

AMP05

# Damp and Mould

## Policy

Last Review	October 2024
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Lead Officer	Head of Assets and Sustainability

BOARD APPROVAL



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## 1. Introduction

Trust is committed to ensuring the health and safety of our customers, staff and others who may be affected by damp, mould and condensation in homes that we own or manage. We will ensure that Trust properties are fit for human habitation and meet all of the relevant requirements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS)

The primary purpose of this policy is to ensure that all Trust colleagues and customers are aware, understand and are equipped with information to deliver the requirements of our process in respect of issues relating to damp, mould and condensation

## 2. Context

### 2.1. Legal and Regulatory Framework

In developing this Policy, the relevant legal and regulatory requirements were considered and taken into account, this includes but was not limited to:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974
- Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS)
- Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2004

### 2.2. Background and Purpose

A Publication by the Housing Ombudsman in October 2021 highlighted issues with the management and failure to act upon reports of damp and mould within English based Housing Associations. The report was commissioned following the tragic death of a two-year-old, with the mould issue to be the primary cause. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has acted promptly, by requesting all Scottish Housing Associations outline and evidence how they approach, mould and condensation issues, what actions taken and how individual occurrences of condensation and mould are dealt with when raised by tenants.

Estimates in the UK are that between 10-50% of homes are affected by condensation and damp conditions. Social Housing and low-income communities, where this is often prevalent, has been found to be caused by overcrowding, lack of appropriate heating, ventilation, and insulation, also lack of support and guidance from landlords.

A purposeful approach to the prevention, treatment and remediation of these issues will benefit our tenants and communities. Moving forward our tools will include better data and recording of condensation and damp with an action plan, improved reporting and identification of condensation and mould, an end-to-end tenant's service with

better joined up advice, guidance, and support. This includes a better use of innovative technology prevention schemes.

### **2.3. Definitions**

“Customer” – Any tenant or leaseholder of a property or commercial unit owned and/or managed by Trust.

“Repair” – The process of rectifying a component or installation when it is faulty or in a state of disrepair.

“Damp” – Structural dampness is the presence of unwanted moisture in the structure of a building, either the result of intrusion from outside or condensation from within the structure.

“Mould” – A natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. It is often noticeable and present in situation where condensation damp is present.

### **2.4. Causes**

There are four main causes of damp and mould within homes. It is important to understand the difference between them because each require different solutions:

“Water Leaks” – From either a defective supply or waste pipework (especially in bathrooms and kitchens), which can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings, often caused by wear and tear or through actions of individuals disrupting pipework.

“Rising Damp” – Movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building through capillary action.

“Penetrating Damp” – Water penetrating the exterior of a structure or internal leaks causing damage to the internal surfaces or structure.

“Condensation” – Moisture held in warm air coming into contact with cold surfaces, subsequently condensing and causing water droplets.

Scenarios which may increase the risk of condensation are:

- Lack of ventilation within the property
- Inadequate heating
- Inadequate insulation
- High levels of humidity
- Overcrowding – this includes pets as well as residents

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1. Our Responsibilities

- We shall investigate to determine the cause of damp and condensation and carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with our repairs policy.
- Undertake a property inspection when a repair is reported relating to suspected Damp, Mould & Condensation.
- Diagnose the cause of damp correctly and deliver effective solutions based on the ethos of dealing with the cause of the damp not just the symptom and wherever possible fixing first time.
- We will operate a reporting framework to enhance our customer and property information, which will potentially shape our future investment programmes.
- Promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to control damp and condensation.
- Ensure that all relevant colleagues have training and are aware of and understand the delivery of the service that will meet the aims of this policy.
- Inform the customer of the findings of the investigations following a property visit. This will include identifying the possible causes of damp, recommending effective solutions and all necessary remedial works / actions / enhancements and the estimated timescales to complete the works /measures; keeping the customer updated throughout the process from inception to completion.
- Ensure that only competent contractors will be employed to carry out any works and that the customer's possessions are adequately protected during the works.
- We are responsible for insulating and ventilating the customers' home in accordance with Scottish Quality Housing Standard / Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) to help reduce the likelihood of condensation occurring.
- We are responsible for maintaining customers' homes to avoid penetrating and rising damp and for carrying out remedial action if these problems occur.
- We will undertake reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation dampness. This may include but is not limited to; upgraded ventilation system installation, localised insulation installation.
- Performance on damp and mould inspections will be reported to the Trust Board, with the board reviewing and agreeing target timescale.
- We will make good internal surfaces following any repairs work carried out,
- ensuring that surfaces are prepared to a condition ready for the customer to redecorate. Where there is a need to decorate, following remedial work carried out by Trust or we will provide a decoration voucher to cover the cost of the materials needed to make good the decoration.

### 3.2. Customer Responsibilities

- Immediately report any evidence of rising and penetrating damp (see definitions) and 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.)

- Customers 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 – ideally at 18°C.
- 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.
- Follow all advice and guidance issued by us on managing humidity and moisture in the home which can lead to condensation.
- If all reasonable efforts have been made to manage and control the presence of condensation and mould, and this has not been successful, contact us immediately.
- Allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works.
- If following an inspection by a member of Trust technical staff, the outcome shows that all reasonable measures are in place for the customer to adequately control condensation and mould, further advice and support will be given to the customer.
- The tenancy agreement, licenses and long leases recommends that the customer arranges adequate household contents insurance for the home that they occupy.
- Where customers are considering making any changes within their home: for example, converting rooms into one room, adding extensions, converting non-habitable buildings/spaces into habitable, they must seek advice and permission from Trust in accordance with their tenancy agreement.
- Where customers do not follow advice or prohibit Trust to take forward inspections or remedial works in relation to damp and mould we reserve the right to charge customers for any remedial works or consultancy fees incurred by Trust as a result of the customers actions.

### **3.3. Assisting our customers**

Where internal conditions within a home are influencing the health and wellbeing of customers or are preventing inspections/repair works to be completed e.g. overcrowding, excessive hoarding of personal belongings, we will provide support and assistance to review the customer's options that may include moving to more appropriate or alternative suitable accommodation.

We recognise that some customers may need help when it comes to meeting their repair responsibilities. We may, entirely at our discretion, provide a service in addition to the statutory and contractual responsibilities, to assist our customers who may need support to meet the conditions of their tenancy. We will make this assessment with the customer based on their individual needs, including whether there is anyone else who might reasonably assist them, and whether there are any immediate risks to their

health or safety. This may include an extension to the scope of repairs which we carry out. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Where decoration is required after works associated with damp and mould, decoration vouchers will be provided to assist with the provision of paint and equipment.

Further consideration will be given to customers and their specific individual or family circumstances, with a view to providing additional assistance where deemed necessary. The nature of the assistance will solely be at our discretion.

## **4. Outcomes & Standards**

### **4.1. Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes & Standards**

#### **Outcome 1 – Equalities**

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- they support the right to adequate housing
- every tenant and other customer have their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

#### **Outcome 2 – Communication**

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

#### **Outcome 3 – Participation**

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

#### **Outcome 4 – Quality of Housing**

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants' homes, as a minimum, when they are allocated are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and any other building quality standard in place throughout the tenancy; and also meet the relevant Energy Efficiency and Zero Emission Standard.

## **Outcome 5 – Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements**

Social landlords manage their business so that:

- tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.

## **Outcome 13 – Value for Money**

Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that:

- tenants', owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay

## **4.2. Regulatory Standards of Governance & Financial Management**

### **Standard 1**

The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.

### **Standard 2**

The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.

### **Standard 4**

The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.

### **Standard 5**

The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity

### **Standard 6**

The governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.

## **5. Data Protection**

We will comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018, which gives individuals the right to see and receive a copy of any personal information that is held about them by the Association and to have any inaccuracies corrected.



## **6. Anti-Bribery**

Trust is committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity in all its activities and, to ensure compliance with the Bribery Act 2010, it has introduced an Anti-Bribery policy and procedures. These must be adhered to by all colleagues, Board Members and associated persons or organisations acting for or on behalf of Trust when undertaking any actions referred to in this policy.

## **7. Statement Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)**

As leaders of EDI, Trust aims to promote equality and diversity and operate equal opportunities policies which inform all aspects of its business. It will ensure that it adheres to the Equality Act 2010 by being committed to equal and fair treatment for all and opposed to any form of unlawful discrimination. As such, in considering this policy, no one will be treated differently or less favourably than others because of any of the protected characteristics as listed in the Equality Act 2010:

- disability;
- sex;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- sexual orientation;
- religion or belief;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- age;

or because of any other condition or characteristic which could place someone at a disadvantage were it to be taken into account, unless this can be objectively justified in terms of the legislation.

Trust will make reasonable adjustments for disabled people where necessary and possible to do so and will use Happy to Translate tools and procedures to help overcome a language barrier.

## **8. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis. The purpose of the review is to assess the policy's effectiveness and adhering to current legislation and good practice and identify any changes which may be required.

## **9. Document References**

In all of the Trust's official documents, where references are made to specific job titles, roles, groups or committees, such references shall be deemed to include any changes or amendments to these job titles, roles, groups or committees resulting from any restructuring or organisational changes made within Trust (or, where this policy

also applies to another member of the Trust group, made within that group member) between policy reviews.