

West Dunbartonshire Council
Process for Dampness and Mould in Tenants
Homes

Why is this being revised?

This process has been revised after the coroner's report on the tragic death of a child who died of a respiratory condition caused by mould in his home. This case has highlighted the clear link between mould and damp in houses and serious health conditions.

West Dunbartonshire Council will treat dampness in tenants' homes with sensitivity, empathy and not put the onus on the tenant or any inference of blame.

Ensuring tenant and resident safety is a critical part of the work of social landlords in Scotland. To meet the tolerable standards the property must

- Be free from serious disrepair
- Be energy efficient
- Have modern facilities and services
- Be healthy, safe and secure

The approach set out below details the process and responsibility of each service area when dealing with reports of mould and damp. We must deal with this quickly and effectively and with sensitivity. The current cost of living crisis, and in particular rising energy costs, mean that many tenants currently face difficulties in heating their homes.

New Process:

- Teams to offer advice where appropriate.
- All visiting Officers to be vigilant and look for signs of dampness or mould in every home we enter.
- Dampness Inspection requests prioritised to a maximum of 2 working days.
- Repairs resulting from an inspection will be re-categorised to Urgent (10 day) repairs where appropriate.
- Housing Officers to be made aware of the outcome of all dampness inspections and will arrange a follow up visit within 2 working days.

Reporting a Repair for Damp/Mould

Citizen Services /CAS covering the repairs centre telephone lines and housing repairs mailbox for on line reports, will determine the cause of the dampness by asking the tenant to confirm if the area is wet or could be caused by water ingress by a leaking pipe or roof leak, if yes appropriate repairs should be raised following up with an inspection request. If there are no signs of water ingress this is likely to be condensation dampness as per guidance documents. When receiving requests, we will be empathetic and sensitive to the concerns

of tenants who may be anxious and worried for the health and wellbeing of family. If appropriate we can offer basic advice to tenants by providing the guidance leaflet on “How to Avoid Dampness & Condensation In the Home” or referring to the section within the repairs pages on the Council website which also includes a short video.

<https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/maintenance-repairs/damp-and-mould/>

As well as offering advice, inspection requests should be appointed detailing the issue, i.e. extent of the mould, location and how long it has taken to develop. Appointments should be prioritised to the available slots in the Building Service Officers’ calendar. To allow for prioritisation 2 additional appointments slots have been added to each of the area based Building Service Officers appointments per day. These additional slots are to be used for dampness requests and should ensure we are able to offer an inspection within 2 working days.

Reports via the Housing Repairs Mailbox – CAS teams should search key words; Damp or Mould to ensure these are processed timeously.

All Council Officers

All Officers visiting tenants’ homes identifying mould or damp should report this on behalf of the tenant if not already reported to Building Services. This can be reported via the Council’s repairs centre on **0800 073 8708** or via housing.repairs@west-dunbarton.gov.uk, ensuring subject heading details dampness to allow teams to prioritise requests.

All Officers should also be aware of the Council’s advice by handing out the damp and mould advice leaflet or referring to the details on the Council website as above.

Building Service Officers

Building Service Officers whilst visiting tenants’ homes will listen to tenants concerns, be empathetic towards these concerns, and take cognisance of family circumstances, for example, health problems.

Taking account of current cost of living/energy crisis we offer advice on how to effectively use heating in terms of energy efficiency, i.e. maintaining an ambient temperature and adequate ventilation. Building Service Officers will liaise with Housing Operations/Energy Advice Officer as required:

Building Service Officers should diagnose issues and make sure there are options for ventilation:

- Are trickle vents operational?
- Windows opening adequately?
- Extractor fan operational?
- Does the extractor fan require to be serviced or cleaned?
- Is there adequate circulation of air? e.g. position of furniture against walls.

Repairs should be raised by the Building Service Officer where the extent of the mould cannot be managed as detailed in the guidance leaflet.

Repairs orders should be raised as priority, in majority of cases appointed

within 10 days and MUST contain damp or mould in the description to allow for reporting.

If unable to appoint these repairs, the Building Service Officer should liaise with the Planning Team / Craft Supervisor.

If the repairs are caused by water ingress caused by a neighbouring property, follow up inspections may be required to ascertain the cause, these should be treated as a priority.

On completion of a visit the Building Service Officers will ensure a notification email is sent to Housing Operations Dampness Mailbox within 2 days following completion of all dampness related inspections and should contain the relevant findings, proposed actions and any support requirements known of the household.

dampness@west-dunbarton.gov.uk.

Housing Options

In cases of dampness/mould, the housing solution should not solely be based upon a technical assessment of the property. It is critical a joined up approach is taken and should take account of the individual health/support requirement of the family household. Where it is clear the extent of the work required to treat damp or mould requires the tenant to be decanted from their property, the Building Service Officer should follow the decant process ensuring forms are completed within 2 days where practicably possible by emailing Housing Operations Dampness mailbox.

Housing Officers upon receipt of this information will prioritise the decant, review the Housing Management system to confirm composition of the household, any known support needs and arrange to contact the tenant within 24 hours. The purpose of the contact will be to confirm information obtained from QL and gather any other relevant information to inform identification of a suitable decant. A decant should take place within 10 working days once a suitable property has been identified.

Specialist Survey Required

The Building Service Officer may be required on occasion to request a more in depth survey from a specialist contractor to ascertain additional recommendations. Officers should request an estimated completion from the contractor and monitor for completion, updating Housing Operations Dampness mailbox with the estimated contractor completion date.

Where there is evidence of mould or damp the Building Service Officer should arrange the necessary repair order to treat while awaiting the outcome of the report.

On receipt of the report the Building Service Officer should follow up with required actions and save the report to the shared drive. An update of the action being undertaken should be shared with the tenant confirming outcome of the report and also updating Housing Operations by emailing Housing

Operations Dampness mailbox to ensure households are supported through the process.

Housing Operations

On receipt of all dampness inspection notifications from Building Services via the Housing Operations Dampness mailbox, the Housing Officer will be responsible for carrying out a follow up visit to the tenant within 2 working days to determine if there are any additional support needs. Support will be dependent on the individual needs of the households, however could include:

- Support and referrals for financial assistance via, Working4U, Welfare Fund, crisis loans, hardship fund, sustainability fund, top up meter or vouchers (as appropriate).
- Review housing application and any medical application points awarded (if applicable and underlying health issues), housing options advice should include review of points, area and house type preferences.

Energy Advice Officer

Referrals can be made to the Councils Energy Advice Officer who can discuss energy efficiency of appliances and advise on ways to reduce air humidity, offer practical solutions to clearing the mould and preventing its rapid regrowth as well as making referrals to Working4U and CAB for financial advice/energy vouchers.

Building Services - Follow Up Inspections

Once a dampness repair has been completed, the BSO will require to do a follow up visit to the property to ensure problems have been fully resolved and there are no further indications of dampness/mould.

Reports will be run of all completed repairs, Support Teams should make contact with tenant to arrange the necessary follow up inspections 60 days after the completed repair. Building Services Officers should record the outcome in QI within the inspection screen, noting if issues have been fully resolved and no further action required. If further issues are identified during the follow up visit the Building Services Officer will raise the relevant repair within 2 days, ensuring notifications are sent to the Housing Operations Dampness mailbox within 24 hours which will trigger a further follow up visit by Housing Officer within 2 working days to determine any family support required.

Monitoring Dampness Inspections/Repairs

Building Services will report monthly to Building Services Board and HIB on the following, providing the tenancy details on all to housing Operations dampness mailbox.

The reporting will be developed further with the proposed implementation of new technology which can track temperature, humidity and Co2 in homes and allows us to track fluctuations which are linked to a gateway dashboard which will provide WDC staff with relevant information.

- Total inspection requests received
- Total appointment requests completed
- Total Inspection requests cancelled no access
- Total active inspections
- Total active dampness repairs
- Total completed dampness repairs
- Total Repairs cancelled no access