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1. Purpose and scope

This policy was approved as part of a review of Portsmouth City Council housing repairs and maintenance policy documents.

The policy applies to the repairs and maintenance service provided to the council's tenants and leaseholders. It defines rules to be applied but stops short of giving detailed procedural guidance as this may change.

In addition, reference should be made to the relevant tenancy agreement or lease document.

2. Document context

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- The relevant policy guideline document which outlines further detail when implementing a policy.
- The Repairs and Maintenance Scope of Service which outlines the purpose and value steps for each of the repairs and maintenance service lines. The document also summarises our principles of work, definitions of waste, decision making using PLANⁱ and our capability measures.
- The Asset Management Strategy which sets out a framework for the council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties to make future decisions about its assets over the next 30 years.
- Where relevant there are links to legislation related to the policies as necessary, however be aware that some changes to the legislation published may be outstanding and legal advice should be sought where appropriate.

ⁱ PLAN - Proportionate, Legal, Accountable and Necessary

3. Arbitration and escalation

Front-line staff requiring help interpreting and implementing the policy should seek advice from their line manager in the first instance.

Where a decision requires arbitration or further escalation the following table outlines the escalation pathway.

Escalation	Job Title
First	Building service team manager ⁱⁱ
Second	Head of Building Maintenance
Third	Assistant Director of Building Services

In addition, a tenant or leaseholder can make a formal complaint using the council's complaints policy. In the first instance they should contact the person or section dealing with their problem and ask to register a complaint.

ⁱⁱ Building Repairs Manager or Building & Compliance Manager or Building Safety Manager or Building Projects Manager

4. Damp and Mould

4.1. Purpose

This policy outlines the council's approach to the management of damp and mould to ensure all our properties are well maintained and free of damp and mould that could risk the health and safety of customers living in homes or buildings as well as its obligations with regard to the [Housing Act 2004](#), [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#) and their successors.

4.2. Scope

The policy covers all council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings including communal areas, sheltered schemes and houses in multiple occupation.

4.3. Damp and Mould Causes

The general term 'damp' covers three possible problems with distinct causes.

4.3.1 Penetrating Damp

Water penetrating the external structure of the building or internal leaks causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure.

4.3.2 Rising Damp

The movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building through capillary action

4.3.3 Condensation

Condensation occurs when humid air comes into contact with a cold surface, it then condenses producing water droplets.

The conditions that may increase the risk of condensation are:

- Lack of ventilation within the property.
- Inadequate heating
- Inadequate insulation.
- High humidity

4.4. Mould

This 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. There is strong research evidence to suggest that health conditions can be exacerbated by damp and mould in housing.

4.5. Our Responsibilities

4.5.1 Property inspection

We will undertake a property inspection when a repair is reported relating to suspected damp, mould and condensation within fourteen days of the repair being reported.

At the property inspection we will investigate and diagnose the cause of damp and deliver effective solutions dealing with the cause of the damp and not just the symptoms where appropriate by undertaking reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation dampness.

4.5.2 Resident advice to minimise condensation.

We will also promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to minimise damp and condensation, particularly when there are no apparent causes relating to design or construction.

Advice provided will include directing residents to sources of information and support on energy savings if they have difficulty in heating their home.

The advice will be available at all housing offices, at sign up of new tenancies, publicised on the website, social media and within Housetalk magazine. It will be periodically reviewed by the damp and mould working group with the resident consortium.

4.5.3 Resident support

Where internal conditions within a home such as overcrowding and excessive hoarding of personal belongings, are contributing to the damp and mould conditions and influencing health and wellbeing of the occupants or are preventing inspections or repairs works being carried out, we will provide support and assistance to review the customer's options.

4.5.4 Damp and Mould follow up.

We will follow up each completed damp and mould repair within six months of any damp and mould repair work being carried out to assess if any work undertaken and/or advice provided has been effective.

4.5.5 Training

All surveyors are trained and competent in the diagnosis of damp, condensation and mould issues.

All staff visiting residents in their homes (service provider operatives and housing officers) will be trained to be aware and identify damp and mould issues as well as provide residents with advice to minimise condensation and directing residents to sources of information and support on energy.

4.5.6 Evaluation of Repairs & Maintenance Data

We will record all instances of damp and mould on the repairs and maintenance database using appropriate keywords and appointments.

The damp and mould safety group will continue to have oversight of the process and will review performance measures and feedback from complaints to monitor that we are responding to damp and mould instances appropriately in accordance with the policy.

4.5.7 Proactive Approach

The buildings service will periodically evaluate repairs and stock data to identify property archetypes that are more prone to damp and mould to inform its asset management strategy. This proactive approach will either inform future planned programmes or identify properties to be targeted that require regular stock condition surveys.

Reviews of stock data will include properties that have a lower energy performance certificate (EPC) rating, blocks of flats where damp has been reported to multiple properties or where certain archetypes of properties are more prone to historical or repeated damp and mould issues.

We will also utilise all opportunities when inside residents' homes to identify damp and mould issues such as repairs and stock condition inspections by surveyors, tenancy update visits by housing officers and contractor visits to ensure damp and mould issues are reported as appropriate and investigated.

We will plan to proactively inspect properties and engage with residents where it has been identified that the properties are more prone to damp and mould issues.

As part of the asset management strategy, we will include developing planned programmes as appropriate that address any building construction causes of damp and mould.

4.6. Hierarchy of remedial action

The actions below have been grouped into tiers to assist with correct diagnosis and specification of remedial actions. These have been ranked in order to assist the management of a proportionate response to the issue.

Tier 1	<p><u>Surveyor Remit (as appropriate)</u></p> <p>Survey to diagnose cause of damp and mould including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Checking temperature and humidity• Checking external building fabric and cavities• Checking effectiveness of extractor fans, window trickle ventilation• Checking radiator sizes• Undertake calcium carbide test.• Arrange water pressure test. <p>Undertake to clean mould or arrange service provider if excessive.</p> <p>Arrange for repairs as appropriate including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repairs to building fabric (clear cavities, roof repairs, water service repairs etc)• Install trickle vents to UPVC windows.• Install loft Insulation.• Install new or upgraded extractor fan. <p>Advice to resident to minimise condensation (using ventilation and heating)</p>
Tier 2	<p><u>Surveyor Remit (as appropriate)</u></p> <p>Arrange for repairs as appropriate including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passive wall vent• Radiator installation or relocation• Thermal board external wall <p>Thermal imaging camera survey</p>
Tier 3	<p><u>Building Repairs Manager Remit (as appropriate)</u></p> <p>Arrange for installation of data loggers to monitor temperature and humidity.</p> <p>Arrange for housing management support.</p> <p>Arrange for installation of positive input fan.</p>
Tier 4	<p><u>Head of Building Maintenance Remit (as appropriate)</u></p>

	<p>Escalate to senior management to investigate rehouse option.</p> <p>Inform Head of Building Projects properties identified that would benefit from larger scale improvements as part of a planned maintenance scheme.</p>
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4.7. Customer Responsibilities

To immediately report any evidence of rising and penetrating damp and faulty equipment that will affect the management of humidity and moisture in the home (faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, heating system failure etc.)

Customers must allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works and servicing of appliances (gas boilers and ventilation systems).

Customers can help reduce the conditions that lead to condensation dampness by:

- Keeping the presence of moisture to a minimum e.g., covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outside (where possible), where it is safe to do so, keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.
- Adequately heating rooms (The World Health Organisation recommends 18°C.)
- Keeping the house well-ventilated e.g., opening windows during cooking / bathing, turning on and ensuring that the extractor fan or ventilation system installed in their home is regularly cleaned and working, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture.