

Cheshire West & Chester Council
Council Housing

Housing Ombudsman Service
Damp and Mould
Self-Assessment
2024/25



Reference	Recommendation	Response _September 2025
Section 1: From reactive to proactive		
1.	Landlords should adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould interventions. Landlords should review their current strategy and consider whether their approach will achieve this.	<p>Policy Our Damp and Mould Policy - Damp and Mould Policy explains our zero-tolerance approach, which is delivered by inspecting all reported cases of damp and processing associated works.</p> <p>Self-reporting Tenants can report damp through any contact channel. There are standard questions to diagnose, ensuring a consistent approach / service. We also identify potential damp and mould issues when carrying out property visits via our staff or approved contractors) and if the property is part of a planned scheme address through the works.</p> <p>Staff /operative reporting As an additional measure, when staff or approved contractors visit properties through day-to-day activities, they are required to report any instances of damp and mould that have not been reported to the Repairs Team (through the team email account which is monitored daily). This enables damp inspections and assessments to be raised directly by front line staff. Alternatively, a damp survey can be raised for further inspection and diagnosis of potential damp and mould.</p> <p>This proactive approach has resulted in requests for damp inspections during 2024/25 as a direct result of property visits.</p> <p>Service Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service standards, introduced 1st October 2021, committed to 10 working days (or sooner) to inspect damp, scheduling and issuing the works (within 24 hours) and a further 40 working days (in 90% of cases) to complete the works. We were finding it challenging to meet the 40 working day completion date due to our proactive approach, the complexity of the issues and availability of the supply chain, so the timescales were

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		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="808 443 1151 517"></th> <th data-bbox="1151 443 1339 517">2021/22 (from Jan 22)</th> <th data-bbox="1339 443 1509 517">2022/23</th> <th data-bbox="1509 443 1680 517">2023/24</th> <th data-bbox="1680 443 1861 517">2024/25</th> <th data-bbox="1861 443 2063 517">Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="808 517 1151 715">Number of damp inspections completed (Some properties may have been inspected more than once)</td> <td data-bbox="1151 517 1339 715">100</td> <td data-bbox="1339 517 1509 715">479</td> <td data-bbox="1509 517 1680 715">994</td> <td data-bbox="1680 517 1861 715">888</td> <td data-bbox="1861 517 2063 715">2,461</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="808 715 1151 890">Inspect 10 working days *</td> <td data-bbox="1151 715 1339 890">5% (5/100)</td> <td data-bbox="1339 715 1509 890">16% (77/479)</td> <td data-bbox="1509 715 1680 890">55% (551/994)</td> <td data-bbox="1680 715 1861 890">61% (538/888)</td> <td data-bbox="1861 715 2063 890">48% (1171/2461)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="808 890 1151 1029">Complete works 40 working days (90% target) *</td> <td data-bbox="1151 890 1339 1029"></td> <td data-bbox="1339 890 1509 1029">100% (23/23)</td> <td data-bbox="1509 890 1680 1029">66% (590/892)</td> <td data-bbox="1680 890 1861 1029">48% (557/1151)</td> <td data-bbox="1861 890 2063 1029">57% (1170/2066)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>							2021/22 (from Jan 22)	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total	Number of damp inspections completed (Some properties may have been inspected more than once)	100	479	994	888	2,461	Inspect 10 working days *	5% (5/100)	16% (77/479)	55% (551/994)	61% (538/888)	48% (1171/2461)	Complete works 40 working days (90% target) *		100% (23/23)	66% (590/892)	48% (557/1151)	57% (1170/2066)
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2.	<p>Landlords should consider whether they require an overall framework, or policy, to address damp and mould which would cover each area where the landlord may be required to act. This would include any proactive interventions, its approach to diagnosis, actions it considers appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication and aftercare.</p>	<p>Procedure The procedure, which was reviewed in June 2025, sets out a structured approach using the following stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diagnostic and Repair Raising 2. Inspection 3. Remedial Repairs 4. Repairs Completion <p>Proactive interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will use insight from stock condition data, including geographical areas, property type, age, and energy efficiency (SAP) rating; and business intelligence, built up from insight from previously reported and completed damp and condensation responsive repairs. • All empty homes will have a full visual technical inspection at survey stage and should issues of potential damp and mould be identified, then a full damp inspection will be undertaken

- Resources - to identify damp and mould our Repairs Inspectors and Contractors work together to deliver inspections and complete damp and mould surveys with our contractors having an allocated Damp and Mould Assessor.
- Inspection - The damp and mould inspection is carried out by our primary contractors and includes an assessment to identify the source of the issue and an assessment of any associated Category 1 and 2 hazards to determine any remedial works that are required. This is done using the prescribed Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which looks at the statistical likelihood of harm, contributory causes and those matters affecting the harm likelihood and potential harm outcome, such as age and vulnerability. Where we identify significant risk to tenants, we carry out a mould wash under a Category 1 emergency to eliminate the mould spores while further works to remove the cause are completed.
- Early intervention for tackling mould - If the inspection identifies mould, which could be detrimental to the health of the tenant and their family, this is actioned immediately to remove any potential risk in advance of any necessary remedial works. This is completed with 24 Hours for emergency works or 7 working days for urgent works. This is undertaken through a specialist mould growth treatment, applied by our contractors.
- HELP Scheme [Help in Emergencies for Local People \(HELP\) | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#) - can provide support such as white goods, furniture etc for people facing an emergency/crisis and in receipt of certain benefits.
- Household Support Fund [Household support fund | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#) – can provide help with emergency fuel however, it is only for those people with a meter.

Different circumstances

The inspection also involves completing a health and vulnerability assessment of the tenant and their family. This assessment enables the required works to be prioritised accordingly, identify if any immediate actions are required and determine if any support is required for the tenant and their family to facilitate the works.

		<p>Communication Tenants receive an automated message when a damp inspection is raised with an appointment; prior to the automated message, planner will attempt to contact tenants via telephone to schedule the appointment. Works are raised with target date (50 working days); 7 days prior to works commencing or sooner depending on appointment and reminding the tenant of the appointment date and any instructions i.e., move furniture if required.</p> <p>Aftercare We will review the effectiveness of the damp and mould service by contacting the tenant or leaseholder four weeks after the works are completed to verify that the completed works have addressed the reported problem.</p> <p>If the damp and mould issues have not been resolved, we will arrange with the tenant or leaseholder a further inspection to identify reasons for the reoccurrence of the issue(s). We aim to undertake these inspections within 14 calendar days.</p>
3.	Landlords should review the accessibility and use of their systems for reporting repairs and making complaints to 'find their silence'.	<p>Accessibility All access methods were redesigned to be consistent including all digital reporting methods. The website has been recently updated to encourage tenants to report issues "immediately" through our Repairs Reporter, which is quick and easy to use, walking the tenant through the process, step-by-step. It also offers the alternative of speaking to staff on the service centre free phone number if this is their preference.</p> <p>As all staff are trained to spot/understand damp and condensation, including how to act, this can be reported even if the tenant isn't aware of the issues.</p>

4.	Landlords should identify opportunities for extending the scope of their diagnosis within buildings, for example by examining neighbouring properties, to ensure the response early on is as effective as possible.	The Council will use insight from stock condition data, including geographical areas, property type, age, and energy efficiency (SAP) rating; and business intelligence, built up from insight from previously reported and completed damp and condensation responsive repairs.
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5.	Landlords should implement a data driven, risk-based approach with respect to damp and mould. This will reduce over reliance on residents to report issues, help landlords identify hidden issues and support landlords to anticipate and prioritise interventions before a complaint or disrepair claim is made.	<p>Stock condition surveys Identification of Categories 1 and 2 damp and mould hazards is a key element of the stock condition surveys undertaken when assessing the compliance of homes against the decent home standard and determining associated future investment needs. The latest stock condition project is aiming to complete surveys to 100% of the stock and is due to complete by the end of December 2025. Our proactive approach to dealing with damp and mould cases has provided us with insight into our properties, based on the data gathered from stock condition surveys, stock knowledge, archetype knowledge and repair data analysis.</p> <p>We 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. An essential element in combating damp and mould is to renew building components and elements such as roofs, windows, doors, kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and the like when they become obsolete and/or they are at the of their serviceable life and/or before they fail and beyond economic repair.</p> <p>The specifications for capital works will be regularly reviewed to ensure that a holistic approach to maintaining social housing properties is achieved and future proofing the stock from damp and mould.</p> <p>Risks identified through damp reports We also undertake analysis of damp and mould works when a property is void and all front-line staff undertake mandatory damp and mould training to enable them to identify</p>
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		potential issues when visiting tenants homes. Our Contractor Operatives will also report any signs of damp and mould when attending homes for other planned works such as gas safety checks.
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6.	Where properties are identified for future disposal or are within an area marked for regeneration, landlords should proactively satisfy themselves that residents do not receive a poorer standard of service or lower living conditions, that steps are taken to avoid homes degrading to an unacceptable condition and that they regularly engage and communicate with these residents.	<p>Any tenant can report a damp issue, and this is dealt with consistently, including where properties could be potentially identified for disposal or marked for regeneration, as there is no differentiation between property category/type/area for damp/condensation reports. In those instances, works would still be completed as per the damp policy and procedure to support the health and wellbeing of the tenant.</p> <p>Where there are major damp works the tenant may decide to be temporarily decanted or permanently rehoused and the tenant will be supported through this process to ensure all associated costs are fully covered.</p>
7.	Landlords should avoid taking actions that solely place the onus on the resident. They should evaluate what mitigations they can put in place to support residents in cases where structural interventions are not appropriate and satisfy themselves they are taking all reasonable steps.	<p>Marketing and Learning and Development campaigns focus on cultural change and have been reviewed to ensure no onus is placed on the tenant. This includes removal of 'lifestyle' assumptions in procedures, training materials and customer information.</p> <p>As soon as we are aware of any concern that a property may have damp and mould we book a damp inspector to visit and diagnose.</p> <p>ForHousing HEART (customer care) campaign reiterates the message to staff and customers using damp comms/case studies.</p>
8.	Together with residents, landlords should review the information, materials and support provided to residents to ensure that these strike	<p>Information for tenants on damp and mould</p> <p>The new process was co-designed by a dedicated task force of tenants, partners, and staff. The group included colleagues within Assets, Neighbourhoods and Marketing and our</p>

	the right tone and are effective in helping residents to avoid damp and mould in their properties.	<p>website information reflects our new approach. A Damp and Mould leaflet has also been produced following feedback from tenants.</p> <p>Damp inspectors also provide advice to tenants when surveying properties and carrying out a pre-inspection prior to raising the required remedial works.</p>
9.	Landlords should be more transparent with residents involved in mutual exchanges and make the most of every opportunity to identify and address damp and mould, including visits and void periods.	<p>Mutual exchanges On inspection of mutual exchanges, Housing Officers who have undertaken mandatory damp and mould training assess the property and will raise any necessary repairs, or if required request further inspection of the property by a Repairs Inspector.</p> <p>Voids All voids have a full visual technical inspection at survey stage, should issues of potential damp/mould be identified then a full damp inspection is undertaken.</p>
10.	Landlords should ensure their strategy for delivering net zero carbon homes considers and plans for how they can identify and respond to potential unintended consequences around damp and mould.	We are investing in energy efficiency measures to low performing properties to make them more efficient which will reduce impact of fuel poverty and therefore the risks of associated damp and mould. We are using this data and insight to analyse the prevalence and types of issues within our stock and to inform how we will address these going forward.
Section 2: From inferring blame to taking responsibility.		
11.	Landlords should review, alongside residents, their initial response to reports of damp and mould to ensure they avoid automatically apportioning blame or using language that leaves residents feeling blamed.	<p>Engagement As part of the review of the Damp and Mould Policy 236 tenants who have had direct lived experience of damp and mould were asked to provide their views on the draft policy. This tenant cohort were also asked to provide their views on what improvements they felt needed to be made that would better support them. This exercise allowed for specific changes to be made to the policy that better reflected the needs of tenants but also the development and roll out of a Damp and Mould Leaflet</p>

<p>12.</p>	<p>Landlords should consider their current approach to record keeping and satisfy themselves it is sufficiently accurate and robust. We would encourage landlords to go further and consider whether their record keeping systems and processes support a risk-based approach to damp and mould.</p>	<p>Monitoring</p> <p>The Council's Executive Cabinet has ultimate responsibility for the safety across all owned, leased and managed properties, and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource and allocate appropriately qualified and suitably experienced persons to assist the implementation of this policy and in discharging our duty for safety. • Ensure that an effective Damp and Mould Policy is in place, and responsibilities have been delegated to other Directors to support the implementation of this policy <p>The Council Housing Management Board has strategic oversight for the management of safety and ensuring compliance is achieved and maintained.</p> <p>The Council have a suite of key performance indicators that will monitor and provide reassurance to tenants and leaseholders. These indicators will be regularly reviewed by the Council Housing Management Board.</p> <p>Staff will have a responsibility to ensure that all cases of damp and mould are dealt within accordance with this policy, as well as any separate and applicable service standards.</p> <p>As part of the Councils monitoring processes, we will maintain accurate records of damp and mould reports, including of the remedial works carried out and any correspondence.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Landlords should ensure that their responses to reports of damp and mould are timely and reflect the urgency of the issue.</p>	<p>Time to respond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Damp and Mould Policy has recently been reviewed to comply with the new legislation of Awaab's Law. The policy includes the following categories and guidance. In line with legislation, works will commence to address issues with damp and mould in the following timescales (applicable at the time of writing and to be reviewed if legislation changes): • Damp to be surveyed within 14 calendar days of report with a written summary provided to tenant (non-urgent cases)

- Urgent reports of damp to be actioned within 7 calendar days of report
- Emergency repairs that pose immediate risks to be actioned within 24 hours

Any issues reported will be logged on a housing management system, with a dedicated team arranging the undertaking of inspections.

- Following the inspection, there are several remedial actions that will be taken to alleviate any issues:
 - ✓ Advice and support to remedy the issues
 - ✓ Minor repairs to be raised, such as repairing extractor fans.
 - ✓ Major works to be raised, such as damp-proof courses.
- We are committed to addressing minor related issues to damp and mould in a timely manner. All damp work will be completed within 50 working days.

Vulnerabilities

Vulnerabilities are identified both during the raising of the inspection and when the inspection takes place. Works required to those properties are prioritised and where required liaison with our Neighbourhood team to temporarily decant or permanently rehouse tenants, where needed.

<p>14.</p>	<p>Landlords should review the number of missed appointments in relation to damp and mould cases and, depending on the outcome of any review, consider what steps may be required to reduce them.</p>	<p>Where access to the home is not provided, we will try to contact the tenant on the number provided. If contact cannot be made, a no access calling card will be left at the property. The card will indicate the reason for the call and a contact number to make a new appointment.</p> <p>Any inspections or remedial work will remain open to allow time for contact to be made by the tenant and the rebooking of the appointment. We will also make reasonable endeavours to gain access to carry out required inspections and/or works.</p>
<p>15.</p>	<p>Landlords should ensure that their staff, whether in-house or contractors, have the ability to identify and report early signs of damp and mould.</p>	<p>Staff training We highlight the importance of this area to all staff through intranet articles and staff webinars and have live staff dashboards highlighting current performance. All staff are mandated to undertake a comprehensive Damp and Mould e-learning module.</p> <p>Logging damp and mould Tenants can report an issue to any member of staff, without being passed to another team member, so reporting repairs and issues will no longer run solely through the Customer Connect Hub. Staff gain a good understanding of what causes damp from the eLearning session, and the repairs Keyfax system will also guide them through the correct questions to ask. There is also a process guide on Microsoft Forms which walks staff through the process step-by-step, showing them the right questions to ask so we can provide the best possible customer service, every time.</p>
<p>16.</p>	<p>Landlords should take steps to identify and resolve any skills gaps they may have, ensuring their staff and contractors have appropriate expertise to properly diagnose and respond to reports of damp and mould.</p>	<p>Skills We have an in-house team who'll oversee all damp repairs and ensure they're addressed as high priority. Our contractor has a dedicated damp and mould team of operatives who complete the repairs and are supported via their in house damp and mould supervisor.</p> <p>We ensure that even if staff do not have the skills to diagnose, they have a process to refer for an inspection. This means anyone visiting a home who identifies any damp and mould issues that has not been reported can refer the property for inspection.</p>

17.	Landlords should ensure that they clearly and regularly communicate with their residents regarding actions taken or otherwise to resolve reports of damp and mould. Landlords should review and update any associated processes and policies accordingly.	<p>Communication on resolution</p> <p>The website has a page dedicated to damp and mould, as well as a leaflet providing examples with photos to aid understanding What to expect leaflet, whilst also Damp and Mould Service Standards</p> <p>Tenants whose homes are diagnosed as requiring works will receive a schedule of works to ensure they are clear of what will take place, the timeframe to complete and an understanding of the related disruption. The job will not be closed down until the tenant is in full agreement that the remedial work is successful.</p>
18.	Landlords must ensure there is effective internal communication between their teams and departments and ensure that one individual or team has overall responsibility for ensuring complaints or reports are resolved, including follow up or aftercare.	<p>Internal communication and coordination</p> <p>The team leading on damp work closely with the contractor undertaking the damp works and the complaints team to ensure full internal control of quality assurance. The introduction of a What to expect leaflet to inform tenants before the works start on what to expect and how to help prepare for the works. We have reviewed the Decant process to provide clear information on what help and support we can provide to improve the overall experience for the tenant if a decant is required and will effectively be the go between for all parties.</p>

19.	Landlords should ensure that their complaints policy is effective and in line with the Complaint Handling Code, with clear compensation and redress guidance. Remedies should be commensurate to the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident, whilst recognising that each case is individual and should be considered on its own merits.	<p>Complaints handling The Complaints Policy is aligned to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. The Compensation Policy sets guidelines for compensation, and this has been externally reviewed to ensure it reflects Housing Ombudsman guidelines.</p> <p>At Stage 2 complaint review, compensation is determined once all evidence is reviewed. Where possible we ask the tenant what compensation they think is appropriate including damage to property, lack of facilities and personal impact.</p> <p>We continually monitor feedback from tenants including any complaints associated with any damp and mould issues and take all necessary action to resolve these to the full satisfaction the tenant. The levels of complaints and resolutions are reported to the Council Housing Management Board and the Complaints Panel as part of the quarterly report.</p>
Section 3: From disrepair claims to resolution		
20.	Landlords need to ensure they can identify complex cases at an early stage and have a strategy for keeping residents informed and effective resolution.	<p>Early diagnosis As each damp report is being inspected at first point of contact, this will be overseen by a member of the repair team and weekly operational reviews will take place within the team where individual cases will be discussed and monitored.</p> <p>Mould clean When a damp and mould inspection identifies issues that could potentially be a health risk, a mould clean will be undertaken in advance of the remedial works to remove the potential risks.</p>

		<p>Decants</p> <p>Our Damp and Mould Policy states “As part of the damp and mould inspection in homes, we will undertake a health and vulnerability assessment for the household. This will determine if any additional support is required to facilitate the works and enable the works to be prioritised accordingly. For example: supporting a tenant if they need to vacate their home while work is being completed.”</p>
21.	Landlords should identify where an independent, mutually agreed and suitably qualified surveyor should be used, share the outcomes of all surveys and inspections with residents to help them understand the findings and be clear on next steps. Landlords should then act on accepted survey recommendations in a timely manner.	Where required a third-party surveyor will be utilised and this will likely arise from cases discussed at the weekly operational meetings.
22.	Where extensive works may be required, landlords should consider the individual circumstances of the household, including any vulnerabilities, and whether or not it is appropriate to move resident(s) out of their home at an early stage.	<p>Vulnerabilities</p> <p>Handheld PDA functionality for the contractor includes the ability to escalate welfare, safeguarding, vulnerability, unreported repairs back to ForHousing.</p> <p>Decants</p> <p>If the remedial works are extensive or could affect the health of the tenant and their family, we will offer to decant them temporarily while these are undertaken or alternatively arrange a permanent move to a suitable alternative property. All costs associated with decanting tenants to facilitate a move are borne by us.</p>
23.	Landlords should promote the benefits of their complaints process and the Ombudsman to their residents as an	There is a page on the Council’s website Make complaint . This invites complaints as an opportunity for us to fix and learn. The page includes a form to report complaints online. Tenants can also report by phone or through the My Account app.

	appropriate and effective route to resolving disputes.	The website explains the stages for complaint handling, which aligns to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, includes our Complaints Policy and self-assessment against the code, and promotes how to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman, explaining its role and service. Complaint response letters also promote the service.
24.	Landlords should continue to use the complaints procedure when the pre-action protocol has commenced and until legal proceedings have been issued to maximise the opportunities to resolve disputes outside of court. Landlords should ensure their approach is consistent with our jurisdiction guidance and their legal and complaint teams work together effectively where an issue is being pursued through the complaints process and protocol.	<p>We will consider each complaint on its own merits and consider the individual circumstances. When a complaint is not accepted a record of the explanation given to the tenant is recorded on our housing management system.</p> <p>There will be exceptional situations when a matter will not be considered a complaint or escalated, and examples are set out in the policy, which we believe are fair and reasonable to residents. One example is Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.</p>
Section 4: From a complaints to a learning culture		
25.	Landlords should consider how best to share learning from complaints and the positive impact of changes made as a result within the organisation and externally. Systems should allow the landlord to analyse their complaints data effectively and identify themes, trends and learning opportunities.	<p>We recognise the importance of learning from complaints and value the opportunities they give us to make improvements. We share what we've learned and the service improvements we implement with customers, colleagues, and relevant committees.</p> <p>A complaints dashboard provides a breakdown of different types of complaints by service type (including damp), issue reported and response rates. This enables trends in high demand complaint types and issues to be identified and actioned quickly.</p> <p>The Complaints Panel consisting of two tenants and a Councillor all of whom are also members of the Council Housing Management Board regularly reviews complaints learnings and trends. The Complaints Panel also ensure compliance with the Damp and Mould Policy and to make recommendations for future handling and management of complaints.</p>

		<p>We publish learning from complaints on the website 'You Said, We Did' and in annual report as per measurements set out in the Tenants Together Charter (TTC). TTC Annual Report 2024-25</p>
<p>26.</p>	<p>Landlords should ensure they treat residents reporting damp and mould with respect and empathy. The distress and inconvenience experienced by residents in this area is some of the most profound we have seen, and this needs to be reflected in the tone and approach of the complaint handling.</p>	<p>Every employee has a “behavioural objective” based on the ForHousing LIVEIT Behavioural Framework. The framework has our values at its centre. It outlines the core behaviours which define ‘how’ we approach our work. These sit alongside ‘what’ we do, as outlined in each of our role profiles and service plans. By demonstrating these behaviours, colleagues will shape our culture along with HEART, our customer service commitment. All this contributes to our culture and ensures we meet the complaint handling objectives as described</p>