

Dover District Council

Damp & Mould Policy



2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Dover District Council (the “Council”) is a stock owning Local Authority with 4,525 units of accommodation within our Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Council understands that issues arising from damp and mould can cause distress, be a nuisance and a risk to the health and wellbeing of our tenants and leaseholders. We consider all damp and mould cases to be very serious and will take quick and effective action to resolve them, including monitoring the effectiveness of remedial actions taken to resolve the issue.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the activities and responsibilities involved in the control of damp and mould within the Council’s Housing stock. The Council aims to provide a consistent high-quality repairs and maintenance service to ensure all properties within our HRA stock are well-functioning, habitable and safe.
- 1.3 This policy has been written to ensure that wherever possible, residents are not adversely affected by the causes of damp and mould. It also outlines how the Housing and Property Assets team will be proactive in taking the necessary action to manage the causes of damp and mould.
- 1.4 This policy is based on the 26 recommendations made in the Housing Ombudsman Service Report: [Spotlight on: Damp and Mould – Oct 2021](#) as well as the Government’s guidance on damp and mould: [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all the Council-owned properties including leasehold and temporary housing properties, and Council staff involved in statutory maintenance duties, residents’ contractors, other persons, and other stakeholders who may work on, occupy, visit, or use these premises.
- 2.2 The policy only applies to Leasehold properties where the causes of damp and mould are attributed to elements which are the responsibility of the landlord (the Council) to maintain, for example rising damp in walls, penetrating damp through the external walls, leaking windows, leaking external doors or water leaks through the roof and/or attached balconies.
- 2.4 This policy should be used by all Council staff and contactors working on the Council’s behalf to ensure they understand the obligations placed upon the Council to maintain a safe environment for tenants and leaseholders within their homes.

3. Aims

- 3.1 The policy aims are to ensure that the Council provides and maintains homes that are safe, healthy and provide a comfortable environment for our tenants, as well as protect the structure and quality of our properties. The key aims are to:
 1. Improve our understanding of the housing stock in relation to damp and mould and have proactive programmes for managing this issue.
 2. Focus on working in partnership with tenants and leaseholders ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is provided.
 3. Undertake effective investigations and implement reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to eradicate damp and mould, including advice for preventing, managing and controlling condensation.

4. Provide relevant training to operations staff to ensure that they can conduct their duties effectively.
5. Establish detailed procedures and agree accepted practices relating to the provision of the service and this policy.
6. Maximise the available budget to deal with damp and mould problems.

4. Legislation, guidance and associated documents

The following legislation, documents and terms have informed the development of this policy and should be read in conjunction with it.

National legislation & regulations

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Housing Act 1985
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 Section 11 - Repairs and Maintenance
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Right to Repair Regulations 1994
- The Housing Act 1996
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Decent Homes Standards
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Housing Ombudsman Service Report – Spotlight on: Damp and Mould Oct 2021.
- Social Housing (Regulatory) Act 2023
- Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the homes guidance

Internal

- HRA Business Plan & Planned Maintenance Programme
- Tenancy Agreement
- Void Properties Policy
- Planned & Cyclical Repairs Policy
- Rechargeable Works Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Tenant Engagement Strategy 2022-2027
- Neighbourhood Management Policy

For Reference

- BRED 245 Rising Damp in Walls
- BS 6576 Diagnosis of rising damp in walls of buildings and installation chemical DPC
- BS 5250 + A1 2016 Examines the causes and effects of condensation.

5. Definitions

5.1 For the purposes of this policy:

- 'We', 'us' and 'ours' refers to Dover District Council ("the Council") as the landlord or freeholder.
- 'Resident' refers to both tenants and leaseholders of Council owned dwellings, or where the Council is the freeholder of a building and therefore has majority responsibility.
- The 'policy' refers to the Damp and Mould Policy and its provisions.

6. Definitions and causes of damp and mould

Definition of damp

6.1 Damp is generally taken to mean the presence of excess moisture that, if not addressed, is likely to result in unacceptable negative consequences – e.g., deterioration of building fabric, harm to occupants, or a significant reduction in thermal performance.

6.2 Generally, damp is categorised by its cause:

- Condensation** occurs when warm air meets a colder surface like a wall, window, mirror etc, then condenses producing water droplets. It can also occur in places where the air is still, like the corners of rooms, behind furniture or inside wardrobes. It is the most common type of damp and can occur where penetration and rising damp are present as these defects will introduce excess moisture into a property. It is essential that penetrating and rising damp is properly investigated before concluding that the cause of the damp is just condensation.
- Penetrating damp** is caused by moisture penetrating into the house through leaking or cracked pipework, a damaged roof, blocked guttering, gaps around window frames and cracked or defective rendering and brickwork. All these problems can be remedied.
- Rising damp** is caused by moisture absorbed from the soil travelling upwards into the walls and floors. Common causes are blocked cavities, poor detailing, and soil higher than damp proof courses. Defective (or non-existent) damp proof courses can also cause rising damp however contrary to popular belief this is less likely to be the cause of rising damp.
- Traumatic damp** can be caused by leaking water from waste and heating pipes, overflowing baths or sinks, burst pipes or defective water storage vessels inside the building. It can also originate from outside the property, for example from both building or from environmental flooding.

Definition of mould

6.3 Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation damp is present. Spores allow the mould to grow and if not treated correctly will spread to soft furnishings, stored clothes and personal belongings and can lead to health issues.

6.4 Mould can form on any surface where there is excessive moisture present (80% moisture content and above) and is common in all three causes of damp as listed above.

Health impacts of damp and mould

6.5 Damp and mould within the home can be harmful to the health of residents. Sufficient evidence has been found to link exposure to indoor mould with upper respiratory tract symptoms, coughing, and wheezing in otherwise healthy people. People living in homes

with damp and mould may also experience depression and anxiety due to the conditions. Damp and mould related health outcomes may affect people regardless of age or current health; the elderly and children are most at risk.

- 6.6 The Council advises any resident(s) who are concerned about any symptoms they are experiencing which they believe to be a result of damp and mould exposure to consult a healthcare professional at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.7 There are a variety of housing conditions that put people at an increased risk of exposure to damp and mould. These include:
- Homes where residents feel unable to open windows due to concerns about security, noise, or high outdoor pollution.
 - Homes that are poorly or inadequately insulated.
 - Homes with inefficient or ineffective and expensive to run heating systems.
 - Homes that are poorly ventilated.
 - Homes without adequate damp proof courses.
 - Homes that are poorly maintained.
 - Homes that are overcrowded.

7. Policy statements

Our approach

- 7.1 In accordance with 3.6.2 of the Tenancy Agreement, tenants must let us know of any repair needed or damage caused to the property within a reasonable time of them becoming aware of this, however, the Council will continue to adopt a proactive approach to identifying properties with damp and mould and to reduce the reliance on residents to report damp and mould issues. These include:
1. Expect residents to report damp and mould directly to the Council's Housing and Property Assets teams (Damp and Mould (dover.gov.uk) as an alternative to directly contacting our Responsive Repairs contractor
 2. Engage with residents periodically and promote the message of looking for and reporting damp and mould as soon as possible. This could be via social media, tenant newsletters and information on our website.
 3. Engage with our contractors to report to the Council any significant and obvious presence of damp and mould in the locality of areas they have been commissioned to attend, and have a system in place for them to report cases to the Council where it is discovered.
 4. Ensure that when renewing relevant maintenance contracts, included within the terms and conditions is for the contractor to be responsible to report damp and mould directly to the Council when they are in a resident's home carrying out maintenance and servicing work.
 5. Make it the responsibility of all Housing and Property Assets team staff, no matter their role, that when visiting a resident's home, to proactively look for signs for damp and mould, and any other defect(s) which may be a potential health and safety concern to the resident(s) and report them to the Property Assets team. By 'visiting' a resident's home, this includes but is not limited to:
 - Stock condition surveys
 - Tenancy visits
 - Capital works surveys
 - Response repairs, pre- and post-inspections

6. Conduct an analysis of data on an annual basis, looking at historic repairs, historic damp and mould cases and property archetypes to identify commonality, trends and defects which could lead to future damp and mould cases. The results will provide essential information to inform the capital works programme and proactive property surveys.
7. Use feedback from our Maintenance Inspectors, Planned Works Surveyors, Housing Management staff who will report damp and mould problems discovered during home visits, property inspections and when carrying out repairs’.
8. The stock condition data is being constantly verified to determine the scope of a full Stock Condition Survey to start in 2024.

Operational processes

- 7.2 The Council will ensure that our processes for dealing with damp and mould will include the following:
1. In conjunction with the Council’s Responsive Repairs Term Maintenance Contractor, regularly review all reports of damp and mould.
 2. All reports of damp and mould reported directly to Council’s Responsive Repairs Term Maintenance Contractor are referred to our Property Assets team who will inspect, diagnose, specify remedial works, and then reinspect and those reported directly to the Council are also responded to by the Responsive Repairs Team.
 3. Damp caused by defects found in the structure and/or fixed systems are dealt by the Council’s Responsive Repairs Term Maintenance Contractor directly within the contractual response time and are also monitored by the Council.
 4. All remedial work to remedy damp be it a roof leak, plumbing, condensation, or rising damp will be post inspected by the Council to ensure the work was completed satisfactorily and a follow up inspection within 3 months where possible to ensure that the works were effective at remedying the cause of the damp (although for the minor cases the follow up can sometimes be a phone call to the resident.) Where deemed necessary additional inspections shall be arranged.
 5. Where mould is present, the Council will instruct its Responsive Repairs Term Maintenance Contractor to remove this with a mould wash and will continue to do this at a property until the root cause of the mould is known and remedied.
 6. The Council will undertake any reasonable repairs identified that could be contributing to damp and mould.
 7. In more persistent cases the Council will engage specialist contractors to survey, advise and to carry out any reasonable actions to remediate the damp and / or mould. Moisture/ temperature data loggers will be used to assist damp and mould investigations. The results of the inspection and data logger if installed will be evaluated to identify any factors that may have led to damp and mould growth.

Council responsibilities

- 7.3 The Council will investigate the causes of damp and mould and commit to carrying out the required actions to ensure that the root cause of the damp is effectively dealt with.

7.4 The Councils responsibilities and actions include but are not limited to the following:

- Provide an effective response repairs service, including giving advice on preventative measures.
- Ensure that there are suitable processes in place to allow residents to raise any repairs.
- Provide a suitable heating system.
- Provide adequate ventilation.
- Provide adequate insulation.
- Deal with any reports of damp or mould timely, adequately, and efficiently
- Investigate reports of damp and mould timely, adequately, and effectively
- Ensure the contractors undertaking the works are doing so timely, adequately, efficiently and effectively.
- Ensure the works completed have been successful.
- Provide literature and guidance on how to reduce damp and mould.
- Ensure that residents are effectively communicated with through the process.

Tenant responsibilities

7.5 Tenants' responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- Report damp and mould as soon as it becomes apparent.
- Manage condensation damp by following the guidance given by the Council and/or a contractor working on our behalf.
- Ensure that the property is adequately heated and ventilated.
- Always allow access to the property for Council staff and / or contractors to inspect and complete planned and responsive works.
- Clean mould from clothes, fabrics, carpets, and furnishings.
- Keep the property properly insulated by not dislodging or removing insulation or storing items in any loft space.
- Reduce excess moisture within the property to an acceptable level.
- Ensure that the property does not become overcrowded, in accordance with 3.2.5 and 4.1.2 of the tenancy agreement.

7.6 If the tenant fails to take the advice and reasonable steps to reduce damp and mould in their home, this may be in breach of the tenancy agreement, and the tenant may be recharged for any resulting repairs required which are considered to be a result of this neglect

Leaseholder responsibilities

7.7 The leaseholder is responsible for maintaining the inside of the property to a standard preventing the occurrence of damp, mould and condensation.

7.8 Leaseholders should report any damp and mould found in communal areas and exterior fabric of the building as soon as it becomes apparent. By communal areas we mean rooms or areas accessible by all leaseholders, visitors, DDC staff and contractors such as corridors, hallways, and stairwells. By exterior fabric we mean issues relating to exterior features such as (but not limited to) the roof, rainwater goods, etc.

7.9 Any neglect by the leaseholder to manage or carry out repairs for which they are responsible for, that consequently has a direct impact on the condition of a Council owned property will be dealt with in accordance with the lease agreement.

Complex and / or severe cases

- 7.10 Where extensive works are required or where the resident(s) is vulnerable and / or has complex needs and support, a case officer will be assigned to oversee and advise upon the required actions. This could include (but is not limited to) temporarily decanting residents or permanently moving residents into alternative accommodation.
- 7.11 When required and on advice of a specialist survey, some properties will be considered for additional permanent ventilation systems, such as a Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) or by a Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery (MVHR) system whichever is the best system for ensuring desired levels of humidity and good indoor air quality.
- 7.12 In addition, where there are incidents of cold bridging additional insulation will be installed where technically feasible.
- 7.13 Follow up visits will be made to ensure that the work has been effective and/or there is no repeat of the problem.

Planned preventative & capital works programme

- 7.14 An essential element in combating damp and mould is to renew building components & elements such as roofs, windows, doors, kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and the like when they become obsolete and/or they are at the end of their serviceable life and/or before they fail and are beyond economic repair.
- 7.15 The Council has a 35-year costed business plan for their stock and an ambitious capital works programme in place identifying numbers of properties and allocate addresses on an annual basis currently for;
- Boiler replacements
 - Kitchen replacements
 - Bathroom replacements
 - Window replacements
 - Pitched and flat Roof replacements
 - Front and rear door replacements
 - Structural Repairs including repointing
 - External redecorations and associated repairs
 - EPC surveys
- 7.16 The Council is committed to ensuring that contracts will be in place to deliver the capital works as well as contracts for servicing and general maintenance.
- 7.17 A contract will remain in place to maintain and service the Council's heating and hot water systems with a 4-hour emergency breakdown response time. This contract also includes our boiler replacement programme to ensure boilers are replaced before they become obsolete.
- 7.18 The Council has and will continue to ensure that the necessary level of investment is spent on our housing stock to keep it in a state of good repair, safe and compliant.
- 7.19 The specifications for these programmes will be regularly reviewed to ensure that a holistic approach to maintaining the property is achieved and that future proofing the stock from damp and mould is achieved. These will include:
- Where reasonably practicable humidistat fans will be installed as part of every kitchen and bathroom replacement to assist with ventilation.
 - Loft and roof insulation and roof ventilation is to be brought up to current standard when pitched and flat roofs are replaced (currently as at the date of the roof renewal).
 - New UPVC double glazed windows will have openable sashes for rapid ventilation and also trickle ventilation.

- 7.20 The Council will continue to explore accessing additional funding opportunities such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, by submitting bids where possible.
- 7.21 The Council will always adopt a holistic approach to a property when undertaking any energy efficiency works recognising that poorly designed and installed energy efficiency works can contribute towards damp and mould forming. The service will work with the necessary specialists to ensure conformity to the requirements of PAS2035.

Resident engagement and access arrangements

- 7.22 It is imperative that there is effective communication between the Council, residents and the contractors working on the Council's behalf when it comes to damp and mould. All three stakeholders have a key role to play in the reporting, managing and mitigating damp and mould within council properties. All engagement with residents will be in accordance with the aims as set out in the [Tenant Engagement Strategy 2022-27](#).
- 7.23 The Council website provides residents with a comprehensive guide about damp and mould: [Damp in a Council Property \(dover.gov.uk\)](#). It is also important for residents to notify us when there is damp and / or mould present in their home. Residents can report damp and mould directly to the Housing and Property Assets team by completing our [online questionnaire](#).
- 7.24 Residents with damp and mould will be given a Condensation / Mould Help Sheet leaflet (Appendix 2) providing advice about damp and mould, and in extreme / persistent cases will be provided with a thermal hygrometer to help them monitor the temperature and humidity within their homes.
- 7.25 Residents will be contacted by the Council and / or our contractors within 14 days from the date of initially reporting their damp and mould and will be offered a mutually agreed date for a survey. The Council and their contractors will make all reasonable attempts to access the property to carry out surveys, remedial work and for post inspections. Residents will be contacted following an abortive visit and will be written to regarding the failed attempt.
- 7.26 In cases of multiple failed access the Council will use the right of access as detailed in section 3.7 of the [Tenancy Agreement](#) and may take legal advice and / or action if necessary to inspect and / or carry out damp and mould remedial work.

Training and equipment

- 7.27 The Council will ensure that all staff within the Housing & Property Assets teams have the required training on damp and mould suitable for their role within the service, including periodic refreshers of the Building Regulations and the Building Safety Act, and basic training on the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- 7.28 We will ensure that staff within the Housing & Property Assets teams are provided with the necessary tools and materials to be able to undertake diagnosis efficiently and effectively.
- 7.29 Where the Council will work with an external contractor(s) to carry out remedial works for damp and mould cases, we will share Government guidance in the expectation that the contractors will be knowledgeable about damp and mould cases, training requirements and key performance indicators.

8. Monitoring and review

- 8.1 The Head of Housing and the Head of Property Assets are both responsible for the operational delivery of this policy and the associated procedures.
- 8.2 Staff have a responsibility to ensure that all cases of damp and mould are dealt with in accordance with this policy, as well as any separate and applicable service standards.
- 8.3 Any minor amendments required will be made through delegated approval process. Any amendments made as a result of changes to our operational processes, or government legislation and regulation will be done so by seeking approval from Cabinet following the standard governance process.
- 8.4 As part of our monitoring processes, the Council will maintain accurate records of damp and mould reports, including records of the remedial works carried out and any / all correspondence.
- 8.5 This policy will be reviewed every 2 years starting from the date it is approved and adopted for use by the Cabinet.

9. Complaints

- 9.1 The Council's definition of a complaint is:
"An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or a group of residents."
- 9.2 The Council takes complaints made about any service it provides, or Officers who work for the Council who provide that service, seriously. If a resident wishes to make a complaint about the service they have received or with an officer, they can be made:
 - In writing (letter or email)
 - Using our online complaint form
 - Using the Council's Complaint leaflets (these are available at the Council's office reception, or they can be posted to the tenant / leaseholder)
 - Via telephone; or
 - In person by an appointment
- 9.3 All complaints received will be dealt in accordance with the Council's Complaints Policy and Procedure. More information about how to make a complaint can be found on our website: [If you are unhappy \(dover.gov.uk\)](https://www.dover.gov.uk/you-are-unhappy).

10. Equality and diversity

- 10.1 The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and to eliminating unlawful discrimination on grounds of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief, financial status, and any other differences that can lead to discrimination or unfair treatment considering the principles of the Equality Act 2010. Please see our Equality Policy for more details.
- 10.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was conducted for this policy and in accordance with our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) when carrying out duties (s149 of the Equality Act 2010), and mitigations put into place where potential negative impacts to individuals with protected characteristics have been identified.

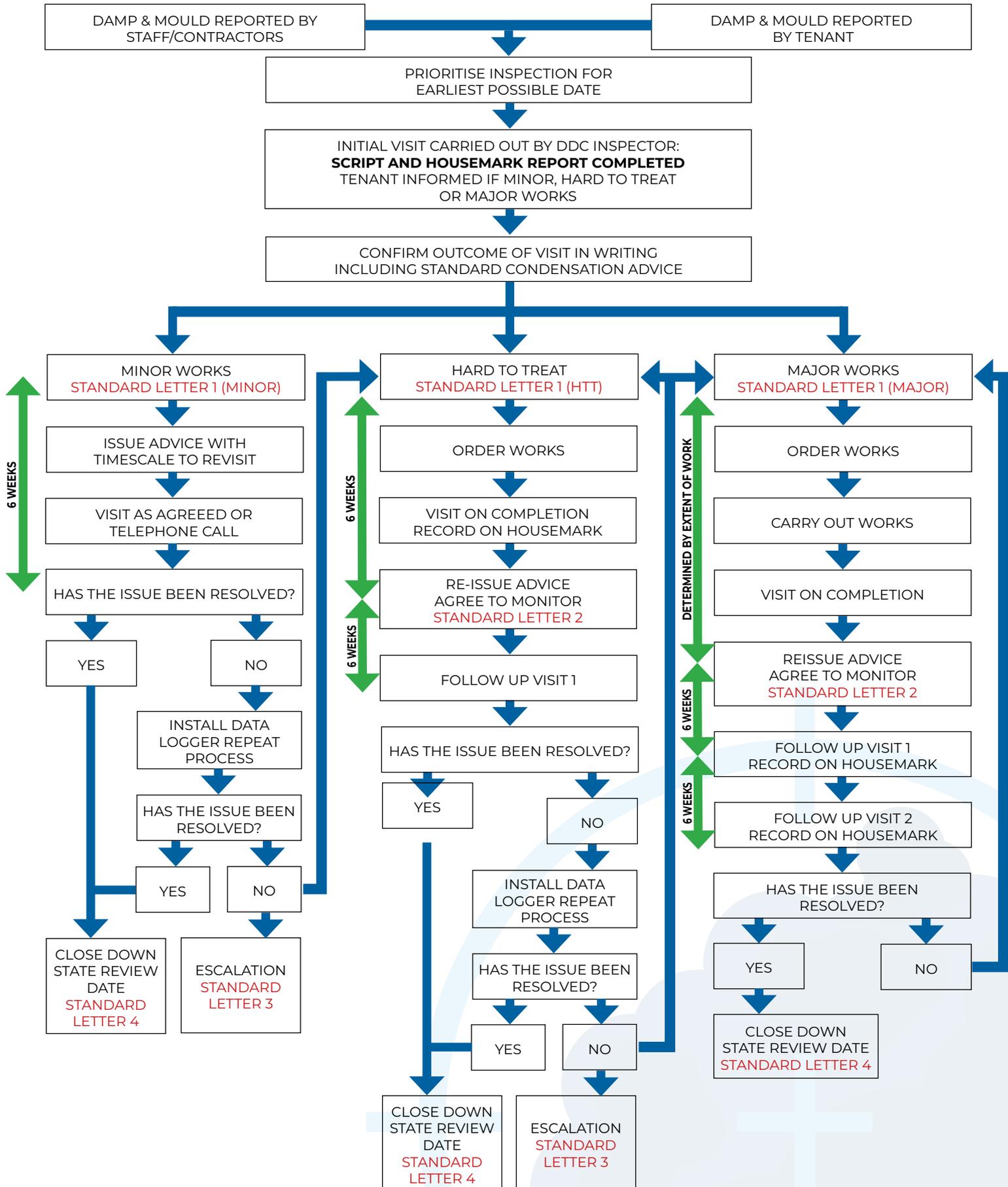
11. Data privacy

11.1 All data captured in relation to damp and mould, and any subsequent repairs that are required to remedy the situation is covered under the Councils [Housing Service Privacy Notice](#).

12. Version control

| | Date required | Completed | Completed by |
|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|--|
| Policy adopted | N/A | 4 December 2023 | David Parish (Head of Asset Management) Tim Goss (Property Asset Manager) |
| Review required | 4 December 2025 | | |
| Review required | | | |
| Review required | | | |
| Review required | | | |

Appendix 1: Damp and Mould Process Chart



Appendix 2: Condensation / Mould Help Sheet

Dover District Council Housing Services

Condensation / Mould Help Sheet

Simply put, condensation will form on cold surfaces when the temperature falls below the moisture content of the air.

The moisture will turn to water on the cold surfaces and if left, cause mould to grow. If a problem with your property is causing condensation, will we investigate this thoroughly.

SIGNS OF CONDENSATION

The most common sign will be water on the glass of the windows and possibly on mirrors and any other cold surface such as cold water pipework.



A 'musty' smell when opening cupboards and wardrobes

In some circumstances, mould on clothing and furniture.

WHAT TO DO TO PREVENT MOULD GROWTH WHEN TRYING TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONDENSATION

Regularly wipe water from windows and sills. Removing the water will prevent the growth of mould. Open affected cupboards and wardrobes to allow air to circulate. How often you will need to do this will depend on circumstances.

Move furniture a little away from walls to allow air to circulate during the colder months.

HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONDENSATION

This can be done by either balancing the temperature by changing how you use your heating system, or reducing the moisture in the air, or a mix of both.

There is no simple solution and it does require trying different things.

BALANCE THE TEMPERATURE

Try to keep an even temperature in your home for as long as possible to avoid extreme high and low levels.



It is more efficient to keep a slightly lower temperature throughout the day than it is to let you home get too cold and then turn the heating up to a high setting. Try not to let the temperature fall below 17°C at all times.

If you have concerns about the cost of having your heating on for a long time, then it is important that you try to reduce the moisture in the air to reduce the risk of condensation

REDUCE THE MOISTURE

The highest risk times for condensation is at night time when the heating is usually at its lowest and the outside temperature is also at its lowest. If there is a lot of moisture in the air then this is when it will likely turn to water when it touches a cold surface.

If possible, make sure your trickle vents are open, or your windows are locked on the nightlatch facility. Reduce the moisture building up during the day by using extractor fan when cooking and bathing, and letting them run for 10 minutes afterwards.

It is always helpful to open windows, if only for a few seconds. This allows moist air out and fresh dry air in and it doesn't waste as much heat as you would think.

If you have to dry clothes indoors, do not use radiators, it is much better to use a clothes airer in a room with the door closed and window open.

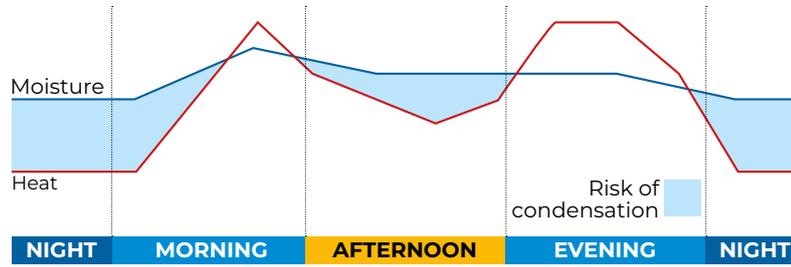


Visit our website for more detailed explanations and advice. Scan the QR code or type in www.dover.gov.uk and search for 'condensation'

When is condensation a risk?

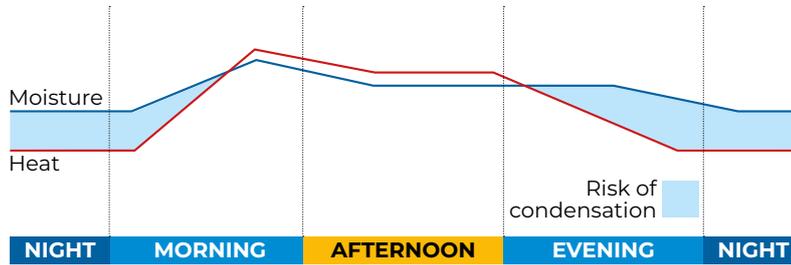
Typical Environment

When the moisture line is above the heat line, condensation will form.



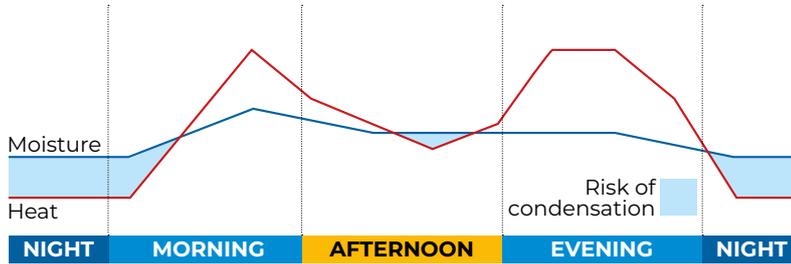
Balance Heating

Balancing the heating will stop high peaks throughout the day without reducing moisture.



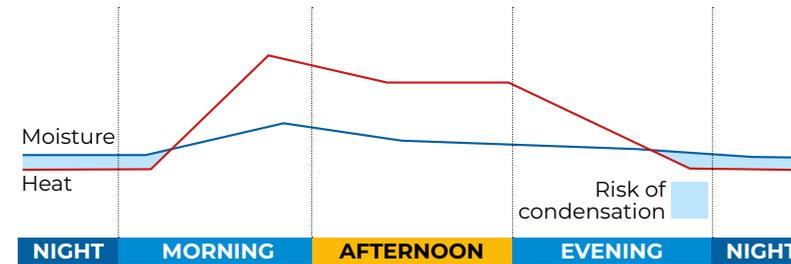
Reduce Moisture

If you can't balance your heating, reducing the moisture will help and you will mainly see condensation at night time.



Balance Heating and Reduce Moisture

If you are able to balance the heat and reduce moisture this is the best way to combat condensation.



Visit our website for more detailed explanations and advice. Scan the QR code or type in www.dover.gov.uk and search for 'condensation'