



## **CITY OF YORK COUNCIL**

# **Responsive Repairs Policy for Tenants of Council Houses**

***Scrutiny Draft December 2024***

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## 1.0 Introduction & Overview

Welcome to the new version of the Responsive Repairs Policy for Tenants of Council Houses which has been developed reflecting the changes in the regulatory environment as well as responding to tenant expectations of what a good repairs service is. The primary audience for this document is City of York Council housing tenants with the aim of ensuring residents know what to expect from the repairs service including its service standards. The document will also be useful across the Housing team and partners.

The Council's vision, as set out in the Housing Charter, is to create "One Team, Healthy Homes, Better lives". With a Mission that "We are ONE TEAM, working with you in positive and responsive ways, always listening and improving our services. We invest in and plan for the future, ensuring we support safe, sustainable, affordable, and good quality homes. Working in partnerships, we aim to support strong and diverse communities where you can live well and thrive."

This policy builds on one of the key objectives of the 2023 – 28 Asset Management Plan in 'Delivering a repairs and maintenance service to target performance levels and meeting tenant's satisfaction targets for their homes and neighbourhood, assuring that we maintain the quality of your home'

To achieve these objectives for the repairs service, CYC commit to ensuring:

- Tenant involvement is at the heart of decision making.
- Repairs service standards are clearly outlined to ensure expectations are clear and so that the council can be held to account.
- Repairs experiences meets tenant expectations.
- The repairs service is cost effective, delivered within budget, is timely and achieves value for money.
- Every tenant's home is safe secure and meets the required legislative standards.
- All health and safety hazards are resolved within appropriate timeframes.
- There is consistent and effective performance monitoring and an attitude of always striving to improve.

## **2.0 Scope**

- a) This policy covers the delivery of repairs in tenants' homes and communal areas where CYC have a repairs obligation.
- b) The policy extends to include the approach to the management and investigation of hazards within tenants' homes, including hazards such as Damp and Mould and trips and falls.
- c) The policy excludes repairs to void properties or works delivered via planned replacement programmes, e.g. the Home Modernisation Programme of replacement kitchens and bathrooms. For details of these see the Asset Management Plan.

## **3.0 Repair Responsibilities**

- a) Tenant responsibilities will differ depending on the ownership status of the individual property. Shared owners, leaseholders and other non-rented tenancies should refer to their individual agreements to establish clear repair responsibilities. The responsibilities outlined below, are indicative of rented tenancies only.

### **3.1 CYC Responsibilities**

- a) For 'Rented' tenancy, CYC is responsible for keeping the structure of homes and other buildings in good repair in addition to maintaining heating, sanitation, and service installations. CYC is responsible for those installations that are fitted by the council, or which have been adopted by the council. CYC will
  - Maintain the structure of tenants' homes, including drains and external pipes. This includes any 'buildings', such as garages or outbuildings, which are CYC owned and built.
  - Repair and maintain installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity, and sanitation, including basins, sinks, baths and toilets, installations for heating rooms and water, and the lift service.
  - Repair and keep in good decorative order shared areas such as entrances and stairways.
  - Paint the outside of tenants' homes when needed.
  - Carry out repairs to broken glass unless the damage is caused by the tenant or any visitors to their home.

- b) When carrying out repairs, the decoration of homes may be disrupted. If this is the case, tenants will be compensated with the supply of decoration packs to carry out remedial decorations at no loss to themselves.
- c) Where like for like replacement materials/products are not available through mainstream supply avenues, the closest matched available material/product will be used. Example scenarios include, but are not limited to, wall tiles, kitchen cupboards, internal doors, ironmongery, worktops, taps and electrical fitting.
- d) Where property components are identified as being at the end of their usable life, they will be included in the next available planned maintenance programme to ensure that best value is achieved.
- e) CYC will not replace a fixture (such as doors, bathrooms, and kitchens) under the repairs policy unless it represents a health and safety hazard. Damaged, faulty, or worn fixtures will always be repaired to good working condition until the end of their expected life before considering replacement.
- f) CYC ensure equality of access for all tenants, especially those tenants with more complex needs. CYC will treat all such situations sensitively and will adapt our working practices where appropriate, to make sure our service is tailored to meet the individual needs of our tenants. An example of this may include a swifter response to a hazard or providing additional support when carrying out repairs that are of a rechargeable nature. CYC will assess each request on a case-by-case basis and strive to respond appropriately to the circumstances.

### **3.2 Tenant Responsibilities**

For Rented tenancies, CYC tenants are responsible for the following.

- a) Ensuring no damage occurs to CYC homes and other buildings and spaces in line with responsibilities detailed within tenancy agreements.
- b) Insuring the contents of homes and other buildings, including any floor coverings or furniture such as laminate floor or built-in wardrobes not supplied by CYC. Details of a suitable insurance

scheme CYC have negotiated can be found here: [Simple Tenants Contents Insurance – City of York Council](#)

- c) Reporting any required repairs or health and safety hazards in their home and communal areas as soon as possible.
- d) Allowing CYC tradespeople and CYC appointed contractors access into the home to carry out servicing, inspections and surveys, or remedial works.
- e) CYC tenants have several repair obligations which are outlined below.
  - decorating the inside of homes, including repairing any minor cracks in plaster
  - maintaining the garden and not allowing trees and shrubberies to grow to the extent they cannot be managed
  - disposing of waste appropriately; including keeping bin stores tidy
  - any repairs caused by neglect, deliberate damage to the property or forced entry if tenants are locked out
  - taking reasonable precautions to prevent damage to the property by moisture build up, fire, frost, burst water pipes or blocked drains
  - attempting to clear sink and basin blockages
  - any fittings or appliances supplied, by tenants, including TV aerials, cookers, plumbed in washing machines and dishwashers
  - testing, keeping clean and replacing batteries, unless they are in a sealed unit, in smoke alarms or carbon monoxide alarm
  - changing, light bulbs, and fluorescent tubes and resetting MCBs on Consumer units
  - replacing keys if lost and locks if locked out
  - replacing bathroom fittings such as cabinets, mirrors, towel rails and toilet-roll holders
  - replacing damaged toilet seats
  - replacing hat and coat rails
  - replacing floor coverings, including bathroom and kitchen flooring originally gifted by CYC
  - Installing and maintaining any outside taps
  - washing lines, clothes posts, and rotary driers within private gardens
  - bleeding the radiators

- maintaining and replacing battery-operated doorbells.
  - ensuring that ventilation or ventilation systems that are provided are left switched on and the operation is not impeded
- f) In addition to this, Tenants are responsible for the following.
- cleaning the inside or outside of the property unless the requirement was caused by the action or inaction of CYC
  - taking on board advice provided by CYC colleagues, ensuring the effective operation of any equipment installed at the property to improve the condition. For example, mechanical ventilation
- g) Repair obligations and tenant responsibilities can be reconsidered on an individual basis depending on the personal circumstances of tenants. Any additional needs will be considered and where appropriate this can be discussed with Housing Management or Repairs colleagues to help find solutions.
- h) CYC understand the importance of making a house feel like a home and to practically work well for its tenants. As such, CYC are supportive of tenants making changes to their home. However, it is important to understand when CYC's permission is required. This ensures the safety of tenants and protects homes from potential damage. A qualified or competent person should carry out works to ensure they are to a high standard. The types of works that require CYC approval before works commence are:
- Removing walls
  - A new kitchen, bathroom suite, shower, gas fire or heating
  - Painting outside your home
  - Extra electrical sockets or light fittings
  - A new external door
  - A shed or a greenhouse
  - New windows
  - A driveway and dropped curb
  - Removing any fire rated doors
- To seek permission (or query if permission is needed) for the types of works listed above, please contact your Housing Management Officer. [Improving your home yourself – City of York Council](#)

#### 4.0 Rechargeable Repairs

- a) Rechargeable repairs are defects that CYC are responsible for repairing but the damage has been caused by neglect, fault or carelessness of a tenant, their family, visitors, or pet. In these situations, the tenant will be expected to cover the reasonable cost of the repair.
- b) There may be circumstances in which repairs that are of a rechargeable nature could be waived. Examples of this could be repairs needed because of hate crime, racial incidents, or domestic abuse. The council may also provide additional security measures to a resident's home where appropriate. An assessment will be made on a case-by-case basis considering all of the information available and tenant's individual circumstances.

#### 5.0 Reporting Repairs

- a) CYC tenants can report repairs to their homes in several ways.
  - By telephoning 01904 551 550
  - By e-mail [housing.repairs@york.gov.uk](mailto:housing.repairs@york.gov.uk)
  - To any Housing Officers who visit you at home
  - In writing to Housing Repairs **Hazel Court, James Street, York, YO10 3DS**
  - To any CYC Tradesperson or Engineer

CYC are currently developing the Customer Portal to allow repairs appointments to be made online. This will mean repairs can be raised at any time on any day through an online system. This service will be available soon and tenants will receive further information when this goes live in 2025.

- b) To help deliver the high level expected by both CYC and its tenants, the person taking a repair query will:
  - Confirm the address of the property
  - Confirm the tenant's contact number
  - Obtain as clear a description as possible of the work required and determine if a pre-inspection is required (this could include a request for a photo)
  - Confirm access arrangements

- Take details of any special circumstances or additional needs that CYC are not already aware of
- Arrange a suitable appointment with the tenant
- Advise tenants of the priority and therefore timescale of the repair
- If applicable, advise them of the contractor who will carry out the work; and
- Advise tenants if the repair is rechargeable.

## 6.0 Service Operating Times

- a) The Housing Customer Service Team handle calls and emails Monday to Friday 08:00 – 17:00 and the physical repair service operate Monday to Friday 08:00 – 16:00 (until 15:00 on Friday).
- b) Outside of these hours an ‘out of hours’ service is in operation for ‘Emergency Repairs’ only, as defined in the Repair Priorities’ below.

## 7.0 Repair Priorities

- a) CYC aims to respond to all repairs as quickly as possible, but it is necessary to categorise repairs and give some a higher priority than others. All repairs are put into one of the following categories: Emergency, General, or Planned, using the following guidance.
- b) Repairs can be allocated a higher priority than usual if, due to a tenant’s personal circumstances, the use of the usual repair priority would result in an increased risk to their home or health and wellbeing.

## 7.1 Emergency Repairs

- a) Emergency repairs need to be addressed quickly because there is a risk of danger to a tenant’s health and safety or serious damage to a tenant’s home.
- b) If an emergency repair is reported, then CYC will attend within **24 hours** to make the property safe and wherever possible to complete a full repair. Where a full repair is not possible, CYC will remove the immediate hazard/risk and arrange a new suitable appointment in line with the repair priorities outlined in this policy.

c) Examples of emergency repairs include:

- There is no power or lights (and not a general power failure) or there is an unsafe socket or fitting which the tenant needs to use
- Total loss of heating in winter, where there is no other form of heating available
- Toilet not flushing if only one toilet in the home
- Total loss of water supply (and not a general failure)
- Bursts of hot-water or cold-water supply
- Water is affecting wiring after a burst pipe
- Blocked drains or leaking foul drain, soil stack or toilet pan (Where there is only one toilet)
- Serious leaks inside the property including from the roof
- Insecure outside windows, doors, or locks on the ground floor (where the window/door cannot be closed and/or secured by any means)
- Lifts and fire alarms are out of order
- To gain access including lock change
- A dangerous structure, such as a wall that might collapse or a dangerous floor, stair tread or handrail

d) CYC operates an 'Out of Hours Emergency Repairs Service'. The 'out of hours' emergency service is available outside normal working hours, for those repairs which pose an immediate risk to people or property. The out of hours' service is designed to deliver a "make safe". CYC will always aim to complete the repair as part of the "make safe" visit, but occasionally this will not be possible. If the reported repair is deemed not to be an emergency, then the tenant will be asked to call back during normal working hours to make an appointment.

e) CYC will deal with any repairs which are needed because of hate crime and racial incidents as an emergency (within 24 hours); and will remove offensive graffiti from council homes within 24 hours of report. CYC may provide additional security measures to a resident's home where appropriate.

## 7.2 General Repairs

a) CYC aims to complete general repairs within **20 working days** (that is 4 calendar weeks) and arranged within a timeframe that reflects

the urgency of the repair, tradesperson capacity, and any special requirements the tenant may have. The majority of the repairs undertaken will fall within the General repairs category. They are classified as faults that will not cause serious discomfort or long-term damage to the property such as:

- General joinery repairs
- Plastering works
- Re-glazing cracked panes of glass
- Repairs to kitchen fittings
- Extract fan repairs
- Minor plumbing repairs such as dripping or leaking taps
- Minor repairs to exterior walls, brickwork, and roofs

### 7.3 Planned Repairs

- a) Planned Repair priority applies when intrusive remedial works are needed that may require significant resources from multiple trades or a specialist contractor to complete. This sort of work may require a pre-start survey from a specialist to establish the full specification of works.
- b) The complexity, multiskilled or specialist nature of these works means that they will often take longer to diagnose and complete. It is important that the right solution is found first time to reduce long term disruption to tenants. This work is sometimes dependent on the capacity or availability of external contractors. CYC will communicate to tenants about likely disruption and timescales of these works once the repair has been surveyed. CYC will aim for all planned repairs to be completed within **65 working days** (that is 13 calendar weeks).
- c) Examples of Planned Repairs could be:
  - Replacement of internal floors
  - Non-urgent major brickwork/structural repairs
  - Works requiring planning/conservation input
  - Replacement of bathrooms and kitchens
  - Failed Damp Proof Course

- d) Any immediate risks to a tenant's health and wellbeing or home will be addressed separately on a temporary basis utilising the relevant priority code.
- e) Planned repairs can sometimes be disruptive, with parts of a home being unavailable for a day or more. CYC know from feedback that the majority of tenants prefer to stay in their home whilst works are underway as overall this is typically less disruptive. As such, CYC will discuss the planned works with tenants and make adjustments to help ensure that tenants are safe and comfortable during works. In some circumstances, through either the nature of the works or the circumstances of the tenants, moving out of the home while the works take place will be the best solution. In these cases, CYC will work alongside the tenants to make suitable arrangements taking account of the tenants circumstances.
- f) All works which fall under the Planned Repair category will initially be inspected and the person carrying out the inspection will explain the likely timescales and be available to answer any questions as part of the process.

## **8.0 Appointments**

- a) If a tenant reports an emergency repair, CYC will attend within 24 hours. CYC let the tenant know an expected arrival time and will confirm when the tradesperson is on their way.
- b) All other repair priorities will be appointed and CYC will arrange a time and date that is convenient to the tenants. CYC aim to provide appointments for as many repairs as possible to reduce waiting times. For some external repairs where access is not required, CYC may not offer an appointment but will complete the repair within the timescale associated with the repair type. CYC will notify tenants if a repair has been completed in their absence.
- c) CYC appointment slots are:
  - morning appointments: 8.00am to 12.30pm
  - afternoon appointments: 1:00pm to 4:00pm
  - Avoiding school run appointments (between 9.30am and 2.30pm)

- d) When repair works are undertaken by the council's own in-house trades team, tenants will receive a confirmation text message when the order has been booked, a reminder text message 24 hours before the appointment and a reminder text message when the repairs tradesperson is on their way. A text message will also be received to confirm any rearranged appointments. When repair works are being undertaken by a contractor on the council's behalf, tenants will receive a phone call or text message when the tradesperson is on their way.

## 9.0 Investigations of potential Hazards

- a) A hazard is something that could be dangerous or could cause damage or accidents. When CYC are made aware of a potential hazard in a tenants home or communal area, CYC will arrange for an investigation to take place within **10 working days** (that is 2 calendar weeks) by a suitably qualified inspector.
- b) The investigation will review the physical nature of the hazard but will take into consideration the level of risk that the hazard presents to the tenants by reviewing the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Operating (HHSRS) Guidance.
- c) Upon completion of the inspection, CYC will provide a written summary to the tenant **within 2 working days** of the inspection confirming the below points.
- How and when the investigation was conducted, and the name and job title of the individual who conducted the investigation
  - Any further investigations that are required, and if so when they will take place
  - If a hazard was found and if so what
  - Whether the hazard is likely to pose a significant risk to tenants' health or safety
- If it does pose a significant risk:
- What temporary repairs are needed to make the property safe until the problem can be permanently rectified and when these will be carried out
  - What CYC will do to permanently rectify the problem and the timescales for this
  - How to contact CYC with any queries
- d) If a HHSRS Category 1 hazard (Significant Risk of Harm) is identified during the inspection, CYC will start to remove the

hazard within **5 working days** of the summary being issued to the tenant. The priority may be increased to 'Emergency' as outlined in section 7.1, based upon the personal circumstances of an individual tenant and the nature of the hazard.

- e) Where a potential 'Damp and Mould' hazard is reported, a suitably qualified person will carry out a survey of the home to identify the root cause of the issue. CYC will check whether:
- The home is suffering from penetrative, rising, or traumatic damp
  - The home is suitably heated, insulated and ventilated to enable the home to remain free from mould hazards
  - The tenant understands how to operate the heating and ventilation systems, with written instructions provided if required
  - All contact information is recorded within CYC's housing management system including the recording of photographs
- Tenants who are struggling to afford to heat their home will be put in contact with the Money Advice Team to help provide short- and long-term solutions to enable the home to be sufficiently heated.
- f) The Damp and mould inspection will be carried out in line with the Government Guidance 'Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home' and CYC's Damp and Mould Process Investigation and Resolution Procedure (Annex 1)
- g) When required, tenants will be provided with appropriate information and guidance on minimising condensation in their home and how to clean down areas of mould.
- h) All remedial actions identified during the investigation will be managed following our Damp and Mould procedure.
- i) Remedial measures will be taken in line with the timescales outlined in this policy. Tenants who are most at risk of health issues from damp and mould will be given a higher priority in line with their individual circumstances.
- j) CYC will carry out a follow up inspection or phonecall **3 months** after the completion of all remedial works to ensure successful resolution. If the works have not been successful, a new inspection will be arranged as per the guidance provided within section 9.0 of this policy.

## **9.1 Alternative Accommodation**

- a) If an investigation finds a hazard that poses a significant, or a significant and imminent, risk of harm or danger, and the property cannot be made safe within the specified timescales, CYC will offer to arrange for the tenants to stay in suitable alternative accommodation until it is safe to return.

## **10.0 No Access**

- a) It is important that CYC tradespeople and appointed contractors are provided with access to the tenants home. This enables repairs to be undertaken as quickly as possible. Missed appointments cost money and reduce the effectiveness of the repair service at meeting the service standards outlined in this document.
- b) If CYC tradespeople or appointed contractors are unable to gain access to carry out a repair or inspection due to a tenant not being home, then CYC will leave a card at the property to advise tenants to contact CYC to re-arrange via the contact methods identified above.
- c) CYC will attempt to contact the tenant via every available contact method that is held on record to make another appointment.
- d) Continued or regular no-accesses will be monitored and could result in tenants being recharged for multiple missed appointments.
- e) Investigations of potential HHSRS hazards and remedial works to remove HHSRS hazards will not be cancelled, and CYC will continue to seek access through, if needed, the appropriate tenancy enforcement measures in the interests of tenants health and safety.

## **11.0 Performance Monitoring**

- a) It is important to CYC that tenants are satisfied with the quality and timeliness of all repairs undertaken within their homes. The performance of repairs, associated inspections, and investigations will be monitored through a series of post-inspection visits by

managers and team leaders, tenant satisfaction data, performance data and analysis of any complaints or compliments received.

- b) In 2025, CYC will be introducing a process for tenants to be able to provide feedback easily following every repair. Repair performance will be a key performance indicator for the Housing Service. Feedback will be used to analyse trends and continually improve the repairs service so that it meets the expectations of tenants where possible.

## **12.0 Post-Work Inspections**

- a) CYC undertake sample post-repair inspections of works completed by both the in-house trades team (10% of jobs) and appointed external contractors (100% of major jobs) to ensure that:
- the work specified on the order has been completed
  - the quality of the work is satisfactory
  - the appropriate charge has been made (where appropriate); and
  - the tenant is satisfied with the outcome.
- b) Post inspection appointments will be arranged with tenants in advance at a suitable time.
- c) If the work is unsatisfactory and ineffective CYC will arrange for relevant remedial works to be completed in line with the repair priorities outlined above.

## **13.0 Repairs Policy if Right to Buy application is received**

- a) CYC aims to provide a cost effective and efficient service for its tenants. When CYC receives a Right to Buy application from a tenant, the policy on repairs changes. This includes only carrying out works identified as being 'emergency repairs' under the terms of the repairs policy.
- b) CYC will only place repair orders for those repairs required by law (Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 & 1987; Right to Repair Regulations 1994). Repairs identified which are outside of these legal regulations will not be undertaken. In most instances,

outstanding repairs or those underway at completion of the right to buy sale will be cancelled.

- c) Once a house is sold by the Council under Right to Buy the buyer/new owner becomes responsible for all repairs, maintenance and for the insurance of the building.
- d) For any flat/apartment that is leased under Right to Buy, the leaseholder becomes responsible for all internal, non-structural repairs except those caused by an insured risk. The leaseholder will also be required to financially contribute to major structural repairs, such as the replacement of a roof.

#### **14.0 Feedback and Complaints**

- a) CYC will endeavour to meet the standards outlined in this policy for every repair. CYC welcomes feedback, both positive and negative in order to help improve the service offered. Where tenants are dissatisfied with the service they receive they are encouraged to use the CYC complaints process. Should a tenant wish to make a complaint then please see guidance on the CYC website ([www.york.gov.uk](http://www.york.gov.uk)) or contact CYC using the details below:

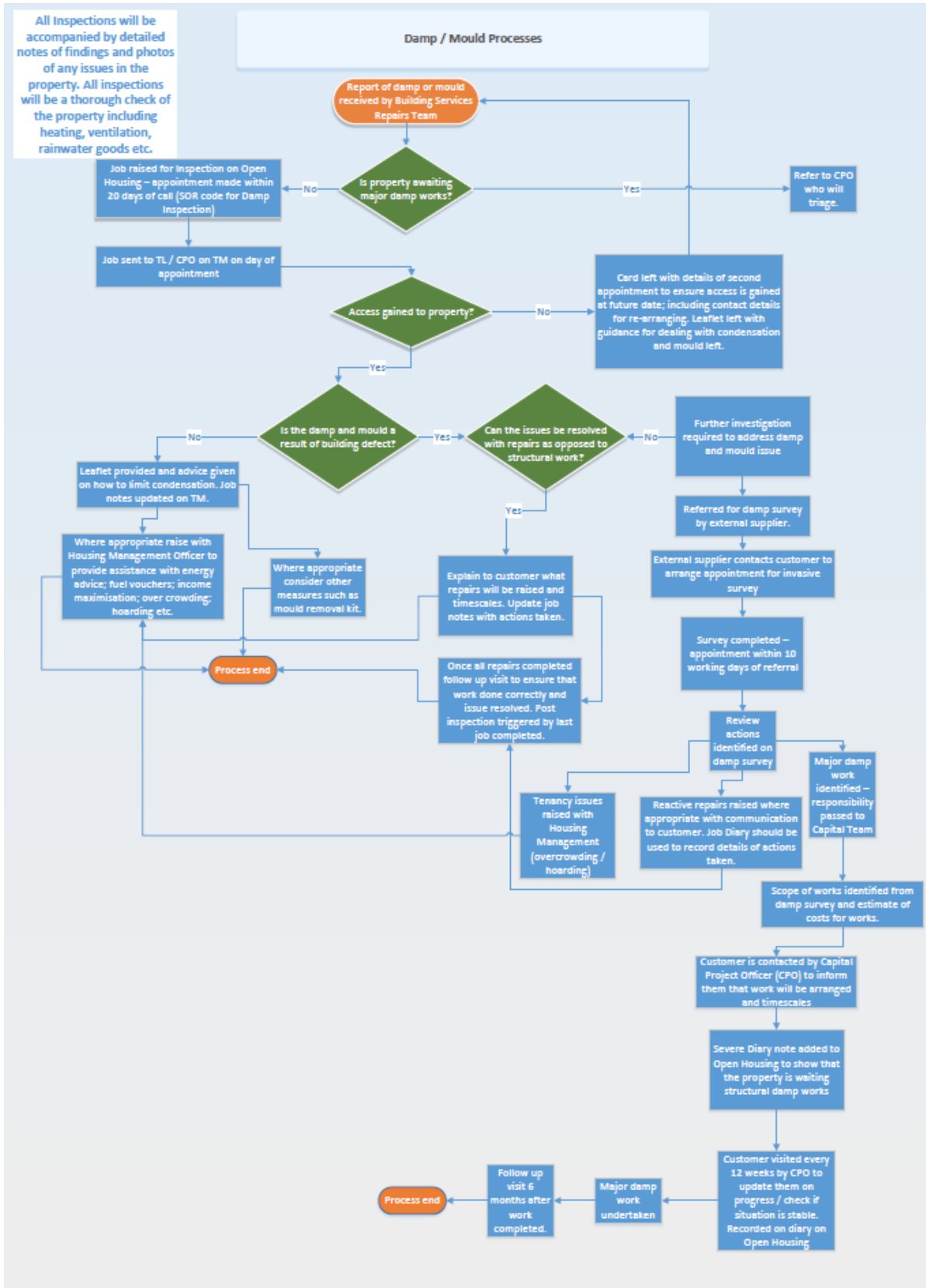
Online Form - [www.york.gov.uk/4Cs#form](http://www.york.gov.uk/4Cs#form)

Postal address - West Offices, Station Rise, York, YO1 6GA

Telephone - [01904 554145](tel:01904554145)

Email - [haveyoursay@york.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@york.gov.uk)

**Annex 1 - Damp and Mould Investigation and Resolution Procedure**



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