



NORTH STAR

Creating homes, building futures

Title of policy:	Damp, Mould and Condensation (DM&C) Policy
Version:	2.0
Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to outline how North Star will meet its statutory, contractual and regulatory requirements where serious dampness poses an issue for tenants or property. It also covers how senior management and The Board will receive assurance on the effective management of this area.
Associated Documents;	DM&C Action Plan Repairs and Maintenance Policy Complaints Policy Disrepair Policy Void Property (Lettable) Standard
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Responsibility;	Executive Director of Assets & Growth and Executive Director of Customers



Contents page

Section number	Title	Page number
1	Introduction	3
2	Purpose	4
3	Scope and Definitions	4
4	Roles and Responsibilities	4
5	Reporting Repairs & Finding Your Silence	4-7
6	Priority Levels	7
7	Remedial Actions	7
8	Standard Repair works	8
9	Specialist Repair Works	8
10	Advice and Support	8
11	Sub-Contractors	8-9
12	Performance and Contract Management	9
13	Decant Procedure	9
14	Repairs Trends	9
15	Void Properties	9
16	No Access	10
17	Assurance	10
18	Link to other policies and procedures	10
19	DM&C Priority Rating and Process Flowchart	11
20	Appendix 1: Diagnostic Survey Report	Appendix 1
21	Appendix 2: Damp mould and condensation advice leaflet	Appendix 2



1.0 Introduction

At the time of policy approval, NS owns and manages circa 4,000 tenanted properties. This document contains details of North Stars approach and procedures which must be complied with by North Star staff and any contractors employed in respect to the identification and rectification of damp, mould and condensation (DM&C) within our properties.

This policy aligns with recommendations and requirements from the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman's spotlight report on Damp and Mould in October 2021, directing Social Housing Landlords as to the expectations in the management of dampness and mould in tenanted properties.

We are committed to ensuring the safety of our tenants, staff and others who may be affected by DM&C in homes that we own or manage. We will also ensure that the organisation's assets are protected and homes are fit for human habitation.

This policy explains how North Star's effective management of DM&C will be met. Whilst North Star has specific obligations, our tenants are responsible for allowing access to carry out any surveys or to undertake remedial works required. Tenants are expected to report any concerns within their homes so these can be rectified accordingly. However, North Star will now take a more proactive approach to identifying properties with DM&C issues by effective use of repairs, stock and associated data.

The policy is supported by the DM&C Action Plan which provides detailed activity points relating to the Ombudsman's specific recommendations.

This policy provides a clear framework to ensure that all North Star staff and customers are aware, understand and are equipped with information to deliver the requirements in respect of issues relating to DM&C. It will also ensure that we can obtain access to carry out surveys or relevant repairs. This is also in line with our current tenancy agreement.

It is North Star's responsibility to ensure that dwellings are free from issues of DM&C. North Star will not use customer behaviour or lifestyle as a basis for failing to address DM&C and will deal with each case on its individual merits depending on the circumstances encountered for empathetic resolution of all matters.

All individuals visiting tenants homes on the instruction of North Star have a responsibility to report any issues of DM&C to the Property Services team so these issues can be resolved.

North Star will take a holistic approach to addressing DM&C issues within tenants homes and as a minimum will ensure all properties will be fitted with;

- a heating source in each habitable room
- windows which can open in each habitable room
- extractor fans to both the kitchen and bathroom
- loft insulation of 300mm minimum thickness and insulated wall cavities where loft and cavities are present
- double or secondary glazing to all windows



Any home which is identified as failing to meet the above standard will receive work within 20 working days to bring the property up to a satisfactory level.

2.0 Purpose

The objective of this policy is to ensure our customers live in a safe and comfortable environment. It details how North Star will meet the required statutory, contractual and regulatory requirements indicated below, where serious dampness poses a problem for tenants and the building itself.

It will also cover how the SMT, H&S Committee and Board will receive assurance that this area is effectively managed;

- Section 11 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation Act) 2018
- Section 4 Defective Premises Act 1972
- Incumbent Awabbs Law
- Safety and Quality Standard (Consumer standard)

3.0 Scope

The scope of this policy includes all properties which are managed or owned by North Star and the various elements of DM&C that may affect the home including, but not limited to, condensation, rising/bridging dampness, penetrating dampness and mechanical/property defects.

3.1 Definitions

Dampness within a property can be defined as the presence of unwanted moisture that can affect the integrity of the building, the living standards of the occupants, the contents and objects that exist within the property and is the result of an intrusion of water from outside, water rising up from below, condensation or mechanical/property defects to the structure or a variable mixture of all types of these.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Director of Assets and Growth is responsible for ensuring that this policy is updated and is being complied with. The Head of Property and Compliance, Property Repairs Manager and Asset Manager are delegated responsibility to ensure that the Policy and Procedures are understood and embedded within operational delivery for works under their areas of control and that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and adequately trained to carry them out. All employees are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Policy and Procedures are followed
- Reporting any concerns relating to the presence of DM&C within our properties so this can be acted upon appropriately
- Reporting any issues that may be contributing to DM&C in our properties so that corrective or support measures can be implemented to assist improved conditions

5.0 Reporting Repairs & Finding Your Silence



North Star adopts a zero tolerance approach to managing instances of DM&C and appropriate interventions.

Customers can report repairs of this nature via telephone, email, face to face, social media, or the specific DM&C area of the North Star website. The existing website content is also undergoing improvement to make it easier for tenants to raise any concerns and the improvements will look at the introduction of a customer portal or app.

The Customer Services Team work from a specially designated script when taking reports of DM&C to ensure they are actioned appropriately. To track all instances, each report of DM&C is pre-fixed with 'DMC' and this also assists with upstream reporting of all cases.

Mould

Upon receipt of a report of Mould, the Customer Services team or Surveyor will log the details on HMS Endeavour (Housing Management System)

A job or inspection will be raised for either a contractor, or Property Services Surveyor to attend the address and complete the relevant works/survey.

Upon receipt of the report, the Property Services Surveyor will assess any previous reports of the same issue. If no previous reports are recorded, a works order will be raised in HMS Endeavour for an operative to attend, wipe down, treat and decorate the affected area utilising stain block.

This work will be carried out as a 20 day (Minor DMC) appointment.

If previous history of a similar matter exists or where stain blocking has previously been completed an inspection shall be raised for a Property Services Surveyor to attend and assess further.

Inspections will be prioritised within 10 working day period, aligning with the Repairs Policy. These surveys will be carried out by our Property Surveyors.

Any repairs required following inspection will be raised on HMS Endeavour and prioritised in line with the Repairs Policy.

If condensation or 'cold spots' is suspected as the cause all or a selection of the following will be introduced to the property;

- Top up the loft insulation to 300mm and ensure it is evenly laid throughout the loft space
- Install modern high performance constant trickle and boost fan (if not present)
- Ensure that radiator sizes are appropriate for the size of each room
- Complete stain blocking to any affected rooms
- Signpost to the Welfare Benefits team to support any tenants with concerns with the cost of sufficiently heating their home
- Jobs will be raised with a maximum of a 20 working days priority. (for minor DMC)
- If the above measures have been taken and the issue remains, a Positive Input Ventilation (PIV – a whole house ventilation system) unit may be fitted to support the ventilation within the property.
- The potential extract and refill of cavity insulation



- Installation of additional ventilation within the affected rooms
- Cladding of the external or internal fabric of the dwelling with an insulation measure.

Damp

Upon receipt of a report of Damp, the Customer services team will raise a works order for a Property Surveyor to inspect the property to assess the potential causes and raise any relevant works and surveys required.

Where deemed necessary by the property Surveyor, a survey will be raised for a specialist contractor to attend the property with a clear scope of which areas to focus on.

The surveys are designed to identify the cause of the DM&C and aim to remedy any issues by undertaking the relevant works associated with the findings.

Readings shall be taken using a Protimeter throughout the ground floor to highlight any potential issues and used to inform the contractor of issues present.

Surveys will be completed by the contractor within a routine appointment and follow on works (if specialist damp works) within a planned work category of 40 days. The contractor will provide a copy of the survey completed to Property Compliance to upload.

Leaks/mechanical defects

Where leaks/mechanical defects are reported, the relevant works will be raised by Customer Services Team or Property Surveyor. If deemed appropriate, an inspection job may also be raised for the surveyor to attend the property and inspect for damage or the need for any drying out mechanisms e.g. dehumidifier etc.

5.1 Finding Your Silence

It is clear that some tenants, for a number of reasons, choose not to engage with North Star and are reluctant to report repairs. This poses a potential risk of us being unaware of inappropriate living conditions and it is important the we 'find this silence'.

Relying on one method and one-off exercises to 'finding the silence' is a risk and North Star use a number of methods to effectively manage this area.

Compliance obligations means we visit the majority of the stock on an annual basis and any areas of concern are raised at this point. In addition, we also;

- Have a refreshed website with an area specific to DM&C including a translator tool and pictures to make reporting issues much easier
- Use specific leaflets and information in multi-lingual format to encourage the reporting of issues
- Carry out tenant engagement events in communities less likely to report issues
- Have social media campaigns



- Have our Day to Day repairs contractors report any areas of concern to allow us to intervene
- Have reduced the frequency and increased the volume of stock condition surveys (5 yearly program)
- Provide information at the time of tenancy sign up
- Carry out a follow up call to each tenant following DM&C work, 3 months after completion to ensure that the work undertaken has been successful
- Every Visit counts implemented to capture site visits to properties,

We have also developed a specific suite of reporting metrics so that we remove the onus from the tenant in making us aware of issues. This reporting takes a holistic view of the stock using repair/stock data together with experienced staff knowledge of housing areas and results in a 'heat map' of areas of concern for planned intervention measures. This moves us from a reactive to proactive approach.

This wide ranging scope of information gathering ensures we have an overview of property condition but continue to evolve processes to ensure each issue can be captured and acted upon. Where high levels of repairs of DMC is reported, we will consider an alternative approach.

6.0 Priority Levels

Aligned with the move from a reactive to a proactive approach, it is important to respond appropriately when cases of high priority for intervention are identified. For this reason, a priority rating system has been specifically developed and will assist in classifying each cases priority. The following factors should be considered;

- How many and which rooms are affected
- Is it widespread or limited
- The demographic and health condition (including respiratory and immune suppressant issues) of those living at the property and

7.0 Remedial Actions

There are a number of actions that can arise following an initial DM&C survey including:

- Damp proofing works/ major works required
- Repairs to be raised, including upgrade of ventilation
- Advice and support to be offered to customers

8.0 Standard Repair Works

Any standard repair works that have been identified on the DM&C survey will be completed by the repairs contractor but may also be passed to alternative external contractors depending on capacity. This needs prior approval from the Property and Repairs Manager. This will ensure the level of work required is achievable and be completed to meet the needs of our customers.

All repair work highlighted will be planned using the categories stipulated in the Repairs Policy.

9.0 Specialist repair works



Works may be classified as 'Major' when they are extensive in nature and are likely to include specialist treatments i.e. damp proofing.

Major works will be assigned to an approved contractor via HMS Endeavour. All works of this nature receive a follow up phone call, 3 months after completion.

The relevant surveyor for the Property Services administrator is responsible for the follow up calls, tracking and reporting.

All major works will be placed on a 40 day planned priority, all works will be monitored during site activity and will be subject to a post inspection upon completion, by the relevant Property Services Surveyor.

All works undertaken and specifically any specialist works associated to the remedial treatment of structural dampness will use a recognised treatment and material specification in line with the British Standards Institute and Building Research Establishment codes of practice

10.0 Advice and Support

On occasion, it may be identified that factors not directly attributable to the property, contribute to DM&C issues e.g. lack of sufficient temperatures being maintained in the home. These cases will be assessed on their individual circumstances to determine if support measures e.g. further guidance, sign posting to assistance agencies or financial assistance may remedy the root cause.

A referral to the relevant housing officer or welfare team may also be considered as a way of offering maximum support to tenants.

11.0 Subcontractors

All contractors undertaking work on behalf of North Star are appointed via the relevant procurement processes

Contractors must be qualified to undertake this specialist work and hold appropriate accreditation. They must also notify us of any new or staff changes prior to work commencing so that their competencies can be checked. The Property and Repairs Manager will ensure regular meetings take place with the contractor, with regards to performance and resource for the DM&C works programme.

An annual assessment of all contractor competencies or the introduction of new staff into their teams will be undertaken by the Property and Repairs Manager/ Procurement to ensure ongoing competence and delivery to specification and required quality standards

12.0 Performance and Contract Management

The Property and Repairs Manager will monitor the performance of the DM&C works to ensure they are completed within specified timescales and to the expected quality standards together with associated customer satisfaction levels.



13.0 Decant Procedure

Customers requiring a decant/alternative accommodation will be assessed on the individual circumstances and the level of work and disruption required, vulnerability, special needs or health conditions such as respiratory problems. This is most likely to occur in situations where kitchen/bathroom removal is required and would require the provision of temporary supplies or severely hamper tenants' access to essential services.

In instances where alternative accommodation is required, the Property Services Team will work closely with the Housing Team. Property Services will provide a minimum of 2 weeks' notice to the Housing Team to ensure accommodation can be available within a timely manner. Property Services are responsible for providing a full scope of the works including timescales for completion.

The Property Services team will work closely with the tenant, keeping them informed and assist in the removal and storage of their belongings as required.

14.0 Repairs Trends

Effective identification of property areas (clusters) or archetypes which appear more prevalent to issues of DM&C will be undertaken. This will allow a 'heat map' of higher risk properties to be produced to implement a proactive programme of works to deal with these properties. The Head of Property and Compliance, Property and Repairs Manager will liaise regularly with the Asset Manager and they will collectively analyse data from repairs trends and stock condition surveys to formulate the addresses for targeted investment.

15.0 Void Properties

When any property becomes void they will be subject to a recognised survey for DM&C by an accredited and competent person. The survey information will be supported by a desk top study of the repairs history and reference to the 'heat map' of higher priority properties for damp work interventions.

No void property will be let without a survey by the Property Services Surveyor having been undertaken and any major works required to rectify the DM&C condition will be completed prior to the new tenancy commencing.

16.0 No Access

Where the Property Services Surveyor visits a property or contractor but access is not gained, a no access call card shall be left at the property. The card will indicate the reason for the visit and a contact number for the customer to call to make an alternative appointment.

Where possible, photographic evidence is collated for every no access visit.

Taking a zero approach to DM&C means we must now ensure access for all cases. The circumstances of each individual case will be considered on its merits by the relevant area Property and Housing teams to decide if a case for breach of tenancy is presented to the Executive Director of Assets and Growth. The Executive Director will then either approve or decline escalation measures at their discretion with the decision recorded on Open Housing for record.



purposes. Depending on this decision, the case will either be escalated through formal no access protocols or closed for no further action

17.0 Assurance

Data for DM&C is abstracted from core systems into a bespoke reporting dashboard. The KPI's on this dashboard details performance and is presented to SMT, Health & Safety Committee on a monthly basis and Board on a quarterly basis for assurance that this area is effectively managed or appropriate challenge as deemed necessary

18.0 Link to other policies and procedures

- Repairs Policy
- Disrepair Procedure
- Disrepair Process flow



