

Damp, mould, and condensation policy

Department: Housing asset management

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We have designed a policy and procedure with the safety of our residents at the core. This enables us to diagnose, respond to and manage reports of damp, mould, and condensation within our homes.
- 1.2 There are many root causes that lead to damp, mould, and condensation within our homes. This has the potential to have an impact on the resident and their households physical and/or mental health and well-being. Both Ealing Council staff and residents will work together to prevent or resolve damp, mould, and condensation issues.
- 1.3 This policy supports Ealing Council's approach to resident safety. We are committed to making sure there is appropriate budget available to use effectively and efficiently to deal with issues of damp, mould, and condensation in our homes.
- 1.4 Repairs or remedial work carried out in response to cases of damp and mould complement our programmes of planned and cyclical maintenance.

2. Scope

- 2.1 Ealing Council wants to take every reasonable action to identify, remedy and provide advice on damp and mould in our homes in order to ensure a safe, healthy and comfortable environment for our residents, as well as to protect the fabric of our buildings.
- 2.2 The types of damp covered by the policy are rising damp, penetrating damp and condensation damp and mould.
 - 2.2.1 Rising damp - the movement of moisture from the ground

rising through the structure of the building through capillary action.

2.2.2 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. The cause can be the result of, for example:

- water ingress due to defective or poor original design or workmanship of the structure
- defective components for example roof coverings, external wall doors and windows
- defective or blocked rainwater gutters and pipes
- defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems
- flooding due to burst pipes

2.2.3 Condensation damp - condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air meets a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. This can take two main forms:

- surface condensation arising when the inner surface of the structure is cooler than the room air
- condensation inside the structure (interstitial) where vapour pressure forces water vapour through porous materials (for example walls), which then condenses when it reaches colder conditions within the structure

The conditions that can increase the risk of condensation are:

- inadequate ventilation. For example, natural opening windows and trickle or background vents and mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens
- inadequate heating. For example, undersized boilers and

radiators, draught stripping

- inadequate thermal insulation. For example, missing, or defective wall and loft insulation
- high humidity. For example, presence of rising and penetrating damp
- poor building design and construction – specific cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction

Conditions that can lead to condensation are:

- poor ventilation – not opening windows, blocking up vents not turning on extract fans, not allowing air to circulate around furniture
- poor heating – not heating the house which can be a result of fuel poverty
- defective insulation – dislodged insulation in lofts
- high humidity - not covering pans when cooking and drying laundry inside the house can contribute to this
- overcrowding

2.2.4 Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation damp is present.

3. Aims

3.1 The aim of this policy is to explain how Ealing Council will deal effectively with damp and mould in our homes and communal areas that we own and manage, so that our residents are safe and can enjoy living in their homes.

3.2 The aim of this policy is to promote the health and wellbeing of

Ealing Council tenants by effectively and efficiently managing issues related to damp, condensation and mould and maintaining dry homes with a healthy internal environment.

- 3.3 This policy aims to raise awareness of legislation related to damp, condensation and mould and ensure the council's compliance with these legal requirements. This includes providing practical advice and information to tenants on how to control damp, condensation, and mould.
- 3.4 This policy aims to protect the fabric of our buildings from long term damage caused by damp, condensation, and mould and by improving the energy efficiency of homes to at least EPC "C".
- 3.5 Ealing Council aims to adopt a data-led approach to reporting damp, condensation, and mould by conducting effective investigation of issues of damp and carrying out effective repairs to eradicate it.

4. Policy statement

- 4.1 This policy has been written to ensure that wherever possible, residents are not adversely affected by the causes of damp and mould and drives forward an agenda of proactive action and a partnership between landlord and tenant to tackle/manage the symptoms and causes of damp and mould. Once we have removed the risk to the resident by treating the symptoms, and the home is safe, remedial works will be completed as soon as possible. This timescale will be dependent upon the nature of the work required and budgetary provision.

5. Our responsibilities

- 5.1 It is Ealing Council's responsibility to keep tenanted and temporary housing properties safe and free from health hazards. This includes issues related to damp and condensation.
- 5.2 Keep the property's structure and exterior in good repair, including the brick work and pointing, roof covering, external waste pipes, damp proofing, doors, and windows.
- 5.3 Ealing Council has a responsibility in maintaining the structure of the building that may contain leasehold properties, in these instances there may be a shared responsibility for both leaseholder and the council depending on the location and cause of the problem.
- 5.4 Carry out all repairs to the property in relation to the internal structure and facilities as necessary in relation to the heating, ventilation, water using appliances and plumbing.
- 5.5 When possible, the council will investigate more permanent solutions to solve problems related to damp, condensation and mould, but recognise this may not be immediately possible due to budgetary provision, or the season. However, we will always make and keep the property in a safe condition.
- 5.6 All customer facing council staff will guide tenants and leaseholder on how to report issues related to damp, condensation, and mould as and when needed.
- 5.7 Housing officers, repairs team and contractors working on the council's behalf will take an active role in encouraging tenants to report issues related to damp, condensation, and mould. Where the tenant is not happy to report themselves the Ealing Council

representative will report their concerns with any supporting photos to the dampandmould@ealing.gov.uk.

- 5.8 The council holds the right to inspect the property for health and safety concerns. The tenant will be given notice of 1 working day, but no notice is needed if it is an emergency.
- 5.9 If a tenant expresses a wish to move as a result of damp, condensation and mould problems, we will support them to make a housing application; if members in their household have medical problems, which may be exacerbated by damp, mould or condensation, officers in the housing solutions team will be available to advise tenants on the type of medical evidence required. We will ensure that the independent GP who completes the medical assessment not only has access to the medical evidence but also has sight of the surveyor's report and other relevant surveys.

6. Engagement with residents

- 6.1 Residents are responsible for making sure that they take appropriate steps to prevent significant amounts of condensation that results in damp or mould growth.

These responsibilities include:

- to wipe down any condensation in their home
- to report an issue related to condensation, damp, condensation, and mould either by phone, or by emailing: dampandmould@ealing.gov.uk
- to seek advice from our team on how to treat condensation and surface related mould at home
- to report reoccurring damp, condensation, and mould

problems if home solutions do not work - to report the issue of damp, condensation and mould if it reoccurs after a repair that has been carried out by Ealing Council staff or their contractors

- to adequately heat rooms – ideally between 18° and 21°C
- to regularly check for and report any leaks, or faulty heating, windows, or extractor fans. (Extractor fans will not be covered)
- to keep the property well-ventilated by keeping windows slightly open especially while cooking or bathing, ensuring that extractor fans are in working condition and vents are clean and left open
- to ensure extractor fans are not turned off in kitchen and bathroom
- to ensure windows vents and wall vents are not blocked or closed
- where remedial works and mould wash treatments have been undertaken by us, the resident is responsible for redecoration. It is recommended that antifungal paint is used
- Ealing Council actively encourages tenants to take out household contents insurance, tenants are responsible for arranging adequate household contents insurance, to protect their home from damage caused by damp, mould, or condensation

7. Engagement with our contractors

- 7.1 We will use specialist damp and mould contractors to help us manage the risk damp and mould presents to our residents. They will attend all high, medium, and low risk cases of damp and mould; they have been authorised to take prompt action to remove the symptoms of damp and mould and will report any follow-on work to Ealing Council's specialist damp and mould team.

8. Monitoring and review

- 8.1 We will maintain a damp and mould register that will be reported to damp and mould task force who meet fortnightly. All housing health and safety rating system category 1 fail cases (where there is a danger to life) are reported to the housing and environment asset management group.
- 8.2 The day-to-day responsibility for damp and mould cases for the council's housing stock is implemented in line with this policy has been delegated, via the Chief Executive, to the strategic director of housing and environment.
- 8.3 A detailed workstream report is prepared monthly and includes:
- an update on progress
 - a RAG risk rating of current overall risk to tenant
 - risk and issues log
 - trend analysis of relevant data

This is reviewed by the rebuilding the housing service programme board and the rebuilding the housing service executive board.

- 8.4 Performance is also monitored monthly by the rebuilding the housing service programme board and the rebuilding the housing service executive board against targets of key performance indicators namely:
- number of damp and mould live cases
 - number of inspections completed number of inspections outstanding
 - number of cases where order has been issued to contractor
 - number of cases where remedial work is required
 - works complete closed cases.
 - % of high-risk cases with symptoms addressed and remediation:
 - completed
 - identified and orders raised
 - works identified but not yet scheduled
- 8.5 Monthly performance reports on our damp and mould cases are shared at our meeting with the leader of the council and the cabinet member for genuinely affordable homes.
- 8.6 The performance will be shared on an exception basis with the health and safety cabinet where individual cases warrant reporting at this level.
- 8.7 The performance information is shared with appropriate engaged residents.
- 8.8 This policy will be reviewed every 2 years, unless new legislation or good practice means it needs to be reviewed sooner.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 A group of residents on the damp and mould register were consulted with, in forming this policy.

Colleagues from the housing health and safety compliance team, and the head of corporate health and safety were also consulted with.

10. Equality and diversity

- 10.1 An equality impact assessment 'initial screening' has been carried out which determined there to be no negative impact specific to those with protected characteristics. However, it is noted with the cost-of-living crisis persons with a disability or people over pensionable age who are not working are more likely to suffer from fuel poverty, and we know that inadequate heating is a contributing factor to damp and mould. Where we have identified people are in financial hardship, we will signpost to the household support fund or for local welfare assistance.

11. Managing risk

- 11.1 When the damp and mould is first reported diagnostic tools will be used in triaging the damp and mould cases. Based on the telephone conversation, high risk cases will be booked in for a specialist damp and mould contractor to visit within 5 working days. The contractor will complete a risk assessment at the time of inspection. This will include any concerns around the health and wellbeing of the occupants of the home, alongside the type and extent of any damp found.
- 11.2 Our approach will always be **safety first**. We will always remove

the immediate risk to the resident(s) by treating the symptoms, and then once the property is safe, we will complete the remedial works within an agreed timescale.

- 11.3 In emergency cases, the property may be considered inhabitable. As a result, we will move the household into temporary accommodation to protect the residents and to carry out the necessary work before the household moves back.

12. A pro-active approach to managing damp and mould

- 12.1 We will review data from our stock condition surveys to identify those homes that may be more prone to damp and mould than others.
- 12.2 We will review trends and patterns of damp and mould including:
- repairs data for past 6 years
 - building design including construction type
 - EPC "D" or below
 - age of property
 - window type – single/double glazing
 - heating type
 - age of heating system
 - number of rooms with heating
 - cavity wall insulation
 - roof insulation levels
 - date of installation of extractor fans
 - geographical area/ postcode
 - vulnerability
 - number of bedrooms against occupancy
 - any children present in the household

- economic status of resident
- rent arrears – financial stress present in the home
- financial inclusion referrals (two way)
- learning from complaints

12.3 We will work collaboratively with the asset team who carry out our stock condition surveys. We will share our trend analysis and highlight our damp and mould cases so that these properties and those with a similar asset characteristic such as age of building/ construction type/ geographical area can be prioritised for a stock condition programme.

12.4 We will review all damp and mould complaints to make sure any learning is incorporated into policy review and practices. We will revise our approach to the way we manage damp and mould in our homes as necessary.

12.5 We will be proactive with our communication to residents who we identify may be more susceptible to damp and mould in their homes because of fuel poverty, type of building they live in, any vulnerability, overcrowding, etc.

13. Education and training

13.1 Ealing Council believes in building a workforce that can respond to problems resulting from damp, condensation, and mould by providing training for staff and outlining expectations from its contractors.

13.2 All resident facing staff (Ealing Council contact centre included) will receive mandatory training in damp and mould awareness that will cover:

- awareness of the causes of damp and mould
- understand how a resident can manage the excess moisture in their home
- Ealing Council's approach to damp and mould

13.3 Ealing Council believes in empowering its tenants and leaseholders by providing and circulating information on how to deal with and report mould.

13.4 Ealing Council encourages its staff to take reports about damp, condensation, and mould seriously and to look beyond lifestyle factors.

14. Legal framework and relevant documentation

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Housing Act 1985
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Section 11 - Repairs and Maintenance.
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1996
- Right to Repair Regulations 1994 – Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities
- Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating
- Equality Act 2010
- The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act
- 2018 Decent Homes Standard
- Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims (England)
- Social Housing (Regulation) Bill 2023
- RSH Damp and Mould in Social Housing 28 June 2023

The TSM measures under the Homes Standard relevant to this policy include:

- TP02 – Satisfaction with repairs
- TP04 – Satisfaction that the home is well maintained
- TP05 – Satisfaction that the home is safe
- TP10 – Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

15. Governance

The borough of Ealing cabinet has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented to ensure compliance with the law.

In practical terms the chief executive reports to cabinet to demonstrate accountability for corporate health and safety across the council and will also ensure that property health and safety compliance management duties in its landlord function are properly controlled and managed to keep our residents safe and to prevent Ealing Council receiving any adverse publicity.

The damp and mould management plan also identifies the roles and responsibilities of those who will undertake the day-to-day tasks on behalf of the strategic director of housing and environment.

16. Associated policies and management plans

- management plan: how we treat damp, mould, and condensation in our homes
- lettable standard
- repairs policy
- repairs handbook
- disrepair management plan
- mutual exchange policy and management plan
- complaints policy
- tenancy agreement
- leasehold agreement
- tenants sign up pack
- decant policy
- asset management strategy
- resident involvement strategy

17. Appendix

Equality impact assessment