

# Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to protecting our residents and homes from damp, mould and condensation.
- 1.2 Damp, mould and condensation can be really distressing for our residents. A damp home is not enjoyable and can pose a serious risk to health and safety. It can also lead to longer term structural problems, meaning that we have to use even more charitable resources to put it right. We are determined to tackle this issue and are taking a proactive approach to address damp and mould in our homes.
- 1.3 This policy has links to some of our other policies, and we've thought about these links when reviewing the policy. Other related documents:
  - Individual tenancy/lease agreements
  - Asset Management Strategy
  - Responsive Repairs Policy
  - Decant Policy
  - Health and Safety Policy
  - Complaints Policy
  - Compensation and Remedies Policy
  - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all homes owned and managed by the Peabody Group, except for Town and Country Housing.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all homes, irrespective of tenure, where we have responsibility for repairs and maintenance.
- 2.3 Leaseholders and Shared Owners are responsible for their own property as per individual lease agreements. If the issue is in a communal area or is a structural building defect, we are responsible for the repairs in line with the corresponding lease.
- 2.4 Individual tenancy/lease agreements supersede this policy document.
- 2.5 This policy is applicable once the property is outside of the defects liability period. Any issues that may arise within this period, will be addressed by the developer.
- 2.6 The aims of this policy are to ensure that:
  - Residents live in a safe and healthy home.
  - We work with residents to resolve issues with damp, mould and condensation and do not blame lifestyle.
  - We provide a consistent and excellent service in response to all reports of damp, mould and condensation.

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- We are kind and caring in our communication with residents, making sure they receive regular and timely updates.
- We prevent damp and mould by making sure our homes are well maintained, using data to understand potential issues and tackle them head on.

### 3. Key terms and definitions

- 3.1 We are all exposed to damp and condensation in our homes. Everyday activities such as cooking, bathing, showering, washing clothes and even breathing create water vapour. This water vapour needs help to escape. If it has nowhere to go, the home will become humid, and the vapour will stick to colder surfaces such as walls or windows.
- 3.2 While designed to prevent water entering the inside of a building, the external envelope comprising the Roofs, walls, windows and doors are all designed to prevent water from getting into a building. Over time, they can all develop faults, or decay. A single fault, or combination of issues, can cause water to get inside the building and this results in damp, mould and condensation within the home.
- 3.3 There are three common types of damp that affect our properties: condensation, rising damp and penetrative damp. Damp can be caused by a variety of factors:
- **Condensation:** This typically forms on windows, walls or other surfaces. This is caused by too much humidity indoors from poor ventilation, lack of heating and poor insulation. Overcrowding and significant differences in the temperature inside and outside of the building can also cause condensation.
  - **Rising Damp:** which relates to ground moisture entering the building, often being drawn up through the brickwork by capillary action (for instance, if the damp course has failed or been compromised).
  - **Penetrative Damp:** which is caused by water penetrating the external or internal structure of the building. It can cause dampness, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structures. This kind of damp includes water that enters the property through defective design and work on the structure of the property. Defective components may include the roof, doors, windows; water drainage systems, and leaking internal or communal water pipes.
- 3.4 **Mould** develops in damp conditions and grows on damp surfaces. Mould can produce allergens, irritants and toxic substances that can cause health problems.

### 4. Our Approach

- 4.1 We will investigate all report of damp, mould and condensation within residents' homes where we have responsibility for repairs. We will make sure we carry out, and complete, any necessary repairs that would help tackle the issue.
- 4.2 Where the damp and mould are not because of repairs issues, we will work with residents to help them manage condensation in their homes.

#### Clear Processes and Procedures

- 4.3 We provide clear and consistent procedures for colleagues to follow when we find, or are told about, a damp, mould or condensation issue. These procedures clearly define roles and responsibilities. They state how we will work together to identify solutions and offer additional support to our residents.

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## Proactive Solutions

- 4.4 We take a proactive approach to managing our homes and buildings, and have several initiatives in place.
- 4.5 We take into account the effect that damp, mould and condensation have on residents and prioritise work to tackle this.
- 4.6 We invest in our homes, including through the renewal of kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, windows, and heating systems.
- 4.7 We proactively review and monitor buildings at a higher risk of damp, mould and condensation. This information is used to provide support and respond to issues before they affect residents.

## Consistent Standards

- 4.8 Sometimes we identify homes that may be part of a regeneration or due to be sold. Where this happens, we will make sure that residents do not receive a poorer standard of service or lower living conditions. We treat these homes as we treat all homes.
- 4.9 We will make sure that all reported repairs, and issues highlighted through data analysis, is investigated and dealt with, including damp and mould.

## Aftercare

- 4.10 We monitor all of the work we carry out to tackle this issue for a year afterwards. This allows us to make sure that any work we have carried out, and advice that we've given, have been effective and resolved the issue.
- 4.11 We will make sure that each tenant or leaseholder has been contacted and is happy to close the issues that were raised.

## Rehousing and alternative accommodation

- 4.12 We have a duty to protect our residents and properties. We will temporarily rehouse people in critical situations where there is a risk to their health and safety.
- 4.13 We will carry out improvement work when we find structural, or other significant, problems that are leading to damp and mould. Where the work required to the home is extensive, we may need to temporarily move residents in line with our Decant Policy. Where this happens, we try to work with residents to meet their needs, such as remaining near their community and support networks. We will make every effort to work with the resident(s) to ensure a move that works for them.
- 4.14 As a last resort, there may be rare occasions when we must take legal action to enforce a temporary move. This would only be to allow us to carry out work to rectify the causes of damp, mould and condensation. We would only take this step when a resident has refused all reasonable offers of alternative accommodation. Where we do this, we will continue to work with the resident to support them to move voluntarily. If they continue to refuse to move, we will look to obtain a court order and may seek reimbursement of costs. We normally only do this where we consider that the damp and mould is dangerous to health or adversely affecting their home and/or other people's homes.

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## Colleague Training

4.15 We have an on-going damp, mould & condensation training programme, covering all levels of the organisation. This includes more detailed technical training for property colleagues to company-wide mandatory e-learning. This allows all colleagues to provide better support for our residents and be quicker to resolve damp, mould & condensation issues.

## 5. Complaints and Compensation

5.1 We will try to resolve complaints directly with our residents, whilst recognising and supporting their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage. Colleagues will follow record-keeping procedures to ensure that complaints are managed effectively in line with our Complaints Policy.

5.2 If residents feel that we have failed to implement this policy, we will consider claims for compensation in line with our Compensation and Remedies Policy.

5.3 We expect our residents to have contents insurance in place for their furniture, decorations and any other personal possessions. For example, a contents insurance policy may cover against accidental damage, loss, fire or water damage, and burglary, amongst other things. We can suggest a provider of a low-cost Tenants Home Contents Insurance Scheme that is available to residents.

5.4 Where a resident commences proceedings under the pre-action protocol for disrepair claims, we seek to resolve the issue through Internal Action Panels (IAPs) and our Legal Team, while following all legal requirements. We do this wherever possible to identify complex cases at an early stage. We keep residents informed and look to achieve an effective and early resolution that maintains their health and wellbeing.

## 6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

6.1 We will consider all requests from residents to accommodate their needs in line with our Reasonable Adjustments policy and the Equality Act 2010. You can request a reasonable adjustment from us through the colleague you are engaging with, or by contacting our Customer Hub.

6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for this policy.

6.3 This policy aligns with our wider Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy by supporting the vulnerable, creating places where people want to live and building resilience in people and communities.

## 7. Legislation and Regulation

7.1 The **Decent Homes Standard** provides a minimum expectation for the condition of homes. Under the Standard, landlords must ensure that properties:

- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing, including keeping properties free of serious hazards.
- Be in a reasonable state of repair.
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services.
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

7.2 The government set out its intentions in the **Charter for Social Housing Residents (Social Housing White Paper) 2020** to review the Decent Homes Standard to reflect present-day concerns and is a key priority in the **Building Safety Act 2022**.

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7.3 Under the **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985**, we are responsible for:

- Maintaining the structure of the property and keeping it in good repair
- Keeping installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation in good repair and proper working order.

7.4 The **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018** amended the 1985 Act. It states that landlords must ensure that homes are “fit for human habitation”. The Act does not define ‘fit for human habitation’, but landlords are considered responsible for repairs, freedom from damp, ventilation, water supply, drainage and sanitary conveniences, facilities for the preparation of and cooking of food, and the disposal of wastewater.

7.5 Other relevant pieces of legislation are:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- The Housing Act 2004 (including the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System [HHSRS])
- Regulatory Standards (Governance and Financial Viability)
- Fire Safety Act 2021

## 8. Responsibilities

9.1 Depending on the complexity of the issue, diagnosis of damp, mould & condensation is carried out by our in-house surveyors, specialist consultants or repair delivery teams.

9.2 Remedial work to address damp, mould & condensation is carried out by our mixed economy supply chain, including in-house repair teams and external contractors.

9.3 Our Neighbourhood Teams responsible for communication with the resident(s). They will be supported by colleagues from Asset Management and Repairs teams in order that we deal with the property related issues causing the damp and mould in a way that is expedient and accommodates the resident’s needs.

9.4 Where the matter is complex then the Area Manager will support the Neighbourhoods Team and others in leading an Internal Action Panel (IAP) until the home is brought back to a decent standard.

9.5 The Director of Repairs has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

## Approval

<b>Version number</b>	1
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<b>Policy owner</b>	Director of Repairs