

## **Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy**

### **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy is to provide clear guidance to staff, tenants and others to ensure that the Policy's aims and objectives are achieved.
- 1.2 Everyone has the right to a warm, secure and decent home and to be treated with dignity and fairness. This Policy highlights the serious risks that damp and mould can pose to tenants' health, why it is imperative to respond quickly, and the practical steps that should be taken both to address and prevent condensation, damp and mould. The speed, efficiency, effectiveness and courteousness with which repairs are carried out is a key feature of the Association's performance as a landlord and on which assessment is made by the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- 1.3 The Association is absolutely clear that it is totally unreasonable to blame damp and mould in the home solely on 'lifestyle choices'. It is unavoidable that everyday tasks, such as cooking, bathing, washing and drying laundry will contribute to the production of indoor moisture. With this in mind, we will adopt a proactive approach to eradicate any causes of condensation, damp and mould due to building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation, inadequate heating and / or poor energy efficiency, before considering the tenants' normal domestic activities. However, it may be beneficial to work with tenants to help them make small, reasonable adjustments to their behaviour, if appropriate, to reduce their condensation, damp and mould risk.
- 1.4 Understanding damp and mould is key and we have trained staff in this field who are supplied with state of the art testing and monitoring equipment. Damp can occur in homes for a variety of reasons (condensation, penetrating, rising or traumatic damp) and our qualified team will identify and tackle the problem in line with our regulatory obligations.
- 1.5 We will also provide guidance on how to manage and / or prevent condensation, damp and mould to our tenants and other service users via our website, newsletters, leaflets and the Annual Report.

### **2. Legislation**

The Association will ensure that all current legal requirements are met. This includes the following:

- Housing Act 2004
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard. (SHQS)
- Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter (2017)
- The Scottish Secure (Right to Repair) Regulations 2002
- Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011

### **3. Policy Aims and Objectives**

- 3.1 To ensure that the Association and its staff follows the Procedure for investigating reports of condensation, damp and mould following contact from a tenant arrangements will be made for a Maintenance Officer to visit the property at the next available appointment.

- 3.2 Firstly, we will listen to the tenant's issues and carry out an inspection of the damage internally. Then, depending on extent of the damage and location within the property the Maintenance Officer will carry out a detailed survey both inside and outside the property. For example, we will check the outside of the property such as drainage, downpipes, airbricks and window and door openings. We will also check to see if there is any saturated or spalling brickwork, or damaged harling around the property to ensure that there are no external issues related to the cause of damage internally. Ground levels are checked to establish if it slopes towards the building or if the ground levels are too high, breaching the DPC or blocking air bricks or any evidence of flooding caused by blocked gullies or ineffective drainage etc.
- 3.3 We will also establish the number of occupants living in the house, enquire about their living habits and record what type of heating system is installed and more importantly how they use their heating and ventilation systems. All the while the Maintenance Officer is trying to build up a picture of what could be causing the symptoms described by the tenant, whilst also trying to establish whether the issue is related to a defect, leak or as a result of lifestyle.
- 3.4 The Maintenance Officer will use Moisture Meter and Hygrometer equipment to take moisture readings and also measure temperature and Relative Humidity readings in the room(s) where the problem is, but also in other rooms to build up an overall picture. Photos will be taken and shared with the Property Services Manager for his consideration before we either, advise the tenant of how we need to work together to manage / resolve the issue, or what repairs we are going to carry out to fix the problem.
- 3.5 It is our aim and objective to ensure the following:
- Ensure that homes are safe, in a good state of repair and provide a healthy environment for tenants.
  - Attend to and carry out any necessary repairs within published timescales.
  - Provide a service which is as convenient to our customers as possible, by operating an appointments system to arrange repair visits for times agreed with our customers.
  - Keep customers informed both during and after visits of the progress of their inspection / repair.
  - Reduce the need to carry out follow on repairs by striving to complete repairs right first time.
  - Reduce the necessity for repeat visits to carry out repairs through good diagnosis and communication with tradesmen.
  - Achieve high levels of customer satisfaction.
  - Provide sufficient and appropriately trained staff and adequate administrative resources to implement the policy, efficiently and effectively.
  - Have clear, concise, comprehensive and accessible procedures, which allow staff to fully implement the policy effectively.
  - Ensure tenants are provided with guidance on how to use the heating and ventilation systems in the property and try to understand why they might not be using them.
  - Cost of living pressures may mean that tenants struggle to adequately heat their homes or heat them irregularly. This can lead to increased condensation and damp. We will try to understand tenants' circumstances and consider signposting them to support with their energy costs or consider if there is any additional support that could be provided.
  - Inform tenants who may have concerns about running costs of heating and ventilation by signposting tenants to sources of advice and support.
  - Help tenants to understand what they can do to improve ventilation and moisture control by informing them about the importance of leaving a gap between furniture and external walls, using extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms, closing internal doors when they cook or

shower, covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outdoors (if possible) and opening windows periodically.

- Improving energy efficiency and ensure homes are sufficiently insulated with good heating and ventilation systems. Improving loft insulation to a minimum of 270mm is a particularly effective means of keeping homes warmer.

#### **4. Procedure for investigating reports of Condensation, Damp and Mould**

- The Association arranges for a Maintenance Officer to visit the property at the next available appointment.
- We approach each and every individual case on its own merits, ensuring that we avoid jumping to conclusions in relation to tenant lifestyle etc.
- Firstly, we will listen to the tenant's issues and carry out an inspection of the damage internally. Then, depending on extent of the damage and location within the property the Maintenance Officer will carry out a detailed survey both inside and outside the property. For example, we will check the outside of the property such as drainage, downpipes, airbricks and window and door openings. We will also check to see if there is any saturated or spalling brickwork, or damaged harling around the property to ensure that there are no external issues related to the cause of damage internally.
- Ground levels are checked to establish if it slopes towards the building or if the ground levels are too high, breaching the DPC or blocking air bricks or any evidence of flooding caused by blocked gullies or ineffective drainage etc.
- The Maintenance Officer will then ask the customer to describe the action taken when cooking, washing and bathing, to ensure that they are using extractor fans and ventilating rooms correctly.
- We will also establish the number of occupants living in the house, enquire about their living habits.
- The Maintenance Officer is trying to establish if there is any evidence of wet clothes hanging up to dry, extractor fans switched off at the spur, window vents in the closed position and furniture clutter preventing the free flow of air; all of which may indicate a condensation issue.
- The Maintenance Officer will discuss the type of heating system installed in the property and more importantly how they use the heating. The Maintenance Officer is trying to establish whether fuel poverty is an issue which is causing or contributing to the issue.
- The Maintenance Officer is trying to build up a picture of what could be causing the symptoms described by the tenant, whilst also trying to establish whether the issue is related to a defect, leak or as a result of lifestyle.
- The Maintenance Officer will use Moisture Meter and Hygrometer equipment to take moisture readings and also measure temperature and relative humidity readings in the room(s) where the problem is, but also in other rooms to build up an overall picture.
- Photos will be taken and shared with the Maintenance Manager for their consideration before we either, advise the tenant of how we need to work together to manage / resolve the issue, or what repairs we are going to carry out to fix the problem.
- The Association has two 'Airthings Wave Mini Smart Indoor Air Quality Monitors' and the Maintenance Manager has trialled them in a property with great success. Once the monitors are placed strategically inside the property the data such as temperature, humidity, air quality etc. can be read from an App on the Maintenance Manager's phone which builds up a good picture in real time of the behaviour inside the property over a two week period. This information is very useful in situations where condensation as a result of tenant lifestyle is suspected.

## **5. Maintenance Officer's Checklist: Condensation, Damp and Mould Surveys**

### **5.1 External Survey**

- Sketch footprint of building and mark up positions of drainage, downpipes, airbricks and openings such as windows and doors.
- Is there any evidence of leaking or overflowing gutters or downpipes?
- Is there saturated or spalling brickwork, or damaged harling around the property?
- Is the adjacent ground sloping towards the building?
- Are the ground levels too high, breaching the DPC or blocking air bricks?
- Is there any evidence of flooding caused by blocked gullies or ineffective drainage?
- Is the property due for any external upgrades as part of the Planned Maintenance Programme?

### **5.2 Internal Survey**

- From the sketched footprint of the building, mark up the internal lay-out (floor plan).
- Highlight areas of concern on the sketch ie. Damp / mould growth on walls etc.
- Are any of the external issues linked to any evidence of damp or mould growth on the internal walls / floors / ceilings etc?
- Ask the customer to describe the action taken when cooking, washing and bathing, to ensure that they are using extractor fans and ventilating rooms correctly.
- Establish how many occupants live in the house.
- Enquire about their living habits and record what type of heating system is installed and how they use their heating.
- Does the property feel cold, suggesting that the heating is not being used adequately?
- Does the property give off a damp smell?
- Do you sense any changes in air temperature or humidity between different rooms?
- Is there a mechanical extraction fan fitted and in working order in the kitchen and bathroom?
- Are all internal doors in-situ and correctly fitted, especially the kitchen and bathroom doors?
- Can you hear dripping water or is there any evidence of plumbing leaks or burst pipes?
- Do wall surfaces feel cold or are there signs of obvious dampness?
- Is there adequate ventilation in the property?
- Are there any gaps in floors, or around doors and windows where cold air could penetrate, apart from trickle ventilation?
- Are there any signs of wood rot?
- Is there any evidence of wet clothes hanging up to dry, which could indicate a condensation issue?
- Have you checked for leaks from all sanitary fittings including WC, bath, shower or water storage tank?
- Have you checked appliances such as washing machines or dishwashers for leaks?
- Is the problem likely to be as a result of condensation due to living habits, fuel poverty, furniture clutter etc?
- Is the property due for any upgrades such as replacement or improvement works to the current heating system?

### **5.3 Testing for Damp and Condensation**

- Carry out tests using the Protimeter MMS using the instruction manual for guidance and establish an efficient work pattern, a sensible approach where time is used efficiently.
- Try to find low readings in walls and skirtings in a 'dry zone' for each material, as these readings will provide you with a marker for the house.

- When using the Protimeter MMS to measure moisture readings always try to use pin probes (Measure Mode), however, advise the tenant that the pins will leave tiny holes in the decoration. Any restrictions in use of the pin probe method must be stated in your report, and the implications clearly stated.
- Measure Mode is better for precise and localised moisture content measurements in wood or WME values in materials other than wood. Please refer to Section 2.2 of the Instruction Manual, pages 7 and 8 for guidance.
- Push the pins into surfaces using a consistent force or you will not get reliable relative readings.
- Use the probes regularly to test skirtings and wall just above skirtings (at one metre intervals) and take readings at intervals laterally along a wall and vertically up the height of walls.
- Take readings around external openings such as windows and doors, or where you have noted potential penetrating damp positions from your initial walk round.
- Take readings where materials appear irregular in surface finish, or marked, damaged or stained in any way.
- Where you have identified any 'damp zones' measurements should be reduced to less than metre intervals at skirtings.
- Pin probes cannot be used on tiled surfaces, therefore record capacitance meter readings instead (use in Search Mode for taking relative moisture readings in tiled walls or floors using the sensor bulge on the back against the tiles. Please refer to Section 2.1 of the Instruction Manual, pages 5 and 6 for guidance).
- Deep probes (insulated extensions supplied with kit) should be used to assess potential moisture conditions deeper into a wall where condensation-led mould is apparent on the surface of the wall and you need to find out if penetrating dampness is a factor. Please refer to page 8 of Instruction Manual for guidance.
- Use thermo-hygrometer measurement to record 'live' condensation, by taking the air temperature reading, and a relative humidity (RH) reading and then checking how far the air and surface temperatures are from dew point. Refer to Section 2.3 Hygrometer Mode on page 9 of the Instruction Manual for guidance.
- Recommend further investigation if necessary (eg. If tiles need to be removed for sample drilling and testing) or any more invasive testing for moisture content by Carbide Meter.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

- Can repairs be carried out to 'manage' the problem or will they simply mask the symptoms?
- Could the root damp problem re-surface with a vengeance if only the symptoms are addressed now?
- What is the life expectancy of the option recommended?
- Would cheaper 'management' rather than 'curing' of the problem work out more expensive in the long run?
- Are there funds available for a long-term cure?

#### 6. **Related Policies**

Other policies closely related to this policy include:

- Planned, Cyclical Maintenance and Improvement Works
- Asset Management Strategy
- Right to Repair Policy
- Void Management Policy
- Defects Policy
- Factoring Policy

**7. Progress and Performance: Monitoring and Reporting**

- 7.1 The Association will monitor progress and performance on cases relating to condensation, damp and mould and report regularly to the Board by way of the Operational Performance Report Key Performance Indicators.
- 7.2 The Association will report annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator by way of the Annual Return on the Charter.

**8. Risk Management Statement**

The risks associated with delivering an effective and efficient repairs and maintenance service are comprehensively incorporated within Association's Risk Management Framework.

**9. Equality and Diversity Statement**

The protected characteristics enshrined in the Equality Act 2010 are respected when ensuring compliance with the Association's obligations in respect of delivering an effective and efficient repairs and maintenance service.

**10. Policy Monitoring and Review**

- 10.1 The Property Services Manager will monitor the implementation and operational effectiveness of the Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy.
- 10.2 The Association will regularly monitor good practice advice from the Scottish Housing Regulator and adopt such advice when formulating the review of the Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy.
- 10.3 The Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy will be reviewed every three years or as and when deemed necessary.