



Damp Mould & Condensation Policy

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Introduction

This Policy aims to ensure that Empower Housing Association (EHA) provides an effective response to reports of damp mould and condensation and notes the risk based proactive approach we have in place to identify and address unreported cases.

EHA has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould and this Policy sets out the activities and responsibilities involved in the control of damp, mould and condensation occurring in all EHA's property stock. EHA aims to work in partnership with our tenants, carers and advocates to ensure that a well-functioning, dry, warm, healthy and safe internal environment is provided. Each individual case of DMC will be assessed on its own merit and fully reviewed, taking into consideration the layout, construction and age of the properties including assessing any impact from neighbouring properties.

In 2021, the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) issued a spotlight report on damp and mould setting out the expected approach for landlords when dealing with cases of damp and mould. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and the HOS have increased their focus in this area, and this is supported by our response in ensuring that all properties meet the relevant legislation including:

- The Homes Bill (Fitness for Human Habitation and Liability for Housing Standards Bill 2017 - 2019)
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Section 11 – EHA is required to carry out repairs as required to maintain their tenants' homes.
- Housing Act 2004, Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) – this system should be used by housing associations to assess the condition of its stock and to ensure its housing meets the Decent Homes Standard.
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 – states that when the condition of a property causes someone to become ill or a sick person to deteriorate, the courts will normally be satisfied that it is prejudicial to health. Damp and mould are defects which are considered prejudicial to health.
- Defective Premises Act 1972 – we have a duty of care to carry out repairs, ensuring that all individuals who could be affected by relevant defects are reasonably safe from personal injury or damage to their property resulting from defects.
- Home Standard (part of the Regulator of Social Housing's Regulatory Standards) – registered providers should provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service and meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of all occupants.

Scope of Policy

The overall aim of this policy is:

- To ensure the effective management of damp, mould and condensation in all our homes and that all properties meet the Decent Homes Standard and Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018.

- To provide an efficient, prompt, and cost-effective repairs and maintenance service, and to ensure that the fabric of our properties are protected from deterioration and damage caused from damp, mould and condensation and that customers are safe in their home.
- This policy applies to all EHA properties including all communal areas.
- This policy is relevant to all EHA employees, tenants, contractors and other persons or other stakeholders who may work on, occupy, visit, or use its premises, or who may be affected by its activities or services.
- Keep communication clear and concise including liaising with numerous parties affected by DMC i.e. tenants, carers, family members, managers of the care service and neighbours where there is a potential issue with an adjoining building.

Responsible / Competent Person

The Building Quality Manager will fulfil the role of the appointed responsible person on behalf of EHA to ensure the appropriate actions are adhered to in relation to damp, mould and condensation. They will ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place for the implementation of the damp mould and condensation policy. They are also responsible for the delivery of all reactive works, the standard of the works and the monitoring of the works going forward.

Objectives

EHA will encourage all damp mould and condensation issues to be reported to maintenance. To identify unreported issues, we will be proactive in visiting our properties to inspect and identify any DMC issues during Performance Review Visits or during our internal property reviews. Our tenants may not feel comfortable complaining about DMC, but we will encourage our tenants to speak to us and work with us to make their home safe. We will treat our tenants with respect and empathy and not prejudge the cause of any issues.

All colleagues have received awareness training re DMC and are trained to identify and treat damp and mould where appropriate. Training will remain at the forefront of all we do. All reports of DMC are actioned within 7 days, once inspected they will be categorised in line with our DMC procedure.

On completion of any work, we will review each report of DMC at 3-month intervals until there has been no recurrence and to ensure the issue has been fully rectified.

EHA requests contractors to feedback from all DMC works reported on what action has been taken and any chemicals used and follow up appointments needed & log this information on SDM.

Factors such as property age, design, modifications, constructions, heating system etc. can all impact on DMC. EHA will treat every reported issue individually.

All reports will be recorded electronically on SDM (our housing system), under a specific code for damp mould and condensation. This enables EHA to monitor each job, ensuring the correct treatment is carried out. This will include any moisture / humidity readings taken and photographs of the area before and after the issue is resolved.

In severe cases where EHA have been unable to immediately remedy your case will be escalated to a 3rd party contractor within a further 7 working days EHA will employ a specialist contractor to carry out a survey and produce a report including suggestions on best practice to treat the damp / mould / condensation. We will keep our tenants informed of any work required.

EHA will promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to manage damp mould and condensation and our colleagues will support tenants / carers / family members to identify ways they can help to prevent DMC.

All complaints regarding DMC will be dealt with efficiently in line with our Complaints Policy & Procedure

Damp, Mould & Condensation - most common causes in our properties:

- Condensation is the most common cause of dampness and results in around 90% of complaints concerning damp. It is caused by the moisture within a property coming into contact with cold surfaces such as walls and windowpanes. The water drops (condensation) then soak into wallpaper, paintwork or plasterwork which can then develop into black mould on the surface. This happens in winter more often than not but can be a year-round problem.
- Excessive humidity – can be caused by lack of natural ventilation – i.e., opening windows, drying clothes on radiators, cooking with pan lids off, bathing etc and not providing / using adequate ventilation.
- Penetrating damp generally occurs when there is a defect outside of a property such as leaking eaves, gutters or downpipes allowing water to pass from the outside in and is more noticeable when we experience heavy rainfall. The area affected will look and feel damp.
- Defecting plumbing occurs when there is an internal leak from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, which are common. It can affect internal and external walls and ceilings. The areas affected will look and feels damp to the touch and remains damp whatever the weather conditions outside. A quick examination of the water (and waste) pipes serving the kitchen and bathroom will usually find the problem.
- Rising damp is more often a problem which is more commonly found in older houses, where moisture in the ground below is drawn up into the bricks or concrete at the bottom of the house and into the property by breaching the damp proof course (DPC) and there is usually a tide mark low down on the wall. It is an all-year-round issue but can be more noticeable in the winter months.
- Cold bridging. This can be in many areas including insulation not being fitted in the eaves of a roof, raking eaves, concrete mullions and lintels, poorly installed cavity wall insulation and many other examples of areas prone to cold spots.

- Blocked vents. On many occasions ventilation provided either mechanical or background ventilation being blocked off, broken or covered.
- Absent or poorly functioning extractor fans in kitchens, bathrooms and utility rooms
- Unvented and condensing tumble dryers. These produce a significant amount of water vapour in the space encouraging condensation.
- Lack of adequate heating - cold temperatures in properties, especially void or infrequently used rooms.

Record Keeping

EHA will hold all records on damp / mould / condensation digitally on SDM. EHA will produce monthly KPI reports to our management team and quarterly reports to Board confirming number of new cases, number outstanding, number completed to date, and any overdue or areas of concern. We will review all work and actions in place and any learning. EHA will dispose of data in line with our Data Retention Policy.