

Damp and Mould Policy

This policy applies to Croydon Council employees, contractors, tenants and other persons or other partners who may work on, occupy, visit, or use its premises.

The policy outlines the Council's approach to managing damp and mould in the domestic properties that it owns and manages.

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1. Purpose

This policy outlines the practices and obligations associated with managing damp, condensation, and mould within Croydon Councils Repairs Service.

The Council strives to maintain a high standard, improving its housing stock through the delivery of a consistently high-quality repairs and maintenance service, ensuring customers who experience damp, condensation, and mould within their properties are treated in a fair and reliable way, and addressing damp and mould issues in an efficient and effective manner.

2. Objectives

This policy aims to bolster a successful and efficient management of Damp and Mould within the Council's housing stock.

This includes implementing procedures that mitigate the risk of damp and mould growth, promoting the preservation of the structural integrity of properties, and providing a cost-effective and prompt repairs and maintenance service. Additionally, the policy aims to adopt a data-driven approach to identify high-risk areas, promote a clear understanding of the Council's legal responsibilities and obligations, and ensure a high standard of workmanship and customer satisfaction.

Ultimately, this policy strives to contribute to a well-functioning and safe environment for all residents living-in properties owned and managed by the Council.

3. Principles

The policy governing the management of dampness and mould within the Council's housing stock is guided by a set of principles, aimed at ensuring that the homes of tenants are warm, dry, and healthy.

One of the central principles of the policy is to involve tenants, leaseholders, and other stakeholders in the development and operation of the service. This ensures that their needs and preferences are considered and that feedback from these groups is used to continually improve the service.

Clear and appropriate communication is also a key principle of the policy. This ensures that information is easily understood and, in some cases, fulfils the Council's legislative requirements. The policy also recognizes the importance of training for operational staff, and the need for detailed procedures and agreed practices to be applied uniformly across the Housing Services.

To fulfil its obligations, the Council will utilize both its in-house repairs and maintenance team and external contractors. The Council will also ensure that value for money and procurement regulations are adhered to in all aspects of the service.

4. Legislation

The following is a list of the current legislation that is applicable to this policy:

- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Equality Act 2010

- Right to repair regulations
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Building Regulations Act 2010
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Housing Acts 1985 & 1996
- Housing Act 2004
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR)

5. Equalities

The goal of all Council policies is to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is a requirement set by the Equality Act 2010. This duty requires that public bodies:

- Eliminate any unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or other prohibited conduct outlined in the Equality Act 2010.
- Promote equality of opportunity among individuals from diverse groups and foster positive relationships between these groups.

The Council is committed to complying with all statutory and regulatory requirements and best practices related to the provision of its services, ensuring that tenants are treated fairly and without discrimination, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

6. Damp and Mould Responsive Repairs

The Policy on Damp and Mould Responsive Repairs outlines the process that will be followed in the event of a report of a defect. When a tenant, resident, advocate, or internal employee reports a defect, the following steps will be taken:

1. Within 6 working days of the initial report, a stage 1 inspection and mould wash will have been undertaken.
2. Based on the results of the Stage 1 inspection, our specialist Damp and Mould Surveyor will conduct a Stage 2 visit to the property to determine the cause of the problem and provide a detailed report of remedial work to be undertaken to ensure the property is returned to a safe and well-functioning environment.
3. In cases where extensive work is required, tenants may need to be temporarily decanted while the works are being completed.
4. Information: A Damp and Mould information leaflet will be provided to tenants to help them avoid dampness and mould in their properties. The overall aim of the procedures is to provide dry, warm, and healthy homes for tenants and to address any damp and mould problems efficiently and effectively.

7. Tenant's responsibility

Tenants are responsible for any redecoration following repairs.

Information is also available via our website to support tenants in their continued maintenance of the property.

8. The Council's responsibility

The Council is responsible for maintaining the structural integrity of its housing. In the event that penetrating and rising dampness are detected, it is the Council's responsibility to carry out the necessary remedial action. Additionally, the Council is obligated to insulate the properties in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard.

9. Training

Croydon Council is committed to ensuring staff, visiting officers and contractors have the knowledge and skills to identify dampness and mould and have the tools necessary to address issues effectively.

Having a good understanding of our housing stock, archetypes and fabrication of our buildings is key to effectively combating dampness and mould in the properties the council owns and manages.

Damp and Mould training will be available to raise awareness and provide a thorough understanding of the policy, related health issues caused by dampness and mould, and the various cases that may arise.

Staff will be equipped with the necessary equipment to assess damp in properties and determine the best course of action to resolve the problem.

Training on the Council Housing system NEC Housing is essential. All reported cases of dampness, and mould is to be logged in NEC Housing as our process and procedures, so cases are dealt with efficiently and actioned within the Council's time frame. Thus, enabling an effective set of KPIs and demand management reporting to highlight trends.

At the London Borough of Croydon, the well-being and professional development of our employees are of utmost importance. In line with this, we are committed to ensuring that all staff, visiting officers, and contractors are equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to address damp and mould issues effectively.

We understand that having a good knowledge of our housing stock and its archetypes is key to effectively combating dampness and mould. Thus, we will provide training to raise awareness and create a thorough understanding of the policy, the related health issues, and the various cases that may arise.

In addition, our staff will be equipped with the necessary equipment to assess damp in properties and determine the best course of action to resolve the problem. By providing our employees with the tools and resources they need to succeed, we aim to create a workplace culture where all staff feel valued, supported, and empowered to deliver the best possible service to our tenants and partners.

[Is this too detailed for this policy given the focus on LBC staff, not residents.]

10. Performance monitoring

To ensure continuous value for money and effective monitoring of service delivery, the Housing Service will report on the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor the completion of works:

The quality of the works carried out, usually collated by Tenants' Satisfaction responses (via Trade Officer obtaining feedback during their post-inspection visit)

- Timely response to initial customer contact
- Timely completion of inspections (e.g., within 6 working days from the initial report)
- Number of first-time fixes (Stage 1)
- Timely resolution of damp and mould issues
- Reduction of repeat damp and mould incidents
- Percentage of homes that are free from dampness and mould.
- Percentage of tenants who are satisfied with the damp and mould resolution process.
- Number of damp-free homes at 3-month and 6-month inspections
- Number of decants required.
- Number of failed appointments (missed timeslot)

KPI monitoring information is usually presented at Senior Management Team or Contractor Operational Meetings.

11. Complaints

We take the satisfaction of our tenants and leaseholders very seriously, and if they are not satisfied with the handling or execution of their repair, they have the option to raise a formal complaint. We strive to provide high-quality service and we welcome all feedback to help us improve. To raise a formal complaint:

A complaint should be made to the Council within 12 months of when a customer feels that something has gone wrong. If this timescale has passed, the Council may ask customers to explain why they could not complain sooner.

The Council has a two-stage complaint process. The target time for a response to be issued to the customer, at both stage 1 and stage 2, is twenty working days from the receipt of the complaint.

Stage 1 complaints are dealt with by the Members and Residents Services team. An investigating officer will be assigned and should acknowledge the complaint with the customer within the first five working days.

The officer will then investigate the complaint and issue a response to the customer from within INFREEMATION the Council's complaint handling system.

Stage 2 If a customer remains dissatisfied after receiving the Council's response to their stage 1 complaint, they can request that their complaint is escalated to stage 2.

Stage 2 complaints are dealt with by the Complaint Resolution Team, who conducts an independent investigation on behalf of the Chief Executive. If a Stage 2 complaint is being investigated regarding your service area, a member of the Complaint Resolution Team will contact your service, requesting that you provide specified information within five working days.

All Stage 2 responses must be approved by the Executive Director of the Service and are signed off by the Chief Executive. Complainants are advised that if they remain dissatisfied following the Council's response to their Stage 2 complaint, they can approach the relevant Ombudsman, who may decide to consider their complaint.

The Complaint Resolution team can decide to reject a customer's request to escalate their complaint to Stage 2 if the customer has not explained how their Stage 1 complaint was not investigated properly or has not provided any new, significant information that may alter the decision made at Stage 1. If this is the case, a rejection letter will be sent to the customer by the Complaint Manager, explaining why the Council cannot consider their complaint, and referring the customer to the Ombudsman.

Ombudsman complaints

Complainants are advised that they can approach the relevant Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied following the Council's consideration (or rejection) of their Stage 2 complaint.

If the complaint is regarding the Council's responsibility as a landlord, for example, housing repairs or tenancy, the complainant will be advised to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

If the complaint is regarding any other corporate service, the complainant will be referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the Ombudsman will first contact the Council to check whether the complainant has completed our complaints process at both Stages 1 and 2. Generally, the Ombudsman will expect a customer to have exhausted all the stages of the Council's corporate complaint process before they escalate their complaint with the Ombudsman. Although, should the Ombudsman consider the customer's complaint to be serious, such as the vulnerability of the customer or another urgent matter, then they will investigate. The Ombudsman can also investigate at an earlier stage if they feel the case is exceptional.

If the Ombudsman does decide to consider the complaint, they will contact the Council, requesting that we provide information to them (usually within 20 working days, although on occasion the deadline is shorter). The Ombudsman has the ability to subpoena former members of staff as part of their investigation. Once the Ombudsman receives the requested information from the Council, they issue a draft decision, upon which both the Council and the complainant are asked to comment. The Ombudsman will take into consideration the comments from both sides before issuing their final decision, which will state whether the complaint has been upheld or not upheld. The final decision may also contain recommended actions that the Ombudsman expect the Council to complete within a certain timescale.

The Ombudsman publish their decisions on their website, and if the complaint has been upheld with a significant impact upon the customer, they may issue a report to the Press.

12. Monitor and Review

- 12.1. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if required by statutory, regulatory, best practice, emerging developments, or circumstances arising from reviews of other Council-wide policies.
- 12.2. Arrangement for a full internal audit of the Void process to be undertaken by Croydon Council's Internal Auditors. The full scope of the audit will be agreed upon with the Internal Auditors, Director of Housing Management, and Heads of Service.

13. Document Control

13.1. This is a controlled document and should not be changed unless by authorisation of the policy owner.

Monitoring	
Approved Date:	
Next Review Date:	
Effective date:	
Consultation Review	
Stakeholders review:	13.03.2024
Legal review date:	22.03.2024
Residents reading group:	
Policy owner:	
Ratified by:	
Equality impact assessment:	The impact of this policy will be measured as it is implemented and used as part of a scheduled 1-year implementation compliance review.

Version History		
Version Number	Summary of change	Author and Approver
1.0	New Policy	