

Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy



A CORNWALL
COUNCIL COMPANY



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1. Background and Policy Objectives

Given certain conditions, damp, mould, and condensation can arise in any home. Cornwall Housing Limited (CHL) recognise that some homes may be more likely to get damp and mould due to the way that they were constructed and / or from the way they are occupied. Damp and mould maybe also be seasonal as it requires a source of water and the right temperature. When damp and high levels of condensation occur, this can lead to mould growth, which may have a potential impact on health.

CHL have designed this policy to ensure residents are able to easily report situations of damp, mould and or condensation in their home. This policy also explains CHL's approach to resolving these issues once they have been received.

This policy sets out a clear framework for CHL to respond to reports of damp, mould and/or condensation that may arise in CHL managed homes.

This policy forms part of CHL's wider organisational commitment to driving a positive health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors. It will be saved on CHL's shared drive and distributed to all relevant members of staff.

2. Definitions

There are four main causes of damp, and the following defines the terms that CHL may use:

Rising Damp – Water can be “sucked up” from the ground into the walls of buildings. Usually this is not a problem as a Damp Proof Course (DPC) acts as a barrier to prevent this water entering into the habitable areas of the home. However, if the DPC fails or is “bridged” then water may rise up the wall, usually to a height of about 1m or three feet. The damp walls may be cold or moist to touch and they may also appear different in colour to the that of the drier walls elsewhere in the home.

Penetrating Damp - Water which is able to enter the home through cracks or holes in external walls, or because the brick or blockwork becomes saturated often from a source of water, such as a leaking gutter or a detail that lets water pond or stagnate, preventing it from running away from the building.

Leaks- Leaks from guttering, downpipes, roof flashings or failed roof coverings can all lead to damp and damage from water entering the home and should be reported for repair as soon as someone becomes aware of their existence. Leaks can also occur internally too from pipework such as radiators, hot and cold water or waste pipes from showers, sinks and toilets. If left untreated these can all be a source of damp and are usually identifiable from tidemarks.

Condensation Moisture - that forms on surfaces when water vapour meets a cold surface. This can be visible when condensation occurs on cold windows but can also be unseen on cold walls. It is usually caused by a build-up of moisture in a home and can lead to mould growth.

3. What CHL should do

CHL acknowledges that it has responsibilities contained in the tenancy agreement and legislation. These include maintaining the exterior of buildings in good repair, such as drains, gutters, external pipes, and roofs and installations for the supply of water and sanitation. It also means keeping heating systems in good repair and working order.

The residents also have responsibilities in the tenancy agreement to look after their home. CHL want to work together to provide and maintain dry, energy efficient and healthy homes. CHL will provide the information needed to help prevent and actively manage damp, mould and/or condensation within residents' homes. CHL has a clear process for reporting damp, mould and/or condensation and how these will be assessed and responded to.

4. Our customer pledge.

CHL will respond within 10 working days of receiving a report of damp, mould and/or condensation from a resident within a CHL managed property. We will work with the resident and seek to understand the cause or causes of the issue and then provide a plan with suitable timeframes as to how the situation will be resolved.

CHL will provide information and advice to residents that help them prevent damp and manage condensation in their homes. This includes damp, mould, and condensation leaflets along with videos to support tenants on the website.

Where residents approach CHL if struggling to afford to heat their homes, CHL will help with a benefit/income check and advise on how to make a claim where possible.

For the purposes of this policy, the words 'damp,' 'condensation' and 'mould' cover problems where issues with the conditions in the home are caused by a variety of problems, including disrepair. This policy relates to CHL residential rented residents' homes. For residential leaseholders and shared owners, the responsibility will be determined by the nature of the lease or agreement that relates to their home. In general, this will mean that for leaseholders and shared owners they will be responsible for the internal condition of their home, and CHL for the external and structural part of the home.

CHL will provide training sessions across the organisation to ensure that staff understand the causes and possible remedies of damp, condensation and mould.

5. How CHL will help

Reporting of damp, mould or condensation can be via phone, email, online webform, writing to CHL offices or directly to CHL employees.

If done via phone, CHL will ask some structured questions to ensure there is sufficient understanding about the home and identify any actions that either party could readily take to try and reduce or limit the conditions for damp, mould and/or condensation to occur.

CHL also aims to successfully engage with vulnerable and hard to reach residents. CHL will use the information gained from structured questions to help organise the actions that need to be taken and ensure that information is available to residents with timely updates as to the next steps.

If, following the initial structured questions, further investigations are required, then a surveyor will arrange a suitable time to inspect the home and identify and plan out the works that are required. In some cases, the surveyor may also highlight positive actions that the resident should take to ensure the impact of lifestyle doesn't increase the opportunity for mould to occur.

If, following the implementation of the actions recommended by the surveyor, the damp and mould returns, then CHL will commission an RICS independent surveyor, to provide further investigation and establish what other actions can be taken to address the concerns. CHL may also seek the resident's permission to carry out some monitoring by using equipment to help understand how the home is being used and what other actions need to be taken to solve the problems.

6. Training

CHL will make all relevant employees aware of this Policy and the procedures that support it including those responsible for managing the delivery of repair works.

CHL will be providing training sessions across the organisation to ensure that staff understand the causes and possible remedies of damp, condensation and mould.

7. Performance reporting

CHL will report key performance indicator (KPI) measures for damp, mould and condensation. These will be provided to the Executive Team on a monthly basis and to the CHL Board, Compliance Board on a quarterly basis. As a minimum, this will include:

Data – the total number of:

- Properties reporting a problem with damp, mould and/or condensation.
- Properties where the case has been successfully closed.
- Properties where action is in progress.
- Properties where the customer is yet to be contacted.

Narrative - an explanation of the:

- Current position
- Further actions that are being implemented
- Progress and performance of current approach

8. Quality assurance

CHL will ensure that each resident reporting an issue has a phone call to confirm that the damp, mould and/or condensation has been fully resolved, following any action that has been taken.

Diversity and inclusion

CHL are committed to treating all people with fairness and respect. CHL aim to create an inclusive environment where people are treated with dignity, inequalities are challenged, and we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances to enable individuals to achieve their potential and foster good relations within the communities we serve. CHL want to be recognised as an organisation delivering fair, inclusive, accessible services and an employer and partner of choice.

When applying this policy, CHL will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and to reduce discrimination and harassment by making reasonable adjustments such as:

- eliminating discrimination – by providing support to those who need it and information in accessible formats and languages on request.
- tailoring the policy to meet both the specific needs of the individual, including those with additional support needs, and the diverse needs of the wider community
- advancing equality of opportunity – treating all reports fairly
- fostering good relationships – listening to customers and responding appropriately
- compliant with all aspects of Equality & Diversity legislation, and specifically the Equality Act 2010.

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