

Damp and Mould Policy

Procedure owner/author:	Housing Director
Approved by:	Stoke on Trent Housing Society Board
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Stoke on Trent Housing Society (the Society) is committed to ensuring that its tenants can live in their homes comfortably and that their homes are dry, warm and provide a healthy environment.

1.2 Condensation, damp, and mould can be a common concern, especially during winter months and the Society recognises that it is not always a straightforward repair issue, but often a complex problem which can have an overwhelming impact on the mental health and physical wellbeing of tenants.

1.3 The practical steps that we will take to address reports of damp and mould can be found in our Managing Damp and Mould Procedure.

1.4 This policy applies to all homes owned and managed by the Society, where we have responsibility for repairs and maintenance.

2.0 Our Commitment

2.1 The Society will take a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould, working with our tenants and their households to resolve the problem.

2.2 We will respond promptly to reports of damp and mould with clear procedures and timescales for appropriate actions and resolution, agreeing an action plan with the tenant and keeping them informed throughout the process. We will do this via a case management approach using our Housing Management system to clearly record actions and to monitor timescales, outcomes and to identify repeat reports and complex cases:

2.3 Our approach will be three-pronged:

- ✓ **Home** - can we identify any issues with the property that may be causing condensation damp or mould? Do we need to carry out any surveys or repairs?
- ✓ **Household** – are there any issues within the household that may make managing condensation problematic. How can we help them with these?
- ✓ **Hardship** – are there any financial factors affecting the household and their ability to heat their home.

2.4 We will provide tenants with information, advice and where needed the appropriate tools to help them manage mould caused by condensation.

2.5 We will never dismiss damp and mould as a 'lifestyle issue' and will work with households to identify the causes and resolve the problem at its source.

2.6 We will use stock condition and other data to take proactive action to prevent damp and mould in our homes, this includes identifying schemes or households that are most at risk of damp and mould problems. We will also identify households that haven't interacted with us for a substantial amount of time and proactively reach out to these residents to see if they need any help or support.

2.7 We will work with our involved tenants to ensure that materials and information regarding damp and mould are accessible and easy to understand.

3.0 Links to Relevant Legislation and Internal Policies and Procedures

3.1 This policy links to:

- Awaab's Law
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Housing Act 1988, 1996, 1998, 2004
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Building Regulations

3.2 It should be used in conjunction with other relevant Society policies and procedure, which include:

- Managing Damp and Mould Procedure
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Access to Properties Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Allocation Policy
- Supported Temporary Move (decant) Policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Hoarding Policy

4.0 Policy Actions

4.1 We will investigate all reports of damp, mould and condensation within our tenant's' homes using our **Home, Household and Hardship** approach. Any actions identified will be captured in an Action Plan that we will agree with the tenant alongside timescales and reviews.

4.2 Home

- We will carry out and complete remedial repairs and improvements to resolve and damp and mould issues and act in accordance with our obligations as landlord. These repairs will be monitored to make sure that the action taken has resolved the issue.
- Our approach to property inspections will be consistent and will include a thorough examination of the home's ventilation performance.
- For voids and mutual exchanges, we will inspect all rooms for damp, mould, and condensation. If identified, it will be managed and rectified as part of the void works and prior to the mutual exchange taking place. We will use our void standard checklist to ensure it includes sufficient proactive measures on identifying and addressing damp and mould problems in unoccupied homes.

4.3 Household

- We will work with the tenant and their household members to help them reduce condensation in their homes. This may include advice on reducing condensation as they go about their daily household tasks,

such as drying laundry or bathing, alongside advice on using the ventilation and heating systems within their home adequately.

- If the damp issue cannot be resolved without rehousing the tenant or household, for example, in cases of overcrowding, we will work to rehouse the tenant through the Society's own housing stock. Where this is not possible due to unavailable property types or low stock turnover, we will approach other social housing providers in the city to try to find alternative housing options.
- Where the household is identified as being vulnerable or the damp issue is deemed a high risk, we will act quickly to move the household as appropriate, whilst the hazard is resolved. Where required we will also make relevant referrals to support agencies.
- Where hoarding is preventing sufficient air circulation, we will work with the household to agree an action plan as appropriate as per our Hoarding Policy.
- We will utilise our Give Something Back Hardship Fund alongside our furniture recycling scheme where necessary to provide any items which may assist the tenant and their household to manage condensation better.

4.4 Hardship

- We will work with the tenant to identify if there are any financial factors affecting the household and their ability to heat their home.
- Advice and support will be given to enable the tenant to heat their homes, for example we may support a tenant to obtain certain benefits or charitable grants.
- We will work with "Beat the Cold" a local independent charity who work to reduce the incidence of cold related incidence and fuel poverty, making referrals as necessary.
- We will again utilise our Give Something Back Hardship Fund to support any household who is struggling financially, for example by issuing food or fuel vouchers.

4.5 We will work in partnership with our tenants to ensure the damp and mould has been eradicated and will monitor this across a reasonable timeframe and across seasons. We will seek agreement once the case is resolved so that it can be closed on our housing management system.

4.6 In cases of identified damp and mould, we will categorise the level of risk based upon Housing Health Safety Rating System (HHSRS) guidelines and categories used by the Regulator for Social Housing.

4.4 Any damp and mould investigation and repairs will be completed within timeframes set by the Regulator.

4.5 We will regularly report on damp and mould cases to the Society Board.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 All Society staff members need to be aware of this Damp and Mould policy as it is a fundamental requirement for the Society, and staff need to be able to direct and resolve any customer queries that may arise.

5.2 We will ensure that all staff and contractors where appropriate, receive sufficient training in spotting the early signs of damp and mould and that they understand the diverse possible causes of the problem, such as overcrowding, fuel poverty or other vulnerabilities.

5.3 Tenants will be encouraged to:

- Regularly check for signs of mould.
- Report condensation, damp, and any repairs or faults with their home to us as soon as possible.
- Allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of remedial works. On occasions where the inspection and remedial repairs are prevented, we may seek legal action to remove the risk.
- Work with the Society, by taking the advice given and adopting reasonable steps to reduce moisture levels within the home.

6.0 Equality and Diversity

6.1 The Society will comply with the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy when dealing with reports of damp and mould. We will consider the individual circumstances of the customer involved and staff member when investigating and determine the most appropriate course of action.

6.2 No one will be unlawfully discriminated against because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, language, religion, belief, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, family circumstances, employment status, physical ability, or mental health.

6.3 We will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to liaise with and use Society services.

7. Monitoring and Review

7.1 To ensure this Damp and Mould Policy remains effective, the Society will:

- Review this policy at regular intervals when significant changes are made to legislation or guidance or when related policies and procedures are amended.
- Present any changes to the Society Board for approval and make any amendments known to staff.
- New staff will have a thorough induction and training to ensure that they understand and can implement our policy.