



# Damp and Mould Policy

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out how we will identify, manage, and respond to incidences of damp or mould in our properties. This policy supports our Providing Quality Sustainable Homes Strategy and its strategic vision of 'Tenants living in warm, safe, high quality, sustainable homes in a place they are proud to live'.
- 1.2 This policy has been developed following consultation with tenants to ensure their voice is heard.

## 2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
  - Ensure we provide and maintain dry, healthy homes which promote tenant and resident safety, health, and wellbeing.
  - Ensure that all reports of damp or mould are investigated to establish the root-cause of the issue.
  - Ensure that remedial works are appropriate and fully resolve the issue as quickly as reasonably practicable.
  - Ensure the fabric of our homes is protected from the damage and deterioration that can result from prolonged exposure to dampness.
  - Ensure that all tenants affected by this policy are treated with respect and empathy.

## 3.0 Principles

- 3.1 This policy is underpinned by the following principles.
  - We will take a proactive approach to identifying damp or mould through tenant engagement and the use of data.
  - We will engage tenants with respect, empathy, honesty, integrity and promote positive relationships based upon trust.
  - We will support tenants with personalised, appropriate, clear, sensitive, practical, and accessible advice.
  - We will work together to ensure the best outcome for tenants is achieved.
  - We will ensure all front-line employees are trained to identify signs of damp, mould and condensation so the problem can be resolved at the earliest opportunity.

- We will improve our response to damp and mould by adopting good knowledge and information management practices and by continually reviewing the feedback from tenants (including complaints) to identify themes, trends and opportunities for learning or innovation.

## 4.0 Definitions

4.1 The key terms used in this policy are defined below

<b>Damp</b>	In Building terms this is the presence of higher-than normal levels of water in a building or in an element of the building fabric.
<b>Causes of Damp:</b>	
<b>Rising Damp</b>	The movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building through capillary action. This is usually because of a missing or defective damp proof course (DPC) or a defect allowing the moisture to bypass the DPC. Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms it will be present all year round but can be more noticeable in winter.
<b>Penetrating Damp</b>	The result of a defect in the structure of the home, such as damaged brickwork, missing roof tiles, loose flashing or leaking rainwater goods. These defects allow water to pass from the outside to the floors, walls or ceilings. Penetrating damp is far more noticeable following a period of rainfall and will normally appear as a well defined 'damp-patch' which looks and feels damp to the touch.
<b>Water leaks</b>	The result of defective supply or waste pipework (especially in bathrooms and kitchens) can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and stays damp regardless of the prevailing weather conditions.

<p><b>Condensation</b></p>	<p>The most prevalent type of dampness and is caused by moisture in the air (water vapour) inside the dwelling coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The drop in temperature causes liquid water to form on the surface and then soak in. It is usually found in kitchens, bathrooms, the corners of rooms, on north facing walls and on or near windows – all places that either tend to have a lot of moisture in the air, or to be cold generally. It is also found in areas of low air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls. All homes in England can be affected by condensation because the climate is often cool and wet. Normal household activities also constantly release moisture into the air. Good practice in the home minimises and alleviates condensation, and in many cases will prevent it causing dampness and persistent mould.</p>
<p><b>Mould</b></p>	<p>Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. It is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation is present.</p> <p>Prolonged exposure to mould can negatively affect physical health causing breathing difficulties, asthma, or fungal infections. Exposure can also negatively affect mental health causing depression or anxiety.</p>
<p><b>Poor condition</b></p>	<p>This is a wide-ranging term and describes properties with one or more of the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclean</li> <li>• In a poor state of decoration</li> <li>• Internal damage</li> <li>• Accumulations of rubbish</li> <li>• Unsanitary</li> </ul>

## 5.0 Scope

- 5.1 This policy applies to the tenants of all social housing rental accommodation and low-cost home ownership properties classified as rent-to-buy. The policy does not cover low-cost home ownership properties classified as shared ownership or leasehold properties.

5.2 This policy applies to all employees and where required to contractors delivering relevant services on our behalf.

## 6.0 Contribution to Plan A

6.1 The effective implementation of this policy will support the following objectives of the Providing Quality Sustainable Homes Strategy:

- **Objective 20:** Maintain homes to a standard which exceeds the needs and expectations of our tenants.
- **Objective 21:** Provide homes that are safe, exceed the needs and meet the aspirations of our tenants.

## 7.0 Legislative and regulatory framework

7.1 Relevant Legislation:

- Defective Premises Act 1972.
- Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11).
- Housing Act 2004.
- Decent Homes Standard 2006.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Home Standard, Regulator of Social Housing, 2015.
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.
- Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims (England), 2021.

## 8.0 Policy statements

8.1 We have a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould interventions and are committed to providing homes that are free from damp. We will provide and maintain fixtures and fittings that supply adequate heating and ventilation to a standard that enables tenants to live in a home free from mould. Through our programme of decarbonisation improvements, we will improve the thermal efficiency of our homes to reduce the likelihood of condensation forming.

8.2 We will proactively encourage tenants to report issues of damp and mould and provide multiple accessible platforms for tenants to access the repairs service.

- 8.3 We will implement a data driven, risk-based approach to reduce the reliance on tenants reporting issues, including as a minimum undertaking an annual review of all damp and mould data. We are committed to using this data to allow the proactive identification of potential issues before they arise and implementing preventative measure where practicable. All reports of damp or mould will be recorded as will the results of all damp and mould surveys to increase the range and accuracy of our records and provide a suitable audit trail.
- 8.4 Property earmarked for regeneration or disposal will not be excluded from the services covered under this policy.
- 8.5 Where properties are subject to a disrepair claim we will actively seek access to carryout remedial works using all powers available to us under the terms of the tenancy agreement.
- 8.6 All reports of damp and mould will be individually assessed by an appropriately trained member of the repairs team with no assumptions being made prior to the assessment. We will conduct a whole house survey where damp or mould is found. In instances where the construction or design of the building is likely to result in an issue being replicated in an adjacent property or where the number of confirmed cases in a scheme are more than 10%above the global stock averages the scope of the survey will be extended to cover those adjoining properties.
- 8.7 All front-line employees will be given damp and mould awareness training.
- 8.8 We will take a collaborative approach to resolving issues with condensation ensuring each home has sufficient means of natural and mechanical ventilation and a heating system that can adequately heat the home. We will provide the relevant advice and guidance to allow tenants to utilise these property attributes to minimise the risk of condensation occurring including offering financial inclusion support where appropriate.
- 8.9 We will inspect properties for damp and mould at each change of tenancy and ensure all properties are free from damp and mould on the commencement of any new tenancy period.
- 8.10 We will carry out an inspection of a property within 8 working days of being notified of suspected damp or mould. Where a serious case of mould is reported following a tenancy visit the inspection will be carried out within 2 working days.

- 8.11 All repairs relating to damp or mould will be actioned in line with the timescales and service levels in our repairs policy. The treatment of mould will be completed in not more than 25 working days and will be prioritised on a risk basis considering the property condition and any occupant vulnerabilities. Tenants will receive clear and regular communications regarding the actions being taken to resolve reports of damp or mould.
- Works orders will not be cancelled after failed access attempts. Where access is an issue, these cases will be referred to a Housing Manager for assistance and support in gaining access to complete the works.
- 8.12 We will consider and implement measures to counteract any potential increased risk of damp or mould in properties receiving energy efficiency measures as part of our programme of decarbonisation works.
- 8.13 We will carry out follow-up inspections on all properties where treatment for condensation related mould has been carried out to confirm that works and mitigating actions have resolved the underlying cause of the damp or mould.
- 8.14 In cases where serious damp or mould has been identified, a case review will be conducted for the continuous improvement of the service. All serious cases of damp or mould will be subject to a case management procedure to ensure remedial works are completed to a satisfactory level in an acceptable timeframe.
- 8.15 Working with our gas servicing contractor we will implement a visual inspection for any obvious signs of damp or mould during the annual safety inspection. This visual inspection will cover all rooms and any issues identified during these visits will be followed up by our repairs inspectors under the damp and mould process.
- 8.16 We will conduct biennial tenancy visit of all properties. During this visit the property will be assessed for evidence of damp or mould.
- 8.17 We will complete whole property stock condition surveys to 10% of our housing stock annually. During this survey the property will be assessed for evidence of damp or mould.
- 8.18 We will deliver training on this policy and the procedures that support it, through appropriate methods.
- 8.19 Complaints linked to damp and mould will be actioned in line with our complaints, compliments, and feedback policy.



- 8.20 All serious cases will be assessed to determine if there is an immediate health risk to the residents of the property. If there is the permanent or temporary relocation of the tenant and other residents will be carried out in line with the decant and permanent relocation procedure.
- 8.21 We recognise that a property can experience overlapping issues of damp and mould and poor property condition. In such cases, housing management will act as customer advocate to ensure repairs are completed within the timescales within the Damp and Mould Policy and will support the tenant to improve the condition of the property in line with the Condition of Property Policy.

## 9.0 Roles and responsibilities

9.1 Roles and responsibilities under this policy are outlined below.

<b>Board</b>	The Board has overall governance responsibility for this policy. As such, the Board will formally approve this policy and review it every three years, or earlier if there is a change in legislation or regulation. Board will receive quarterly performance reports containing high-level performance metrics measuring the effectiveness of this policy.
<b>Executive Management Team</b>	EMT will be notified of any significant, continued, non compliance with this policy. EMT will receive at least quarterly performance reports containing high-level performance metrics measuring the effectiveness of this policy.
<b>Executive Director of Finance and Investment</b>	The Executive Director of Finance and Investment has strategic responsibility for the management of property maintenance and for overseeing the implementation of this policy.
<b>Head of property services</b>	The Head of Property Services has operational responsibility for the implementation and oversight of this policy.
<b>Repairs and Maintenance Manager</b>	The repairs and maintenance manager has operational responsibility for the delivery of the inspections and repairs covered by this policy.
<b>Repairs and empty homes inspectors</b>	Repairs and empty homes inspectors will implement the processes and procedures underpinning this policy.

9.2 This policy will be communicated to tenants, employees and contractors via our website, intranet, or through other channels. Those responsible for implementing the policy will where required receive appropriate training, advice, and guidance.

## 10.0 Related policies and procedures

10.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Repairs and Maintenance policy	The services provided under this policy will be delivered in line with the commitments set out in the approved Repairs and Maintenance Policy.
Damp and Mould procedure	This contains the detailed operational processes for dealing with damp or mould identified within properties. The procedures will be amended periodically to reflect best practice and operational learnings.
Condition of Property Policy	Where damp or mould is identified within a property also identified in poor condition both policies will be applied. In such instances the Head of Housing and 8 Communities will retain overall responsibility for maintaining effective engagement with the tenant.
Complaints, Compliments, and feedback Policy	Complaints relating to damp and mould will be monitored identify themes, trends, and opportunities for learning.

## 11.0 Monitoring and review arrangements

11.1 We will report key performance measures for damp and mould. These will be provided to the Executive Director of Finance and Investment monthly and to EMT and the Board on a quarterly basis. As a minimum, we will report.

- Percentage of damp and mould cases closed within 33 working days
- Time taken to carry out damp inspections
- Time taken to carry out repairs following damp and mould inspections
- Percentage of damp cases requiring a follow up which has been completed

11.2 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if a significant development requires a more urgent review, e.g., new legislation or regulation.

