

DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy sets out how English Rural Housing Association ('the Association') will address and respond to reports of damp, mould and condensation in our properties.
- 1.2. The Association recognises the importance of addressing the problems damp and mould can cause and of having preventative measures in place to tackle and reduce issues surrounding condensation in its properties.
- 1.3. The Association treats all reports of damp and mould seriously and understands the health implications it may have, including respiratory problems or other conditions that impact on the immune system. It may also have an impact on mental health if left untreated.
- 1.4. The Housing Ombudsman's October 2021 spotlight report on damp and mould highlighted the seriousness of dealing effectively with damp and mould in properties, following a high number of complaints from tenants that certain landlords did not act appropriately to deal with these issues.
- 1.5. The Association has always been committed to tackling damp and mould in its properties and this policy has been developed to specifically address the problems associated with damp and mould highlighted in the Ombudsman's report to cover each area where the Association as a landlord may be required to act. This includes any proactive interventions, the approach to diagnosis, actions considered appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication and aftercare.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The key aim of this policy is to raise awareness of the issues surrounding damp, mould and condensation and to set out the Associations pro-active approach to addressing and resolving reports in its properties.
- 2.2 The key objectives for the Association are:
 - To take a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould
 - To raise awareness of landlord and tenant responsibilities on damp and mould
 - To provide and maintain dry, warm and healthy homes for all tenants and reduce the number of homes with damp and mould
 - To ensure responsive repairs to alleviate damp are carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimise damage to the structure, fixtures and fittings of the property
 - To ensure the fabric of properties are protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould
 - To work in partnership with tenants to resolve the issues of damp and mould in their homes. This will include providing tenants with information, materials and support to prevent and help them reduce condensation in their homes
 - To reduce the number of complaints and disrepair claims regarding damp and mould
 - To ensure the service provided is accessible to all so everyone can easily report damp and mould and are treated in a fair, respectful, empathetic and consistent way

3. CAUSES OF CONDENSATION, DAMP, AND MOULD

- 3.1. Condensation occurs when the moisture in the air gets cooler and tiny water droplets appear on surfaces. If left untreated, mould will begin to grow.
- 3.2 Causes of condensation may include:

- Excess Humidity – for example, drying washing inside without adequate ventilation
- Ventilation – for example, windows are not opened, trickle vents are closed, extractor fans are not used, furniture is placed too close to external walls
- Inadequate heating
- Defective or inadequate insulation
- Overcrowding

3.3 Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation is present.

3.4 Damp occurs when a fault in the building's basic structure lets in water from outside. As well as damp created by condensation, there are two further types of damp

- Rising damp – This occurs if there is a problem with the damp proof course. The usual evidence of rising damp is a 'tide mark' on the walls that shows how high it has risen and sometimes an accompanying musty smell.
- Penetrating damp – This occurs if water is coming in through the walls or roof, or through cracks. It can be identified by a discolouration of internal walls or ceilings, the presence of tidemarks, blown or blistered plaster and rusted nails in skirting boards and floor timbers, and may be caused by defective components, defective or blocked rainwater gutter and pipes, defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems, water ingress or flooding.

4. THE ASSOCIATION'S RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. The Association continues to coordinate a range of planned works to help reduce the risk of damp and mould and the likelihood of condensation occurring, which may include;

- Improvement of insulation, both internally and externally
- Upgrade/Installation of mechanical extracts
- Upgrade/Installation of wet/dry heating system
- External Wall Insulation
- Replacement windows and doors
- Other energy efficiency improvements to maintain the Government's Decent Homes Standard

4.2. The Association is responsible for maintaining the structure of its properties to avoid penetrating and rising damp and carrying out remedial action if these do occur.

4.3 The Association will effectively diagnose and evaluate what mitigations it can put in place to support tenants in cases where structural/repairs interventions are not appropriate.

4.4 The Association also logs all cases and reports of damp, mould and condensation with a register maintained by the Customer Services Manager, and attention paid to this at property inspections.

5. TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. To prevent and reduce any conditions that can lead to condensation and damp/mould. This includes:

- Managing humidity levels in the home and maintaining a healthy humidity level. This can be achieved by keeping levels of moisture to a minimum for example, covering

pans when cooking, drying washing outside and keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing

- Adequately heating rooms – the Energy Saving Trust recommends heating your home to between 18 to 21 degrees Celsius during winter, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests 18 degrees is the ideal temperature for healthy and well-dressed people
 - Keeping the property well ventilated, for example, opening windows when cooking or bathing, turning on and ensuring that the extractor fan is working, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture
- 5.2. Tenants are responsible for reporting any repairs for which the Association is responsible, such as repairs which need to be carried out to eliminate damp and mould in their home.
 - 5.3. To report issues of damp, mould and condensation to the Association, including faulty equipment that will hamper the management and control of damp, mould and condensation.
 - 5.4. Follow all advice and guidance issued by the Association on managing and controlling damp, mould and condensation. The advice and guidance can be found here.

6. REPORTING DAMP AND MOULD

- 6.1. If damp and mould is visible, tenants should report this to Resident Services either by email to repairs@englishrural.org.uk, via the Residents Portal or by telephone on 0800 1214422.
- 6.2. If a damp or mould issue is reported to the Association the Customer Services Advisors will gather evidence and log the case, before passing it to the Repairs and Maintenance Surveyor to assess.
- 6.3. Based on the RMS assessment the issue will be rated “moderate” or “severe” and a contractor assigned to visit the affected property and produce a report, to include photographs, following which remedial works will be carried out and the resident advised.
- 6.4. A follow up appointment will be scheduled for six months after the initial appointment and the Resident Services will continue to monitor the case.