

# Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy (DCM)

## 1. Introduction

Cambridge City Council adopts a zero-tolerance approach to damp, condensation and mould interventions. This policy sets the framework of activities and responsibilities in response to damp, condensation and mould reports and complaints.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1. The overall purpose of this policy is to promote the health and wellbeing of Cambridge City Council tenants by effectively and efficiently managing issues related to damp, condensation and mould and maintaining dry homes with healthy internal environment.
- 2.2. This policy aims to raise awareness of legislation related to damp, condensation and mould and ensure the council's compliance with these legal requirements. This includes providing practical advice and information to tenants on how to control damp, condensation and mould.
- 2.3. This policy aims to protect the fabric of our buildings from long term damage caused by damp, condensation and mould and by improving the energy efficiency of homes to at least EPC "C"
- 2.4. The Council aims to adopt a data-led approach to reporting damp, condensation and mould by conducting effective investigation of issues of damp and carrying out effective repairs to eradicate it
- 2.5. This policy would be applied in conjunction with other Council policies and complaints procedures

## 3. Definitions:

- **Damp:** an excess of moisture that can't escape from a structure, which can also go on to cause significant damage to the building. There are three/four main causes of dampness in homes, which each require different solutions:

- **Rising damp:** water that rises through fabric and brick walls of a building after being absorbed from the surrounding ground.
  - **Penetrating damp:** water penetrates the fabric of the building from the outside to the inside, for example, because of a leak.
  - **Condensation:** occurs when warm, moist air touches a cooler surface such as tiles, windows or walls. If left for a long period of time, it can cause damp and/or mould.
- **Mould:** is a type of fungus. It spreads through spores, which are invisible to the naked eye but are in the air around us all of the time and can quickly grow on surfaces where dampness persists, or water has formed into a visible covering.

#### 4. Scope:

Cambridge City Council housing stock for tenants and the structure of buildings that may contain leaseholders.

#### 5. Legislation and Regulations

This Policy and its delivery are also intended to be compatible with the following legislation:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 & 1996
- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- The Homes (fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Right to Repair Regulations 1994
- Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims (England)
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System BS7671 - Requirements for electrical installations 2008 (17th Edition)
- Decent Homes Standard
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994

## 6. Related policies and procedures

This Policy and its delivery are intended to be compatible with the following Council policies and documents:

- Disrepair procedure
- Voids Policy
- Mutual Exchange
- Complaints Policy
- Regeneration policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Leasehold Agreement
- Tenants Sign Up pack
- Decant Policy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Resident Involvement Strategy

## 7. Education & Training

- Cambridge City Council believes in building a workforce that can respond to problems resulting from damp, condensation and mould by providing training for staff & outlining expectations from its contractors.
- Cambridge City Council believes in empowering its tenants and leaseholders by providing and circulating information on how to deal with and report mould.
- Cambridge City Council encourages its staff to take reports about damp, condensation and mould seriously and to look beyond lifestyle factors.

## 8. Our responsibilities

- It is the council's responsibility to keep tenanted and leased housing properties safe and free from health hazards. This includes issues related to damp and condensation.

- Keep the property's structure and exterior in good repair, including the brick work and pointing, roof covering, external waste pipes, damp proofing, doors and windows.
- The Council has a responsibility in maintaining the structure of the building that may contain leasehold properties, in these instances there may be a shared responsibility for both leaseholder and the Council depending on the location and cause of the problem.
- Carry out all repairs to the property in relation to the internal structure and facilities as necessary in relation to the heating, ventilation, water using appliances and plumbing.
- When possible, the council will look into more permanent solutions to solve problems related to damp, condensation and mould.
- All council staff should guide tenants and leaseholder on how to report issues related to damp, condensation and mould as and when needed
- Housing officers, repairs team and contractors working on the Council's behalf should take an active role in either encouraging tenants to report issues related to damp, condensation and mould or to complete a cause for concern card if it comes to their attention.
- The council holds the right to inspect the property for health and safety concerns. The tenant will be given 24 hours' notice, but no notice is needed if it is an emergency.
- The council will complete HHSRS hazard rating at the time that it completes the cyclical stock condition survey. The council will arrange for any necessary work to be completed if they find a Category 1 or 2 hazard.
- If a tenant expresses a wish to move as a result of damp, condensation and mould problems, we will support them to make a housing application; if members in their household have medical problems, which may be exacerbated by damp, mould or condensation, officers in the Housing Advice Service will be available to advise tenants on the type of medical evidence required. We will ensure that the independent GP who completes the medical assessment not only has access to the medical evidence but also has sight of the surveyor's report and other relevant surveys.

## 9. Tenants' Responsibilities

Damp and mould can be caused by condensation and may adversely affect your health and your home. Residents are responsible for making sure that they take appropriate steps to prevent significant amounts of condensation that results in damp or mould growth. These responsibilities include:

- to report an issue related to condensation, damp, condensation and mould either by phone, report it on the repairs page [Request a repair for your council home - Cambridge City Council](#) or by emailing: [condensation@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:condensation@cambridge.gov.uk)
- to seek advice from our council staff on how to treat condensation and surface related mould at home.
- to report reoccurring damp, condensation and mould problems if home solutions do not work
- to report the issue of damp, condensation and mould if it reoccurs after a repair that has been carried out by Cambridge City Council staff or their contractors.
- to adequately heat rooms – ideally between 18° and 21°C
- regularly check for and report any leaks, or faulty heating, windows, or extractor fans.
- extractor fans should not be covered.
- to keep the property well ventilated by keeping windows slightly open especially while cooking or bathing, ensuring that extractor fans are in working condition and vents are clean and left open.
- ensure extractor fans are not turned off in kitchen & bathroom
- ensure windows vents and wall vents are not blocked or closed.
- the Council actively encourages tenants to take out household contents insurance, tenants are responsible for arranging adequate household contents insurance, to protect their home from damage caused by damp, mould, or condensation.
- where remedial works and mould wash treatments have been undertaken by us, the resident is responsible for redecoration. It is recommended that anti-fungal paint is used. For vulnerable or disabled residents, we will consider how to assist the redecoration process on a case-by-case basis.

## 10. Process & Procedure

### 10.1 Reporting of damp, condensation and mould concerns:

A request can be made by our tenants and leaseholder using our tenant portal, customer service centre or by contacting the dedicated email address. 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 daily.

### 10.2 Logging of and management of cases:

All reports are logged. Details of inspections, surveys, repairs, interventions, and follow up on the cases are recorded. The tenant will be contacted within 2 working days of the report being made to arrange an inspection by our surveyor.

### 10.3 Inspection and diagnosis:

A surveyor will attend to make a diagnosis. They will take damp and humidity measurements, check insulation and heating, extractor fan flow and check what planned work is on our programme. Their equipment includes damp meters, extractor fan flow measurement, borescopes and thermal imaging cameras. Our in-house energy assessor might also conduct a survey.

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 and may also include support and advice to tenants with regards to heating and ventilating their home. If fuel poverty is identified as a factor, then we will offer support through Tenancy Support Officers and Financial Inclusion Support Officers. In some cases, we may install monitoring sensors to obtain data on humidity levels over a period of time.

If damp is found to be present, we will instruct a damp specialist to undertake a survey and provide a report. We will act upon the recommendation of the report, and we will carry out repair works to areas that are the responsibility of the Council.

Where this requires complex works, we will keep tenants informed of actions being taken to bring about an effective solution. Where extensive works are required, the Council may move the tenants out of their home for a period whilst these works are completed.

#### **10.4 Assessing Risk:**

The surveyor will complete a risk assessment at the time of inspection. This will include any concerns around the health and wellbeing of the occupants of the home, alongside the type and extent of any damp found.

Questions that will be considered as part of the risk assessment are:

1. Health questions:
  - a. Age of children
  - b. Existing health conditions (including mental health conditions) that may increase vulnerability
  - c. Any concerns
  
2. Types of Damp:
  - a. Condensation
  - b. Surface Mould
  - c. Rising damp
  - d. Penetrating damp
  
3. The Extent of damp:
  - a. Which rooms are affected
  - b. How many rooms are affected
  - c. Areas of mould on external walls
  - d. Is this a reoccurring issue
  - e. How long has it been going on

#### **10.5 Identify if the work is routine, urgent, or an emergency:**

The surveyor will evaluate if the case should be considered routine, urgent or an emergency using their risk assessment and findings on inspection.

Routine and urgent cases will be addressed within our normal agreed timescales for repairs (routine, 28 working days, urgent 3 working days).

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.

### **10.6 Follow up inspection:**

Telephone follow up calls will be made by our tenant liaison officer to establish if the measures put in place are having a positive effect and if there is a requirement for the surveyor to return. If this is the case, a follow up inspection will be arranged.

## **11. Performance Monitoring**

We operate within a performance management framework. The framework uses a series of measures and performance indicators to demonstrate service quality in terms of achieving 'purpose' and value for money.

We monitor our repairs performance monthly. Figures are also discussed with the contractors at their monthly performance review meetings. Progress updates are provided to the members of Housing Scrutiny Committee at each cyclical meeting

## **12. Communication with Tenants**

We regularly remind tenants how to report repairs to us. We are developing our online platform so customers can report repairs online and even, where appropriate, can schedule their own repairs. Tenants can also report repairs using traditional approaches, in person or on the telephone and through social media.

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'.



### 13. Proactive plans

We are proactively reducing the occurrence of condensation, damp, condensation and mould in our homes by taking the following measures and actions:

- The long-term formal way we identify damp, condensation and mould within the stock is through our programme of stock condition surveys, where a HHSRS assessment will take place and be recorded on our asset management system. However, as this series of surveys is undertaken as a rolling programme over a period of at least 5 years, we have put in place other avenues of proactively identifying damp, condensation and mould within the housing stock.
- 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
- Tenancy Audits are being conducted, with a target of 10% of all our stock each year. During these audits we are inspecting and acting upon identified cases of damp, condensation and mould.
- We have generated publicity on our website, social media and in our tenants' magazine 'Open Door' to encourage reporting.
- We have engaged with health colleagues at a Housing and Health Summit and promoted to them routes of communicating problems to us.
- When a property becomes empty, 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.
- We are implementing a more proactive approach to addressing damp, condensation and mould by looking at the data we hold on our asset management system and reported cases, so we inspect neighbouring properties of those on our case load or similar archetypes. We have plans in place to inspect these properties.
- We will investigate the neighbouring properties where damp, condensation and mould problems identified by posting letters requesting information. This will help us to identify structural issues in the block and tackle them promptly.

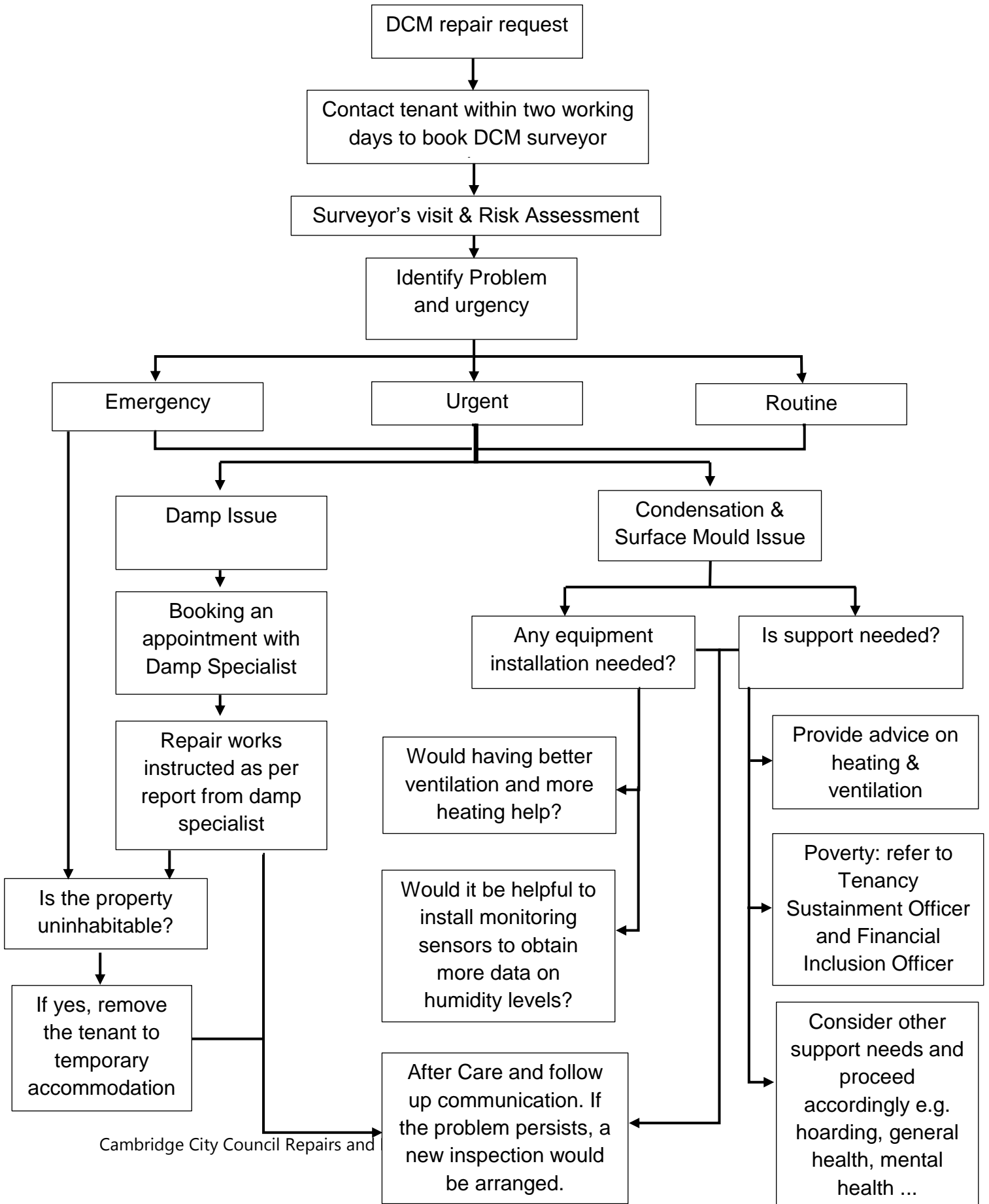
- We are investigating building blocks with damp, condensation and mould issues by collecting the data existing on our database and analysing it to identify damp, condensation and mould hotspots on the map and address them accordingly (see appendix).
- We have identified for redevelopment, as part of our new build programme, existing properties 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 has been assessed and is being programmed. Reactive repairs are delivered in these properties to the same service standards we apply to the rest of our tenanted stock.
- Quarterly analysis of any complaints received is undertaken and a review of themes and trends completed. We will use the data around this to explore learning opportunities or changes to process and procedure.
- In the Investment programme, we will target archetypes that are constructed in a way that condensation, damp, condensation and mould are prevalent. This includes, replacing inefficient heating with traditional or renewable heating, ventilation and insulation programmes.
- Investigate the possibility of providing secure drying areas in communal flat blocks to reduce the need to dry washing on radiators or inside flats.
- Review each damp, condensation and mould work case resolved after 8 weeks to see if the proposed solution has been effective.

## 14. Data collection Sources

- 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 prevention.
- Upskill Housing Officers (checks to be carried out at tenancy audit)

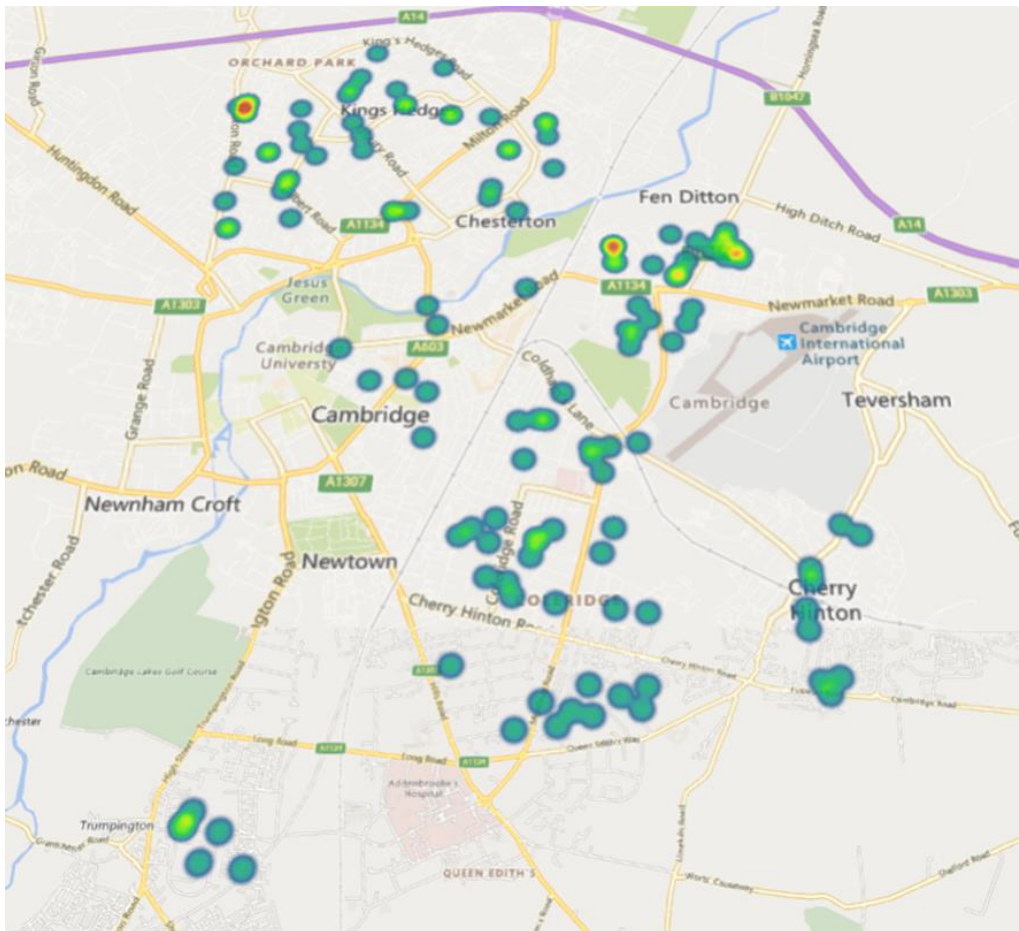


**Damp, Condensation and Mould Repair Request Flowchart:**



## Appendix:

In March 2023, we have collected data about houses with damp, condensation and mould issues. We have conducted data analysis and identified some of the hotspots in Cambridge. The orange spots identify the areas with the highest repair requests on damp, condensation and mould.



The map shows all the damp, condensation and mould hotspots in Cambridge. If we look closer, we can identify, for example, that properties around the Rodings and Brentwood close in Fen Ditton are more at risk of damp, condensation and mould. We are planning to contact tenants at these areas by sending them letters to tackle early signs of damp, condensation and mould before they become a serious risk.