signs of damp and mould they should report this to West Kent.
- 2.2.4 Residents should wash down any mould forming on windows and doors because of condensation forming during the winter months. If residents are not able to do this, they should contact our customer services department to ask for help.
- 2.2.5 Residents should keep their homes clear and tidy and ensure good ventilation around their home, if they are struggling to do this, they should contact our customer services department to ask for help.
- 2.2.6 Residents should follow helpful information and tips on our website which is continuously kept up to date with useful advice.

3 Regulation

- 3.1 This policy is intended to deliver on the Regulator for Social Housing's Home Standard, in particular the requirement that:

1.1 Quality of accommodation

Registered providers shall:

(a) ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance [footnote] and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard

In addition to providing a safe home environment to our residents, West Kent will comply with all relevant legislation not just the legislation identified in this policy.

4 Policy Statement

Our policy has been informed by the Housing Ombudsman report on Damp and Mould entitled "It's not Lifestyle". This report had 26 recommendations based on evidence which was broken down into the following sections:

- From reactive to proactive
- From inferring blame to taking responsibility
- From disrepair claims to resolution
- From a complaint to a learning culture.

The 26 recommendations formed the 10 key spotlight areas from the Housing Ombudsman published in February 2023.

4.1 Dedicated damp and mould strategy

- This damp, mould and condensation policy together with our approach to planned investment and our asset management strategy towards meeting net zero standards together provide a comprehensive and proactive approach to tackling and managing the risk of DMC.
- This DMC policy and accompanying procedure will be regularly reviewed. This will be done in conjunction with our resident scrutiny panel.
- We will ensure all reports of damp and mould are triaged to ensure cases of serious concern are attended to as a priority.
- All void properties will continue to be reviewed to ensure they have not had previous occurrences of damp, mould, and condensation and that all homes have the required insulation before they are re-let.

4.2 Find your silence

- We will regularly review customer insight and property repair records to identify where we have not had contact within the last 12 months. We will then ensure that these residents are contacted.
- We will also identify those properties with repeat DMC repairs and consider the potential for building design factors and consider options to actively resolve these factors.
- Customer service training is key to the way West Kent actively progresses complaints.

- We will continue to encourage those residents struggling with damp, mould, and condensation to contact us for action.
- We will be promoting to all our staff to continue to raise cases and jobs if they see damp, mould and condensation, even if they have reported this previously.
- The implementation of our new Housing system, Civica CX will make it easier for staff whilst out on visits to raise cases and works orders for issues they identify.

4.3 Proactive communications strategy

- Our 2023 campaigns on damp and mould and the cost of living will ensure we are continuously communicating with our residents on these topics, providing information, guidance, and signposting on a regular basis.
- We will continue to update our website with relevant information, guidance, and support for our residents.
- We will continue to use our Neighbourhood News newsletter to communicate with our residents, providing, information, guidance, and support.

4.4 Treat residents fairly

- We will ensure all residents needs are identified in our processes and aim to meet these wherever possible.
- In 2022 we introduced a team of experts to help those in financial hardship who can help sign post residents for the help needed.
- We will continue to maintain all our properties to the Decent Homes Standard even when they are identified for regeneration at a future date.
- There will be a no blame culture throughout West Kent with a zero-tolerance approach to ensure reported cases are resolved.
- In appropriate circumstances where significant works are required, we may need to temporarily move residents to alternative accommodation to enable works to be carried out.
- We have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group to ensure the fair treatment of all staff and residents.

4.5 Record keeping

- All damp, mould and condensation cases will be tracked and triaged in terms of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) risk rating of pass, low, medium, and high categories by our surveying team and this will be recorded on our asset management database for full reporting.
- In 2024 we will begin to develop through our new Civica CX system improved data driven diagnostics of our properties and potential issues, ensuring a clear flow from start to finish of any DMC works with follow ups included.
- Our data analysts will continue to analyse our stock condition, energy and repairs data to ensure we proactively approach homes that are at risk of damp and mould.

4.6 Know your residents

- We will overlay our Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) data with customer insight on vulnerable residents and potential overcrowding to highlight homes with an increased risk of DMC.
- We will continue to use data to give us information on the bigger picture such as overcrowding and proactively checking for repeat repair issues including damp and mould.
- Job timescales will be dependent of the triaged risk rating and residents' individual needs and circumstances. This triage can be altered if residents inform us of any change in circumstances.

4.7 Plans for meeting net zero standard

- We will ensure that our journey to net zero adopts a fabric first approach. This will reduce the demand for energy to heat that home.
- We will investigate different sources of heating once all our homes are well insulated. This approach will ensure homes that are heated by electric and those that we wish to convert from gas to electric are still cost effective for our residents to run as electric heating costs more than gas.
- We will not carry out any net zero carbon improvements to our homes if this has a detrimental effect to our residents.
- When we retrofit our properties, we will monitor works to ensure no thermal bridging, ensure homes are ventilated and meet all PASS 2035 requirements and are remotely monitored to ensure improvements have been achieved.

4.8 Know your homes

- We will investigate any properties identified with known design issues that increase the risk of DMC. We will use our energy data to identify potential problematic stock and proactively contact the residents within these properties to provide appropriate advice and support.
- We will carry out stock condition surveys of all our stock once every five years, which covers damp, mould and condensation through the Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS).

4.9 Empower staff

- We will ensure all our staff and contractors recognise damp, mould and condensation and know how to report cases.
- We will ensure all staff dealing with damp, mould and condensation receive adequate training and hold the relevant competencies in surveying experience and building surveying qualifications.
- Weekly damp and mould meetings will be set up lead by the Property Team to review all tracked cases and identify any complex cases to ensure progress is made and action needed is taken.

4.11 Use the complaints system to learn

- We will continue to use our robust complaints process with dedicated customer resolution officers to support a culture of learning.
- We will track themes and trends and look for patterns of property types. This will then be followed up by our Property Team to ensure we proactively contact residents in similar properties to actively prevent problems occurring.

4.12 Reactive response

All damp and mould cases will be taken seriously however we realise the need to attend to some more serious cases quicker.

Serious cases should be raised as an emergency 24-hour job. These would constitute a HHSRS Category 1 High Failure. Residents would report that damp and mould is visible in large quantities in one room or across their property. They may report that walls, ceilings, and floor coverings are wet, that personal belongings are also being damaged in large quantities.

Cases will also be prioritised if any resident has any ongoing respiratory health condition. Customer Services will raise all these jobs on an urgent to 5-day priority based on the information they are given.

Less serious cases that should be raised on the normal 21-day priority are where there are small, isolated cases of mould growth for example around window reveals, mould growth in non-habitable rooms or cupboards, or condensation water forming on windows and doors.

4.6 The below details the overarching procedure to damp and mould cases.

Identification	Action	Follow up
<p>1st report of damp, mould or condensation from resident or staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer services to determine how serious the case of damp and mould is to ensure a correct priority is assigned. • Order to contractor to identify and remedy problems. • Contact resident within five days of order being raised or sooner if the severity determines a quicker response. • 21-day timescale for completion of survey. • Survey completion priority adjusted to an emergency or 5-day timescale if high risk issues are identified, such as medical conditions, mould is present in high volumes, water running down walls. • On completion of survey contractor to email the Integrator mailbox with the 	<p>Repair completed within the priority determined by the works required. Priority will be escalated to an urgent priority if there are high risk issues such as medical conditions or if mould is present in high volumes.</p> <p>Task allocated to our communities' hub for triage for additional help for hardship fund cases, further support, and welfare benefits team.</p> <p>Clerk of works to undertake a sample of audits on completed surveys to assess the quality of survey produced by the contractor.</p>

	HHSRS outcome for input onto the Asset System.	
2 nd report of damp, mould or condensation from resident, staff or data analysis of customer contacts and jobs raised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case assigned to internal surveying team, detailing the severity of the damp and mould. • Contact resident within five days of order being raised or sooner if the severity determines a quicker response. • 21-day timescale for completion of survey. • Survey completion priority adjusted to an emergency or 5-day timescale if high risk issues are identified, such as medical conditions, mould is present in high volumes, water running down walls. • On completion of survey, surveyor to ensure HHSRS outcome is recorded on Asset system. 	<p>Repair completed within the priority determined by the works required. Priority will be escalated to an urgent priority if there are high risk issues such as medical conditions or if mould is present in high volumes.</p> <p>Follow up appointment set.</p> <p>Hygrometers given if relevant.</p> <p>Task allocated to our communities' hub for triage for additional help for hardship fund cases, further support, and welfare team.</p>
Ongoing issues, which have not been resolved at previous two stages or identified early on as a complex case.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order raised for specialist surveyor. • Contact resident within five days of order being raised. • 21-day timescale for completion of survey. • Survey completion priority adjusted to an emergency or 5-day timescale if high risk issues are identified, such as medical conditions, mould is present in high volumes, water running down walls. 	<p>Repair completed within the priority determined by the works required. Priority will be escalated to an urgent priority if there are high risk issues such as medical conditions or if mould is present in high volumes.</p> <p>Ongoing smart monitoring of building and its use.</p> <p>Follow up timescales set.</p> <p>Task allocated to our communities' hub for triage for additional help for hardship fund cases, further support, and welfare team.</p>

5 Reporting

An overview of our compliance with meeting the Decent Homes Standard, including cases of damp, mould and condensation will be reported to the Executive Team monthly and the Board quarterly.

Reporting will classify cases into low, medium, and high HHSRS failures, clearly identifying any high failures which result in a decent homes failure.

6 Consultation

The Director of Property and Asset Management and the Head of Strategic Asset Management have prepared this policy with input from representatives from across West Kent.

As part of the development of this policy a review by the Resident Scrutiny panel has been undertaken. As part of this residents shared their feedback on its content via a focus group. The outputs of that review were considered to shape the policy before publication.

7 Communication

This policy is available to view by all residents on the website and will be updated with any changes. Internally this policy will be viewable and accessible by all staff with links in place to the website to maintain version control.

RELATED POLICY DOCUMENTS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Legislation	Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS) under the Decent Homes Standard.
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Related Policies	West Kent Homes Standard
	Compensation Policy
	Complaints Policy
	Asset Management Strategy