



# Cassiltoun Housing Association

## DAMP AND MOULD PROCEDURE

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**Cassiltoun is a registered Scottish Charity no 035544  
& Registered Property Factor no PF0015**

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## **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure that will create a consistent approach to addressing cases of mould and condensation or dampness through to resolution and rectification of cause within our properties.
- 1.2 This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Damp and Mould Policy.
- 1.3 This procedure will consider the recommendations made in a Housing Ombudsman Service Report – *Spotlight on Damp and Mould – October 2021*.
- 1.4 This procedure has taken into account of the briefing note on damp and mould for social housing practitioners “Putting Safety First” produced by Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Scottish Housing Regulator and ALACHO (Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers).

## **2. THE FOUR MAIN CATEGORIES OF DAMPNESS**

### **2.1 Penetrating Dampness**

This type of Dampness will only be found on external walls or, in the case of roof leaks, on ceilings. It only appears because of a defect in the structure of the home, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, missing roof tiles, loose flashing or leaking gutters. These defects then allow water to pass from the outside to the inner surfaces. Penetrating dampness 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. ‘Tide marks’ will be left, even in periods of dry weather.

### **2.2 Defective Plumbing**

Leaks from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens are relatively common. They can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and stays damp whatever the weather conditions outside. An examination of the water and waste pipes in the kitchen and bathroom and the seals around the bath, shower and sinks will usually find the problem. In cases when leaks are not attended to, rot may become established in wooden joists and floor boards leading to a risk of collapse in severe cases.

### **2.3 Rising Damp**

This is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. The water gets through or around a defective damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the natural brick work if the property was built without a DPC. Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms. It will normally rise no more than 36 inches above ground level (900mm) and usually leaves a ‘tide mark’ low down on the wall. White salts may also be visible on the affected areas. Rising damp will be present all year round but is more noticeable in winter. If left untreated, it may cause wall plaster to crumble and paper to lift in the affected area. Mould will rarely

be seen where there is rising damp (and then only in the early stages). This is because rising damp carries with it salts that prevent the growth of mould.

## **2.4 Condensation and Mould Growth**

Condensation is caused by water vapour or moisture in the air, inside the dwelling, coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The drop-in temperature causes water to form on the surface. This water may then soak into the wallpaper, paintwork or plasterwork.

Condensation can be more prevalent during the colder months and we often experience a spike in customer reports during Autumn and Winter. A symptom of condensation is mould growth which is usually found in the corners of rooms, north facing walls and on or near windows. It is also found in areas of little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds especially when they are pushed up against external walls. It also forms in bathrooms and kitchens as they are high moisture areas or in properties which are overcrowded.

All homes are affected by condensation at some point, however, certain activities can increase the problem and good practices can eliminate this from becoming a bigger problem. Condensation and mould growth can often be a consequence of customer habits and other factors. Cooking, washing and drying clothes indoors etc. all produce water vapour that can only be seen when tiny droplets of water (condensation) appear on colder surfaces such as walls, windows, ceilings or mirrors and often unseen on clothing, shoes and furniture.

The amount of condensation in a home depends on a number of things, most importantly:-

- How much water vapour is produced by the actions of its residents.
- How cold or warm the property is.
- How much air circulation the property has (ventilation).
- How well the property has been insulated.

All factors will need to be looked at to reduce the problem. The first sign of a problem is often water vapour condensing on windows and other cold surfaces, which then takes a long time to disappear. This allows the surfaces to become damp resulting in mould growing on these damp areas.

## **3. CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS OF DAMPNESS, MOULD AND CONDENSATION**

### **3.1 Fuel Poverty**

It is recognised that fuel poverty is a major factor in cases of condensation which can lead to mould problems when customers are unable to afford to heat their home effectively.

### **3.2 Cold Bridging**

Cold bridging can be found in many areas including poorly installed cavity wall insulation. Where a gap occurs in the insulation, this can cause areas to become colder, which would then be at risk of increased condensation.

### **3.3 Blocked or Broken Ventilation**

This would include blocked solum or air bricks and broken window trickle vents.

### **3.4 Radiators**

Heating systems performance is not always at the standard required to prevent condensation. Radiators may be undersized for the room volume and can be located on internal walls creating colder external walls.

### **3.5 Missing/Damaged Render or Pointing on Brickwork**

There could be various reasons for poor or broken pointing (i.e. the finish between the bricks on parts of a brick wall which may have created cold spots for condensation and penetrating damp. The same can also be true with damaged render systems.

### **3.6 Leaking Guttering**

Guttering can, over time, corrode, warp or sag causing leaking joints. Lack of effective maintenance can result in blocked or choked gutters and downpipes that can, through time, cause damage to the fabric of the building.

### **3.7 Leaking Roofs**

This could be caused by many things i.e. damaged or missing tiles, damaged flashing, roof vents or chimneys, blocked gutters or simply that the roof is approaching the end of its serviceable life.

### **3.8 Unvented and Condensing Tumble Dryers**

These can produce excessive amounts of water vapour in the property encouraging condensation.

### **3.9 Environmental Factors Within the Property**

Excessive humidity within the home and the lack of adequate ventilation is a primary cause of condensation.

### **3.10 Rising Damp**

Rising damp can occur where there is missing or ineffective damp proof course or where a high-level ground level breaches the damp course.

#### **4. THE IMPORTANCE OF VENTILATION AND HEATING**

- 4.1 There should be a continuous low-level of background ventilation, that allows 0.5 air changes per hour.
- 4.2 Extract ventilation in kitchens and bathrooms is also important to remove steam from cooking, bathing and showering.
- 4.3 An appropriate heating system should be in place that is capable of maintaining a temperature between 18 and 21 degrees, and radiators should be utilised in all rooms to avoid cold spots in the house for water to condense on.
- 4.4 Clearly there can be a conflict with affordability for some tenants, particularly for those with key meters, which may lead to some rooms being unheated.

A supportive and constructive approach needs to be taken if it is found that condensation and damp is only occurring in unheated or periodically heated rooms, especially if fuel poverty is a factor. In these cases, we will arrange an appointment for the tenant with the Money Advice Team.

#### **5.0 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

- 5.1 The Association has created a Damp and Mould Register on the Housing Management System. The register will hold detailed information from a variety of sources which include:-

- Dampness Complaints
- Pre and post inspections
- Reactive Repairs System (where repairs have been recorded as damp and mould.
- Stock condition survey data.
- EPC's
- Specialist Survey data from reports commissioned by the Association.
- Historical damp and mould issues from tenants' records.

- 5.2 The Damp and Mould Register will contain the following information:-

- The type and age of the property (i.e. tenement, cottage flat, house)
- Type of roof covering
- External wall construction
- Number of rooms in the property
- Heating type
- Areas of dampness/mould growth
- Information on ambient temperature in the property, relative humidity and surface temperature of external walls.
- Sources of moisture production.
- Condition of fabric of the building
- Condition of roof, gutters and downpipes
- Information on any loft insulation
- Information on windows and surrounds are trickle vents in use

- 5.3 The Association will adopt a traffic light system for coding and prioritising condensation, damp and mould issues within our properties. This will also be included in the damp and mould register and the procedures.

Medium Priority	Urgent Priority	High Priority
Condensation	Damp	Mould

- 5.4 On a quarterly basis the Asset Manager will extract data from the Association's Damp and Mould Register to establish what properties require further investigation and or investment. This data will be analysed for trends including types of properties affected, location i.e. ground floor/top flat and area.
- 5.5 This analysis will also be used to form a pro-active approach when prioritising future investment programmes and inform the Asset Management Plan.
- 5.6 All analysis of the Damp and Mould Register will be reported quarterly to the Operations and Regeneration Sub Committee.
- 5.7 The Technical Team will ensure that the data within the Damp and Mould Register is accurate and up to date. Refreshing the information monthly as a minimum.

## 6. **PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH REPORTS OF CONDENSATION, DAMP AND/OR MOULD**

- 6.1 On receipt of a dampness complaint from a tenant, the technical team must:-
- Log it within the Damp and Mould Register on the Housing Management System.
  - Carry out an inspection within three working days of receiving the report.
  - Use Report and Run to document and evidence the complaint.
  - Take meter readings (evidence if heating is being used and in case dehumidifier is required).
  - Ensure appropriate equipment is used to accurately diagnose the issue and raise the appropriate works order(s) to resolve the issue.
  - Discuss the issues with the tenant to get a better understanding of the problem from their perspective.
  - If appropriate, use external specialist consultants/contractors to investigate, report and resolve on the issue(s).
  - The Technical Team must ensure that the tenant is kept updated throughout the process. All contact made or received must be logged on the Housing Management System.
  - Once the works have been agreed this must be confirmed in writing to the tenant with the expected timescales for completion of the works.
  - Upon completion of the works the Senior Technical Officer or Technical Officer will post inspect the works to ensure that they have been completed to a high standard and to obtain feedback from the tenant on their journey through the process. The Technical Team will also carry out a customer satisfaction survey. As good practice this feedback should be shared with the contractor.

**6.2** Other actions that the Technical Team may feel appropriate are:-

- To consider the information that they hold on the affected households and ask about health conditions on receipt of the report. Additional priority should be given to cases where tenants are particularly at risk e.g. young children, older and disabled, people with a lung condition or a compromised immune system. In rare case temporary accommodation may need to be provided.
- Referral to the Association's Money Advice Team where fuel debt and/or poverty is evidenced or advised by the tenant.
- Support and assistance from the Handyperson Team with regard to decoration, removal of damaged furnishings/belongings.

**6.3 Voids** – Landlords have an important opportunity to assess the condition of their homes when they become void. Specifically:-

- Damp and mould issues should be treated and resolved **before** reletting the property.
- The void assessment checklist will include steps like checking that the extractor fans and ventilation systems are working effectively as this will help to prevent the build-up of excess moisture in the property.

**6.4 Follow-up action required after 6 weeks** – The Technical Team will run a report of all completed damp and mould repairs within the 6-week period. They will then contact the tenant to ascertain whether the damp and mould works carried out have continued to be successful. If yes this must be logged in the Damp and Mould Register and also on the Housing Management System. If no the Technical Officer will arrange to visit within 3 working days to determine why the work has been unsuccessful and move the outstanding issue forward to a satisfactory conclusion.

**6.5 Follow-up action required after 6 months** - The Technical Team will run a report of all completed damp and mould repairs within the 6-month period. They will then contact the tenant to ascertain whether the damp and mould works carried out have continued to be successful. If yes this must be logged in the Damp and Mould Register and also on the Housing Management System. If no this should be escalated to the Senior Technical Officer who will arrange to visit within 3 working days to determine why the work has been unsuccessful, call in the services of a specialist contractor if required and move the outstanding issue forward to a satisfactory conclusion.

**7. COMMUNICATION WITH A TENANT**

**7.1** When dealing with a complaint from a tenant regarding, condensation, damp or mould we will not use the word lifestyle. Instead, where appropriate we will discuss internal environmental factors within the property with them. For example, ensuring that areas are well heated and ventilated.

**7.2** Giving advice to a tenant will not be considered as sufficient action taken on a report of damp or mould.

- 7.3** We will not tell a tenant to use a mould remover kit and keep their home warm without consideration of individual circumstances and thorough investigation of the reported problem.
- 7.4** Tenants will be regularly updated on the proposed and taken action which should be confirmed in writing.
- 7.5** Ongoing campaigns of educational material will be provided on the website, in newsletters and on social media, to support tenants with the understanding of methods used in reducing the impact of condensation, damp and mould in their homes.

## **8. TENANT SUPPORT**

- 8.1** Once all damp and mould issues have been diagnosed, discounted or resolved, there will be occasions when all departments must work together to provide support, advice and assistance to the tenant(s) concerned and may involve our partners e.g. Social Work Department too. This may include:-
- Support in working with vulnerable tenants to assist them to remain in their home.
  - Addressing overcrowding issues with advice on the options open to the tenant for rehousing.
  - Money and debt advice around fuel poverty.
  - Energy Advice for example SMART Meters.
- 8.2** It is important that staff recognise that condensation, damp and mould issues are not only the responsibility of the Technical Team to manage but the organisation as a whole. To that end awareness training will be carried out with all staff in order that they can recognise the signs of damp, mould and condensation, the causes and remedies.