



How Cadwyn Deals with Reports of Damp and Condensation

(July 2016)

Introduction and Context

The topic of damp and condensation was initially selected for review in 2014. The panel members at that time had identified it from a range of topics which were presented to them from performance data, tenant feedback and complaints. This topic was a recurring issue for Cadwyn. After discussions exploring the range of topics and their potential for review the group agreed to look at how the Association deals with reports of damp and condensation.

This initial group conducted interviews, surveys and a substantial amount of research towards the review however in early 2015 these scrutiny panel members resigned from their positions, each for their own personal reasons.

New members were recruited in 2015. These new members underwent an extensive training programme during the year.

The review was picked up again in early 2016 to give a practical application to the training the members had undertaken. Current members were also in agreement that it was an important piece of work that should be completed.

Scrutiny at Cadwyn was re-launched as Cadwyn's Service Improvement team in June 2016 and welcomed new members. These new members have since taken on the review, undertaking research of their own and reviewing the findings of the previous panel.

This report and its recommendations draws together the research and findings of all members involved in the review of damp and condensation to date.

Objective of this Review

- To understand how Cadwyn deals with reports of damp and condensation
- To enable more tenants to deal with issues relating to condensation themselves
- To reduce the impact of the issue on Cadwyn's resources and ensure it is targeted where it is needed.
- Identify sustainable and holistic approaches to managing the problem
- To improve the service Cadwyn provides.

Intended Outcomes

- Improved information for tenants on damp
- Increased tenant satisfaction
- Increased tenant capacity to deal with condensation.
- Increased staff confidence when dealing with the issue.
- More robust tracking and monitoring of damp reports to enable identification of trends, repeated calls and / or swifter resolution of (reoccurring) issues.

Summary of Findings

Examples of positive practice;

- The Neighbourhood Team provides a responsive and personal service – they carry out lots of home visits to inspect all reports of damp and condensation. This helps many tenants feel confident that Cadwyn is listening, understanding and taking appropriate action.
- Neighbourhood Officers provide free moisture traps and install the latest low-energy ventilation fans, which are good technical solutions to alleviate problems.
- The number of complaints in relation to reports from tenants is relatively low. The majority of complaints appear to be dealt with in a timely and professional manner.
- Cadwyn provides accessible information on damp to tenants via leaflet, in person and on their website.
- Cadwyn has access to free damp surveys carried out by DTD Dampproofers, which is helpful to provide confirmation of a damp problem, identification of remedial works or a second opinion, as required.
- Neighbourhood Officers ensure they are responsive to the individual needs of tenants, eg using an interpreter for tenants whose first language is not English, providing assistance for tenants with disabilities who may find it hard to do remedial work themselves.

Areas for improvement;

- There is currently no central log for reports of damp and condensation – Neighbourhood Officers deal directly with tenants, some works are logged on the Housing Management / Repairs system and some are logged for Planned Works. Therefore, it is difficult to monitor, review and evaluate trends or the effectiveness of the service provided as a whole.
- Some tenants feel that they are passed from 'pillar to post'. There is a sense of being sent back and forth in some instances between Neighbourhood Team and Repairs. Tenants simply want the problem resolved.
- Staff changes have led to less expertise in this area amongst the Neighbourhood team.
- The vast majority of reports of damp are actually condensation problems, therefore tenant responsibility. The CSI team question whether it is best use of resources or value for money to be carrying out home visits for all reports as standard procedure. However, we appreciate the value of officers visiting homes to see the problem first hand and have a conversation with tenants about the issue.
- The high proportion of condensation related issues suggest there is opportunity to do more work on informing and educating tenants on identification and resolution of the problem.
- Tenants were often frustrated at the apparently contradictory information given about keeping their home warm (heating on) whilst keeping their home ventilated (windows open).

- Tenants were often frustrated at the lack of communication from Cadwyn, keeping tenants informed as to what work is going to be carried out, when and by whom. This was especially noticeable when external contractors were involved.
- Cadwyn could be more proactive in raising awareness of condensation and how to deal with it prior to the winter months and on an ongoing basis.
- An out of date leaflet on damp and condensation (issued by the Welsh Office) is currently being handed out to tenants by reception staff.
- Cadwyn may be missing opportunities to talk more with tenants about energy usage and cost saving opportunities which may help reduce reoccurring problems in the long term.

Methodology – Our Research

Accompanied Neighbourhood Officer on a home visit

Interviewed Neighbourhood Officer and Housing Manager

Surveyed and got feedback from all other Neighbourhood Officers

Review of Cadwyn's website

Review of Cadwyn's information leaflet

Review of other HAs websites and information leaflets

Requesting information on damp from Cadwyn's reception

Discussed own experiences of service in relation to damp and condensation

Reviewed the damp reports provided to tenants by DTD Dampproofers

Analysis of damp and condensation report data

Performance Data & Complaints

Survey of tenants

Feedback from tenants

Focus Group

Review of cost implications of visits and remedial work

Review of process for tenants whose first language is not English

NB. The team were not able to fully explore whether there are specific barriers which prevented tenants generally from reporting issues to the Association. All tenants who had experienced damp were invited to participate in surveys, focus groups and requests for additional information but there was little or no response to some of these requests. However, tenants that did participate did not indicate there were any specific or widespread barriers.

Tenant Members (including previous and current members who have been involved in this review. Current members in bold).

Graham Roberts	Sheila Watt	Ceriann Goddard
Ivor Jones	Rhys Humphreys	Claude Boisard
Stephen Price	Neil Hinton	Sam Hinton
Russell MacListon	Janet Mullen	

Recommendations

- 1) Introduce a central log for all incoming damp or condensation reports (from tenants or staff) which tracks progress from initial report to resolution. Include;
 - a. Reference to any prior damp issues or if the property is in the Barrage Survey area (which may have a bearing on any problems)
 - b. Photos of affected area
 - c. Responsible officer dealing with case
 - d. Links to correspondence
 - e. Details of any follow up, resolution and customer satisfaction.
- 2) Improve communications with tenants;
 - a. Responsible person to keep tenant informed of progress of any work
 - b. Follow up with tenant to ensure problem has been resolved
- 3) During the winter months (eg between October to February) have one central point of contact for reporting damp issues;
 - a. Office-based member(s) of staff primarily responsible for taking reports
 - b. Have a dedicated option on switchboard to direct people
 - c. Promote the 'damp hotline' on website, leaflets and newsletter.
- 4) Update leaflet so that it encourages tenants to look at and identify the type of damp they may have. Include;
 - a. More pictures to illustrate what key signs are
 - b. A checklist to help tenants diagnose the problem
 - c. Advice on reducing condensation – with more information about maintaining constant temperature, using your boiler effectively and talking to Cadwyn or your energy supplier about ensuring you're getting the best deal for your energy.
 - d. Information on what to use (and not to use) to get rid of mould
 - e. What tenants need to do to report it to Cadwyn
- 5) Ensure updated leaflet is easily available for staff and tenants.

- 6) Take pre-emptive action with awareness-raising campaign in autumn – eg leaflets out with rent statements, other mailings, newsletter, on website, social media and during visits / appointments.
- 7) Increase visibility of information on damp and condensation on Cadwyn’s website over the autumn and winter.
- 8) Introduce a questionnaire / checklist for staff to go through with tenants so that there is more of a filtering process at initial reporting stage. This should encourage tenants to be more proactive about identifying and attempting to deal with the issue and reduce the number of home visits required by Neighbourhood Officers.
Include;
 - a. Ask all tenants if they can take a photo and send (via Cadwyn app or email)
 - b. Straightforward advice on getting rid of mould
 - c. Appropriate consideration for accessibility and service for tenants with disability, vulnerability, mental health and other protected characteristics.
- 9) Updated training on damp, condensation and Cadwyn’s process for all front line staff before winter. In particular specific training for the Neighbourhood team.
- 10) Work with Chris Nunn in Calon (and other experienced staff in Cadwyn) to identify opportunities to improve team skills and confidence in dealing with damp issues and Cadwyn’s damp inspection visits by learning from their approach. Including;
 - a. Ensure staff are comfortable and confident to discuss lifestyle factors with tenants that contribute to the issue
 - b. Helping tenants understand their responsibilities in managing condensation
 - c. Ask tenants about their energy usage and how they heat their home
 - d. Help them set their boiler / thermostats
- 11) Cadwyn to conduct some research and feasibility study into whether there may be HMOs / blocks of flats with existing space to create a ‘drying room’ for tenants (eg outhouse, shed or garage that is currently unused).
- 12) Tenants and Cadwyn to do further work together to explore opportunities to be able to provide tenants with more advice and support on energy related issues.
- 13) Staff to be making more home visits to tenants to check for signs of damp/condensation. All visiting staff should ‘keep their eyes open’ and report back any issues.
- 14) Cadwyn to be stricter with tenants and enforce the terms of their tenancy agreement (tenant responsibilities) if tenants are breaching it with regards to condensation.



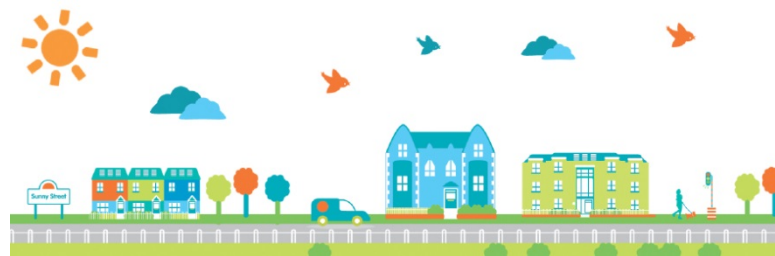
Cadwyn Service Improvement Team

Management response to Report on *How Cadwyn Deals with Reports of Damp and Condensation*

“We very much welcome the report and can see how much work has gone into the review.

Many of the recommendations relate to improvements in communication. Some of the recommendations will require some I.T systems development.

In the table below we have included our suggested priority and we will now draw up an implementation plan to deliver the necessary changes. We anticipate that this plan will be in place in October.”



	Recommendation	Management Response	Priority
1	Introduce a central log for all incoming damp or condensation reports (from tenants or staff) which tracks progress from initial report to resolution	This is a great idea. Reports of damp come from a variety of sources and we need to consider how best we can create a comprehensive useful data base. We will discuss with I.T and come up with a solution.	2
2	Improve communications with tenants	This is a common theme for tenant complaints and a big cause of frustration. This links with recommendations 4, 5, 6 &7 We will look at setting some service standards with tenants and explore the potential for utilising the app as a way of keeping people informed.	1
3	During the winter months (eg between October to February) have one central point of contact for reporting damp issues	We think this a good idea however it presents some practical challenges given that tenants can contact us to report damp in a number of ways e.g. through the app, through the website, telephone or come to the office. Given this, it is difficult to see how this could be achieved.	
4	Update leaflet so that it encourages tenants to look at and identify the type of damp they may have.	Agree we will update the leaflet. We will also look at the potential for a could a video clip on the website about how to deal with damp and condensation. We will also look at creating a link on our website page to energy efficiency tips page.	1
5	Ensure updated leaflet is easily available for staff and tenants.	Agree - we will make sure staff and tenants have easy access to leaflet including a link on the website.	1
6	Take pre-emptive action with awareness-raising campaign in autumn – eg leaflets out with rent statements, other mailings, newsletter, on website, social media and during visits / appointments.	This is a good idea and we will consider how best to raise awareness including the ideas put forward by CSI Team. In addition we will explore the practicalities of having a self help diagnostic tool on the website.	2

7	Increase visibility of information on damp and condensation on Cadwyn's website over the autumn and winter.	Agree - links with recommendation 6	2
8	Introduce a questionnaire / checklist for staff to go through with tenants so that there is more of a filtering process at initial reporting stage. This should encourage tenants to be more proactive about identifying and attempting to deal with the issue and reduce the number of home visits required by Neighbourhood Officers.	A simple questionnaire would be helpful to a least an initial diagnosis. We could also consider placing an online version on our website so that tenants could self-diagnose.	2
9	Updated training on damp, condensation and Cadwyn's process for all front line staff before winter. In particular specific training for the Neighbourhood team.	Agree - We are currently reviewing the training requirements for the neighbourhood team and we will ensure that this topic is included.	1
10	Work with Chris Nunn in Calon (and other experienced staff in Cadwyn) to identify opportunities to improve team skills and confidence in dealing with damp issues and Cadwyn's damp inspection visits by learning from their approach	Agree – we will draw on the expertise within Cadwyn and incorporate into the training for frontline staff.	2
11	Cadwyn to conduct some research and feasibility study into whether there may be HMOs / blocks of flats with existing space to create a 'drying room' for tenants (eg outhouse, shed or garage that is currently unused).	Worth exploring and seeing if we could at least run some sort of pilot scheme if we found somewhere suitable.	3

12	Tenants and Cadwyn to do further work together to explore opportunities to be able to provide tenants with more advice and support on energy related issues	Agree – links with points 6 & 7.	2
13	Staff to be making more home visits to tenants to check for signs of damp/condensation.	If we are successful in implementing the recommendations in point 8 then the need for specific visits to look at damp should be reduced. Staff regularly visit tenants in their home. The neighbourhood team visit around 600 -800 homes /year. The intended training will ensure visits will pick up on this issue.	
14	Cadwyn to be stricter with tenants and enforce the terms of their tenancy agreement (tenant responsibilities) if tenants are breaching it with regards to condensation.	Our preference here would be a more effective programme of education and improved services rather than enforcement.	

