



## **SHA Dampness and Mould Policy**

**Issue Date: February 2024**

**Next Review Date: February 2027**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 We want to do everything we reasonably can to make sure our tenants stay safe, healthy and well in their homes. Damp and mould are issues which can have a serious impact on the health and well-being of our tenants, and cause damage to properties.
- 1.2 This policy has been written to ensure that wherever possible, tenants are not adversely affected by damp and mould and outlines the actions we will take to manage the causes of damp and mould. The document sets out the key policy objectives, control measures and accountabilities for ensuring the management of dampness and mould.
- 1.3 Through this policy, we will establish appropriate processes, guidance, and knowledge to ensure all of our properties are well maintained and free of damp and mould that could risk the health and safety of tenants.
- 1.4 Our approach to the prevention, treatment and remediation of dampness and mould will benefit our tenants. Going forward our tools will include better data, improved reporting and identification of mould, condensation and dampness, end-to-end customer service with better joined up advice, guidance and support, and preventative technology systems.

## **2. Scope of the Policy**

- 2.1 The Dampness and Mould Policy applies to all rented property owned or managed by the Association including communal areas.
- 2.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Association's Maintenance Policy.

## **3. Policy Objectives**

- 3.1 The objectives of this Policy are to:
  - Ensure our properties are maintained to a high standard through the delivery of efficient and effective repair and maintenance services;
  - Provide and maintain a comfortable, warm and healthy home, free from damp, mould and disrepair for our tenants;
  - Take a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould;
  - Ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould;
  - Provide clear lines of responsibility within Southside Housing Association for the management of dampness and mould related issues;

- Establish a clear, accessible process to enable tenants to report dampness and mould issues;
- Develop a focussed approach to the prevention, treatment and resolution of dampness and mould with better data and improved reporting and identification;
- Provide assurance that measures are in place to identify, manage and mitigate risks associated with dampness and mould;
- Recognise that having dampness or mould issues in a home can be distressing and provide guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process to all tenants living in our properties and ensure that they are treated in a fair, consistent and supportive way, and;
- Comply with legal duties, regulatory requirements and good practice standards.

### 3.2 To achieve these aims the Association will:

- Provide a clear statement of the level of service and standards to which the Association will work.
- Have procedures and agreed practices that are applied uniformly across the service.
- Provide training to ensure that staff are equipped to carry out the roles expected of them.
- Plan resources to respond to higher demand particularly during the winter months.
- Keep tenants informed during the process.

## 4. Definitions

4.1 **Rising Damp** - The movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building through capillary action.

4.2 **Penetrating Damp (including internal leaks)** - Water penetrating the external structure of the building or internal leaks causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure.

4.3 **Condensation Damp** - Moisture held in warm air coming into contact with a cold surface and condensing, producing water droplets.

4.4 **Mould** – Very small plants which thrive in conditions produced by condensation but will grow in any places with a lot of moisture, such as around leaks in roofs, windows, or pipes, or where there has been flooding. Mould grows well on paper products, cardboard, ceiling tiles, and wood products. Mould can also grow in dust, paints, wallpaper, insulation, plasterwork, carpet, fabric, and upholstery. Mould reproduces by means of

tiny spores which are very small and exist in the air. They will colonise a suitable habitat very quickly and produce more spores.

## **5. Our Approach**

### **5.1 Receiving reports of dampness and mould**

5.1.1 When a tenant reports a dampness/mould issue in their home or in a common area we will record this as a specific repair type and open a case file within our case management system/ dampness register.

5.1.2 Staff receiving reports of damp and mould must ascertain at time of reporting if there is any member of the household who has vulnerabilities that may put them more at risk of ill health and record this to allow the appropriate prioritisation.

### **5.2 Effective Inspection and Diagnosis**

5.2.1 The Association will provide staff with the skills to identify and differentiate between signs of damp and condensation and understand the causes and remedies.

5.2.2 We will take action to identify homes that have, or may be at risk of developing, problems with damp and mould. We will use data on our households and homes to help us understand the risk profile in relation to damp and mould.

5.2.3 The Association will inspect all repair requests reported in relation to dampness and mould. Where required we will seek support from specific damp and mould consultants.

5.2.4 We will make best use of technology to manage dampness and mould and use technological insight to better understand cause and solutions. This will include systems such as the North gateway network which monitors temperature and moisture levels and provides alerts where these become hazardous.

5.2.5 After the initial inspection we will make an assessment of the problem and categorise/prioritise the issue and feed this information into our case management system and dampness register. The vulnerability of the occupants will be a material factor in determining the priority attached to the case.



### 5.3 **Case and Data Management**

5.3.1 Repair and improvement solutions to address any issues are implemented through a system of casework management.

5.3.2 All cases of dampness and mould whether reported by tenants or identified by staff on site will be logged and managed via the housing system. Cases will be tracked through the system and reports will be developed to monitor case management, identify trends and themes and to monitor the number of properties affected by dampness and mould. Property Maintenance Officers will be responsible for the overall management of cases.

5.3.3 Cases will be initially assessed and categorised as follows:

#### **Category 1**

Source of dampness/mould is identified and required remedial action can be ordered and the situation monitored.

#### **Category 2**

Source of dampness/mould is not identified on first visit and either follow up is required and or more detailed or invasive survey work is needed.

#### **Category 3**

Problem is ongoing and either the source has not been identified following survey or the remedial action taken has not been successful.

5.3.4 Within the categories above the Property Services Officer will identify in the monitoring system the source or suspected source of the problem. In particular if the issue is identified as condensation the case will be subject to specific remedial “progression”

5.3.5 At first point of contact it will be established if this is a new complaint or has been previously reported. Where the issue has been reported before the case will be reopened and treated as a continuation of the original complaint. Defective plumbing or water penetration reports will have repair orders issued direct to our responsive maintenance contractors, but the case will be recorded in the Dampness and Mould monitoring system to allow the Property Services Officer to arrange a follow up visit to ensure the issue has been resolved and if any additional remedial action (water damage or staining, assistance with drying out etc.) is required. Regardless of the remedial action taken all cases will be recorded and monitored in the same way.

5.3.6 We will always attempt to resolve issues of dampness and mould as a first-time fix but understand that there will be instances where work is more complex or specialist in nature and needs to be programmed and monitored accordingly.

## 5.4 **Remedial Action**

- 5.4.1 The Property Services Officer will develop an action plan in consultation with the tenant where the problem is in Categories 2 or 3.
- 5.4.2 The Property Services Officer will identify the cause of damp occurring in the property and order remedial works where required within set repair categories.
- 5.4.3 In minor instances of condensation with associated mould growth the Property Services Officer may issue a mould eradication removal and prevention kit, to allow the tenant to treat the issue themselves. A follow up inspection will always take place to confirm that the kit has been effective or if further remedial works are required.
- 5.4.4 When a particularly severe or recurring damp or mould issue is identified we will undertake a comprehensive assessment which might result in a range of actions to support the resident depending on their circumstances, including providing dehumidifiers, the installation of mechanical or passive ventilation systems, internal wall cavity wall or solid wall insulation or applying mould resistant cleaners and coverings, as appropriate, on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.4.5 We will keep tenants informed of any property inspections, diagnosis of issues and the timetabling of works, where these are required. This includes explaining to them why work might be needed and what work might be done.
- 5.4.6 For more complex cases, and especially where more intrusive building work is required and/or there is a serious health risk to the resident or a member of their household, we may require them to move out of their home either on a temporary or permanent basis. We will consider the individual circumstances of the resident. We will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out at the property to ensure it is suitable for the resident to return to.
- 5.4.7 We will seek to mitigate any risks of damp and mould arising as a result our work to meet SHQS EESSH 2 or Net Zero standards.
- 5.4.8 We know that some tenants cannot afford to heat their homes adequately due to their income levels. We will refer such cases to our Welfare Rights Team who will work with them to ensure that they are receiving the income to which they are entitled and that they are benefitting from the most economically efficient fuel tariff.
- 5.4.9 We recognise that there may be instances where the problem, particularly where it is as a result of condensation, cannot be resolved. This could be due to financial issues or where there is serious overcrowding. We will work with

the tenant and explore solutions which may include the tenant moving to a more suitable home if this is available and appropriate.

## 6. Legal and Regulatory Framework

6.1 In approving and implementing the Dampness and Mould Policy the Association aims to adhere to following legislation and contractual obligations.

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001;
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010;
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2008;
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard, and;
- Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement

### The Scottish Social Housing Charter

6.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into effect in April 2012, and this sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. Social landlords are responsible for meeting the standards and outcomes set out in the Charter. The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords, individually and collectively, achieve the outcomes.

6.3 The Scottish Housing Regulator's approach to monitoring landlords' achievement of the outcomes and standards in the Charter will be based on the landlord's performance information and their own assessment of their performance. For each year ending on 31 March, landlords will be expected to:

- Measure and assess their performance in progressing towards or achieving the Charter outcomes and standards;
- Provide the Regulator with key performance information on their achievement of the outcomes and standards; and
- Report their performance to their tenants and other service users who use their services.

6.4 In terms of property maintenance the Charter states that landlords should:

*Manage their business so that tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.*



*Manage their businesses so that tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.*

*Manage all aspects of their business so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.*

We will, through operation of this policy and supporting procedures, demonstrate compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

- 6.5 The Association will review each element of the Charter with its tenants and agree locally based standards designed to demonstrate the achievement of outcomes.

## **7. Complaints**

- 7.1 If anyone feels that they are dissatisfied with the service they have received as a result of this policy they have the right to complain and should be encouraged to use the Associations Complaints Procedure. A complaints form is available on our website and a complaints booklet is available from our offices. Complaints can also be made in writing or by telephoning our office. Similarly, any individuals dissatisfied with decisions made in the operation of the policy are entitled to appeal against these.

- 7.2 We will attempt to resolve complaints quickly through front line resolution by the staff who receive the complaint. Where this is not successful or where the complaint has been categorised as constituting a serious service failure, we will carry out a full complaint investigation.

- 7.3 Ultimately complainants have a final right of appeal to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The Associations Complaints Handling Procedure details the way in which complaints can be made and the timescales for responding.

## **8. Equality and Human Rights**

- 8.1 In applying the Dampness and Mould Policy, SHA will ensure it complies with the Equality Act 2010. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against, harass or victimise a person because they have one or more of the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (Appendix 1) has been carried out in relation to this policy to assess the positive and negative Equality Impacts of this Policy.

## **9 Data Protection**

- 9.1 SHA will treat all personal data in line with our obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the SHA Privacy Policy and Data Retention Policy. Information regarding how SHA process personal data and the legal basis for processing personal data is set out in SHA Fair Processing Notices.

## **10. Training and Development**

- 10.1 Staff dealing with the management of dampness and mould will have training appropriate to their needs and to the needs of the Association identified within their Personal Training Plans.
- 10.2 Repairs staff will be trained to assist the identification, reporting and remediation of damp, mould and condensation. This training will include providing staff with the skills to identify and differentiate between signs of damp and condensation and understand the causes and remedies.
- 10.3 We will ensure that all employees have an awareness of the policy and receive adequate training to enable them to report issues of damp and mould and to support our tenants.

## **11. Monitoring and Reporting**

- 11.1 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy and supporting procedures by staff, and for the maintenance of all the necessary records on the housing system to enable the compilation of regular reports on performance.
- 11.2 Targets will be set for monitoring performance for each aspect of dealing with dampness and mould.
- 11.3 The Operational Services Sub-Committee will receive reports from the Director of Property Services to allow effective monitoring of the dampness and mould policy.
- 11.4 Our performance will be regularly benchmarked against other comparable social landlords.

## **12. Customer Service and Tenant Satisfaction**

- 12.1 The Association is committed to a high level of customer satisfaction in the delivery of this Policy.
- 12.2 The Association will include aspects of the process within its main customer satisfaction survey and ensure that any feedback is taken into account in the review of the policy.

12.3 The survey information will be used to inform any policy review with a view to improving the services we deliver and the overall customer experience. The survey results will be reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator through our annual return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter and in our annual tenants' report on performance.

### **13. Risk Management**

13.1 The management of dampness and mould potentially presents the following risks to the Association:

- Unresolved dampness and mould issues may pose a danger to the health and safety of tenants;
- The Association may be subject to litigation in cases where dampness and mould have not been properly treated.
- The fabric of our properties will be subject to deterioration and damage resulting from untreated damp and mould.

13.2 Given the importance of these risks the effective management and implementation of this policy is paramount.

### **14. Links with Other Policies**

14.1 The Association recognises that the management of dampness and mould is dependent on policies and performance in a variety of service areas, including:

- Repairs and Maintenance Policy

### **15. Policy Review**

15.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner, in the event of a significant legal or regulatory change which affects this policy or a change in operational requirements.

12.2 In reviewing the management of dampness and mould, we will incorporate tenant feedback on the process and customer satisfaction surveys of tenants will be ongoing. This feedback will be analysed to inform reviews of the service as will complaints and comments from tenants.

12.3 The policy, in parts, attempts to summarise current legislation. In any case of conflict between the two, legislation will always take precedence.



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