

DAMP AND CONDENSATION

Strategy Document (DRAFT)

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1. STRATEGY PURPOSE

- 1.1. The presence of excess moisture is a common construction defect that is particularly prevalent in the United Kingdom. A technical briefing, in the form of a presentation, was given to the Community Select Committee on 28 June 2016. The full version of this document is embedded as [Appendix A](#) and should be read before reading this report.
- 1.2. The service to treat cases of damp and condensation have recently been passed from the Repairs and Voids Service (formally the “BMO”) to the Investment Team.
- 1.3. The Repairs and Voids Service recovery plan cites damp and condensation as an area which was under-performing, noting a backlog of circa “200” cases of untreated instances of damp and/ or condensation.
- 1.4. As part of the service transition it was deemed necessary to produce a dedicated strategy to combat the backlog and provide a sustainable process for managing new cases.

Legal

- 1.5. Landlords subject to the Housing Act 2004, such as Stevenage Borough Council, have obligations to manage such defects; these are described in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System¹ (HHSRS) which is enforceable under the Act.
- 1.6. The following HHSRS hazard profiles are specifically associated with Damp and Mould:
 - 1.6.1. ‘Damp and Mould Growth’ (Item 1, Section A, Physiological Requirements, *Hygrothermal Conditions*) describes specifically the risk profile of water penetration, condensation and mould.
 - 1.6.2. ‘Excess Cold’ (Item 2, Section A, Physiological Requirements, *Hygrothermal Conditions*) is

¹ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Creating Sustainable Communities). (February 2006). *Housing Health and Safety Rating System: Operating Guidance, Housing Act 2004*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15810/142631.pdf [Accessed 16 August 2016]

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relevant due to the process of thermal (cold) bridging which can exacerbate the problem of condensation.

1.6.3. 'Volatile Organic Compounds' (Item 10, Section A, *Pollutants (non-microbial)*) is relevant as *Cladosporium* ("black mould") is categorised as a Volatile Organic Compound and may spore in areas where moisture condensates into water.

1.7. Failure to combat damp and condensation where such a condition is beyond the reasonable ability of the building user to control can be classified as 'disrepair'.

Social

1.8. It also recognised that our tenants feel that damp, condensation and mould have a significant detrimental impact on their welfare, health and enjoyment of their property.

1.9. This strategy acknowledges that an over-reliance on citing 'life-style' as a root-cause of a damp and/ or condensation is unsatisfactory in most cases. Where such a claim is made it will be backed-up by reference to holistic technical data and building science.

1.10. This strategy will recognise that building users have a responsibility to report the presence of damp and/ or condensation and to aid in its treatment. Also, the strategy will rely on the principles of collaboration between residents and council to each ensure that they have fully explored and enacted every available remedy to treat any such problem.

Operational

1.11. This section describes the previous procedure, as carried out by the Repairs and Voids Service.

1.12. The previous strategy was centred on a case management approach. A 'Damp and Mould Surveyor' would visit each property who reported a problem.

1.13. The Repairs and Voids Service review recognises that a combination of management and capacity issues had led to a back-log of cases in this area and a high volume of repeat treatments.

1.14. The following operational concerns have been identified as requiring improvements:

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- 1.14.1. An over-reliance on citing 'life-style' as a cause without adequately identifying building defects that would be beyond the reasonable control of the building user.
- 1.14.2. Symptom management, not cause management. For example, the excess specification of anti-fungal solutions where permanent repairs were possible.
- 1.14.3. Lack of technical expertise in holistic building surveying leading to ineffective treatments.

Financial

- 1.15. Financial benefits from this strategy will be realised chiefly through the elimination of waste and reactive expense.
- 1.16. The key areas of financial impact are:
 - 1.16.1. Eliminating costs associated with misdiagnosis and ineffective treatments.
 - 1.16.2. Preserving the weather-tightness and preventing corrosive fungal attack within our asset base.
 - 1.16.3. Reducing the costs incurred with court-fees and/ or court prescribed mandated actions arising from disrepair cases.

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2. PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- 2.1. The new strategy will combat the considerations outlined in section 1.0 by providing the following priority outcomes.

Legal Outcomes

- 2.2. That the Borough remain in complete compliance with its duties as described in the Housing Act **[Outcome 1]**.
- 2.3. That the Borough is not negligent to the extent that proceedings be issued for failing to uphold any pertinent duty and where any such proceeding may arise that the actions arising from this strategy provide the basis for defence **[Outcome 2]**.

Social Outcomes

- 2.4. Resident satisfaction with their home, their repairs service and their investment service is of paramount concern. Increased resident satisfaction and/ or decreased levels of complaints are a key outcome **[Outcome 3]**.
- 2.5. This strategy wishes to give all residents confidence that we are dedicated to keeping moisture levels in their home suitable so that they can reasonably manage moisture levels independently **[Outcome 4]**.
- 2.6. Residents may expect to be consulted on how we manage moisture levels, updated on any works to their home and to receive accurate technical briefings on how they can aid us in tackling damp and/ or condensation **[Outcome 5]**.

Operational Outcomes

- 2.7. That this strategy provides the guidance required to develop preventative, diagnostic and management procedures to greatly reduce the backlog of cases and provide a sustainable strategy thereafter **[Outcome 6]**.

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- 2.8. That a holistic technical approach be used to take into account all relevant factors when determining the cause and required remediation in each and every case of damp and/ condensation **[Outcome 7]**.
- 2.9. That competency and capacity to take a strategic approach to damp and/ or condensation is adopted across the Housing Service, not just within the Investment Team **[Outcome 8]**.

Financial Outcomes

- 2.10. To reduce disrepair cases **[Outcome 9]**.
- 2.11. To eliminate inadequate or incorrectly specified works **[Outcome 9]**.

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3. REALISING THE STRATEGY

3.1. This section outlines the steps required to realise the desired outcomes specified in section 2.

3.2. The strategy is framed around three critical steps; **Prevention**, **Diagnosis** & **Intervention**

Prevention

3.3. The preventative step is designed to minimise the volume of cases that are referred by pro-active intervention before the need for a technical inspection or solution.

Table A – Preventative tasks and outcomes.

Task No.	Task Description.	Priority Outcome(s) resolved.	
		Outcome No(s).	Outcome Description.
1	Annual consultation event with all residents. This will enable two-way discussions on the causes of damp & condensation will allow for an education programme and will also allow Officers to record issues.	3, 4, 5	Customer Satisfaction and Confidence. Consultation.
2	Strategy and technical briefing to elected Councillors and members of relevant housing-related boards.	8	Whole service approach
3	Strategy and technical briefing to all relevant Housing staff.	8	Whole service approach
4	Strategy and technical briefing to relevant new starters.	8	Whole service approach
5	Development of new web-page that will allow for multi-media presentations, strategy guidance and an on-line form for internal and external reporting of damp and condensation issues.	3, 4, 5	Customer Satisfaction and Confidence. Consultation.
6	New education & literature package for new tenants.	3, 4, 5	Customer Satisfaction and Confidence. Consultation.
7	Period, targeted, Estate Inspections and development of cyclical programme to focus on arboriculture, drainage	8	Whole service approach

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	and ground-level issues.		
8	Better use of analytics and stock-condition data to inform asset strategy.	6	Strategy monitoring
9	Development of procedures, with a focus on the customer journey.	ALL	

Diagnostics

- 3.4. The diagnostic step is designed to correctly identify causes, before possible referral to intervention steps.

Table B – Diagnostic tasks and outcomes.

Task No.	Task Description	Priority Outcome resolution	
		Outcome No(s).	Outcome Description
10	Holistic approach to technical inspections.	All	
11	Increased use of ‘data-loggers’ to provide statistical and building usage data.	1, 2	Compliance monitoring.
12	Sharing of findings and individual action plans with affected residents.	3, 4, 5	Customer Satisfaction and Confidence. Consultation.

Intervention

- 3.5. The intervention step is designed to ensure accurate, proportional and sustainable resolutions when intervention is required.

Table C – Intervention tasks and outcomes.

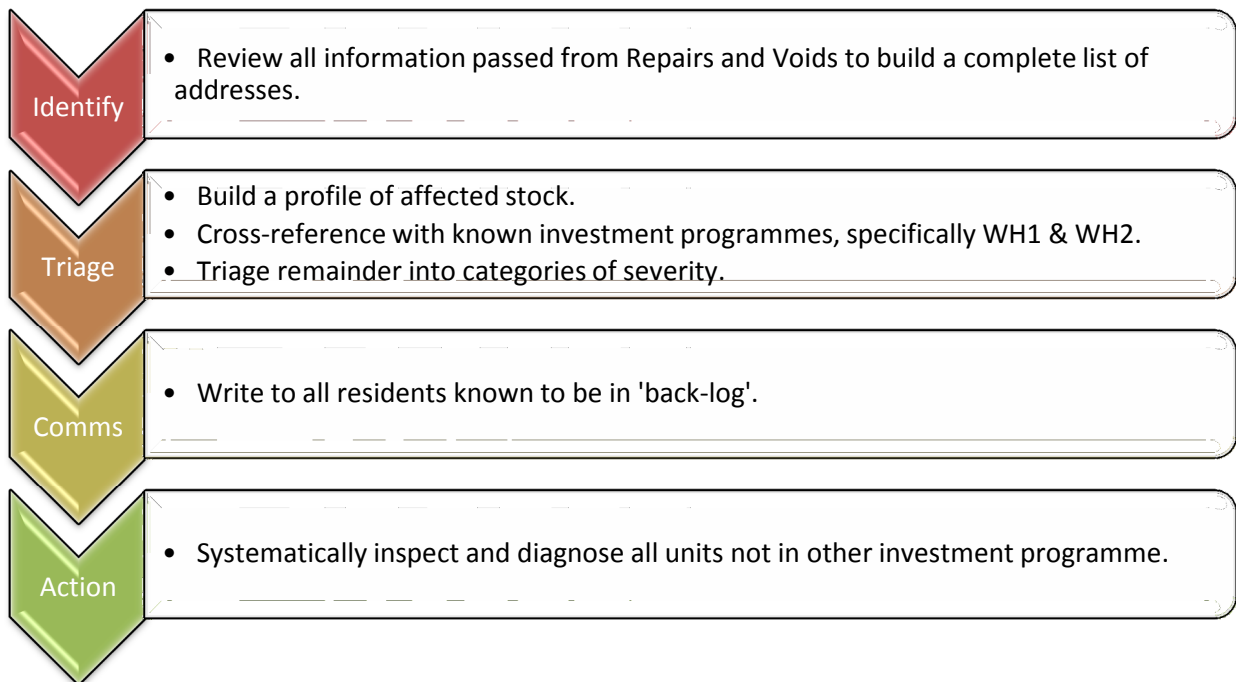
Task No.	Task Description	Priority Outcome resolution	
		Outcome No(s).	Outcome Description
13	Holistic approach to specifications and works.	All	
14	Initial visit will also involve a consultation session with resident.	3, 4, 5	Customer Satisfaction and Confidence.

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			Consultation.
15	Better case-management and introduction of follow-on visits.	1, 2 3, 4	Compliance monitoring. Customer Satisfaction and Confidence

Backlog

3.6. A specific, stand-alone procedure for dealing with the “back-log” of cases is also required:



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4. ACTION PLAN

- 4.1. A full action plan will be published upon agreement of the strategy principles by the CSC on the 7 Sept 2016.
- 4.2. The action plan will list responsibilities, timescales and measures for success.

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5. RESOURCING AND BUDGETING

- 5.1. Resources have already been increased to enact the immediate priorities of dealing with damp and condensation.
- 5.2. A more detailed profile of resources and budgets will be drawn-up upon approval of the strategy principles by the CSC on 7 Sept.

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APPENDIX A

Damp, Condensation and Mould: Preventative Strategy. Presentation to the Community Select Committee, 28 June 2016.

Click here to open:



Click [here](#) to return to where you left off.

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