



# **West Suffolk Council Damp and Mould Policy for Residential Properties**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 West Suffolk Council takes seriously its responsibility to provide safe and suitable housing for our tenants. We understand that decent, safe homes have a direct impact on the prevention of poor health and can significantly improve quality of life.
- 1.2 This policy sets out our approach to identifying issues with damp and mould in the properties owned by the council that includes temporary accommodation, leased and tenanted. The council takes a proactive approach to assessing and maintaining our properties and reacting quickly when issues are identified. This policy is also set in the context of Government guidance, [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home](#), published in September 2023

## 2. Aims of the policy

- 2.1 Through this policy we are committed to deliver a service that will:
  - make sure we provide and maintain dry, healthy homes for our tenants to support improved physical and mental health and in particular people with certain health conditions, children and older adults who are at greater risk of more severe health impacts
  - undertake assessments and investigations and ensure that all reasonable and appropriate actions are put in place to make improvements to remove damp and mould
  - ensure that tenants have access to information and resources with advice and guidance on preventing damp and mould, tenants can access ways to raise concerns and that they have confidence in our response
  - ensure that the fabric of the council's property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould
  - utilise the external funding available to support the investment in the council's stock, improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings and reduce heating costs for residents.

## 3. Scope of the policy

- 3.1 The scope of this policy sets out how the council's property service team and housing services teams will work together and with tenants to prevent and manage any issues with damp and mould. This includes:
  - properties that we own and where we have responsibility for maintenance such as owned or leased and including temporary accommodation
  - identify types of damp: rising, penetrating and condensation damp
  - identify the responsibilities for dealing with damp and condensation
  - offering guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process to tenants living in council properties or council provided temporary and emergency accommodation
  - identifying situations where the council will not be able to undertake works to rectify condensation damp.

## 4. Legislation

4.1 As a social landlord, the council adheres to a number of regulations. The scope of this policy is covered by the following legislation and guidance:

- [Housing Act 1985](#)
- [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)
- [Homes \(Fitness for Human habitation\) Act 2018](#)
- [Landlord and Tenant Act 1985](#)
- [Housing Act 2004](#)
- [Decent Homes Standard](#)
- [Minimum Level of Energy Efficiency Standard](#)

## 5. West Suffolk Council's responsibilities

5.1 The council will carry out the following to help prevent damp and mould and deal with any issues.

<b>West Suffolk Council's responsibilities</b>	
1.	We will promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to manage damp and condensation. Build relationships with tenants to ensure they feel encouraged to report damp and mould and support people who are most likely to face barriers to reporting damp and mould.
2.	We will ensure that all our appropriate staff who manage residential property have the required level of training for identifying and addressing damp, mould and condensation concerns and are aware of this policy and its aims. We will also build relationships with health and social care and other frontline professionals when supporting tenants to ensure that every opportunity to identify damp and mould is utilised, making 'every contact count'.
3	We will help tenants to reduce the likelihood of condensation, damp and mould occurring and we will undertake any reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of damp, mould and condensation.
4.	We will diagnose the cause of damp correctly and deliver effective solutions which deal with the primary cause of the issue.
5.	In the event of identifying an issue with damp and mould, we will keep our tenants up to date about our findings including the causes of damp, the actions to be taken including all necessary remedial works giving clear timescales and keeping tenants up to date throughout the process. We will also provide guidance on how to minimise the likelihood of recurrence. Prior to the removal of any mould, we will photograph and document the location of the mould, to help identify the source.
6.	Where remedial works are required, we will take all necessary actions to ensure works are carried out where it is reasonable and practical to do so and in a reasonable timeframe. The council will work within the constraints of existing buildings and take an appropriate and pragmatic approach to finding appropriate solutions. We will inspect the home at least six weeks after remedial work has been carried out, to ensure that the issue has been fixed and damp and mould have not reappeared. If damp and mould have reappeared, further investigation and intervention will be pursued.

<b>West Suffolk Council's responsibilities</b>	
7.	Where extensive work is required, we will support tenants by considering their individual needs and requirements including any vulnerabilities and take this information into account as part of our plans to address the issues.
8.	As part of our decarbonisation programme, we will consider upgrading the insulation and heating in our properties. This has a positive impact on reducing cold spots, maintaining healthy indoor temperatures, ensuring a reasonable degree of thermal comfort and reducing the likelihood of damp and mould.
9.	We will ensure properties are free from damp and mould at the point of letting.
10.	Where necessary we will identify where an independent, mutually agreed and suitably qualified surveyor should be used and share the outcome of all surveys and inspection reports with our tenants. We will act on those recommendations in a timely manner.
11.	We will also ensure that we support tenants to fully utilise the complaints policy throughout their dealings with us up until any legal proceedings may be issued to us, with the aim of resolving disputes outside of court where necessary. The commencement of a complaint or legal action against the council would not impact the progress of required remedial works.
12.	We will look to identify trends and lessons learned through complaints and amend our process and systems accordingly. This will be monitored through the reporting of complaints to the council's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee that will sit alongside the Ombudsman Report which is considered by the committee in September each year. In addition, we have developed a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) for reporting to Leadership Team and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee which measure our proactive and reactive work, and response times.
13.	An auditable reporting process is already in place, and this applies to all types of tenancy arrangement.
14.	We will encourage tenants or occupants to submit photographs as evidence.

## **6. Tenant responsibilities**

6.1 While the council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that properties are free from damp and mould, there are actions that tenants can take to reduce the risk of damp and mould. These include:

<b>Tenant responsibilities</b>	
1.	Reporting to the council evidence of rising and penetrating damp and faulty equipment that will hamper the management and control of damp and condensation, for example faulty extraction fan, unable to open windows for ventilation, lack of heating.
2.	Regularly check for mould and clean signs of mould as soon as they are discovered.
3.	Allow access for inspection and for the carrying out of remedial works.

## **7. Our approach to inspections and how we respond to incidence of damp and mould**

- 7.1 We take a proactive approach to inspections. The inspection programme set out at **Appendix A** applies to all residential properties owned by the council and takes place on elements of properties for which we have responsibility, whether this be entire maintenance, main structure or structure and common areas.
- 7.2 We also ensure that those who lease our properties are taking appropriate action in accordance with the terms of the lease.

## **8. How to report a problem**

- 8.1 Please contact the **Property Services helpdesk** on [property.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:property.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk) or 01284 757372
- 8.2 Any issues that are reported will be recorded on the property management database for further investigation. We will make an initial response within three working days.

## Appendix A. Our approach to inspections and how we respond to incidence of damp and mould

Type of inspection	Key tasks	Purpose	Our response if damp and/or mould identified or reported by a tenant
<p>Annual reactive maintenance survey</p> <p>See <a href="#">Annex A - Annual reactive maintenance inspection housing sites</a> for further information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspect the key building elements for reactive repairs.</li> <li>• Inspect for damp and mould.</li> <li>• Inspect services for certification and labelling.</li> </ul>	<p>React to and deal with any issues that are identified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the type of damp and mould problem.</li> <li>• Advice given to tenant in order to prevent future problems.</li> <li>• Actions will include looking at the cause of the damp and mould: structure of the property for any damp (water ingress), missing roof tiles, leaking rainwater goods, leaking pipes, poorly ventilated rooms.</li> <li>• Once the primary cause of the damp and/or mould has been established we can take any of the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ repairs are fixed</li> <li>○ dehumidifier used to remove any damp</li> <li>○ deep clean</li> <li>○ ventilate</li> <li>○ replace any damp carpets</li> <li>○ undertake redecoration.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Type of inspection	Key tasks	Purpose	Our response if damp and/or mould identified or reported by a tenant
<p>Every five years, planned maintenance inspection of all properties over five years old</p> <p>See <a href="#">Annex B - 5 yearly planned maintenance inspection housing sites</a> for further information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspect the key building elements for reactive repairs</li> <li>• Carry out a condition survey</li> <li>• Inspect for damp and mould</li> <li>• Identify decarbonisation opportunities</li> <li>• Review the current EPC rating and recommendation report</li> <li>• Incorporate an Housing Health and Safety Rating System survey</li> <li>• Inspect services for certification and labelling</li> </ul>	<p>Focus on identifying any preventative measures that can be undertaken.</p> <p>Any significant works included in and funded through the capital programme.</p>	
<p>Temporary accommodation inspected on a regular basis</p>		<p>Any concerns relating to issues with damp, mould and/or repair are then reported to the council's property services team immediately.</p>	<p>The temporary accommodation team, which is part of Housing Options and Homelessness service, inspects our temporary accommodation on a regular basis.</p>