

DAMP AND MOULD POLICY

Approved On	April 2023
Review Date	April 2026

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 This policy aims to set out the approach West of Scotland Housing Association Limited (WSHA) will take to prevent and address any cases of damp and/or mould in your home. We aim to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould.

1.2 This policy will help ensure that we provide safe and healthy home environments for our tenants and their household and protect the fabric of our property.

1.3 WSHA will adopt in the first instance a preventative approach to dampness and mould

1.4 The policy will aim to give confidence to tenants that we will also robustly respond to all reports of dampness and/or mould in our homes.

1.5 WSHA's will focus on property solutions to dampness and mould and will not use tenant's "lifestyle" as a reason for any issues found. Unless a tenant is misusing their home's ventilation or other systems, we will avoid automatically apportioning blame or use language that leaves residents feeling blamed. Our homes will be suitable for modern living where tenants can complete everyday activities without being blamed for causing dampness.

1.6 WSHA will respond promptly to any reports of dampness and mould and continue to monitor the effectiveness of both the advice we offer to tenants and any remedial work we undertake.

1.7 WSHA will not solely rely on tenants reporting dampness and mould to us and will develop a strategy which will risk assess our properties to pro-actively identify properties at greater risk of experiencing dampness or mould.

1.8 Below are additional policy commitments in relation to dampness and mould:

We will ensure our tenants:

- live in safe, well insulated and dry homes;
- are given good advice and information on how to minimise the risk of condensation and mould developing in their homes
- are made aware of our responsibilities in relation to tackling dampness and mould in our homes;

We will ensure that we:

- meet our legal and regulatory responsibilities.
- monitor and action incidences of dampness and mould in our homes
- undertake thorough investigations and implement all reasonable repair solutions and improvements to eliminate damp including, managing, and controlling condensation.
- Ensure that customers have access to and are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp and condensation.
- Ensure budgets are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp, mould, and condensation problems.
- We won't close off cases until we are certain that reported dampness and mould is no longer a problem in a tenant's home.

- Implement data quality and insight measures to assist with informing us of the possible risks to our properties so that we can undertake proactive measures to eliminate damp, mould, and condensation before it becomes a problem for our customers.
- Ensure that the fabric of our properties is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp, mould, and condensation
- When delivering net zero carbon homes, aim to prevent mould and damp resulting from delivery of net zero

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 The Director of Development & Asset Management is responsible for ensuring the overall adoption of, and adherence to, this policy and its associated procedures relevant to their operation.

2.2 All relevant Managers and Senior Officers/Team Leaders are responsible for ensuring that effective training is provided to all staff, and that this is applied consistently throughout all areas of operation.

2.3 All staff working within WSHA are responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy.

2.4 The Technical Officers, will be the lead officers for implementation of the policy and associated procedures on a day-to-day basis.

2.5 The Maintenance & Asset Managers, with the assistance of the Senior Officers/Team Leaders, will support and oversee all services in respect of preventing and addressing dampness and mould.

3. REFERENCES AND SOURCES

3.1 The following legislation and other documents are relevant to the content of this policy and may be referred to for further information and context:

- The Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.
- The Scottish Housing Regulatory Framework
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter
- 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
- The Environmental Health Protection Act 1990

- Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2004
- Tenements Scotland Act 2004
- Letting Agent Code of Practice (Scotland) Regulations 2016
- Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016
- The Scottish Housing Quality Standard / EESSH (Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing) . The Scottish Housing Quality Standard developed by the Scottish Government requires that the homes provided by social landlords:
 - *Meet the Tolerable Standard;*
 - *Are free from serious disrepair;*
 - *Are energy efficient*
 - *Have modern facilities and services; and*
 - *Are healthy, safe and secure*

4. EQUALITIES

4.1 We will not unfairly discriminate against any person within the protected characteristic groups as contained within the Equality Act 2010 or people who experience socio-economic disadvantage. To ensure equal access to the information contained in this policy for all, we are happy to provide copies in Braille, in larger print, translated into other languages or on tape to you or anybody that you know upon request and where practicable.

4.2 WSHA will seek to ensure that tenancies are managed in a manner that is fair to all sections of the community regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, socio-economic status.

4.3 As with all Association policies and practices, the Association will adhere to Outcome 1 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter (Equalities): ‘Social Landlords perform in all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services’.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 Tenants (through an online survey) and our The Tenant Scrutiny Panel were consulted on this Policy.

6. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

6.1 This policy will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that the content remains compliant with legislation and reflects best practice. Audits may take place if commissioned by the Director of Development & Asset Management to ensure there is consistent practice and adoption of the policy principles.

6.2 Period of review

6.2.1 Until a new policy is formally adopted this document will remain in force and operational.

6.2.2 This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the policy review programme agreed by Corporate Management Team.

6.2.3 If there are significant changes to legislation or regulation or there are found to be deficiencies or failures in this policy, as a result of complaints or findings from any independent organisations, the Director of Development & Asset Management will initiate an immediate review.

6.2.4 Where appropriate, key stakeholders such as tenants and interested parties will be consulted as part of any review of this policy.

7. APPROVAL

7.1 This policy is approved by WSHA Board and applies to any properties managed across the West of Scotland group.

8. DAMPNESS AND MOULD – IMPACT ON HEALTH & DEFINITIONS

8.1.1 Impact of damp and mould on health.

Mould spores can pose a danger to health, particularly to children, older people and people with existing skin and respiratory conditions or a weaker immune system. It can cause respiratory problems, trigger asthma attacks and allergies, and make it more likely that people will suffer from infections and have an impact on mental wellbeing

8.1.2 Rising Damp

The movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building through capillary action.

8.1.3 Penetrating Damp (including internal leaks)

Water penetrating the external structure of the building or internal leaks causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure.

8.1.4 Condensation Damp

Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets.

The conditions that may increase the risk of condensation are:

- Lack of ventilation within the property.
- Inadequate heating
- Inadequate loft insulation.
- High humidity
- Overcrowding/Hoarding

9. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1 Tenant Reports of Dampness and Mould and Service Standards.

We will undertake a property inspection when a repair is reported relating to suspected Damp, Mould & Condensation. We will 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.

We will respond to all reports of damp and condensation and complete any repair works/measures in line with our Repairs policy. This will be dependent on the severity and urgency of the problem, the complexity of the solution and the repair works/actions required.

Our service standards for responding to reports of Dampness & Mould are set out below:

- We will visit a tenant's home within 3 working days when they report dampness or mould to us.
- Complete remedial work within 6 working days unless a specialist contractor inspection is required. In such cases we will look to complete remedial work within the timescales proposed by the specialist contractor.
- We will follow up each completed repair within six weeks of any damp and mould repair work being carried out.
- We will programme further visits every 6 months until both the tenant and the Association is happy that the issue has been resolved.
- All logged repairs must have evidence of at least three attempts to contact the customer.

9.2 Proactive Inspections.

We will periodically require access to your home for the purposes of carrying out a Stock Condition Survey. During this inspection the surveyor will also be looking for any signs of excess moisture within the home. The surveyor will discuss with you anything that may require to be addressed and also raise a repair request to ensure any incidence is recorded and appropriate action implemented.

Routine Visits to Tenant's Homes

The Tenancy Management Policy includes an aim to visit all tenants periodically. The goal is to achieve this every three years. Doing so will provide an opportunity to proactively identify a number of issues, including the possibility of problems with damp and mould in a tenant's home. A system will be put in place to ensure this aim is achieved and any issues are recorded and followed up following the visit.

Any Association staff member who has reason to visit a property for whatever reason will also effectively be inspecting it for obvious signs of dampness and mould. Anything noted at such times will be recorded and appropriate action implemented.

9.3 Remedial Repairs & Improvement Works

We will make reasonable attempts to access the property to inspect and carry out the works. Written communication must then be provided to the customer asking them to contact us to organise a new repair and record each attempt on our customer database.

We will visually inspect the external fabric of the building for repairs/issues and report these to prevent penetrating dampness occurring.

We shall investigate to determine the cause of damp and condensation and carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with our repairs policy.

We will diagnose the cause of damp correctly and deliver effective solutions based on a consistent approach of dealing with the cause of the damp not just the symptom and wherever possible fixing first time.

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, improved indoor air movement and quality best practices.

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 need to decorate following remedial work carried out by WSHA we will provide a decoration voucher to cover the cost of the materials needed to make good the decoration.

If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day-by-day basis or a temporary decant to an alternative property. The customer will be supported through this process to find suitable accommodation.

9.4 Void homes and Relets

An important opportunity to assess the condition of our homes is when they become void. When a property is vacant:

1. Damp and mould issues will be treated and resolved before reletting the property
2. The void assessment checklist will include steps like checking that extractor fans and checking ventilation systems are working effectively as this will help to prevent the build-up of excess moisture in the property.

9.5 Advice and Information to Tenants

In some cases, remedial work may not be necessary so additional support and advice will be provided to the customer on managing and controlling the occurrences of condensation damp.

We will promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to control damp and condensation.

Where internal conditions within a home for example, overcrowding and excessive hoarding of personal belongs are influencing health and wellbeing of the occupants or are preventing inspections or repairs works being carried out, we will provide support and assistance to review the customer's options.

We also recognise that some of our 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.

We know that many of our Tenants on low income will struggle to heat their homes, which can lead to their rooms being more likely to develop mould from moisture settling on cold surfaces. We will aim to support tenants on low incomes who struggle to heat their homes where we have resources available to help mitigate the likelihood of dampness and mould developing.

9.6 Use of Environmental Sensors

WSHA has been trialling the use of “Environmental Sensors” which are located within tenants’ homes that primarily record heat and moisture content. The information that the sensors monitor is accessed through an on-line platform.

WSHA monitor any alarms within the platform, and we have appointed a lead within the Repairs Team to be responsible for this.

On completion of pilots we may roll this out as part of our routine approach to tackling dampness and mould in our homes.

9.7 Staff Training

We will ensure that all employees have appropriate and relevant training and are aware of and understand the delivery of the service that will meet the aims of this policy. This will include:

- General awareness-raising training for all staff: all staff, particularly those who may enter tenants’ homes or respond to repair requests, should be trained to identify damp and mould and understand the organisation’s policies and processes for responding to it.
- Specific, technical training for staff dealing with damp and mould: staff who will respond to reports of damp and mould must be trained and appropriately equipped to assess the issue including use of PPE), identify the root cause, and respond appropriately.

9.8 Contractors

We will 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.

WSHA will appoint an independent specialist contractor to inspect and report on incidences of dampness and mould where it is not immediately clear as to the cause.

All specialist reports in to dampness and mould will be shared with tenants and an outline of the remediation required should be related to the tenant.

9.9 Preventing Dampness and Mould

We are responsible for maintaining our customers’ home in accordance with Scottish Quality Housing Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH). This includes

that we are responsible for maintaining customers' homes to avoid penetrating and rising damp and for carrying out remedial action if these problems occur.

We undertake on-going investment in stock to ensure that homes are modern with good facilities which includes periodically replacing kitchens, bathrooms and windows. This work includes the installation of new extractor fans that help remove the build up of moisture in the kitchen and bathrooms as this is where most moisture is generated. In addition our replacement windows include trickle vents that are designed to ensure a low level of air movement throughout the home to minimise the build up of moisture.

Our new homes are built in accordance with the relevant building standards in place at the time. Often we surpass these minimum standards. As new homes are particularly well insulated it is important that all the measures for moisture control and to ensure air movement are allowed to operate as intended to maximise enjoyment of the home and to protect the fabric of the property. We will provide advice to tenants of new homes on how to best to ventilate the property.

9.10 Communication & Partnership Working

To manage our response to dampness and mould effectively, the Repairs Team Leader and their team will work in partnership with relevant internal teams such as the Asset/Housing Services Team and also external contractors. Specific details on how WSHA will deal in detail with damp and mould issues and the scope of responsibilities is set out in the Damp and Mould Procedure.

9.11 Repairs & Maintenance Budget

We use our repairs and maintenance budget for responding to dampness and mould. Our approach will always be to find out the reason for the incidence of the excess moisture, dampness or mould in a home. We will approach a repair by trying to achieve the optimum outcome recognising our budgets. Where the root cause behind the issue is not clear, the reason may be established through a process of eliminating the obvious and monitoring the effectiveness of this before more costly repairs are considered as a next stage.

9.12 Data Recording

We will consider how best to implement a data driven approach. We will establish the optimal method of how we can better capture a report of damp and mould repair within our current repairs system and the report on incidences and outcomes.

10. TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

We will ask that all tenants:

- 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.)
- Try to 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) or alternatively in a well-ventilated room with the door closed, , keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.

- Adequately heating rooms, if they can afford to – 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. This information can be found on WSHA's website or in new tenant packs.
- If all reasonable efforts have been made to manage and control the presence of condensation and mould, and this has not been successful we ask that tenant's contact us immediately to identify a property solution.
- Allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works.
- If following an inspection by an independent specialist surveyor, 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 such as providing advice on best use of heating system and best way to ventilate the property.
- Where a tenant is not satisfied with our response we ask that they raise this through our Complaints Handling Procedure.