

Westfield Housing Association

Damp and Condensation Policy & Procedure

1.0 Policy Statement

In October 2021, the Housing Ombudsman issued a “Spotlight on Damp and Mould”, highlighting the approach they expect social landlords to take when dealing with tenants who report or complain about damp and mould to them. This report outlined 26 recommendations that landlords should review as part of their management of damp and mould issues within their tenants’ homes.

Following the tragic death of 2 year old Awaab Ishaak in 2020 due to exposure to mould and poor housing conditions. Awaab’s Law was introduced as part of the landmark Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, which requires landlords to investigate and address reported health hazards within specific timeframes. The primary goal of this law is to ensure that residents of social housing live in decent, safe, and secure homes.

The policy aims to demonstrate that we take a zero-tolerance and pro-active approach to damp and mould interventions, ensuring that it is easy for our residents to report issues to us and that we act in a timely manner.

We will investigate to determine the cause of damp using a holistic process, carry out required remedial works in a timely manner, offer advice and guidance where appropriate and take all reasonable steps to eradicate damp including, managing and controlling condensation via reasonable ventilation and insulation improvements to the property.

We will ensure that we are also using the data we hold about our residents and their homes to try and identify and put right issues before a complaint is made and where possible utilise available technologies.

We will also work with our tenants to ensure that they live in a safe environment and are treated in a fair and consistent way, with respect and dignity.

2.0 Definitions and Background Information:-

1) Damp

'Damp' in this context can be defined simply as the presence of moisture within a property that can cause a detrimental effect on the building or its occupants. Dampness is a symptom and identifying its cause and source should be a holistic process. The main mechanisms causing damp are:

- a) Rising
- b) Penetrating

- c) Condensation
- d) Mould

It is also important to remember that all the causes of rising and penetrating damp can ~~also~~ create condensation in a property.

a) Rising damp

Rising damp is moisture that has moved vertically upwards from the ground below the building by capillary action.

Rising damp is quite rare. Most buildings have a Damp Proof Course (DPC) barrier installed to prevent rising damp, and even small defects in this course rarely result in rising damp. Sometimes though, due to a construction fault, or external works the DPC may also be bridged. This means that, despite the course remaining intact, damp can bypass past it.

Rising damp will affect the ground floor of your home and show up to, up to a height of about one and a half metres.

A few, common signs of rising damp are:

- dark patches and tidal marks low on ground floor walls
- peeling wallpaper and rotten skirting boards

b) Penetrating damp

Penetrating damp describes moisture that moved from one side of a wall to another.

Penetrating damp is usually the result of building defects like bridged cavities, faulty guttering and other leaks. It can affect your home at any level and can get worse after long and heavy periods of rain.

A few, common signs of penetrating damp are:

- damp staining on external walls
- damage to the interior decoration and crumbly plaster
- Mould growth only in isolated areas.

Treatment will be concerned with identifying the property defect and making good.

c) Condensation

Condensation is a common issue and a natural process where moisture is absorbed into the warm atmosphere of your home, and when your home cools down the moisture condenses on cool surfaces.

The effects of condensation are often underestimated and can over time cause damage to our homes. The major difference between condensation and other forms of dampness is that we have the ability to reduce or solve the problem just through changing behaviour in our homes.

An average family of 4 to 5 people can produce up to seventeen litres of water vapour per day. This can be from drying wet clothes on radiators, having hot baths or showers, boiling kettles, cooking, and of course breathing. That is 3.5 litres per person on average.

We will advise tenants on ways to prevent condensation in their home and provide with a leaflet giving more information.

d) Mould

Mould is the term used for many different types of naturally occurring fungi that can grow on damp surfaces, in poorly ventilated conditions.

There are many types of dampness-related mould agents, some of which can be harmful to health, causing respiratory damage and accentuating breathing difficulties, making asthma worse and causing allergic reactions.

The prevalence of mould types which are hazardous to health should always be treated as a Category 1 hazard under the HHSRS.

4.0 Responsibilities

a) Westfield Housing Association's Employees

- We will visit every case of damp or mould reported within 14 days to determine the cause correctly and deliver/collate effective solutions which deal with the root cause of the issue.
- We will ensure that all our staff who may visit your home have appropriate training for identifying and addressing damp, mould and condensation concerns and are aware of this policy and its aims.
- We will ensure that Health risks from damp and mould are accurately recorded using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and all cases are accurately monitored and tracked to completion using a Damp and Mould Register.
- We will ensure that works required are logged immediately and started within 7 days, working with the tenants, which ensures the issues are addressed and works are completed as soon as possible.
- We will keep in touch with our tenants and Contractors on progress of works throughout the process until completion.
- A follow visit will be conducted by our Technical Services Officer within 3 months of completion to ensure the issues have resolved.
- We will ensure that your home is insulated in accordance with the Decent

Homes Standard to help reduce the likelihood of condensation, damp and mould occurring and we will undertake any reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of damp, mould and condensation, such as, installing mechanical extractor fans, enhancing insulation etc.

- We will ensure properties are free from damp and mould at the point of letting, including through mutual exchange.
- Where necessary we will identify where an independent, mutually agreed and suitably qualified surveyor should be used and share the outcome of all surveys and inspection reports with our tenants. We will act on those recommendations in a timely manner.
- Where extensive work is required, we will support tenants by considering their individual needs and requirements including any vulnerabilities and take this information into account as part of our plans to address the issues.
- We will also ensure that we will support tenants to fully utilise the Complaints Policy throughout their dealings with us up until any legal proceedings may be issued to us, with the aim of resolving disputes outside of court where necessary.
- We will look to identify trends and lessons learned through complaints and amend our process and systems accordingly. This will be monitored through the work of our Complaints Task Force.
- We will work on a proactive basis to identify and target high risk properties, monitor where beneficial and educate tenants in the management of condensation.

b) Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants are required to:

- Report any issues with Damp and Mould to the Association as soon as possible to arrange a visit.
- Reports can be made as follows:-
 - Telephone Westfield Housing on **01900 602906**
 - By email for non-urgent repairs repairs@westfieldha.org.uk
 - Via our website www.westfieldha.org.uk on the tenants portal. Westfield staff will then receive an email with the details tenants have added.
 - Call into our office at The Minto Centre, Westfield Estate, Workington
 - By letter to The Minto Centre, Nilsson Drive, Westfield, CA15 5BD
 - Report to Westfield Staff on visits/site

c) Contractor Responsibilities

Contractors are required to:

- Report any issues they observe in our homes which relate to damp, mould and condensation in our properties – if their current work at the property job relates to

it or not. They should report any issues to the Technical Services Officer who will arrange an inspection.

- Understand and work in line with the requirements of this policy.
- Ensure that they and all staff falling under their control have received appropriate information, instruction and training to enable them to comply with this policy and the Association's emergency arrangements;
- Follow instructions relating to Damp and Mould works and management by authorised members of the Association.
- Follow the Code of Conduct.

5.0 Monitoring and Reporting

This policy has been developed in April 2023 and will be reviewed every year or as legislation or best practice changes. We will keep records of properties where damp and mould have been reported and check in with tenants following works to ensure the issues have been resolved. If not, we will revisit and address accordingly.

Complaint themes, lessons learned, and subsequent actions will be monitored quarterly at the Maintenance Team Meeting and Executive Team will have be provided with an overview. The information will also be shared with our Customer Panel for information/feedback.

6.0 Legal / Legislative Framework/References

There are legislative requirements setting out what is considered to be a decent home. The Decent Homes Standard was updated in 2006 to take account of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). According to the Standard, for a home to be considered 'decent' it must:

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

The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 amended the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, with the aim of ensuring that all rented accommodation is fit for human habitation. While it did not create new obligations for landlords, it required landlords to ensure their properties are fit for human habitation at the beginning of, and throughout, the tenancy.

The Landlord and Tenant Act does not define "fit for human habitation", but consideration should be given to repair, stability, freedom from damp, internal arrangement, natural lighting, ventilation, water supply, drainage and sanitary conveniences, facilities for preparation and cooking of food, the disposal of wastewater and any prescribed hazard. The Act also strengthened tenants' means of redress where landlords do not fulfil their obligations, with the expectation that if tenants are empowered to take action against their landlord, standards will improve.

7.0 Linked Documents

- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Compensation & Reimbursement Policy [& Procedure](#)
- Further information and documents are also available on our website

8.0 Legal

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-guidance-for-landlords-and-property-related-professionals>

9.0 Mould/Damp Process Overview

- 1) Damp/mould issue identified (e.g. tenant contacts Westfield Housing to report issues with damp/mould, from a visit to a property etc.)
- 2) Appointment is logged for an inspection by our Technical Services Officer.
- 3) The details are added to our Damp/Mould Register
- 4) Inspection is completed and works identified are logged with a start date within 7 days. If inspection by damp/mould specialists is required, this is instructed with a request for an inspection report within 14 days.

The tenant will be informed of the need for further inspection and the timescale for this. Where no works identified other than tenant action, tenants are advised and provided with the information required to alleviate the issues and a leaflet for information.

- 5) Works are completed and recorded on the Damp/Mould register. If a further inspection has been undertaken works will be instructed as appropriate or a tender process instigated (for works estimated at £10,000 and over).

The tender process will be undertaken in line with the association's Procurement Policy and implemented as quickly as possible. Tenders will be assessed at the tender deadline and a works order instructed within one working day. The tenant will be informed of the tender outcome and the timescale for the works.

- 6) Tenants advised to contact Westfield if any issues arise.
- 7) Follow up with tenant within 3 months of work being completed to ensure issues resolved.
- 8) If further visit is required, this is arranged, and the above process will be repeated.
- 9) Damp and Mould Register is updated and reviewed by Property Services Officer monthly alongside KPIs
- 10) We will report on the number and type of issues reported within each calendar month.

Timescales for works are as follows (taken from the day of reporting/identification):

- Emergency e.g. leak into property: Repair carried out within 24 hours to resolve the immediate problem. Full repair completed within 20 working days.

- Urgent e.g. serious level of damp/mould: Inspected within 3 working days and full repair completed within 20 working days from reporting.
- Routine: e.g reports of mould/damp from tenant: As per urgent.

More extensive repair works will in some instances require longer than 20 working days to complete. The appropriate timescale will be discussed and agreed with the contractor and the tenant with a view to completing the works as quickly as feasibly possible.

To be completed by Corporate Services Officer

Document Control

Business Owner (name & job title)	Helen Timney, Property Services Officer
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Document History

Date	Version Number	Author	Description of Update
22 May 2022	1.1	HR	Minor updates including reference to Awaab's Law, and revised timescales; visit every case reported within 14 days, works started within 7 working days & follow up visit within 3 months of completion.
25 May 2023	1.0	HT	New Damp & Condensation Policy
8 May 2024		HT	Review of Policy and Procedure