

No.	Recommendation / question	Self-assessment response
Chapter 1: From reactive to proactive		
R1	Landlords should adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould interventions. Landlords should review their current strategy and consider whether their approach will achieve this.	Cambridge City Council have made changes to their strategy to incorporate a zero-tolerance approach to damp, condensation and mould (DCM) interventions. We have reduced response time to repair requests damp, condensation and mould. We have also made the response process more efficient by sending surveyors to check the problem at the initial appointment.
R2	Landlords should consider whether they require an overall framework, or policy, to address damp and mould which would cover each area where the landlord may be required to act. This would include any proactive interventions, its approach to diagnosis, actions it considers appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication and aftercare.	<p>Our Damp, Condensation and Mould policy outlines our responsibilities as local authorities. We also have a clear process and flowchart on how to respond to damp, condensation and mould requests. In addition, we have developed a proactive approach to identify council stock that is at risk of mould by collecting data from previous repair requests and analyse that data to identify areas and neighbourhoods with damp, condensation and mould issues. Once identified, these properties will be contacted via post to be encouraged to contact us for advice, support and repair as needed.</p> <p>Our repair programmes, depending on the urgency and severity of the damp, condensation and mould, can include external wall insulation Programmes, net zero pilot project and energy work programme. We also can use our repairs budget for extractor fans and other related repairs.</p> <p>Our communication and aftercare include updating tenants regularly of actions taken, encouraging them to contact us if the issue is not resolved and a follow up contact by our team two months following the repair to ensure that the damp, condensation and mould has been addressed.</p>
R3	Landlords should review the accessibility and use of their systems for reporting repairs and	This can be made through our customer service centre, tenant portal or by the

<p>making complaints to 'find their silence'.</p>	<p>dedicated email address by tenants. Our staff, contractors and Councillors can also report on a tenant's behalf through the dedicated email address or via our Cause for Concern cards that are supplied to staff and contractors. The email inbox and the cards are viewed each working day.</p>
<p>R4 Landlords should identify opportunities for extending the scope of their diagnosis within buildings, for example by examining neighbouring properties, to ensure the response early on is as effective as possible.</p>	<p>All reports are logged, details of inspections, surveys, repairs, interventions, and follow up on the cases are recorded.</p> <p>We have trained housing officers, repairs staff, surveyors and contractors that are regularly visiting tenants' homes to inspect and identify properties where there is a DCM concern. These concerns are reported back to the team that is dedicated to dealing with this area of work.</p> <p>We have engaged with health colleagues at a Housing and Health Summit and promoted to them routes of communicating problems to us.</p>
<p>R5 Landlords should implement a data driven, risk-based approach with respect to damp and mould. This will reduce over reliance on residents to report issues, help landlords identify hidden issues and support landlords to anticipate and prioritise interventions before a complaint or disrepair claim is made.</p>	<p>We have identified sources of data that will help us to implement a risk-based approach with respect to DCM.</p> <p>Some of the sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenancy Audits - Stock Condition Survey - Repair inspections - Planned works programme - EPC Surveys, - Complaints system - Property type, solid wall, non-traditional. - Value engineer new products. - Tenant education on prevention. - Upskill Housing Officers (checks to be carried out at tenancy audit) <p>We have analysed the data on DCM cases and we have been able to identify areas that</p>

	<p>is at risk of DCM. We are sending letters to our tenants in these areas requesting they contact us if they are experiencing DCM or have concerns about it.</p>
<p>R6 Where properties are identified for future disposal or are within an area marked for regeneration, landlords should proactively satisfy themselves that residents do not receive a poorer standard of service or lower living conditions, that steps are taken to avoid homes degrading to an unacceptable condition and that they regularly engage and communicate with these residents.</p>	<p>In our new build programme, we have identified some existing properties for redevelopment that are less energy efficient and harder to maintain. Planned work that is still required to support tenants in these properties whilst this regeneration is taking place is being assessed and programmed where agreed.</p> <p>Reactive repairs are delivered in these properties to the same service standards we apply to the rest of our tenanted stock.</p>
<p>R7 Landlords should avoid taking actions that solely place the onus on the resident. They should evaluate what mitigations they can put in place to support residents in cases where structural interventions are not appropriate and satisfy themselves they are taking all reasonable steps.</p>	<p>If the outcome of the inspection shows that condensation and surface mould is causing the problem, we will liaise with the tenant and evaluate what mitigations we can put in place to support them. This can include additional ventilation and insulation or balancing and checking their heating system is working efficiently. It may also include support and advice to tenants with regards to heating and ventilating their home. In some cases, we may install monitoring sensors to obtain data on humidity and heating levels over a period of time.</p> <p>Our support approach will be personalised to the individual needs of our tenants. If fuel poverty is identified as a factor, then we will offer support through Tenancy Support Officers and Financial Inclusion Support Officers. We will also look into contributing factors such as the need for mental health & wellbeing support or hoarding advice and work with our tenants and signpost them</p>

accordingly. We are also carrying out mould washes at properties where mould problems have been identified.

R8 Together with residents, landlords should review the information, materials and support provided to residents to ensure that these strike the right tone and are effective in helping residents to avoid damp and mould in their properties.

We have developed different sources of information for tenants about how to identify condensation and mould problems with their property and what they can do to deal with the problem. We regularly include articles within the Tenants Magazine, 'Open Door' and on our social media pages.

Cambridge City Council encourages its staff to take reports about damp, condensation and mould seriously and to look beyond lifestyle factors.

We have also identified our responsibilities and procedure as a council in our Damp, Condensation and Mould policy to ensure that we strike the right tone in supporting our clients.

We are looking to develop trust with our tenants by developing our existing relationships with tenants' advocates, residents and leaseholders representatives, councillors and community groups to deliver the information related to damp, condensation and mould. We believe by developing these relationships, we can build a positive relationship with our tenants and gain their trust so they are willing to approach us when problems arise. We are also looking into investing in some simple videos as an easy and approachable method to reach our tenants. These would be made available through our websites and social media channels.

<p>R9 Landlords should be more transparent with residents involved in mutual exchanges and make the most of every opportunity to identify and address damp and mould, including visits and void periods.</p>	<p>When a property becomes vacant, as part of the void checklist, we will look for signs and causes of damp, condensation and mould. An assessment of the ventilation such as air bricks and extractors will be carried out and any necessary work will be undertaken.</p> <p>The same applies to mutual exchange properties. Initially, we count on the tenants reporting any problem and we check the property repair history to identify any recurrent DCM issues. If issues are not reported, we still pick it up during our mutual exchange inspection and treat and rectify accordingly. The inspection reports are shared with residents involved in mutual exchange for transparency.</p>
<p>R10 Landlords should ensure their strategy for delivering net zero carbon homes considers and plans for how they can identify and respond to potential unintended consequences around damp and mould.</p>	<p>CCC complies with PAS 2035 standards. When delivering net zero carbon homes, our trained consultants conduct detailed retrofit assessments/condition surveys. Before retrofitting our council properties, we assess ventilation, humidity level, CO2 level to check the risk of condensation and damp in the property as insulation increases the risk. We also communicate to the tenants the importance of reporting any issues they have had with damp, condensation and mould in the past. We rectify any issues before retrofitting the property.</p> <p>Yearly, we conduct insulation work such as external wall insulation, replacing windows and doors. From this year onwards, these works also comply with PAS 2035 standards and aim to increase energy performance certificates (EPC) ratings to minimum of C. In our aim to achieve Netzero carbon, we use EnerPhit design principles.</p>

Under Decent Homes Act, we replace windows and doors, insulate walls in number of our rented properties yearly.

Q1 Do we have a proactive, zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould and a comprehensive, consolidated policy or framework for responding to these cases? Are we considering damp and mould as part of our net zero strategy?

Our net zero strategy adopts a monitoring system to ensure that previous problems are not coming back or being exacerbated by retrofitting. Our consultants will monitor the retrofitted properties for a minimum of 3 weeks during the winter heating season. About 10% of the retrofitted properties, as a sample, are monitored for three months or that period could be extended depending on the tenants' wishes and emerging reports about damp, condensation and mould.

We evaluate the condition of the properties by sending questionnaires to tenants after the first winter following the retrofitting to check for any issues related to damp, condensation and mould and to check if they are utilising the ventilation system.

The other evaluation method is to check the ventilation system and install monitoring equipment such as CO2, humidity and temperature sensors. We have our in-house equipment to conduct further investigation when needed.

Chapter 2: From inferring blame to taking responsibility

R11 Landlords should review, alongside residents, their initial response to reports of damp and mould to ensure they avoid automatically apportioning blame or using language that leaves residents feeling blamed.

We are working along our Tenant and Leaseholder representatives to develop our policy and response to complaints on damp, condensation and mould. In the last few months, we have upskilled our staff by enrolling them in courses about damp, condensation and mould and learning from complaints. Our senior management are fully supportive of the changes in strategy and the importance of supporting tenants affected by damp, condensation and mould.

	<p>In addition, our new policy takes into consideration other factors that might contribute to damp, condensation and mould such as poverty, mental health conditions and lack of engagement. From identifying contributing factors, we can then create a support system around our tenants and a culture of understanding and empathy.</p>
<p>R12 Landlords should consider their current approach to record keeping and satisfy themselves it is sufficiently accurate and robust. We would encourage landlords to go further and consider whether their record keeping systems and processes support a risk-based approach to damp and mould.</p>	<p>We have updated our complaints system to include damp category to obtain accurate and robust data. Utilising pivot tables in Excel, we have also been able to identify areas which are most at risk of damp, condensation and mould.</p> <p>Furthermore, our new flowchart identifies the process of dealing with issues related to damp, condensation and mould and utilises risk-based approach by taking contributing factors into consideration.</p> <p>We are looking into adding a category under our repair management system Orchard.</p>
<p>R13 Landlords should ensure that their responses to reports of damp and mould are timely and reflect the urgency of the issue.</p>	<p>Our new policy and flowchart outline the response time that corresponds to urgency of the issue. We contact the tenants within two working days to arrange our surveyor's visit.</p> <p>The surveyor will evaluate if the case should be considered routine, urgent or an emergency using their risk assessment and findings on inspection.</p> <p>Routine and urgent cases are addressed within our normal agreed timescales for repairs (routine, 28 working days, urgent 3 working days).</p> <p>In emergency cases, the property will usually be considered inhabitable. As a result, we will move the household into temporary accommodation to protect the tenants and to carry out the necessary work before the household moves back.</p>

<p>R14 Landlords should review the number of missed appointments in relation to damp and mould cases and, depending on the outcome of any review, consider what steps may be required to reduce them.</p>	<p>Our Tenant Liaison Officer is following up with our tenants who reported issues related to damp and mould. We will explore ways of reporting and reviewing missed appointments through our repair management system in the future.</p>
<p>R15 Landlords should ensure that their staff, whether in-house or contractors, have the ability to identify and report early signs of damp and mould.</p>	<p>We have trained housing officers, repairs staff, surveyors and contractors that are regularly visiting tenants' homes to inspect and identify properties where there is a concern. These concerns are reported back to the team that is dedicated to dealing with this area of work daily</p> <p>Under our Tenancy Audits programme, we are also looking for any signs for damp and mould and report accordingly.</p>
<p>R16 Landlords should take steps to identify and resolve any skills gaps they may have, ensuring their staff and contractors have appropriate expertise to properly diagnose and respond to reports of damp and mould.</p>	<p>Monthly one-to-one's and performance reviews focus on identifying skills gaps among our staff and suggesting training accordingly to resolve these gaps. All our surveyors involved in this work are trained to diagnose, respond and refer reports related to damp, condensation and mould.</p>
<p>R17 Landlords should ensure that they clearly and regularly communicate with their residents regarding actions taken or otherwise to resolve reports of damp and mould. Landlords should review and update any associated processes and policies accordingly.</p>	<p>We have changed strategy/process and developed DCM policy. We report regularly to Housing Scrutiny Committee where the elected residents sit on the committee</p> <p>We have also identified that the Damp, Condensation and Mould policy will need to go back to committee if new legislation or updated standards are released</p> <p>Our Tenant Liaison Officer communicates regularly with tenants affected by damp, condensation and mould to update them of actions taken. We have set up a follow up process: all our tenants who reported damp, condensation and mould issues, are being contacted two months following the completion of the repair to ensure that there are no further issues.</p>

	<p>Another action we have taken is circulating leaflets to our tenants about preventing damp, condensation and mould which also included contact information for repairs. This leaflet has been also added to our Tenant Sign-up pack which is handed out to our new tenants.</p> <p>Currently, we are looking to work more closely with community groups and organisation to deliver our information to as many tenants as possible.</p> <p>We have identified through our complaints analysis STAR survey results and preparation for the regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards that improvement generally needs to be made on communication with tenants and this is something that is being explored.</p>
<p>R18 Landlords must ensure there is effective internal communication between their teams and departments, and ensure that one individual or team has overall responsibility for ensuring complaints or reports are resolved, including follow up or aftercare.</p>	<p>We have strengthened communication channels among Customer Services, Housing and Estates and Facilities to ensure that we respond within our timeline target and to anticipate support needs for our tenants with DCM issues. Our Concern cards can be used by any of our staff to report any concerns that could increase the risk of damp, condensation and mould.</p> <p>Our damp, condensation and mould procedure ensures that we respond within the agreed timeframe and resolve the issue depending on the urgency of the problem.</p> <p>Our dedicated team which includes our Tenant Liaison Officer supervises the aftercare process by maintaining records of repairs related to damp, condensation and mould and follow up with our tenants within two months period. This ensures that if a problem related to damp, condensation and mould is not resolved, we can identify it early on and fix it as soon as possible.</p>
<p>R19 Landlords should ensure that their complaints policy is effective and in line with the Complaint Handling Code, with clear compensation and redress guidance. Remedies should be</p>	<p>Each year the Council carries out a self-assessment against the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure that our complaint handling remains in line with its requirements. This is accessible to the public.</p>

commensurate to the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident, whilst recognising that each case is individual and should be considered on its own merits.

All cases are logged into the Council's central case management system CaseTracker.

When a case is entered into the Council complaints system, the case will be allocated to a service manager in the area/department related to the complaint, the complainant will also receive an automatic response informing them that we aim to respond to all complaints within 10 working days.

There are 2 stages to the Council's complaints procedure internally, and complainants also have the right for their case to be reviewed externally by either the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or the Housing Ombudsman.

After the case is resolved, the Council can reopen for further investigation if new information about the initial issue comes to light. The Council will only reopen a complaint from less than 12 months from the date it was raised.

The housing services has a complaints handling procedure that explains the approach to remedies and redress. The housing Ombudsman remedies guidance is referred to when considering this also.

Q2 How effective and timely are we at responding to and resolving reports and complaints concerning damp and mould? How do we know we are providing meaningful information and support to our residents?

We are responding to damp and mould reports within two working days to book a surveyor to check the property. Once the survey is completed, we are fulfilling our duties within the agreed timeframe for emergency, urgent and routine repairs.

We are analysing the feedback through the follow up calls to assess if the information and support provided to tenants has been successful.

Chapter 3: From disrepair claims to resolution

R20 Landlords need to ensure they can identify complex cases at an early stage, and have a strategy Our housing officers, repairs team and surveyors working on related issues are all trained to identify complex cases at an early

<p>for keeping residents informed and effective resolution.</p>	<p>stage and support and signpost tenants as appropriate. We are also encouraging our tenants to register for our online portal which will allow them to keep track of any requests they made.</p> <p>We have developed information for tenants about how to identify condensation and mould problems with their property and what they can do to deal with the problem. We regularly include articles within the Tenants Magazine, 'Open Door'.</p>
<p>R21 Landlords should identify where an independent, mutually agreed and suitably qualified surveyor should be used, share the outcomes of all surveys and inspections with residents to help them understand the findings and be clear on next steps. Landlords should then act on accepted survey recommendations in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Once our surveyor attends, if required, we will instruct an independent damp specialist to survey the property, provide a report and act upon their recommendations. The surveys are shared with tenants if requested but the tenants will be kept updated on any course of action.</p>
<p>R22 Where extensive works may be required, landlords should consider the individual circumstances of the household, including any vulnerabilities, and whether or not it is appropriate to move resident(s) out of their home at an early stage.</p>	<p>In our assessment of damp and mould reports, we check for any support needs or vulnerabilities. If a member in the household have medical problems, which may be exacerbated by damp, condensation and mould, officers in the Housing Advice Service will be available to advise tenants on the type of medical evidence required. We will ensure that our independent GP who completes the medical assessment not only has access to any medical evidence but also has sight of the surveyor's report and other relevant surveys.</p> <p>Based on the GP's report and the extent of damp, condensation and mould in the house, we consider moving the tenants to a suitable accommodation.</p>

	<p>Our new Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy is compatible with our Disrepair procedure, Voids Policy and Decant Policy so we would take similar actions as with any other urgent repair if appropriate.</p>
<p>R23 Landlords should promote the benefits of their complaints process and the Ombudsman to their residents as an appropriate and effective route to resolving disputes.</p>	<p>We advise our tenants to make a formal complaint if they are not happy with the solution or if they prefer that someone else works on their case. Information on how to make a complaint is shared on our website and our Tenant Sign-up pack.</p> <p>There are various ways to contact the council, but regardless of how a complaint is received, all cases will be logged into the Council's central case management system. If a complainant contacts the Council by phone, email or in person, staff members can assist with recording a complaint. The Council would prefer complainants to complete the form themselves so that they can provide their complaint in their own words with as much detail as possible. Where a customer is unable to complete the complaints for themselves, Council staff should assist complainants to record their case.</p>
<p>R24 Landlords should continue to use the complaints procedure when the pre-action protocol has commenced and until legal proceedings have been issued to maximise the opportunities to resolve disputes outside of court. Landlords should ensure their approach is consistent with our jurisdiction guidance and their legal and complaint teams work together effectively where an issue is being pursued through the complaints process and protocol.</p>	<p>The Council has written a disrepair protocol that fully acknowledges the requirements of the pre-action protocol.</p> <p>All reported repairs are completed in our usual timeframes and to the same standard regardless if a letter of claim has been issued under the pre-action protocol.</p> <p>The tenants right to complain is not affected by the tenant's instruction of a letter of claim.</p>
<p>Q3 How do we identify and manage complex cases, complex situations and/or those involving</p>	<p>A robust process for dealing with disrepair claims and a disrepair protocol has been</p>

legal disrepair claims? Are we promoting our complaints processes enough and does our approach allow the complaints process to continue alongside pre-action claims?

developed which acknowledge and allows for the complaints process to run alongside this.

All open disrepair claims are marked with a UDC on the repairs system, this enables the customer service centre and repairs team to notify the person who manages the disrepair claims with the legal team.

Chapter 4: From a complaints to a learning culture

R25 Landlords should consider how best to share learning from complaints and the positive impact of changes made as a result within the organisation and externally. Systems should allow the landlord to analyse their complaints data effectively and identify themes, trends and learning opportunities.

We use Case Tracker application to track the progress of complaints against deadlines. On Case Tracker, we have a category dedicated to damp.

Our Housing Policy and Performance team analyse our complaints data quarterly and identify targets met, themes and trends. Every quarterly report is examined in comparison to the previous one to produce a clear image of changes in trends and themes so we can identify problems early on. Based on these reports, recommendations are passed to Housing teams to improve performance and update policies. For example, in the past, our reports showed an increase in complaints against our contractor for their slow response in repairing heating system. Accordingly, we have made the recommendation and we have worked on an improvement plan with the contractor.

R26 Landlords should ensure they treat residents reporting damp and mould with respect and empathy. The distress and inconvenience experienced by residents in this area is some of the most profound we have seen, and this needs to be reflected in the tone and approach of the complaint handling.

At Cambridge City Council, we understand that damp, condensation and mould is a serious issue which could affect tenants badly. We encourage and direct our staff to respond to our tenants' complaints in a professional and empathetic way. If there is evidence or tenants report that this is not the case, then this would be investigated and addressed through performance management and in line with the Council's competency framework.

All members of staff that deal with complaints have on-going training in dealing and responding to complaints.

Q4 What is our organisational culture with respect to learning? Are we making the most of our complaint data and case studies to learn and improve?

Cambridge City Council encourages learning, secondments and internships for staff and supports their efforts to do so. The annual performance review process defines training as an essential part of employees' progress.

Training for staff is fully paid by CCC and the online learning platform is available for staff to do training whenever needed.

