

DAMP AND MOULD MANAGEMENT POLICY

Version Control						
Version	Date drafted	Date approved	Approved by	Date reviewed	Next review date	Owner
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Westmoreland Supported Housing Ltd (WSHL) acknowledge and accept responsibility under the Landlord and Tenant Act and associated legislation and guidance, to ensure all tenanted properties meet or exceed the requirements of what is considered to be a decent home.
- 1.2. To ensure WSHL effectively discharge their responsibilities as part of their overall housing management framework, a damp and mould management policy has been created to address any potential issues.
- 1.3. WSHL recognises there are many and varying root causes that lead to damp and mould and therefore will implement proactive interventions and a transparent approach to diagnosis, actions we consider appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication and tenant aftercare.
- 1.4. This process will also reduce a reliance on residents to report issues, with proactive interventions and the implementation of a 'Zero Tolerance' approach to damp and mould. A zero-tolerance approach does not mean zero cases, it means WSHL will take proactive measures that does not infer blame and ensures the implementation of timely solutions. Crucially, this includes maximising the potential for the complaints procedure to resolve issues and learn, without losing empathy when engaging with tenants.
- 1.5. This policy will also seek to implement the findings identified in the Housing Ombudsman's report - Spotlight on: Damp and Mould – It is not Lifestyle, in order to demonstrate our commitment to being a learning organisation that is subject to continuous improvement and tenant focused outcomes.

2. Background

- 2.1. Mould is an organism that is part of the fungi family and is caused by damp. Mould can exhibit in a range of colours but is often spotted black or white. It often appears powdery and has other associated factors such as: A musty, earthy smell, there is a nearby source of moisture, you see warping, cracking, or peeling of whatever material is growing on.

- 2.2. Condensation occurs when the air and/or surfaces are cold and when the moisture content of the air is high. Condensation can be caused by breathing, cooking, washing and drying clothes and by the design and construction of a building. There is always some moisture in the air, even if it is not visible. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear on cold surfaces, typically windows and other colder surfaces, which can lead to black spotted mould growth. Your property should be able to cope with normal levels of moisture without the need to open windows or use dehumidifiers to reduce damp.
- 2.3. Rising damp occurs when a property does not have adequate damp proofing or there is a breach in the property's structure. It is caused by moisture rising up in walls. Rising damp can be identified by looking for tide marks or salt stains. These tend to rise around one metre from the ground.
- 2.4. Penetrating damp comes from issues on the exterior of a property, for example: roof, brickwork, pointing, windows, doors. Water can build up inside its walls and cause damp and mould growth if a property is not kept in good repair. Penetrating damp can also be caused by internal issues, such as poor sealant around a shower tray which allows water to leak into the surrounding walls and ceilings.
- 2.5. Poor ventilation, mould will develop without proper ventilation, due to the build-up of condensation from everyday activities like drying clothes indoors, cooking and showering, which can add moisture to the air.
- 2.6. Health effects, studies estimate that in the UK between 10-50% of homes are affected by damp. Social housing and low-income communities where there are often a lack of appropriate heating, ventilation and insulation can experience a substantially higher proportion of damp and mould than the national average. In addition, high energy costs prevent the adequate heating of many homes during winter (fuel poverty) leading to increased condensation and indoor dampness.
- 2.7. Studies have linked exposure to indoor mould with a number of health affects including: - respiratory disorders, coughing, wheezing, sore throats, skin rashes and headaches in otherwise healthy people. The numbers of dust mites are also elevated by damp indoor environments, which can exacerbate allergies and asthma. Tenants living in homes with damp and mould may also experience depression and anxiety due to these conditions and poorer health outcomes regardless of age or current health.
- 2.8. Legislation - The Decent Homes Standard was updated in 2006 to incorporate the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which replaced the Housing Fitness Standard. According to the Standard, for a home to be considered 'decent' it must: Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing, be in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and services, provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.



- 2.9. The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 amended the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, with the aim of ensuring that all rented accommodation is fit for human habitation. While it did not create new obligations for landlords, it required landlords to ensure their properties are fit for human habitation at the beginning of, and throughout, the tenancy.
- 2.10. The Landlord and Tenant Act does not define “fit for human habitation”, but consideration should be given to repair, stability, freedom from damp, internal arrangement, natural lighting, ventilation, water supply, drainage and sanitary conveniences, facilities for preparation and cooking of food, the disposal of wastewater and any prescribed hazard. The Act also strengthened tenants’ means of redress where landlords do not fulfil their obligations.
- 2.11. Due regard will also be taken of the Regulator of Social Housing – Home Standard.

3. Key Management Principles

3.1. Key objectives

- To ensure WSHL provides and maintains dry, warm, healthy homes for our tenants.
- Ensuring that our properties are maintained to avoid issues that can lead to damp and mould being created.
- To ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould.

3.2. Key measures to avoid damp - WSHL take a holistic approach to tackle issues of damp and mould by looking at a property as a whole and the pattern of mould. This may include the following:

- Ensure kitchens and bathrooms have suitable mechanical ventilation.
- Ensure suitable background ventilation, such as air vents and trickle vents on windows etc
- Review the energy efficiency of property heating and insulation e.g. loft/wall insulation, double glazing and heating systems.
- Ensure building components such as roof tiles, brick work and damp courses are performing correctly.
- Installation of humidity and temperature sensors and supporting behavioural change where necessary.
- During property visits identify factors that may lead to damp and mould, including the impact of fuel poverty as an understandable cause of tenants neither heating or ventilating their homes adequately and therefore as part of this programme, provide support to help tenants manage their heating costs in a way which avoids the risk of damp and mould issues.

3.3. Provision of information

- Provide employees, tenants, care providers and contractors with information about the health risks of living in damp and/or mouldy homes.
- When investigating causes of damp and mould being transparent with tenants in order that they are kept fully informed throughout the process.
- Reducing over-reliance on residents to report issues.
- Informing tenants and care providers of issues that may increase condensation e.g., an unvented tumble dryer, turning off extractor fans or blocking air vents to enable air to circulate.

The word 'lifestyle' will not be used when dealing with causes of damp and mould, when it may be a consequence of limited choices and the performance of the property.

3.4. Employees training – All Operations and Asset staff and the management and Executive Teams will receive training on damp and mould to cover:

- Spot signs of condensation, damp and mould and understand the health effects, causes and remedies.
- Understand WSHL stock and the types of properties and conditions that are likely to suffer from damp and mould.
- Understand the components in WSHL properties which may cause damp.

3.5. Preventative and reactive measures

- Ensuring that appropriate budget levels are assigned to preventing the cause of damp and mould.
- Carrying out preventative maintenance to prevent the occurrence of damp and mould and undertaking responsive repairs in a timely manner where issues may be exacerbated.
- Providing employees with the correct information and support to identify and manage issues associated with mould and damp.
- Ensuring access to competent consultants and contracts to ensure robust investigations and solutions.
- The void process will include a review of any signs of damp or mould and where concerns are identified remedial action will be taken.
- Housing officer inspections include a formal requirement to check for signs of damp or mould. Where issues are identified this will trigger a requirement for further action, which will be tracked to completion.
- The Maintenance Surveyor or other qualified WSHL representative will visit all sites where damp and mould has been reported, and an obvious repair or remedy is not available or obvious. These will be tracked and reported to Board.
- Adopting a data led, proactive approach i.e., building reports based on where there are known issues with damp and condensation to help identify building typologies, locations, property age and tenancy types that are more vulnerable to condensation, damp and mould.



- Complying with all statutory and regulatory requirements and best practice to ensure all cases of damp and mould are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Periodic reviews of the accessibility and use of systems for reporting repairs and making complaints will be conducted to ensure continuous improvement.
- Ensuring processes and systems allow WSHL to analyse complaints data effectively and identify themes, trends and learning opportunities to ensure continuous improvement.

3.6. Complaints

Where issues regarding damp or mould are raised, WSHL will not close their complaints procedure prematurely if a resident commences with the pre-action protocol, as the Ombudsman does not consider the use of the protocol to constitute legal proceedings. This will maximise the opportunities to resolve disputes potentially sooner through the complaints process and in a less adversarial way.

4. **Monitoring and Review**

The Head of Property and Compliance Manager will be responsible for monitoring the WSHL Damp and Mould Management Policy, to ensure that risks are effectively identified and mitigated, reporting any deficiencies and recommendations to the WSHL Chief Executive as appropriate.