



DAMP, MOULD & CONDENSATION POLICY

DOCUMENTATION MASTER SHEET

Amendments to this Document are Detailed Below.

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DAMP, MOULD & CONDENSATION POLICY



Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
01	01/12/2021	New Policy	07/04/2022	RP	Customer Panel
02	12/09/2024	Update	03/12/2024	Lee Duty	SLT
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OVERALL AIM/INTRODUCTION

This policy aims to assist in the delivery of a damp and mould service that will be able to:

- Ensure that customers are treated in a fair and consistent way.
- Comply with statutory requirements and good practice.
- Focus on working in partnership with customers ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is provided.
- Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to eradicate damp including, managing and controlling condensation.
- Ensure that customers have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp and condensation.
- Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp and condensation problems.
- Ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and condensation.

SCOPE OF POLICY

The scope of this policy covers how GCH and our customers can jointly control, manage and eradicate damp and this includes:

- All GCH properties, including emergency / temporary accommodation.
- Identifying the types of damp: rising, penetrating and condensation damp, including internal leaks.
- Identifying GCH's responsibilities for dealing with damp and condensation.
- Identifying the customers' responsibilities for dealing with damp and condensation.
- Offering guidance, advice and assistance throughout the process to all customers living in GCH properties.

- Identifies situations where GCH will not be able to undertake works to rectify condensation damp

LEGAL AND REGULATORY EXPECTATIONS

The key responsibilities a landlord has when there are damp issues is to make sure a correct diagnosis is obtained and to carry out the treatment. Damp is a mandatory repair under the HHSRS. This also stresses that landlords must ensure mould doesn't affect a customer's physical and mental health. Mould is a fungus which is known to cause breathing difficulties. Customers who suffer from asthma or rhinitis conditions, or are taking any cancer treatment, may suffer serious health problems if exposed to it.

Other key legal and regulatory references are set out below:

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Landlord and Customer Act 1985 (Section 11)
- Housing Act 2004
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Equality Act 2010 • Home Standard, Regulator of Social Housing 2015
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims (England) 2021

SERVICE STANDARDS

Damp

Dampness is an excess of moisture that can't escape from a structure, which may go on to cause significant damage to the building such as collapsed ceilings and rotten timber elements.

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.

There are four main causes of dampness in homes in England. It is important to understand the difference between them because they each need different solutions:

Water leaks from defective supply and waste pipework (especially in bathrooms and kitchens) can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and stays damp regardless of the prevailing weather conditions. It is the result of a problem or fault with the home, which requires repair.

Rising damp is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. Water gets through or around a defective damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the masonry that was built without a DPC. Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms it will be present all year round but can be more noticeable in winter. It is extremely uncommon but is generally the result of a problem or fault with the home, which requires repair.

Penetrating damp appears because of a defect in the structure of the home, such as damaged brickwork, missing roof tiles, loose flashing, or leaking rainwater goods. These defects allow water to pass from the outside to the floors, walls, or ceilings. Penetrating damp is far more noticeable following a period of rainfall and will normally appear as a well-defined 'damp-patch' which looks and feels damp to the touch. It is the result of a problem or fault with the home, which requires a repair.

Condensation is the most prevalent type of dampness and is caused by moisture in the air (water vapour) inside the dwelling encountering a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The drop in temperature causes liquid water to form on the surface and then soak in. It is usually found in kitchens, bathrooms, the corners of rooms, on north facing walls and on or near windows – all places that either tend to have a lot of moisture in the air, or to be cold generally. It is also found in areas of low air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

All homes in England can be affected by condensation because the climate is often cool and wet. Normal household activities also constantly release moisture into the air. Good practice in

the home minimises and alleviates condensation, and in many cases will prevent it causing dampness and persistent mould. However, on occasion the root cause can be a problem that requires a repair or an improvement to the home. In others, a different solution may be needed (for example, in cases of severe overcrowding)

Our Approach

Pro-Active approach

- We will take action to identify homes that may be at risk of developing problems with damp and mould - We will use data (stock condition, EPC and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping) to help us understand the potential in relation to damp and mould and where appropriate use technology to monitor and reduce the risk and occurrence
- We will use the investment programme and asset management strategy to ensure we take steps to remove the root causes of damp and mould growth - We will mitigate any increased risks of damp and mould by investing in 'fabric first' principles, by improving thermal efficiency, when decarbonising the council's homes and making sure that adequate ventilation and heating systems are installed and maintained
- When a property becomes vacant, and prior to re-letting, we will identify and remedy any issues which may cause damp through our 'voids standard' works -
- We will provide information on our website, and through other communication channels such as social media and newsletters to raise awareness about the causes of damp and mould. This will include details about how everyday activities in the home can generate condensation and what customers can do to help prevent damp through, for instance, ventilation, controlling the build-up of moisture and adequate heating. Where there is mould growth, we will provide advice on how this will be treated - We actively encourage customers to report repair requests and log complaints where required.
- All front-line staff and contractors will have the skills and knowledge to identify signs of damp and mould and discuss with customers how to manage the problem - Staff are trained to look out for signs whenever they visit a customer's home and clear guidance is given on how to signpost and refer
- All GCH homes will receive a physical inspection every 12 months proactively targeting damp and mould. This will be achieved via Stock Condition Surveys, EPC Surveys, Voids and Home Safety Checks

Reactive approach

- Customers will be supported and encouraged to report any problems to us as soon as possible after noticing any potential damp or mould issue. When we receive a report, a trained member of the team will attend the property within 5 days to determine the cause and seek to resolve the immediate issue, by removing any visible mould. In some cases, they may need to further diagnose the problem to determine the root cause. Sometimes finding out what's causing damp and mould isn't always straightforward and could be due to a combination of factors, that we will then address. Any repairs that are required to be carried out will be dealt with in accordance with our Repairs Policy.
- Where damp is a result of condensation, we will work with customers to take appropriate measures to prevent the damp and mould occurring. This might include advice about how to control moisture levels or increase ventilation or heating, so that moisture levels are controlled within acceptable limits
- When a particularly severe or recurring damp or mould issue is identified we will undertake a comprehensive risk assessment which may result in a range of actions to support the customer depending on their circumstances, including providing and funding dehumidifiers through our compensation policy, the installation of positive pressure, mechanical or passive ventilation systems, dry lining walls or applying mould resistant coverings, as appropriate, on a case-by-case basis
- We will keep customers informed of any property inspections, diagnosis of issues and the timetabling of work. If any changes to the programme of works are needed, we will keep the customer informed. Where work is not required, customers will be informed, and we will explain the reason why no further work is needed
- For more complex cases, and especially where more intrusive building work is required and/or there is a serious health risk to the customer or a member of their household, we may require them to move out of their home on a temporary. We will consider the individual circumstances of the customer. We will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out at the property to ensure it is suitable for the customer in line with our Decant Policy.

Access to Property

- Our tenancy (and leasehold) agreements require customers to allow us (including appointed contractors) access to their home to carry out works. If we are unable to gain access and the integrity of the property, its fabric and/or the safety of the customer or those in the vicinity of the property is compromised, we will take appropriate action. For example, this may include but is not limited to obtaining an injunction for access

Compensation

- In line with our Compensation Policy, we will pay compensation because of our failure to deliver the service we have committed to. This includes where distress and inconvenience has been caused. Also, where furniture or belongings have been damaged, damages will be resolved through insurance claims. Each case will be considered on its own merits, considering the individual circumstances of the customer and their household

Supporting our customers

- We will give customers advice on how to prevent damp and what they can do to remove mould. However, we recognise that not every customer will be able to do this. We will provide appropriate support in such cases in relation to the specific circumstances and the individual customer's needs
- We know that some customers cannot afford to heat their homes adequately due to their income levels. We will refer customers to our tenancy sustainment team for support
- Where homes are overcrowded humidity will tend to be higher, and this increases the likelihood of condensation. We will support customers to apply to Homeseeker to ensure their housing application/ bedroom need is assessed based on their current circumstances, so they are able to bid on appropriate housing via the CBL system.

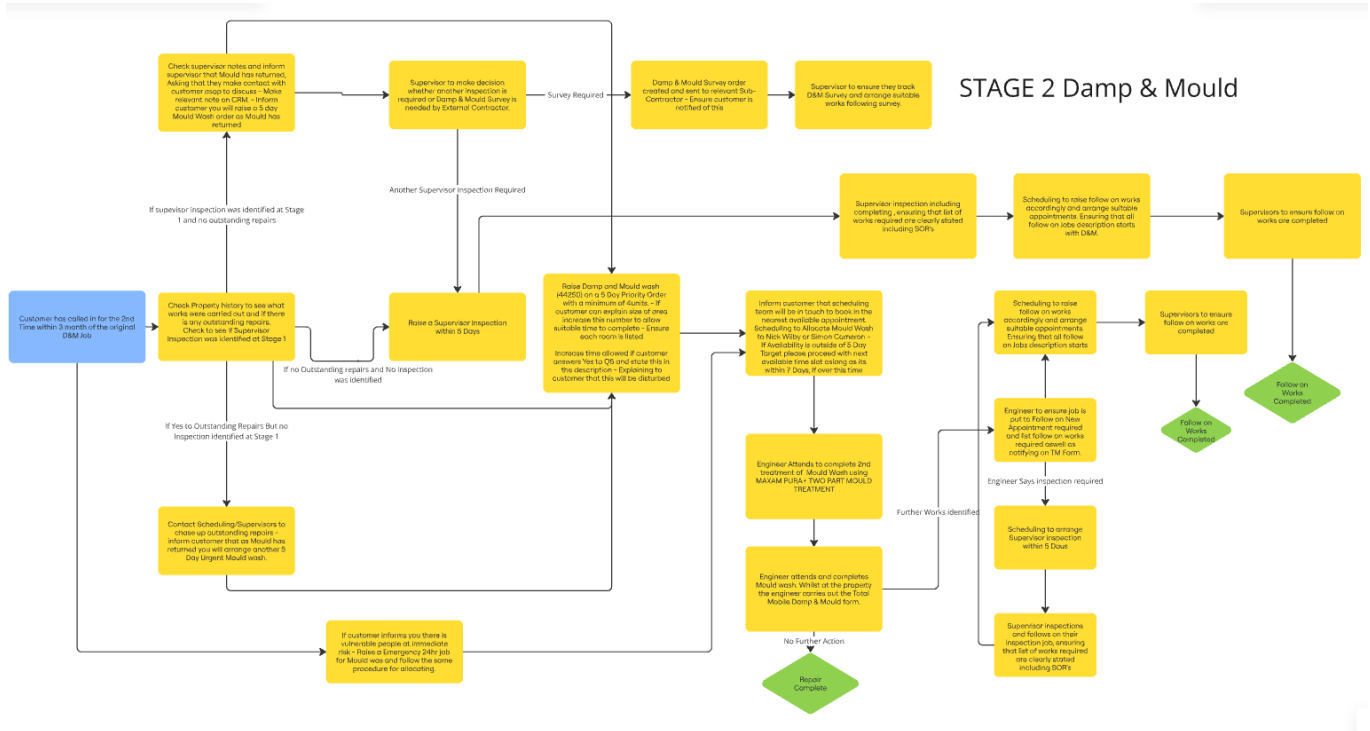
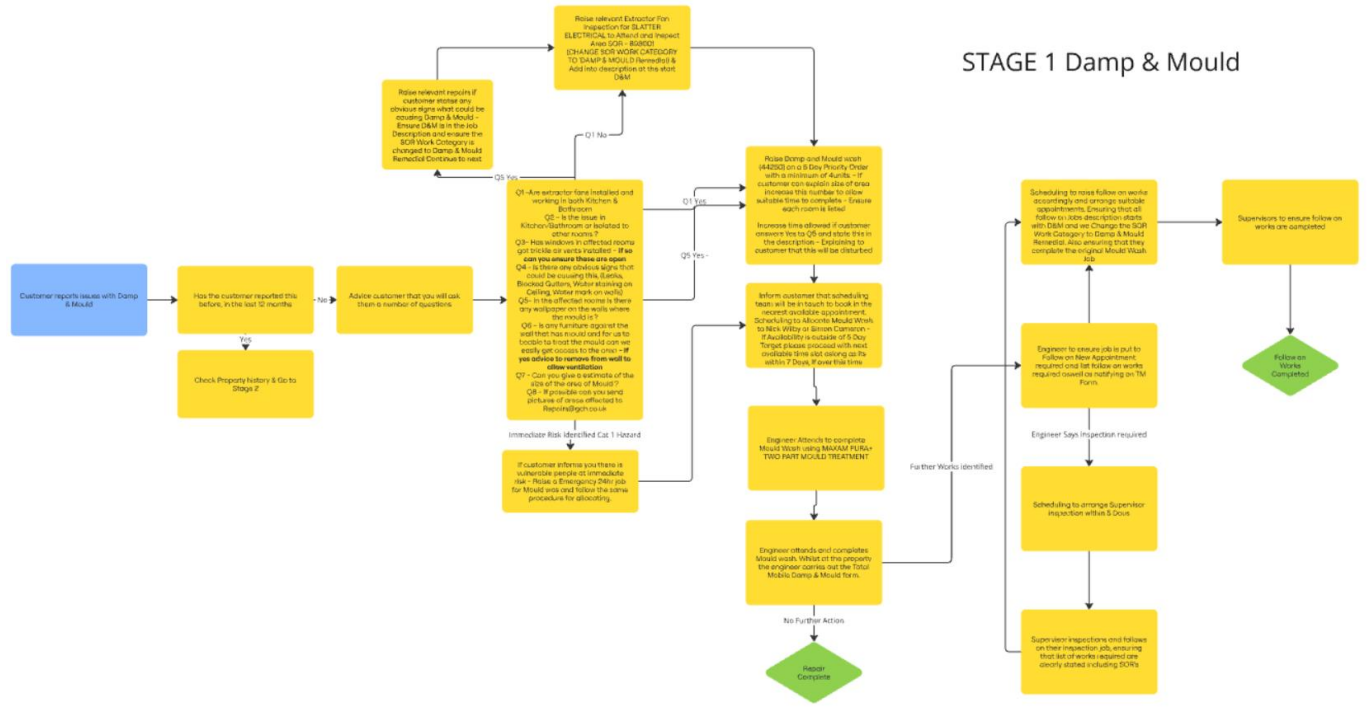
Staff Training

- We will ensure that all front-line staff (whether in house or our contractors) will have the required skills to recognise damp and the potential for mould.

Responding to complaints and learning lessons

- We aim to resolve complaints in line with our Complaints Policy without customers needing to resort to disrepair claims and legal action. Where legal action is taken, we will follow the Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims so that we may resolve the dispute outside of court to help ensure issues are resolved quicker for customers
- We will learn lessons from damp and mould cases, update our technical approach and how we communicate with customers, to continually improve

Flowchart



APPEALS

Any customer who is not satisfied with our approach in assessing and managing their damp and mould concerns can make a formal complaint. If the customer is dissatisfied with actions and decisions made under this policy, it will be dealt with under our Customer Complaints Policy.

REVIEW

This policy will normally be reviewed triennially to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, unless an earlier review is required due to regulatory, statutory or other requirements.