

DAMP, MOULD & CONDENSATION

Policy Statement

1.0 Introduction

1.1 HYELM (“us”, “our”, “we”) is committed to keeping our properties in good condition and, in doing so, will meet both its statutory and contractual responsibilities.

1.2 This policy sets out our approach to dealing with damp and mould in our flats and communal areas.

1.3 We encourage residents to report any concerns of damp, mould or condensation as soon as possible. We will treat the immediate problem and investigate and deal with any underlying issues that are the root cause of the problem.

1.4 Our aim is to:

- Fulfil our statutory obligations relating to Health & Safety and the well-being of our residents, members of staff and service users.
- Maintain the structure and fabric of our housing stock as a capital asset, preventing it from deterioration resulting from damp.
- Know the condition of the housing stock for which we have repairing obligations by using appropriate survey and inspection methods.
- Provide a responsive and effective repairs and maintenance service.
- Treat residents reporting damp and mould with empathy and respect.
- Take responsibility for diagnosing and resolving damp and mould in a timely and effective way where they result from issues that require repair.
- Support residents in resolving damp and mould where they result from the use of the apartment, and provide our residents with appropriate, clear, sensitive, practical and accessible advice.
- Ensure staff are trained to enable them to spot potential causes of damp, mould and condensation so they can advise residents, diagnose problems and provide solutions.

1.5 Our staff and contractors will work together with our residents to deliver this policy.

1.6 We are committed to challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in every area of our work. This policy is written from an equal opportunities perspective.

1.7 This policy, and others, if requested, are available in different formats, such as languages, large print and recorded form.

1.8 When applying this policy, make reasonable adjustments for people who have a disability and will take into account the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy outlines to residents who live at our properties types & causes of damp & mould, how to report damp & mould concerns and the procedure followed in managing such requests.
- 2.2 It also outlines the standards of service that a person should expect to receive.
- 2.3 All staff and contractors are asked, as part of their duties, to report any instances of damp and mould within our properties.
- 2.4 All employees have a legal and contractual duty to report anything within our properties that could affect the Health & Safety of residents, members of staff, contractors or other service users.

3.0 Related Documents

- 3.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Tenancy Agreement.
- Guide for Residents.
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy.
- Health & Safety Policy.

4.0 Causes

- 4.1 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 of the time and can quickly grow on surfaces where dampness persists or water has formed into a visible covering.
- 4.2 Dampness is an excess of moisture that can't escape from a structure, which can also go on to cause significant damage to the building such as collapsed ceilings and rotten timber elements such as windows and doors.
- 4.3 There are four main causes of damp, mould and condensation. These are:
 - **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.
 - **Rising damp** is caused by water rising from the ground. 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.
 - **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.
 - **Condensation** is the most prevalent type of dampness and is caused by moisture in the

air (water vapour) inside the apartment coming into contact with 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.

- 4.4 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 is to minimise and alleviate 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 repair or an improvement to be made. In others, a different solution may be needed.

5.0 Preventative Action

- 5.1 We will take action to identify apartments that have, or may be at risk of developing, problems with damp and mould.
- 5.2 We will seek to mitigate any increased risks of damp and mould arising as a result of our work to decarbonise our properties.
- 5.3 When a property becomes vacant, and prior to re-letting, we will seek to identify and remedy any issues which may cause damp. This may include ensuring windows are serviceable and can effectively ventilate the property, extractor fans are working, heating is operational and if any damp or mould is found within the apartment the root cause is investigated and repaired.
- 5.4 We will provide information on our website, and through other channels, 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 residents 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 could be treated.
- 5.5 Our staff and contractors will have the skills and knowledge to identify signs of damp and mould and discuss with residents how to manage the problem.
- 5.6 An annual inspection of each apartment will be conducted. The member of staff completing the inspection will look out for signs of damp and mould.

6.0 Dealing with Damp and Mould

- 6.1 Residents are required to report any problems to us as soon as possible after noticing a problem. Reports should be made to the property management team either in person, by telephone on 020 7336 9000 or by emailing hi@hyelm.com.
- 6.2 On receiving a report, a member of the HYELM team will inspect the damp and/or mould and seek to resolve the immediate issue. In some cases, they may need to further diagnose the problem to determine whether it is due to a repair issue for which we are responsible. Sometimes finding out what's causing damp and mould isn't always straightforward and could be due to a combination of factors. Any repairs that are required to be carried out will be dealt with in accordance with our Repairs and Maintenance Policy.
- 6.2 Where damp is as a result of condensation, we will work with our residents 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 damp levels are kept low. Where we provide such advice, it is important that residents adhere to it and

do not take actions that could accentuate any problems e.g. by turning off ventilation systems or sealing over air vents.

- 6.3 When a particularly severe or recurring damp or mould issue is identified we will undertake a comprehensive review which might result in a range of actions to support the resident depending on their circumstances, including providing dehumidifiers, mechanical or passive ventilation systems or applying mould resistant coverings, as appropriate, on a case by case basis.
- 6.4 We will keep residents informed of any inspections, diagnosis of issues and the timetabling of works, where these are required. This includes explaining to them why work might be needed and what work might be done. If any changes to the programme of works are needed, we will keep them informed. Where work is not required, residents will be informed and we will explain the reason why no further work is needed and the steps they should take.
- 6.5 For more complex cases, and especially where more intrusive building work is required and/or there is a serious health risk to the resident, we may require them to move to an alternative apartment either on a temporary or permanent basis. We will consider the individual circumstances of the resident.
- 6.6 Our tenancy agreements require residents to allow us (including appointed contractors) access to their apartment 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 resident or those in the vicinity of the apartment is compromised, we will take appropriate action. For example, this may include but is not limited to obtaining an injunction for access.
- 6.7 In line with our Compensation Policy, we will pay compensation as a result of our failure to deliver the service we have committed to. This includes where belongings have been damaged and/or distress and inconvenience has been caused. Each case will be considered on its own merits, taking into account the individual circumstances of the resident.
- 6.8 The Property Manager will take responsibility for overseeing and ensuring instances of damp and mould are dealt with in accordance with this policy. They will be supported by the Maintenance Office and our general maintenance contractors. Where specialist advice or investigation is required surveyors will be instructed.

7.0 Support

- 7.1 We will give residents advice on how to prevent damp and what they should do to remove mould. However, we recognise that not every resident will be in a position to resolve damp and mould themselves. We will provide appropriate support in such cases in relation to the specific circumstances and the individual resident's needs.

8.0 Training

- 8.1 We will ensure that the Property Manager and Maintenance Officer have the required skills to diagnose and remedy damp and mould.

9.0 Responding to Complaints

- 9.1 We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible without residents 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 residents.

- 9.2 We will learn lessons from damp and mould cases, update our technical approach and how we communicate with residents, in order to improve future responses.

10.0 Monitoring of Mould and Damp

- 10.1 A survey will be conducted each year asking for the views on our response to mould and damp and on our performance to issues in general.

11.0 Condition Surveys and Checks

- 11.1 Regular condition and maintenance checks of all areas of our properties will be conducted by staff and action taken, where necessary.
- 11.2 A record system will be kept so that the maintenance history of each area of each property can be monitored.
- 11.3 From time to time, appropriate independent professional survey or inspection methods will also be undertaken to assist in medium to long-term planning.

Approval

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Version Control

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