



# Dampness and Condensation Policy

## 1. Aims of the Policy

- 1.1 The Policy aims to assist in the delivery of a dampness and condensation response service that will:
- Ensure that tenants are treated in a fair and consistent way.
  - Focus on working in partnership with tenants ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is provided.
  - Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to eradicate dampness including managing and controlling condensation.
  - Ensure that tenants have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling dampness and condensation.
  - Comply with statutory requirements and good practice.
  - Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to deal with dampness and condensation problems.
  - Ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from dampness and condensation.

## 2. Scope of the Policy

- 2.1 The scope of this Policy covers how Midlothian Council's Building Maintenance Service and our tenants are able to jointly control, manage and eradicate dampness. This includes:
- All housing properties that are tenanted and communal. It also includes emergency / temporary accommodation.
  - Identifying the types of dampness: rising, penetrating and condensation dampness, including internal leaks.
  - Identifying the Council's responsibilities for dealing with dampness and condensation.
  - Identifying the tenants' responsibilities for dealing with dampness and condensation.
  - Offering guidance, advice and assistance throughout the process to tenants.
  - Identifying situations where the Council will not be able to undertake works to rectify condensation dampness.

## 3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Chief Officer - Place has overall responsibility for the Policy, ensuring that it is fully implemented.
- 3.2 The Building Maintenance Service Manager is responsible for:

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- The effective implementation and delivery of the Policy.
- Monitoring the performance and delivery of the Policy.
- Reviewing the Policy.

### 3.3 The specialist officer is responsible for:

- Developing the processes and procedures that are in line with the Policy.
- Ensure that the Policy aims and terms are adhered to.

## 4. Types of Dampness

### 4.1 The types of dampness covered by the policy.

#### Rising Dampness

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

#### Penetrating Dampness (including internal leaks)

Water penetrating the external structure of the building or internal leaks causing dampness, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure. The cause can be the result of, for example:

- Water ingress due to defective or poor original design / workmanship of the structure.
- Defective components for example roof coverings, external wall doors and windows.
- Defective or blocked rainwater gutters and pipes.
- Defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems.
- Flooding due to burst pipes.

#### Condensation

Condensation occurs when water vapour in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. This can take two main forms:

- Surface condensation arising when the inner surface of the structure is cooler than the room air.
- Condensation inside the structure (interstitial) where vapour pressure forces water vapour through porous materials (eg. walls), which then condenses when it reaches colder conditions within the structure.

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The risk of condensation is increased through:

- Inadequate ventilation e.g. natural opening windows and trickle / background vents and mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens.
- Inadequate heating e.g. undersized boilers and radiators.
- Inadequate thermal insulation e.g. missing or defective wall and loft insulation.
- High humidity e.g. presence of rising and penetrating dampness.
- Poor building design and construction – specific cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction.

Conditions that can lead to condensation are:

- Poor ventilation – not opening windows, blocking up vents, not turning on extract fans, not allowing air to circulate around furniture.
- Poor heating – not heating the house.
- Defective insulation –dislodged insulation in lofts.
- High humidity - not covering pans when cooking and drying laundry inside the house can contribute to this.
- Overcrowding.

Mould 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 dampness is present.



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### 5. Responsibilities of Midlothian Council

- 5.1 The Council will investigate to determine the cause of dampness and condensation and carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with the tenancy agreement.
- 5.2 The Council will diagnose the cause of dampness correctly and deliver effective solutions based on the ethos of dealing with the cause of the dampness not just the symptom and wherever possible **“right first time”**.
- 5.3 The Council will promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to manage dampness and condensation.
- 5.4 The Council will ensure that relevant staff have training and understand the delivery of the service that will meet the aims of this Policy.
- 5.5 The Council will ensure that, if works are not undertaken by Building Maintenance Service tradespersons, only competent contractors are employed to carry out any works and that the tenant’s possessions are adequately protected during the works.
- 5.6 The Council will inform the tenant of the findings of the investigations following a house visit. This will include identifying the possible causes of dampness, recommending effective solutions and all necessary remedial works / actions / enhancements and the estimated timescales to complete the works / measures. This will be communicated to the tenant. The Council will keep the tenant up to date with their enquiry through the process from inception to completion.
- 5.7 The Council will undertake reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation dampness, for example installation of mechanical extract fans, fresh air vents, repairing existing insulation, etc. The Council will install environmental monitors, where required, to monitor humidity levels within the property. These devices will collect data to assess the issue and inform reactive measures.
- 5.8 The Council is responsible for insulating the tenant’s home in accordance with current SHQS/ESSH Standards to help reduce the likelihood of condensation occurring where practical.
- 5.9 The Council is responsible for maintaining a tenant’s home to avoid penetrating and rising dampness and for carrying out remedial action where these occur.
- 5.9 Remedial works will only be carried out where it is reasonable and practical to do so. The Council will have regard to the constraints of the existing building design and structure and will take a pragmatic approach in finding appropriate solutions.



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- 5.10** The Council will make good internal surfaces following any remedial work carried out ensuring that surfaces are prepared to a condition ready for the tenant to redecorate.
- 5.11** Mould wash will only be carried out where this is found to be persistent or extensive and cannot be controlled by the tenant.
- 5.12** In some cases, remedial work may not be necessary. However, additional support and advice will be given to the tenant on managing and controlling the occurrences of condensation dampness.
- 5.13** The Council will make reasonable attempts to access the property to inspect and carry out the works.
- 5.14** The Council will not be able to control condensation dampness where it is unreasonable or impractical to do so or if any remedial action would be ineffective for example:
- Poor construction / design (not meeting current construction and living standards):
- Cold bridging areas in the fabric of the building that cannot be eliminated.
- Non habitable rooms, including but not limited to:
- Out –buildings / sheds that have been converted including linking buildings between the house and out building and other add-on structures.
  - Unheated / uninsulated store rooms.
  - Unheated enclosed stairs for building access.
- 5.15** The Council will respond to a report of dampness and condensation and complete any remedial works/measures within 21 days. This will be dependent on the severity and urgency of the problem and on the complexity of the solution of the remedial works/actions required.
- 5.16** Under certain exceptional circumstances where the tenant is unable to carry out mould washes or redecoration the council will provide support and assistance.
- 5.17** If the extent or nature of required works makes it unreasonable for the tenant to remain in the property, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day by day basis or a temporary decant to an alternative property. The tenant will be supported through this process to find suitable accommodation.



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### 6. Responsibilities of the Tenant

- 6.1** The tenant will regularly check for dampness and immediately report to the Council evidence of rising and penetrating dampness and any faulty equipment that will hamper the management and control of dampness and condensation (e.g. faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, lack of heating etc.), in accordance with the tenancy agreement conditions. This can be reported via the Midlothian Council online system or telephone 0131 663 7211 or the council website.
- 6.2** The tenant will regularly check for mould and clean signs of mould as soon as they are discovered. They will manage condensation dampness following the Council's guidance. Tenants can also 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, keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.
  - Adequately heating rooms – ideally between 18°C and 21°C and maintaining humidity between 40-60%.
  - Keeping the house well ventilated e.g. opening windows when cooking / bathing, turning on and ensuring that the extractor fan is working if applicable, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture.
- 6.3** The tenant will follow all advice and guidance issued by the Council on managing and controlling dampness and condensation. This information will be provided by Building Maintenance Service staff and can be found on Midlothian Council's website.
- 6.4** If following an inspection by the Council, the outcome shows that all reasonable measures are in place for the tenant to adequately manage the condensation dampness, further advice and support will be given to the tenant. Where the tenant fails to take the advice and reasonable steps to reduce dampness, the tenant may be recharged for any resulting repairs required which are considered to be result of this inaction.
- 6.5** The tenancy agreement recommends that the tenant arranges adequate household contents insurance. Midlothian Council can offer a low cost insurance.
- 6.6** Where tenant is considering converting / using non – habitable buildings and spaces/rooms they can seek advice and permission from the Council in accordance with the tenancy agreement conditions. This will not be covered by the dampness and condensation policy as it is not designed for this purpose.
- 6.7** The tenant will allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of remedial works (in accordance with the tenancy agreement).

## **7. Monitoring**

The Policy will be monitored quarterly to manage performance and its effectiveness in terms of its delivery.

## **8. Review**

The Policy will be reviewed every two years and also in response to:

- Legislative changes;
- Council strategy or Policy changes; or
- Discovery of ineffective Policy terms.