



WILLIAMSBURGH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Damp and Mould Policy

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Review date	Reviewer(s)	Amendments

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The fundamental role of social landlords is to provide tenants with safe homes to live in. This includes effectively and promptly resolving issues in homes which pose a danger to health and wellbeing, including reports of damp and/or mould. If damp and mould are left untreated for extended periods, health problems can be serious or, in extreme cases, fatal.
- 1.2 This policy acknowledges the importance tenants/residents place on receiving a high-quality service from Williamsburgh Housing Association (WHA) that is responsive to their needs where reports are received of dampness, mould or condensation issues within individual properties or common areas.
- 1.3 The Scottish Housing Regulator issued a letter in December 2022 to all Scottish Landlords to consider what systems they have in place to be proactive in ensuring tenants homes are not severely affected by mould and dampness and that they have appropriate systems to identify and deal with any reported cases of mould and damp situations timeously and effectively. This policy supports the current operational systems in place and is informed by current legislation and best practice guidelines relating to issues of damp and mould.

2.0 Aim of the Policy.

- 2.1 The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) requires that homes provided by social landlords:
 - Meet the Tolerable Standard.
 - Are free from serious disrepair.
 - Are energy efficient.
 - Have modern facilities and services; and
 - Are healthy, safe and secure.

This document sets out Williamsburgh Housing Association's (WHA) policy for responding to reports of damp or mould in properties to ensure compliance with the SHQS.

- 2.2 The aim of this policy is to ensure prompt diagnosis and management of the potential risks and issues which may arise from reports of damp and mould in our properties, including within communal areas. The policy supports our commitment to meeting the needs of our tenants and residents in achieving our aim in providing homes that are safe, warm, and dry.
- 2.3 The policy provides staff with access to the appropriate processes, guidance, and knowledge to ensure all our properties are well maintained and free of damp and mould that could risk the health and safety of our tenants residing in homes owned by the association.

- 2.4 This policy also sets out how we will support our tenants and residents to minimise the risk of damp and mould occurring and report it where there is evidence of its presence.
- 2.5 The policy aims to ensure that WHA meets its legal, contractual, regulatory and statutory obligations.

3.0 Scope of Policy

3.1 This policy explains how we will implement control measures, manage and eliminate damp and mould and manage condensation, including, but not limited to:

- Tenants who rent their home under a tenancy agreement.
- Leased properties to other agencies.
- All property communal factored areas.

3.2 What this policy will cover:

- Identifying the types of damp: rising, penetrating and condensation dampness, including internal leaks.
- Identifying the responsibilities of WHA and our tenants and residents in dealing with damp and condensation.
- Offering guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process to all tenants and residents living in our properties.
- Data gathering and reporting, identifying proactive methods in mitigating risk of all dampness.
- The legal and regulatory framework areas which relate to this policy.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with WHA Maintenance Policy.

4.0 Legal and Regulatory Framework

A number of legal, regulatory and best practice areas have informed this policy.

4.1 Legal and regulatory:

- The Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS)
- The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH)
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 (& Subsequent amendments)
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Environmental Health Protection Act 1990
- Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2004

- Tenements Scotland Act 2004
- Right To Repair (2001)

4.2 Best practice:

A briefing note issued in February 2023 jointly by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) focused on damp and mould for social housing practitioners and echoed many of the comments, findings and lessons to date in the social housing sector:

- *'Putting Safety first: A briefing note on damp and mould for Social Housing Practitioners.'*

5.0 Key Policy principles

WHA will in its role as a responsible Landlord ensure the following key principles are adhered to:

- 5.1 To comply with statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements and best practice as introduced during the lifetime of the policy.
- 5.2 Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable repair solutions and improvements to eliminate damp including, managing, and controlling condensation.
- 5.3 Respond to all reports of damp and condensation and complete any repair works/measures in line with WHA Maintenance policy complying with all legislation. This will be dependent on the severity and urgency of the problem, the complexity of the solution and the repair works/actions required.
- 5.6 Focus on working in partnership with tenants ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is provided.
- 5.7 Always communicate effectively in relation to the delivery of our reactive repairs service and provide a range of options for tenants to report repairs including sending a video, photographs, etc.
- 5.8 Ensure that customers have access to and are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp and condensation.
- 5.9 Ensure budgets are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp, mould and condensation problems.
- 5.10 Undertake analysis of causation of dampness and mould to assist with informing us of the possible risks to our properties so that we can undertake proactive measures to eliminate damp, mould and condensation before it becomes a problem for our customers.

6.0 Categories of damp and condensation

6.1 Broadly, issues of damp and condensation can be categorised in the following way:

- Rising Damp - The movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building through capillary action, usually displaying an area of damp up to a height of around one metre from the ground.
- Penetrating Damp - Water penetrating the external structure of the building causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure. This includes defective stonework, rainwater goods and roof structures.
- Dampness caused by Internal leaks from pipework, household appliances or from an adjacent property.
- Condensation damp - Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. The conditions that may increase the risk of condensation are:
 - Lack of ventilation within the property.
 - Inadequate heating.
 - Inadequate loft insulation.
 - High humidity contributed to by resident activities.
 - Overcrowding
- Condensation is also caused by high levels of humidity in a property. This is the amount of water vapour present in air expressed as a percentage of the amount needed for saturation at the same temperature. A home should have a relative humidity of 30% to 60%. Above 60% and you have what is considered “high” humidity. Besides being less comfortable, high humidity can cause a host of other problems in a property, including growth of fungus and mould in various parts of the home.
- Interstitial condensation – Occurs within the thickness of the fabric of a building. This can take place inside walls, roofs or floors. When warm air vapour passes through the fabric of the building it cools down within the building structure, which leads to condensation which can result in damp and subsequently present as mould.

6.2 On report of damp or mould to WHA, investigations will be carried out to identify the cause. Appropriate actions will be instructed and/or advice/support given to tenants/residents.

7.0 WHA Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1 The Chief Executive and Management Committee has overall responsibility for ensuring adequate resources are made available to enable the aims and objectives of this policy to be met.
- 7.2 The Head of Property Services has been delegated the responsible person for the implementation of this policy. Responsibilities include the delivery of the key policy objectives including designing and implementing procedures, staff training and communication to tenants and residents. Operational procedures to action, record and monitor instances of reports of damp and mould are in place and reviewed on a regular basis.
- 7.3 Our initial approach to damp, mould or condensation situations is that we will always first consider whether the source of the damp and mould is a design, construction, or maintenance issue which we can eliminate through work to the home. Where this is not the case additional support and advice will be provided to the tenant/resident on managing and controlling the occurrences of condensation, mould and damp. This support will be provided through the provision of advice and guidance literature and by working with our tenants and residents.
- 7.4 When a report of any dampness and mould situations are received, the maintenance team shall inspect and investigate the potential causes(s) of dampness/mould before issuing remedial repairs and actions in accordance with our Maintenance Policy. The inspection will aim to diagnose the root cause of damp correctly and deliver effective solutions based on the ethos of dealing with the cause of the damp not just the symptom and wherever possible fixing first time.
- 7.5 Reports of damp and mould in tenanted properties will be given a priority category for Inspection by WHA Staff. We will make reasonable attempts to access the property to inspect and carry out the works. All logged repairs will have an agreed appointment date for inspections to be carried out. Following continuous no accesses (3 attempts), written communication will be issued to the tenant requesting them to contact the Association to organise an inspection of the affected areas. All contacts will be recorded on the WHA Housing Management System including instances of no access and communications.
- 7.6 The Maintenance Team shall inform the tenant or resident of the findings of the investigations following the inspection. This will include identifying the possible root causes of damp, recommending effective solutions and all necessary remedial works / actions / improvements and the estimated timescales to complete the works /measures; keeping the customer updated throughout the process from inception to completion.
- 7.7 Should works require to be instructed to rectify reports of damp and mould, the Maintenance Team shall ensure that only competent contractors will be

employed to carry out any works and that the customer's possessions are adequately protected during the works.

7.8 Following analysis of root causes of dampness/mould, the Maintenance team may also look to programme in reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation/dampness. This may include, but is not limited to, additional ventilation system installations.

7.9 Following any remedial works to make good internal surfaces ensuring that surfaces are prepared to a condition ready for the Customer to redecorate. Where there is need to decorate following remedial work carried out by WHA, we may provide a decoration voucher to contribute towards the cost of redecorating the affected area.

7.10 If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day-by-day basis or a temporary decant to an alternative property. The tenant will be supported through this process to find suitable accommodation.

In some instances it may be necessary to re-house a tenant/family on a permanent basis if a medical professional advises that re-housing is the most suitable option and/or repairs to the fabric of the property will take an extended time to complete. This will be considered in accordance with WHA Lettings Policy.

7.11 In the absence of any remedial works being issued the Maintenance Team shall promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to minimise damp and condensation, particularly when there are no apparent causes or faults relating to the design or construction of the property.

7.12 We will follow up each completed damp or mould repair with a re-inspection where deemed required within six months of any remedial works carried out. Frequency of re-inspections will be determined by the severity of the affected areas and diagnosed nature of the work required.

7.13 All employees who interact with our tenants and residents will have an awareness of this policy and receive adequate training to enable them to report issues of damp mould & condensation and to support our tenants and residents.

All Maintenance staff who will be involved in the inspection and investigation of root causes of dampness/mould will receive training to ensure that they are competent in diagnosing damp, condensation and mould issues.

8.0 Tenants/Residents responsibilities

8.1 It is the tenant/resident responsibility to immediately report any evidence of rising and penetrating damp (see definitions, section 6.0) and faulty equipment that will affect the management of humidity and moisture in the home (faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, heating system failure etc.)

- 8.2 it is the tenant/resident responsibility to ensure all equipment installed by WHA is operational including window vents being opened at all times, extractor fans being switched on to allow effective operation and any other installed components to allow ventilation operating as required.
- 8.3 Access to properties must be made available for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works. Where tenants are considering making any changes within their home: for example, converting rooms into one room, adding extensions, converting non-habitable buildings/spaces into habitable, they must seek advice and permission from WHA in accordance with their tenancy agreement. Tenants must ensure that the proposed alteration would not contribute to the accumulation of damp, mould, or condensation, as well as ensuring alterations comply with building control and planning guidelines
- 8.4 Tenants/Residents can help reduce the conditions that lead to condensation dampness by:
- Keeping the presence of moisture to a minimum e.g., covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outside (where possible), where it is safe to do so, keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.
 - Adequately heating rooms – The World Health Organisation recommends a temperature of 18°C.
 - Keeping the house well-ventilated e.g., opening windows during cooking / bathing, turning on and ensuring that the extractor fan or ventilation system installed in their home is regularly cleaned and working, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture.
 - Following all advice and guidance issued by WHA on managing humidity and moisture in the home which can lead to condensation.
- 8.5 If all reasonable efforts have been made to manage and control the presence of condensation and mould, and there is still an issue then the tenant should contact WHA immediately to report the problem.
- 8.6 Where internal conditions within a home for example, overcrowding and excessive hoarding of personal belongs are influencing the health and wellbeing of the occupants or are preventing inspections or repairs works being carried out, we will refer the Tenancy to the Housing Management Team to provide support and assistance to review the tenants/residents options In their current property or to explore options in relation to the allocation of an alternative property.

9.0 Complaints

- 9.1 WHA aims to provide a first class service to all of its tenants and residents. We will therefore strive to keep service complaints to an absolute minimum by

aiming to agree a resolution quickly with the customer and learn from the resolution to develop the services we provide. When early resolution is not agreed and a complaint is received we will also consider if we can learn from these complaints to help improve service.

- 9.2 In the event a complaint is received in relation to dampness/mould issues, this will be assessed in line with the WHA complaints process which follows the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) process.

Once the investigation stage has been completed, tenants of WHA have the right to approach the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) if they remain dissatisfied.

The SPSO considers complaints from people who remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of our complaints procedure. The SPSO looks at issues such as service failures and maladministration (administrative fault), as well as the way we have handled the complaint.

Where a factored owner is dissatisfied with the outcome of their mould/dampness complaint, they are entitled to contact the Housing and Property Chamber, First-tier Tribunal for Scotland.

Contact details for the SPSO and Housing and Property Chamber can be found in the WHA Complaints Procedure or on our website:

www.williamsburghha.co.uk

10.0 Reporting

- 10.1 Reports of dampness & mould currently forms part of our Compliance reporting to the Operations and Performance Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis.

The report includes the following

- Number of reported cases.
- Work instructions issued.
- Advice provided to tenants.
- Number of properties being monitored to ensure issues have been resolved.

11.0 Risk management

- 11.1 WHA's approach to Risk Management is the process of:

- Analysing risks
- Prioritising risks
- Treating risks
- Monitoring risks.

- 11.2 Reports of damp and mould in tenanted properties presents a risk to WHA in relation to maintaining stock condition, providing homes which meet

regulatory and legislative requirements, the satisfaction of our tenants and potential reputational damage.

- 11.3 WHA Risk Register includes areas of compliance relating to tenant safety. Due to the nature of the risks incurred should instances of damp and mould be found in WHA stock, this has been added to the Risk Register to maintain focus in this area.

12.0 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 12.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and attached to this Policy as Appendix 1.

No Equalities issues have been identified as the Policy relates to the service delivery mechanisms to investigate, instruct remedial works, record and monitor dampness and mould situations within tenanted homes and common areas. The tasks required to ensure continuity of tenancy and to be compliant with legislation will be applied equally to all properties resulting in no positive or negative impact upon the protected characteristic groups.

13.0 Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

- 13.1 Record keeping for the purposes of this policy will relate to the tenant (s) personal details who reside in WHA stock. This will include contactors having access to tenant's personal details for the purpose of visiting properties and a data sharing agreement being in place.

All data will be held in line with GDPR requirements. This Policy is written to be open and transparent in line with FOISA. A DPIA Impact Assessment has been carried out and attached to this Policy as Appendix 2.

14.0 Review

- 14.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years, with the next review scheduled for October 2026 or earlier if required to take account of:
- Legislative, regulatory and good practice requirements.
 - Association performance.
 - The views of tenants and Staff.
 - Strategic aims and objectives.
 - Stock condition information.
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