



# POLICY DOCUMENT

## DAMP, MOULD & CONDENSATION POLICY

<b>POLICY TITLE:</b>	Damp, Mould & Condensation Policy
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Head of Asset Management
<b>DATE APPROVED:</b>	August 2023
<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	St Leger Homes Board
<b>IMPLEMENTATION DATE:</b>	September 2023
<b>DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW:</b>	August 2026 (or sooner if new guidance or legislation is introduced)
<b>ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE:</b>	Damp, Mould & Condensation Operating Procedures (to be developed)
<b>ASSOCIATED CUSTOMER/EMPLOYEE PUBLICATIONS:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Management Strategy</li> <li>• Repairs &amp; Maintenance Policy</li> <li>• Customer Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Environmental Strategy</li> <li>• Tenant’s Handbook</li> <li>• Tenancy Agreement</li> <li>• Damp &amp; Mould Operating Procedures</li> </ul>
<b>TEAMS AFFECTED:</b>	All staff and departments
<b>THIS POLICY REPLACES</b>	This is a new policy

**Brief Policy Summary:** This policy sets out the organisation’s approach towards managing damp, mould and condensation in tenanted homes.

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# DOCUMENT CONTROL

## Revision History

<b>Date of this revision:</b>	19.07.2023
<b>Date of next review:</b>	August 2026
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Head of Asset Management

Version Number	Version Date	Author/Group commenting	Summary of Changes
1.0	01.06.2023	HoAM	Original version for initial consultation with EMT
1.1	04.07.2023	EMT, Customers, Staff	Minor tweaks throughout the document following consultation feedback
1.2	19.07.2023	EMT	Minor tweaks to the document following final consultation

## Policy Creation and Review Checklist

Action	Responsible Officer	Date Completed
Best practice researched (HouseMark, HQN, Audit Commission, general websites)	D,M & C Working Group	31.05.2023
Review current practices from similar organisations	D,M & C Working Group	31.05.2023
Review customer satisfaction data from the area the policy relates to	Head of Customer Services	N/A
Review Customer complaints from the area the policy relates to	Head of Customer Services	06.06.2023
Undertake customer consultation if applicable	Head of Asset Management	June 2023
Staff consultation if applicable	Head of Asset Management	June 2023
Trade Union consultation if applicable	Head of Asset Management	N/A at present
Stakeholder consultation if applicable	Head of Asset Management	N/A at present
Equality Analysis carried out	Head of Asset Management	19.06.2023
General review and refresh	Head of Asset Management	N/A at present

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## POLICY DOCUMENT

### DAMP, MOULD & CONDENSATION POLICY

#### 1. Introduction

This policy is intended to provide clarity for customers, staff and other key stakeholders around the level of service that can be expected from St leger Homes, and the approach that will be taken in relation to Damp, Mould and Condensation.

The policy sets out SLHD's commitment to ensuring that damp, mould and condensation issues are always be taken seriously, and that these are dealt with in true partnership with tenants, with each party having their own responsibilities and roles to play.

The tragic death of Awaab Ishak is a stark reminder of the devastating consequences of the failure to manage damp and mould in homes can have. The Regulator of Social Housing expects all registered providers of social housing to fulfil their responsibility to take action to protect tenants from hazardous damp and mould. More importantly, our customers rightly expect to be able to live in safe and decent housing.

St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) wants to do the right thing, and we are firmly committed to providing good quality, safe and decent homes. This commitment is a key objective within our corporate plan and is at the heart of our customer-focused approach to delivering our services.

Providing safe and decent homes includes ensuring that any damp or mould issues identified within our properties are robustly addressed in a reasonable timescale, commensurate with the scale of the issue, and with the collaboration and support of our tenants.

SLHD recognises the wider impact damp, mould and condensation within a home can have on our tenants, and we understand our responsibilities and obligations in addressing such issues when they occur. We have developed this policy to set out our commitment to tackling issues of damp and mould, demonstrating the importance we place on meeting our responsibilities and obligations.

To enable us to fulfil our obligations we also recognise the need to work in true collaboration and partnership with our tenants, working together to achieve a common goal: ensuring our homes are decent, modern, safe and free from hazards.

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## 2. Purpose

This policy sets out our specific commitment to a **zero** tolerance approach to damp and mould in our properties. This policy complements and supports other key strategies, policies and documents including SLHD's:

- Asset Management Strategy
- Repairs & Maintenance Policy
- Customer Complaints Policy
- Environmental Strategy
- Tenant's Handbook
- Tenancy Agreement
- Damp & Mould Operating Procedures

The policy will underpin the work of our dedicated Damp and Mould Team to provide assurance that SLHD:

- Takes all reports of damp and mould seriously.
- Takes appropriate and reasonable measures to maintain the Decent Homes Standard and Homes Standard across its managed housing stock.
- Has robust systems in place to ensure that tenants' homes are free from hazardous levels of damp and mould, alongside comprehensive operational processes in place to identify and effectively deal with cases that may arise within a reasonable timescale.
- Complies with all relevant associated legislation and takes account of existing and emerging best practice.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All City of Doncaster Council properties under the management of SLHD that are tenanted.
- Communal spaces in residential accommodation under the management of SLHD.

It covers:

- Rising, penetrating and condensation damp, including internal leaks. A definition of the different types of damp is covered in Appendix 1.

It sets out:

- SLHD's responsibilities for identifying and dealing with damp, mould and condensation.
- Tenants' responsibilities for identifying, reporting and dealing with damp, mould and condensation.

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It confirms:

- Our commitment to addressing damp and mould issues and how we will meet these promises.

It also:

- Clarifies the guidance, advice, and assistance available throughout the process to all tenants living in SLHD managed properties.
- Identifies situations where SLHD will not be able to undertake works to rectify damp, mould and condensation.

#### **4. Ownership and Responsibilities**

##### Our Statutory Obligations

The key statutory and contractual obligations applicable to this policy are:

- Housing Act 2004.
- Decent Homes Standard.
- Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018.
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- Defective Premises Act 1972 (Section 4).
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994.
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11).
- Tenancy Agreement.
- Equality Act 2010.
- The Health And Safety At Work Act 1974.

##### Our Responsibilities

In preventing and managing issues relating to damp, mould and condensation, SLHD is responsible for:

- Maintaining the main fabric of the building in good condition including: walls, roof, chimneys, doors, windows, guttering, fascia and soffit.
- Ensuring that internal components such as pipework, heating, insulation and ventilation are in good working order.
- Responding to reports of faulty components or repairs in a reasonable timescale (and in accordance with our repairs and maintenance policy).
- Responding to reports of damp and mould in a reasonable timescale.
- Utilising data and other asset intelligence to proactively identify potential issues.
- Delivering the specific commitments contained within this policy.

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## Tenant Responsibilities

In preventing and managing issues relating to damp mould and condensation, tenants are responsible for:

- Regularly checking for, and reporting in a timely manner, any damp or mould issues. This includes faulty equipment that will hamper the management and control of damp, condensation, and mould (e.g. leaks, faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, faulty or absence of heating in habitable spaces etc.).
- Regularly checking for mould and cleaning signs of mould as soon as they are discovered.
- Following all advice and guidance issued by SLHD on managing and controlling damp and condensation and taking all reasonable steps to reduce and manage condensation within the home, e.g., using fans where provided, adequately ventilating the property, using trickle vents, covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outside where possible, keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.
- Adequately heating the property (recommended between 18-21 degrees) and keeping humidity levels below 60%.
- Providing reasonable access for repairs and inspections, in accordance with the tenancy agreement.

If the tenant fails to take the advice and reasonable steps to reduce damp the tenant may be recharged for any resulting repairs required which are considered to be as a result of this neglect.

## **5. Policy**

### Our Policy Commitments

In delivering our Damp and Mould service to our customers, we are committed to delivering the following to the best of our abilities:

- Taking all reports of damp, mould and condensation seriously.
- Making it easy for tenants to report and raise concerns relating to damp, mould and condensation and to raise a formal complaint where they are dissatisfied with the response.
- Triaging reports of damp, mould and condensation to ensure more urgent cases and issues are prioritised accordingly, including consideration of tenant circumstances and vulnerabilities.
- Ensuring that concerns raised are listened to, and tenants are treated fairly and with respect.
- Focusing on working in partnership with tenants to resolve any issues raised together.
- Taking into account individual tenant needs, circumstances and vulnerabilities when investigating and addressing concerns raised.

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- Undertaking effective and time appropriate investigations.
- Keeping a record of issues raised and our response (including inspections).
- Using independent specialists where appropriate.
- Informing tenants of findings following a property inspection and the proposed next steps.
- Delivering all reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to eradicate damp and mould including, managing, and controlling condensation, in line with our repairs policy.
- Making good internal surfaces following any remedial work carried out ensuring that surfaces are prepared to a condition ready for the tenant to redecorate.
- Ensuring that when a third party deliver works on behalf of SLHD, only competent contractors are used.
- Ensuring that tenants have access to comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp, mould and condensation.
- If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, arranging for alternative accommodation. This may be on a day-by-day basis or a temporary move to an alternative property. The tenant will be supported through this process to find suitable accommodation.
- Supporting tenants, where appropriate, to take their own proportionate and reasonable actions to help control and manage condensation related issues within the home.
- Making referrals to the Tenancy Support Team for tenants where financial issues or other vulnerabilities may have been a contributory factor in instances of damp, mould or condensation. The team will work with the tenant to maximise incomes and build financial resilience.
- Ensuring that the fabric of SLHD managed property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and condensation.
- Maximising available budgets and ensuring that they are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp and condensation problems.
- Using information gathered from reports of damp and mould to inform future investment programmes across the housing stock, ensuring strong links with the journey to net zero carbon.
- Complying with appropriate statutory requirements.
- Adopting a continuous improvement approach to the service, including learning from complaints and customer feedback, and identifying and adopting emerging best practice where feasible.
- Ensuring that relevant staff have appropriate damp, mould and condensation training and understand their obligations under this policy.

### Policy and Commitment Limitations

In responding to concerns around damp, mould and condensation, there are some limitations and exclusions to what SLHD will, or are able to provide, and these include, but are not limited to:

- Controlling damp and mould where it is unreasonable or impractical to do so or if any remedial action would be ineffective. For example poor construction or design

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(not meeting current construction and living standards), i.e. listed buildings, or cold bridging areas in the fabric of the building that cannot be eliminated. Where such buildings are identified, the future retention and use of these will be reviewed.

- Non-habitable rooms, for example: out-buildings and other add-on structures or unheated or uninsulated semi external toilets and storerooms. Where tenants are considering converting or using non-habitable buildings and spaces or rooms they should seek advice and permission from SLHD in accordance with the tenancy agreement conditions.
- Where internal conditions within a home prevent inspections or remedial work being safely carried out, for example overcrowding or excessive hoarding of personal belongs. In such instances, SLHD will provide support and assistance to review the tenant's options that may include moving to more appropriate alternative suitable accommodation, or referral for other methods of support.

Also, under this policy:

- Mould wash treatment will only be carried out by St Leger Homes where this is found to be:
  - A persistent or extensive issue.
  - Cannot be controlled by the tenant following previous documented attempts.
  - Where vulnerabilities prevent the tenant being able to undertake independently.
- Surfaces will be prepared ready for decoration, but decoration will not be provided following works. In very exceptional circumstances, SLHD may consider this at their discretion as a gesture of goodwill.
- SLHD will not normally reimburse for personal items damaged by mould unless it is proven that SLHD have been negligent.

## 6. Monitoring, Compliance and Effectiveness

The Director of Property Services has overall responsibility for this policy, including ensuring its effective implementation and delivery of the commitments specified.

- The Head of Asset Management is responsible for:
  - The day-to-day implementation and delivery of the policy.
  - Monitoring the day-to-day performance and delivery of the policy.
  - Reviewing the policy.
- The Damp and Mould Manager has responsibility for:
  - Supporting the development and ongoing review of this policy.
  - Developing the processes and procedures that underpin this policy.

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- Delivering the Damp & Mould action plan, which brings to life the aims and commitments within this policy.

As a minimum, the Policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required in response to:

- Legislative changes.
- SLHD strategy or policy changes.
- Customer feedback, including complaints.
- Emerging new best practice.
- Ineffective policy terms.

Oversight, governance and monitoring of this policy will be provided through the existing SLHD Board & Committee structure, with regular damp and mould updates being provided as a minimum via the Health, Safety and Compliance report.

## 7. Performance Standards

New performance monitoring measures will be developed and introduced within the first six months of the policy. As a minimum, these will include:

- **Number of damp, mould & condensation inspection requests made by tenants each week or month.**
- **Number of damp, mould & condensation inspections completed each week or month.**
- Average time to complete a damp, mould & condensation inspections (from the date reported to the date the inspection completed).
- Number of repairs raised following a damp, mould & condensation inspection.
- Number of repairs completed following a damp, mould & condensation inspection.
- Average time to complete damp, mould & condensation related repairs following an inspection.
- Number of properties where a category 1 hazard in relation to damp & mould is recorded at a moment in time.
- Number of properties where a category 2 hazard is relation to damp & mould is recorded at a moment in time.
- Number of referrals made to the tenancy sustainability team.

The indicators highlighted in bold above will be included in the Health, Safety & Compliance report, which is monitored by the Executive Management Team and Building Safety Committee (on behalf of the Board).

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Types of Damp & Mould

The types of damp covered by the policy are:

Rising Damp: The movement of moisture from the ground rising up through the structure of the building through capillary action.

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.

Condensation Damp: Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with 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 where vapour pressure forces water vapour through porous materials (e.g., walls), which then condenses when it reaches colder conditions within the structure.

The conditions that can increase the risk of condensation are:

- Inadequate ventilation e.g., natural opening windows and trickle or background vents and mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens.
- Inadequate heating e.g., undersized boilers and radiators.
- Inadequate thermal insulation. e.g., Missing, or defective wall and loft insulation.
- High humidity e.g., presence of rising and penetrating damp
- Poor building design and construction – specific cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction.

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Conditions that can lead to condensation are:

- Inadequate ventilation – lack of opening windows or mechanical ventilation or extraction, not opening windows, blocking up vents not turning on extract fans, not allowing air to circulate around furniture.
- Inadequate heating – absence of suitable heating system or not heating property appropriately (acknowledging that in some cases fuel poverty may be a contributing factor).
- Defective insulation –dislodged insulation in lofts.
- High humidity - not covering pans when cooking and drying laundry inside the house can contribute to this.
- Overcrowding.

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.

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