



Damp and Mould Policy

1.0 Purpose and scope

1.1 Purpose

We recognise the impact that damp and mould can have on our residents and operate a zero-tolerance approach to its presence. Ensuring healthy, safe homes, now and in the future, is fundamental to our repairs and asset management plans.

This policy and associated procedure will provide a framework for our staff to effectively deal with reported damp and mould problems. The policy is aimed at ensuring residents get appropriate information regarding the causes and control of damp and mould and we carry out our duties in relation to the provision of a "healthy and safe" home.

We will:

- Establish a positive culture and proactive approach to reports of damp & mould that produces regular learning outcomes.
- Ensure an empathetic manner of communication with our residents.
- Ensure that we fulfil our repairing obligations as a landlord.
- Take fast and effective action to eliminate any identified HHSRS issues.
- Provide transparency to residents about their rights and correct processes in the event of a service failure.
- Aim to resolve the issues "right first time" and prevent reoccurrence.

We have positively adopted an approach of collective responsibility for the eradication of damp and mould in our homes. This is to ensure we provide and maintain dry, warm, healthy homes for our residents and ensure the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould.

1.2 Scope

This policy outlines our approach to dealing with damp and mould in homes and communal areas for which we are responsible for carrying out repairs, as determined by the tenancy, licence agreement or lease. It should be used by all to ensure they understand the obligations placed upon us to maintain a safe environment for residents and employees within the homes of each resident, and within all communal areas of buildings.

2.0 Definitions

This is not an exhaustive list and highlights commonly used terminology.

Damp: an excess of moisture that can't escape from a structure, which can also go on to cause significant damage to the building. There are three/four main causes of dampness in homes, which each require different solutions.

- **Rising damp:** water that rises through fabric and brick walls of a building after being absorbed from the surrounding ground.
- **Penetrating damp:** water penetrates the fabric of the building from the outside to the inside, for example, because of a leak.
- **Condensation:** occurs when warm, moist air touches a cooler surface such as tiles, windows, or walls. If left for a long period of time, it can cause damp and/or mould.

Mould: is a type of fungus. It spreads through spores, which are invisible to the naked eye but are in the air around us all the time and can quickly grow on surfaces where dampness persists, or water has formed into a visible covering.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS): places a legal duty on landlords to assess and regularly review the condition of their properties to ensure that properties are safe and free from hazards. This includes issues related to damp and mould.

3.0 Letting standard

We do not ask tenants to move into a property where we have identified damp or mould. If damp or mould is present at viewing, this will be remediated before the tenant is asked to move into the property.

We will also, during the normal inspection regime of a mutual exchange, actively look for signs of damp and mould to proactively begin a remediation process.

4.0 Identifying damp or mould

The primary aim is to identify the source and not the consequences of damp and mould. This will then allow an effective treatment plan to be put in place. We will make no lifestyle judgement, but instead take an objective view of the cause and remedy to allow for an effective approach that promotes collective responsibility.

4.1 Engagement with residents

We will proactively engage with individuals and organised residents to raise the awareness of damp and mould. We will also provide information leaflets and signpost to other useful resources such as instructional videos.

We will ensure an empathetic and proactive approach when our residents report instances of damp and mould within their homes. We will ensure our communication and information that we provide is effective in helping residents avoid any mould issues within their homes.

Our Local Officers, Surveyors, Repairs Team and Contractors will keep our residents fully updated at every stage of their damp/mould issue including the recommendations from specialist contractors and timescales for works.

We will ensure that any remedies aim to minimise any distress and inconvenience caused to the resident, whilst also recognising that each case is individual and should be considered on its own merits.

We will ensure that our staff, contractors, and specialists have the correct level of knowledge to share the outcomes of all surveys and inspections with residents to help them understand the findings and be clear on next steps.

We will actively engage with and support our residents if they are experiencing issues such as fuel poverty. If this is identified as a contributing factor to mould growth, our trained members of staff will signpost residents to our third-party partners who can offer support. When a complex case is identified we may engage with external agencies to assist in resolving the issue.

4.2 Training

We ensure that all customer-facing and call-centre staff have the appropriate training on damp and mould awareness.

We will ensure that only suitably competent specialists, contractors, and suppliers, are procured and appointed to undertake the works including the installation of specialist equipment and application of specialist materials.

Our expectation is that staff and contractors have the ability to identify and report early signs of damp and mould. Through ongoing performance reviews, we will identify and resolve any skills gaps to ensure our staff and contractors have appropriate expertise to accurately diagnose and respond to reports of damp and mould. This includes identification of complex cases at an early stage, a documented escalation process and a clear strategy for keeping residents informed at all stages.

The Procurement and Contracts and Strategy teams will check the relevant accreditations of the specialists and contractors engaged for carrying out damp and mould works. These checks will be undertaken as part of the procurement process and/or on an annual basis and evidenced appropriately.

We will ensure that any suppliers and operatives carrying out works on behalf of the organisation have the relevant and appropriate training required for their role. This will be managed via periodic assessments and audits of suppliers to ensure compliance.

4.3 Intelligence

We carry out stock condition surveys on all social rented homes on a five-year cycle, allowing us to continuously assess and monitor our homes. Considering factors such as the age and property type, energy performance certificate (EPC) rating and history of repairs of a property, as well as the presence of any HHSRS hazard, we determine which properties are more likely to require investment or proactive visits to ensure damp and mould is not present.

Along with stock condition surveys, we capture high-resolution aerial images of the external parts of social-rented and leasehold buildings every seven years to ensure the fabric remains in good condition. These aerial photos capture the conditions of the roofs, chimney stacks and anything that is visible.

We will also analyse any previous reports of damp and mould to spot clusters of hotspots, or specific archetypes, that may benefit from proactive visits.

4.4 Line of sight

We operate a “line of sight” policy which ensures all relevant officers, (including non-technical officers who may encounter the resident or visit the property) have

basic damp and mould training and are able to make effective observations and report the issues back to the organisation for thorough investigation where needed.

In addition, our programme of annual visits to each social rented home, alongside our regular estate inspections provide us with further opportunities to identify any potential issues. At every annual visit we will discuss with our residents if there are any damp and mould issues in the home, and if necessary, inspect the property to identify the root cause or escalate for a full technical survey.

Data collection will be analysed to ensure we take a proactive / preventative approach to damp or mould. Trends will also inform future planned investment programmes such as loft insulation or window replacement.

We will use the data collection to identify trends in certain property types and we will ensure our strategy for delivering net zero carbon homes consider and plans for how we can identify and respond to potential unintended consequences around damp and mould.

We will also share learning from complaints and the positive impact of changes made as a result complaints outcomes. Data systems should allow us to analyse complaints data effectively and identify themes, trends and learning opportunities.

5.0 Responding to a report

5.1 Reporting damp and/or mould

Residents can report suspected damp and mould through a variety of methods:

- Calling us directly on our dedicated damp and mould phone number (020 8451 8001)
- In person, for example, at their annual visit
- Online through their individual 'My Account' housing account
- By email or phone to their named local officer
- Via our live chat functionality on our website

5.2 Process for dealing with Damp and Mould issues.

- All initial reports of damp or mould growth will be prioritised as urgent with consideration given to any vulnerabilities.
- The enquiry will be passed to the Local Officer who will contact the customer within 5 working days and make an agreed appointment to visit within 10 working days.
- During the inspection, an assessment will be made by the Local Officer as to the cause of the damp or mould concerns and they discuss any actions that can be taken to reduce the occurrence of mould.
- A complete initial inspection will be recorded via a standardised template to capture all relevant information. This report can be shared with the resident following completion.

- Following the inspection the Local Officer will complete a report and recommendations for any minor remedial works and submit the necessary repairs within 2 working days.
- For minor remedial works, the Repairs Delivery Team or Local Officer will organise for repair works to be completed within 20 working days. Specific vulnerabilities and resident needs will be considered as part of this booking process to ensure correct prioritisation.
- Where the Local Officer assesses that a technical specialist is required, eg in cases of penetrating damp, this will be escalated to the patch Surveyor for a full technical inspection within 10 working days.
- Where severe mould is present, an initial repair will be raised to remove the immediate mould risk pending the surveyor inspection.
- Following completion of the surveyor inspection, a full report will be provided within 3 working days to outline root causes and required works.
- The surveyor will discuss with the customer any major remedial work, including timescales and if required will liaise with colleagues if a temporary decant is required from the property.
- In cases where our proposed resolution conflicts with a customer's view, we may instruct an independent expert to survey the property and provide a specification for remedial work.
- On completion of the works an inspector/surveyor will conduct a quality assurance inspection and ensure the customer is satisfied with the completed works.
- A courtesy follow up survey will also be carried out with our customer between 3 and 6 months after the completion of the works to find out if damp or mould has returned or the resident is completely satisfied with the outcome. The timing of any follow up visit may be dependent on the time of year following the completion of the works.

5.3 No access

In the event of a failed access attempt for damp or mould associated repairs, we will continue to engage with customers to ensure the necessary agreed resolutions are completed.

Repeated failed access attempts will be escalated via our No Access process. Exact details of the time of attendance, attendees, photographs and statements will be required for each no access visit to prove attendance and ensure robust defence to any challenge or action taken by the resident.

Where a category 1 HHSRS risk has been identified, or where we feel there is an immediate health & safety risk, NHG may proceed with legal action to gain access to the home to ensure necessary works are carried out.

5.4 Disrepair Claims

We will continue to support and work with customers, even where there is an active legal claim, to come to an agreeable resolution and resolve the report of damp or mould. When a disrepair claim is raised that includes damp or mould, we follow our Disrepair Policy and Procedure.

5.5 Supporting our residents.

Health and Wellbeing issues

At the initial stage/enquiry or following the first visit to the property by the appointed contractor or surveyor any health or wellbeing concerns will be flagged with operations colleagues. This could include known health problems, mobility issues or safeguarding concerns. In certain circumstances and depending on the identified issues there may be a need to prioritise individual cases.

Where extensive works may be required, we will consider the individual circumstances of the household, including any vulnerabilities, and whether it is appropriate to move customers out of their home at an early stage.

We also recognise that residents who could struggle with fuel costs will find it more difficult to control moisture levels. More information about the financial support available to residents experiencing fuel poverty is available on our [website](#).

5.6 Transfers

We refer social renters to our Allocations and Lettings Policy where there is an identified housing need.

Where major/disruptive or works which may exacerbate health conditions are required, households will be considered for a temporary decant. Information about how we manage cases where a resident is required to move from their home for works to be carried out can be found in our Decant Policy.

6.0 Key roles and responsibilities

Our Board will have overall governance responsibility for ensuring the Damp and Mould Policy is fully implemented to ensure full compliance with the regulatory standards, legislation, and approved codes of practice. Our Executive Board will formally approve this policy and review it every two years (or sooner if there is a change in regulation, legislation, or codes of practice).

The Board will receive regular updates on the numbers of Damp and Mould issues reported and subsequent progress against performance along with notification of any non-compliance issue which is identified. This is so they have assurance that the policy is operating effectively in practice.

The Director of Repairs has strategic responsibility for the Damp and Mould Policy and will oversee the implementation of the Policy.

The Heads of Service within Operations and Repairs will be responsible for implementing the key outcomes of the Damp and Mould Policy.

The NHG Executive Board will receive reports in respect of performance against numbers received and numbers of those resolved. They will also be notified of any legal cases ongoing.

The housing teams will provide key support in gaining access into properties where access is proving difficult and use standard methods to do so. They will also facilitate the legal process to gain access if agreed it is necessary.

The Director of Customer Experience will be responsible for ensuring the policy is reviewed every two years, and will notify the Board, and operational team responsible for the delivery of the Policy. The Director will ensure that this review process takes place before the policy expires.

The Director will ensure that this policy is saved on the organisation's intranet and distributed to all relevant members of staff.

7.0 Recording, monitoring and reporting

7.1 Data Collection

Information obtained from reports from damp or mould will be recorded and all remedial works actioned using our repairs IT systems. All paper-based records will be input and stored on the IT system as soon as practically possible.

7.2 Key Performance Indicators

KPI measures will be produced and provided to the Director of Repairs monthly and at Board on a quarterly basis. As a minimum, these KPI measures will include reporting on:

Data – the total number of:

- Total current and projected spend
- Damp and mould problems being reported.
- Specialist surveys including recommendations completed within agreed timescales
- Specialists works undertaken within agreed timescales
- Properties vacated to allow for works to be completed
- Customer Satisfaction
- Legal Cases/Disrepair Claims
- Compensation

Narrative - an explanation of the:

- Current position.
- Action required.
- Area specific trends.

8.0 Quality Assurance

In addition to the above documented cases by case after care and quality assurance visit, the Director will arrange for an independent audit at least once every two years. This audit will specifically test for compliance with the regulation,

legislation and approved codes of practice and identify any non-compliance issues for correction.

9.0 Our approach

In writing this policy we have carried out assessments to ensure that we have considered equality, diversity, and inclusion.

10.0 Reference

Key legislation

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Under Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 landlords must carry out basic repairs within a reasonable time
- Housing Act 2004 Part 1 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System [Decent Homes Standard 2006](#)
- Home Standard, Regulator of Social Housing, 2015 requires registered providers to provide a cost-effect repairs and maintenance service.

Document control

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Approved by	Chief Operating Officer
Policy owner	Director of Repairs

Version Control

Date	Amendment	Version
14.02.2023	New stand-alone policy	1.0
3.3.2023	Clarified that initial visit is carried out the local officer; added 'damp and mould wash' as an example of a minor repair; added link to leaflet; added statement around fuel poverty	1.1
1/06/2024	Full review of policy	2.0