



Exeter
City Council



Council Housing
& Development
Services

Exeter City Council Housing Services

DRAFT

Damp and Condensation Policy 2025-2030

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1. Introduction & Purpose

- 1.1 The Housing Assets Team responsible for the repairs and maintenance of council housing in Exeter have taken the recommendations from the Regulator for Social Housing, the Housing Ombudsman and other national peer housing providers and created this Damp and Condensation Policy which supports the existing Repairs & Maintenance Policy.
- 1.2 This Policy outlines Exeter City Council's approach to managing damp, condensation and mould within its homes.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 This Policy ensures that Exeter City's Council (ECC) Council Housing tenants who experience dampness, condensation and mould issues within their homes are treated in a fair and consistent way.
- 2.2 It is recognised that there has, in the past been an over reliance on the term 'lifestyle' to explain incidences of damp and mould, this policy follows the recommendations in the Housing Ombudsman's 'Spotlight on: Damp and Mould'¹ and its 'Zero Tolerance approach' towards damp and mould'.
- 2.3 We at ECC Housing will move from a reactive to a more proactive approach to the identification and tackling of damp and mould, treating the issue as a high priority.
- 2.4 Alongside this policy there is a detailed procedure ensures that each reported instance is documented, managed and acted upon and common issues or trends are identified.
- 2.5 We understand that some homes are more difficult for our tenants to heat, either due to their age and design, hence their energy efficiency or cost of living pressures, and that this can make damp and mould more likely to occur, these households will also be supplied with information about partner organisations who can offer support.
- 2.6 Having an increased understanding of the condition of our properties through stock condition surveys and a focus on the fabric of a building will enable us to adopt a preventative approach to dealing with damp and mould, making the necessary interventions to ventilation, energy efficiency and building deficiencies before damp and mould occur.

- 2.7 We will ensure, if damp and mould is identified that the correct remedial action is taken, this can include repairs, but may also include detailed guidance, advice or support from the visiting Exeter City Council officer or contractor.
- 2.8 Where required and appropriate we will consider what support, referrals or signposting will be given to tenants to help tenants to understand what they can do to reduce damp and mould.
- 2.9 We will ensure that staff and contractors are aware of the significant health risks associated with damp and mould, the need to address the underlying causes of the issue and not just treat visible mould, are aware of any processes associated with reporting and addressing damp and mould, and understand the importance of being sensitive to tenants' circumstances and vulnerabilities building relationships with tenants, ensuring that tenants feel encouraged to report damp and mould⁴
- 2.10 There is a clear understanding running through this policy that damp and condensation are not caused by ECC tenants and together with partnership or support referrals, issues such as excessive hoarding which could reduce ventilation can be mitigated and resolved to achieve a positive outcome.
- 2.11 The Assets Team take responsibility for resolving issues reported and ensuring the improvement of access to complaints, including Housing Disrepair claims, and to learn from them.

3. What is damp & mould?

- 3.1 Damp and moisture in the home can cause wet patches, staining and peeling walls. This can lead to mould forming, which often looks like black, white, or green patches. The cause of damp can be through several factors such as a leak or condensation and if left untreated can be detrimental to health and wellbeing. ²

4. Legal Duties & Statutory Requirements

We are legally bound by various pieces of legislation including the following:

- Gas safety (installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2006
- Building Regulations 2010
- Commonhold and Leasehold reform Act 2002
- Defective premises Act 1972

- Housing Act 2004
- Public Health Act 1961
- Health and safety at work Act 1974
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

5. Main Objectives

5.1 The Priorities from the Housing Strategy 2023-2027 are:

- 1: Enhancing Resident Experience
- 2: Providing the Right Homes in the Right Places
- 3: Providing Value for Money Services
- 4: Supporting our residents
- 5: Ensuring the Safety of our Homes and Residents

5.2 This Policy covers many of these priorities, but specifically priorities 1, 4 and 5. It is the aim to provide an excellent housing service whilst maximising the budget for repairs and improvements in Council owned properties by completing repairs within timescales and to a high-quality standard. It is important to maximise the energy efficiency of these properties and ensure that they are in a safe condition.

6. Actions:

6.1 We have produced a detailed damp and condensation procedure which includes a commitment to:

- Visit every home that where reports any report of damp and/or mould have been received from either the tenant or another officer or contractor visiting the home

- Assess the issue to determine the severity of the situation and the potential risk to tenants
- Photograph and document the location of any mould growth, to help identify the source
- Undertake appropriate investigations to determine the cause of damp and mould (see later in this document for examples) acting swiftly where concerns about tenants' health have been raised
- Pursue action without the need for medical evidence or opinion
- Keep tenants informed about action being taken and the timescales for this
- Treat any mould, to address the health risk to tenants
- Identify and tackle the underlying causes of damp and mould, including building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation and condensation.
- Install appropriate and energy efficient mechanical extraction systems
- Provide information to our tenants about ventilation, heating controls and humidity levels in the home.
- Undertake a heating survey if required
- Provide comfort thermometers that provide a visual representation of humidity levels and instructions about its control
- Train all staff on the causes and actions to be taken when damp and mould are reported.
- Keep detailed data (within GDPR legislation) of when officers have attended and reports of mould and condensation
- Continue to listen to tenants, and take their concerns seriously, while making sure their health and wellbeing is being maintained, treating them with respect and empathy
- Proactively make contact and visit homes that are of identified designs, overcrowded, reporting repeated mould or damp service request or have not engaged with our services for some time.
- Carry out works to void properties to deal any identified mould with and measures to prevent future occurrences
- To use paint with anti-mould properties if re-decoration works are carried out
- Arrange to undertake follow up calls or visits from the repairs team at least three months after the initial report to ensure the issue has been resolved
- If damp and mould have reappeared, further investigation and intervention will be pursued
- Arrange a decant (temporary or permanent) where the condition of the property is deemed to be unacceptable for the tenant to remain.

7. Obligations to Tenants

7.1 We at ECC Housing are responsible for maintaining our properties to minimum standards that are set out in the [Decent Home Standard](#) which is currently under review by the Government.

7.2 It is important to be able to tell the difference between damp caused by condensation and damp caused by other factors, such as penetrating damp and rising damp. The following is a simple explanation of these:

Penetrating damp (repair problems)

These issues could be caused by a leak from the roof or gutter, rainwater pipes or even leaking water pipes. Defects of this sort can be repaired once the sources have been identified. The dampness may then take some time to dry out and there could be some staining on the surface affected which can be remedied with a stain block paint and re-decoration.

Rising Damp

Rising damp is caused by the breakdown, deterioration or bridging of the damp proof course of the building at ground floor level. Moisture then rises up the walls to a maximum height of 1.00m.

As with penetrating damp it can be identified by a tide mark which can be yellowy brown or can be white and textured. This texture is caused by salts from the ground and the plaster being drawn through the wall with water.

This type of damp may take some time to resolve and be invasive and disruptive to tenants as it will involve either repair or replacement of the damp-proof membrane.

Condensation

The Government guidance 'Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home'⁴ states that: condensation is one of the most common causes of damp and mould in homes, moisture from normal occupant activities, such as showering, drying laundry and cooking, builds up in the air around a home if it cannot be removed. Over time, condensation can lead to damp and mould growth.

7.3 We have published a Damp and Mould leaflet as a useful guide to the effects of condensation and what can be done to prevent it. The same information is provided on the Council's website.

7.4 The guide is issued upon commencement of a new tenancy and when residents report damp issues to us in addition a free comfort thermometer can be provided to help tenants understand humidity within their home.

8. Obligations to leaseholders

8.1 Most leasehold properties exist because a flat in one of the ECC owned blocks has been purchased under the [Right to Buy Scheme](#).

8.2 Unlike tenants, repairs responsibilities to leaseholders generally rest only in the maintenance of communal structures and services, and for this maintenance a recharge is made-a proportion of the cost to leaseholders as a service charge.

8.3 Any reports of damp and mould will be investigated with the leaseholder to establish if the cause of the reported issue is the fabric of the building.

8.4 If the cause is determined to be the leaseholder responsibility, officers will signpost to appropriate specialist contractor that can carry out a survey for them free of charge.

8.5 The contractor will provide a report of recommended works to them and the leaseholder can then carry out the works at their cost if they wish to do so.

9. Performance Monitoring and Review

9.1 To ensure the maintenance of high service standards, there will be effective monitoring of the effects of this Damp and Condensation Policy by the collection of key performance data which will be reported to the Council Housing & Development Advisory Board (CHADAB) and to the Tenants' Voice group:

- Number reported cases
- Cost of remedial repairs and treatments
- Numbers of damp and mould cases in homes we proactively contact
- Trends over the past year

9.2 Information about mould and damp has been presented to the Tenants' Voice group and the CHADAB and this policy will be reviewed by this group and they will be consulted as legislation changes and when it is to be updated.

Other Documents linked to this Policy

Exeter City Council Housing Strategy 2023

Tenants' handbook

Damp and Condensation Leaflet

Responsive Repairs Strategy

Decant Procedure

References

1. [Spotlight on: Damp and mould | Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk/spotlight-on-damp-and-mould)
2. [Damp and mould - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk/damp-and-mould)
3. [Follow up: Spotlight on damp and mould | Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk/follow-up-spotlight-on-damp-and-mould)
4. [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-of-damp-and-mould-in-the-home)