



**City of London Corporation**  
**Department of Community & Children's Services**  
**Housing Division**

**DAMP, MOULD & CONDENSATION POLICY**

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<b>Approved by:</b>	<b><i>Housing Management &amp; Almshouses Sub-Committee</i></b>
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## **1. Purpose**

This policy outlines our approach to the management of damp, mould and condensation to ensure all our properties are well maintained, as well as free of damp and mould that could risk the health and safety of residents living in the homes we manage.

Due to the diversity, age and construction of our housing stock, some properties may need more regular maintenance than others, and varying levels of management for damp and mould conditions.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- Properties owned or managed as part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), including communal facilities such as car parks, commercial premises, and community rooms
- Properties managed on behalf of the City of London Almshouses Trust and the Gresham Almshouses Trust

## **3. Regulator for Social Housing – Regulatory Standards**

- Safety and Quality Standard

We will ensure that we meet all our responsibilities under the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements for the health and safety of residents in their homes.

## **4. Aims of this Policy**

Our objectives are to:

- Meet our landlord repairing responsibilities as detailed within our Tenancies, Leases and Repairs Policy
- Maintain our homes so that they meet the Decent Home Standard, providing dry, safe homes for our residents which are free from any hazards including those identified in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- Comply with legislative, regulatory and contractual obligations.
- Treat residents reporting damp and mould with empathy and respect; we will not prejudge the cause of the damp.
- Conduct timely and thorough investigations and implement appropriate corrective repair measures and improvements in place to control condensation, mould, and damp.
- Support residents on resolving damp and mould where they result from the use of the home, and provide our residents with appropriate, clear, sensitive, practical and accessible advice and solutions.
- Provide residents with guidance and support, including information on how to prevent condensation, damp and mould

- Ensure staff are trained to enable them to spot potential causes of damp, mould and condensation so they can advise residents, diagnose problems and provide solutions.

We will ensure that:

- Residents who report damp and mould in their properties are treated with respect and empathy.
- Residents have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive advice, information, and guidance on managing and controlling mould, damp and condensation.
- The process of reporting an issue of damp and mould is straightforward and easily accessible for residents.
- We remain in regular and effective communication with a resident, following a report of damp and mould being made, providing progress updates from beginning to end especially on the occasion where an investigation into a case may be complex.
- In the situation of hoarding resulting in damp and mould, we will work with the resident and relevant partner agencies.
- At the time of a void (empty property) inspection, each room will be checked for damp, mould, and condensation. If identified, it will be managed and rectified as part of the void works.
- As part of a Mutual Exchange, a property inspection is completed at which time, each room will be checked for damp, mould, and condensation. If identified, it will be managed and rectified before the Mutual Exchange completes.

## 5. Definitions and Causes

The general term 'damp' covers four possible problems with very distinct causes.

**Penetrating Damp** - Water penetrating the exterior of the building causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure. This appears because of a defect 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.

**Leaks** - Water leaks from defective supply and 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. It is the result of a problem or fault with the home, which requires repair.

**Rising Damp** – This is the movement of moisture from the ground rising through the damp course of the building through capillary action.

**Condensation** - Condensation occurs when humid air comes into contact with a cold surface, it then condenses producing water droplets. The conditions that may increase the risk of condensation are:

- Lack of adequate or improper use of ventilation
- Lack of adequate or improper use of heating
- Lack of adequate insulation.
- High humidity
- Overcrowding

**Mould** - This is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation damp is present. There is strong research evidence to suggest that health conditions can be exacerbated by damp and mould in housing.

Any home can be affected by condensation because the climate in the UK fluctuates. 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. However, on occasion the root cause can be a problem that requires a repair or an improvement to the home. In others, a different solution may be needed (for example, in cases of severe overcrowding).

## **6. Policy Approach**

### **6.1 Property inspection**

We will undertake a property inspection when we receive a report of suspected damp, mould or condensation, within seven working days of the report.

At the property inspection we will investigate and diagnose the cause of the damp or mould and determine which solutions are appropriate.

When a property becomes vacant, and prior to re-letting, we will seek to identify and remedy any issues which may cause damp. This may include ensuring doors and windows are serviceable and can effectively ventilate the property, ensuring extractor fans are working well, as well as applying mould treatments where necessary.

### **6.2 Resolving Damp, Mould and Condensation**

Sometimes finding out the cause of damp and mould isn't always straightforward and could be due to a combination of factors. Any repairs that are required to be carried out will be dealt with in accordance with our Repairs Policy.

Where damp is because of condensation:

- we will work with the resident to take appropriate measures to prevent the damp and mould occurring.
- we may include advice about how to control moisture levels or increase ventilation or heating, so that damp levels are kept low.
- we may also offer improvements such as additional mechanical ventilation according to the situation.

Where we provide such advice, it is important that residents adhere to it and do not take actions that could accentuate any problems e.g. by turning off ventilation systems or sealing over air vents.

When there is a particularly severe or recurring damp or mould issue, a representative from our repairs team will undertake a comprehensive assessment which might result in a range of actions to support the resident depending on the circumstance of the issue the resident faces.

We will keep residents informed of any property inspections, diagnosis of issues and the programming of works, where these are required. Where work is not required, residents will be informed explaining the reason and the steps they should take.

### **6.3 Complex Cases**

For more complex cases, and especially where more intrusive building work is required and/or there is a serious health risk to the resident or a member of their household, we may require them to move out of their home. We will consider the individual circumstances of the resident. We will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out at the property to ensure it is ready for the resident to return to.

### **6.4 Access**

Our tenancy and lease agreements require residents to allow us (including appointed contractors) access to their home to carry out works at the agreed appointment time. If we are unable to gain access and the integrity of the property, its fabric and/or the safety of the customer or those in the vicinity of the property is compromised, we will take appropriate action. For example, this may include, but is not limited to, obtaining an injunction for access.

### **6.5 Compensation**

In line with our Compensation Policy, we will pay compensation where there has been a service failure. Any claims for damages to belongings, or for personal injury, will be dealt with by our insurance department.

### **6.6 Resident advice on damp and mould**

We will also provide general advice and guidance on how to minimise damp and condensation, particularly when there are no apparent causes relating to design or construction of the property.

Advice provided will include directing residents to sources of information and support on energy savings, if they have difficulty in heating their home.

The advice will be available at all Estate Offices, at sign up of new tenancies, publicised on the website, within the damp and mould booklet and periodically in resident publications.

### **6.7 Resident support**

We will give residents advice on how to prevent damp and what they should do to remove mould. However, we recognise that not every resident will be able to resolve damp and mould themselves. We will provide appropriate support in such cases in relation to the specific circumstances and the individual customer's needs.

We know that some residents struggle to afford to heat their homes adequately so we will work with them to ensure they are guided to all the help and support available from various funding initiatives including those offered by City Advice.

Where internal conditions within a home, such as overcrowding and excessive hoarding of personal belongings, are contributing to the damp and mould conditions, affecting the health and wellbeing of the occupants or preventing inspections or repairs works being carried out, we will provide support and assistance to review the resident's options for resolving the problem.

### **6.8 Damp and Mould follow up**

We will follow up each completed damp and mould repair within six months of any damp and mould repair work being carried out, to assess if any work undertaken and/or advice provided, has been effective.

### **6.9 Evaluation of Repairs & Maintenance Data**

We will record all instances of damp and mould and keep full records of action taken in response. The Head of Repairs and Maintenance will continue to have oversight of the process.

We will review performance measures and feedback from complaints to monitor that we are responding to damp and mould instances appropriately in accordance with the policy.

### **6.10 Proactive Approach**

The Major Works Team will periodically evaluate repairs and stock data to identify property archetypes that are more prone to damp and mould, to work alongside the Asset Management Strategy. This proactive approach will either inform future planned programmes or identify properties to be targeted that require regular stock condition surveys.

Reviews of stock data will include properties that have a lower energy performance certificate (EPC) rating, blocks of flats where damp has been reported to multiple properties or where certain archetypes of properties are more prone to historical or repeated damp and mould issues.

We will also utilise all opportunities when inside tenants' homes to identify damp and mould issues, such as repairs and stock condition inspections, tenancy inspections and contractor visits, ensuring damp and mould issues are reported as appropriate and investigated.

We will plan to proactively inspect properties and engage with tenants where it has been identified that the properties are more prone to damp and mould issues.

As part of the asset management strategy, we will include developing planned programmes as appropriate that address any building construction causes of damp and mould.

### **6.11 Resident Responsibilities**

Residents are encouraged to report any concerns about damp and mould to our Repairs service as soon as they arise. This includes reporting any evidence of rising or penetrating damp or faulty equipment that will affect the management of humidity and moisture in the home (faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, heating system failure etc.).

Tenants must allow access for inspections and for the carrying out all remedial works and servicing of appliances (gas boilers and ventilation systems).

Residents can help reduce the conditions that lead to condensation dampness by:

- Keeping the presence of moisture to a minimum e.g. covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outside (where possible), where it is safe to do so, keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.
- Adequately heating rooms (The World Health Organisation recommends 18°C. and above)
- Keeping the house well-ventilated e.g., opening windows during cooking / bathing, turning on and ensuring that the extractor fan or ventilation system installed in their home is regularly cleaned and working, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture.

### **6.12 Leaseholder Responsibilities**

We will support leaseholders in addressing damp and mould by taking proactive and collaborative steps. We will conduct property inspections to ensure that the building's structural elements, such as roofs, external walls, and windows, are well-maintained to prevent water ingress. As we do with tenants, we will share information with leaseholders on the importance of ventilation and heating to reduce moisture buildup.

## **7. Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring**

We will ensure that every case of damp, mould or condensation is managed appropriately, and practical advice, help and support is offered to each household in accordance with this policy.

The repairs contract operates 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, and the figures are reviewed by senior management on a quarterly basis. They are also discussed with the contractors at their monthly performance review meetings.

## **8. Training**

The Housing Division will ensure that our Repairs team (internal and external) will have the required skills to diagnose and remedy damp and mould.

We will ensure the provision of training for all front-line and customer service staff on the identification, treatment and the prevention of damp, mould and condensation. The training will enable them to:

- Become familiar with and understand the correct response needed when a damp or mould issue is identified by them or reported to them, including what advice to give and when to raise remedial works.
- Identify the correct equipment required to assess damp in properties and find resolution to the problem if it is our responsibility.
- Develop their knowledge on our stock and the archetypes of properties that are likely to suffer from damp and mould.

## **9. Responding to complaints and learning lessons**

We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible without residents needing to resort to legal action. Where legal action is taken, we will follow the Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Condition Claims on the Housing Ombudsman's website so that we may resolve the dispute outside of court to help ensure issues are resolved quicker for customers.

We will learn lessons from damp and mould cases, update our technical approach and how we communicate with residents, in order to improve future responses.

## **10. Related documents**

- Housing Strategy
- Housing Asset Management Strategy
- Repairs & Maintenance Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Compensation Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Decant Policy
- Voids Policy
- Tenant and Leasehold Agreements
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Decent Home Standard
- Damp, Mould and Condensation Leaflet
- Housing Ombudsman Service Spotlight on: Damp and Mould

## **11. Regulation and 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
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims (England), 2021
- Common hold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Building Regulations Act 1984

## **12. Equalities**

This Policy has been subject to an equalities impact assessment and will be implemented in accordance with our responsibilities and duties under relevant legislation, including the Equalities Act 2010.

We will ensure that tenants' needs are considered when implementing this Policy to ensure that they are treated fairly. We will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that customers with distinct communication needs are not unreasonably and disproportionately affected. This could involve providing communications in alternative languages or formats or providing interpretation or transcription as appropriate.

### **13. Data Protection**

We will comply with our obligations under relevant data protection legislation and regulations. We will process and store personal information securely.

There are some circumstances in which we are required by law to disclose information given to us.

### **14. Exceptions**

We may make an exception to the approach outlined in this policy if the circumstances require it and it is reasonable to do so. Our reasoning can be provided to the affected parties on request.

## 15. Document Management

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