

Contents

- 1. Headline Messages**
- 2. Aims of the Policy**
- 3. Scope**
- 4. Policy Approach**
 - 4.1 Prevention
 - 4.2 Dealing with damp and mould
 - 4.3 Supporting our residents
 - 4.4 Staff training

Appendices

- 1. Assurance**
- 2. Legislation and Regulation**
- 3. Other appendices as relevant**
- 4. Policy controls**

1. **Headline messages**

- **We want to provide homes that everyone can be proud of**
- **We'll make sure we keep our residents safe, secure and warm by fulfilling our responsibilities for health and safety and decent homes.**
- **We'll take reports of damp and mould seriously.**
- **We'll focus on tackling the root cause of the problem and carry out any repairs needed to prevent damp and mould from reoccurring.**
- **We'll work together with and continue to support our residents to prevent mould and damp now and in the future.**

2. **Aims of the policy**

Damp and mould can have serious impacts on the health and well-being of our residents and their families. It also has serious implications for our homes, potentially leading to long term damage and structural issues if effective action is not taken or taken quickly.

This policy sets out our approach to managing damp and mould and how we will respond to reports of damp and mould.

- We will comply with all relevant legislation and regulatory requirements.
- We will ensure our process for residents to report damp and mould is easy, clear, and accessible.
- We will ensure that our residents have access to and provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp and mould.
- We will consider the needs, vulnerabilities, and circumstances of our residents' when we offer any advice ensuring it's appropriate, clear, practical, and sensitive alongside any action we will take.
- We will treat all our residents who are reporting damp and mould to us with respect, sensitivity, and empathy, and will not impart any blame or judgement as to the reason for the damp and mould.
- We will take responsibility for identifying, investigating, and resolving damp and mould as quickly and effectively as we can. We will ensure to keep residents informed of our actions and next steps and communicate on a regular basis.
- We will ensure all relevant staff are trained to identify damp and mould and can advise residents appropriately.
- We will continue to embed a data-driven, risk-based approach so we can be more proactive in our approach to damp and mould, anticipating where issues may arise and intervening earlier to avoid unnecessary escalations, complaints, and disrepair cases.

3. **Scope**

Our policy applies to all our tenants where we have maintenance responsibilities for their homes.

For our leaseholders and shared owners, we will meet the responsibilities as set out in the terms of the lease but will always provide relevant guidance and advice.

The policy should be read alongside our Repairs Policy.

Definitions

- Damp: is the excess of moisture that can't escape from the homes, which can lead to significant damage to the home such as rotten timber elements such as windows and doors. These are the main types of damp:
 - Condensation damp – this is the most common type of dampness and is caused by moisture in the air inside the home meeting a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The drop in temperature causes the moisture to turn to liquid water on the surface and then soak in. It is usually found in kitchens, bathrooms, corners of rooms, on north facing walls and on or near windows. It can also be found behind wardrobes and beds due to low air circulation. Conditions that can increase the risk of condensation are – inadequate ventilation, inadequate heating, inadequate thermal insulation, high humidity and poor building design and construction.
 - Penetrating damp - where water comes in from the outside or through internal leaks causing damage to the internal surfaces or structure. Could be issues such as damaged brickwork, missing roof tiles, loose flashing, or leaking rainwater goods. This can be more noticeable, particularly following a period of rainfall as there will be a well-defined 'damp-patch' which look and feels damp to touch. This is a result of a problem and fault with the home, which requires a repair. Who is responsible for the repair, depends on what the fault is and where it is.
 - Rising damp - where water comes up from the ground through the brickwork, this is usually due to a defective damp proof course (DPC). This will usually be our responsibility to fix.
- Mould – is a type of fungus that breaks down dead organic material. It will only develop in damp conditions and spreads through spores. It is usually black. If not dealt with and is allowed to grow, can cause health problems, such as coughs and symptoms of asthma.

4. Policy approach

4.1 Prevention

For our residents, we provide accessible information on our website to raise awareness about the causes of damp and mould and advice on how it could be avoided. This includes advice on how to remove moisture from homes, keeping homes properly ventilated, and how to stop rooms from getting too cold.

We are committed to ensuring that all our empty homes, prior to being let, are free from all forms of dampness. We will check all ground floor walls for rising dampness with an electronic moisture meter. If there is any condensation mould, this will be washed off and sterilised with an anti-fungicidal solution. We will also check that our homes ventilation and heating are in good mechanical order and install loft insulation and cavity wall insulation if this is required.

We will ensure, through our Major Works Investment Programme, to deliver on our objective that every resident has a safe and decent home to live in. One of the focuses of this programme will be to improve the energy efficiency of our homes and identifying homes that we can bring up to meet Energy Performance Certificate C status and Net Zero where possible.

4.2 Dealing with damp and mould

We want our residents who are noticing signs of damp or mould in their home to report it to us immediately, even if the problem is only small as we can offer practical advice. We want to ensure that it is easy to report these issues to us and this could be done by calling us on:

0300 456 9996 (tenants in London and the South East)

0300 777 7777 (tenants in the North West)

Our general needs tenants can also report their issues to their Neighbourhood Housing Lead. Our sheltered and supported housing tenants can report their issues to their Supported Housing Officer. Our tenants living in a Private Rented Sector (PRS) home, Intermediate Market Rent (IMR) or London Living Rent (LLR) home can report their issues to their Property Managers.

Following a report of Damp and Mould, we will establish if an immediate repair is required (leak, health and safety risk) and act in accordance with our Repairs policy. Following the report an assessment of the property will be agreed at a mutually convenient time within 20 working days to understand the scale of the problem. The assessment will identify the underlying cause of the damp and mould within the property and provide the tenant with guidance on managing mould within the property. Any remedial works identified will be recorded and raised to our internal or external maintenance teams within 10 working days of the assessment. Multiple fixes may be required and therefore, we will be clear with residents on timescales and keep them informed throughout

We will consider a range of interventions to tackle and, where possible, eliminate damp and mould – this could include:

- Providing clear, sensitive, practical advice and guidance to our residents on how they can resolve damp and mould in their homes.
- On a case-by-case basis give more tailored advice that is tailored for each resident and their home.
- Where appropriate, clean and shield treatments (can be known as mould washes).
- Possible adjustment of heating controls to help them perform better to prevent mould in the future.
- Possible installation of humidity and temperature sensors to remotely monitor temperature changes which enable us to proactively intervene if temperatures are too low or high and advise tenants accordingly.
- Possible installation and/or upgrading of fans to improve ventilation.
- Undertaking repairs in accordance with our Repairs Policy.
- Where appropriate, regular monitoring of the situation with follow up calls and if required, additional visits.

We will work with our residents to ensure ease of access and agree appointment times, and reasonable notice will be given. If we are denied access for no good reason, continually prevented from entry or we receive no response to our requests then we will escalate actions to gain entry, which may include injunctive proceedings. We will refer any case to the relevant team when entry is denied on more than three occasions. They will take actions that are proportionate to the reason/s that we require entry. We will ensure we follow our Property Access policy and procedure should this occur.

Where we are dealing with any homes that have been reported damp and mould and they have been identified for future disposal or are part of a regeneration area, we will continue to maintain and repair these until the time of disposal.

4.3 Supporting our residents

We want to support our residents in every way we can to reduce and hopefully eliminate damp and mould in their homes. We recognise there are many factors that can contribute to damp and mould occurring, and some of these may require us signposting and/or referring residents to other services we provide or external agencies. If we identify or are aware of any vulnerabilities, we will ensure we deliver our services and support in line with our Vulnerable Residents' policy.

When a damp or mould problem is perpetuated by property conditions such as hoarding, cost of heating/pre-payment meters and overcrowded conditions, we will ensure appropriate referrals are made – this could be to our Neighbourhood Housing Leads, Lettings, Resident Support Leads or Tenancy Sustainment services who will support with these challenges and help to alleviate the presenting damp and mould.

If we need to rehouse a tenant to allow work to be carried out, we will follow our Allocations and Lettings Policy which details our rehousing position for general needs tenants. Property Managers will manage the rehousing process for our PRS, IMR or LLR tenants.

4.4 Staff training

We are committed to ensuring all relevant front-line staff are trained and are aware and understand their roles and responsibilities in meeting the aims of this policy.

We will ensure our contractors and partners have the required skills to diagnose and remedy damp and mould.

We will regularly review the training we are providing and ensure it is up-to-date and meets all the latest standards and requirements.

Appendices

1. Assurance

When assessing compliance with the policy, we will consider the following:

- Acting in line with our Customer Promise, specifically 'we'll listen and act'
- Acting in accordance with our Vulnerable Residents Policy
- The timeliness of taking action to address damp and mould issues
- Accuracy of our record keeping
- Quality of our communication – tone of voice/empathy

2. Legislation and Regulation

We will ensure that we address damp and mould in accordance with relevant legislation and regulation:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 section 11
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018

Regulation:

- Home Standard
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

3. Equality Impact

We do not see that this policy will have a negative impact or particular impact on any group but should, if implemented and embedded effectively, have a positive impact on our residents experiencing damp and mould in their homes.

4. Resident engagement

Our Resident Services Board discussed our gap analysis work in response to the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight report on damp and mould and its recommendations on 8th February 2023 and agreed that a dedicated Damp and Mould policy should be developed to ensure we are providing a clear service offer to our residents.

Policy controls sheet

Date of approval: 22/05/23

Approved by: Customer Group

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Author: Policy and Assurance Team, Sustainability Operations Manager

Policy owned by: Executive Group Director - Property Services

Associated documents: Repairs Policy, Vulnerable Residents Policy, Property Access Policy, Allocation and Lettings Policy

Main change New policy designed to ensure we can respond effectively to the Housing Ombudsman's spotlight report and its recommendations on Damp and Mould.	Key points <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A
Reviewed by: N/A Approved by: N/A	