



Damp & Mould Policy

1. Introduction

We at Ekaya are committed to maintaining our homes to the highest standards, which adds value to our homes and surroundings.

Maintaining high quality, secure and safe homes can improve the lives of our residents and achieve improved satisfaction. Our homes give people the space and security to build a home for life.

This policy has been written to ensure that wherever possible, residents are not adversely affected by the causes of damp and mould and drives forward an agenda of proactive action to tackle and manage the causes of damp and mould.

Damp and Mould will now be known as the seventh strand of Health and Safety compliance and will be reported alongside other essential Health and Safety reporting streams.

This policy and associated procedure will take into account recommendations made in the Housing Ombudsman Service Report – Spotlight on: Damp and Mould – Oct 2021.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all types of damp, condensation and mould are identified, investigated and address both the causes and symptoms of the problem. More importantly, that the residents are living in properties that are fit for purpose and not do not cause a serious risk to health and well-being.

This policy will meet all of its obligations established by statute and contract by adhering to the following.

- Housing Act 1985, 2004
- Decent Homes Standard
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Tenancy Agreement (agreed between us and the tenant)
- Equality Act 2010
- Home Standard, Regulator of social housing, 2015

3. Scope

This policy applies to all rented, owned and managed property (including Shared ownership units) to meet legal and regulatory requirements under the new social housing bill, building safety act, consumer standards and decent homes standards. The policy covers condensation, mould, penetrating damp and rising damp as the four main types of damp.

4. Policy Aims

Our policy is that we will:

Our properties

- Set out a property standard and ensure we design properties to prevent all types of damp in the first instance and that our fabric of the homes that we provide are protected from deterioration.
- Provide dry and warm home, healthy homes for our residents which are free from hazards.
- Take responsibility for diagnosis and resolving damp in a timely and effective manner.
- Conduct stock condition surveys every five years to assess the condition of our homes and identify and quantify all damp related issues.
- Carry out a property audit for each property on an annual basis.
- Outline action plans for each property type and unit as required to bring them up to our property standard as per the Decent Homes Standards.
- Ensure staff on a regular basis conduct a tenancy audit and inspection which will identify any early signs of damp and mould.
- We will keep a comprehensive register of any properties identified with damp and mould and ensure there are regular follow up checks on the property after the remedial works has been completed.

Our residents

- Treat residents that report damp to us with respect and dignity and a no blame culture is adopted.
- Support the residents in resolving any issues, with sensitively and practical solutions and provide accessible information.
- Communicate with our resident's effectively and timely on any actions we intend to take and any actions our residents are to make.
- When applying this policy, we will ensure we make any reasonable adjustments for the residents that have a viability and take into account the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.
- Engage and work with our tenants, providing pre-lettings guidance on ventilation, stop-cock location and the consumer unit (these have links to condensation, mould, plumbing and penetrating damp)
- Provide effective information to educate, empower, guide and engage the residents with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Share on a regular basis information to our residents on how to tackle mould and damp in their homes, and ensure this is visible on our social media and websites.
- Provide information and signpost residents to assist in financial health checks and benefits advice to ensure they are able to budget effectively for their fuel and other costs, including referral to the Tenancy Sustainment Officer

Our staff

- Train all our staff on a regular basis and provide updates on guidance and knowledge to support residents maintain the property standard.
- Will regularly update our damp and mould charter that outlines the key steps to tackling mould and damp.
- Comply with legislative and regulatory obligations.
- Aim to respond to all complaints quickly and effectively and so residents do not escalate to a disrepair claim.
- Learn lessons from any complaints or cases of mould and damp so that our practice can be improved for future communications and delivery.

This policy supports key areas of our strategic priorities which are:

- To provide good quality, safe homes to our residents
- To meet our regulatory and legislative requirements
- To deliver a service of excellence to our residents through effective communications

5. What is damp and mould and common causes

There are normally four main causes of dampness in our residents' homes and each one requires a different solution.

Mould is a type of fungi that spreads spores which are invisible to the naked eye but are in the air around us all the time and can quickly grow on surfaces where dampness persists and Dampness is an excess of moisture that cannot escape from a structure and can cause significant damage to buildings such as a collapsed ceiling, roofs and damage to windows and doors.

Rising damp is the name given to the process of water in the ground entering a property by travelling up through the pores in brickwork. Rising damp will stop when gravity and evaporation impede, and this usually results in a visible "tidemark" around 1m high. That said, other signs of rising damp may be visible above 1m.

Typically, walls will be surrounded by porous materials like plaster, timber and wallpaper and this is where a lot of the aesthetic damage will be noticed as these materials rot and deteriorate. Groundwater also contains salts that travel up through the bricks and causes white marks to form on the internal wall - another common sign of rising damp.

Penetrating damp is the process of moisture moving from the exterior wall of a building to the interior. It occurs when outside moisture like wind-driven rain impacts a building's wall. Building materials like brick are porous. They soak up rain to saturate the wall with penetrating damp.

Condensation is when warm, moist air condenses and forms water when it comes into contact with a cool surface, such as a wall or window. Condensation is not caused by water penetrating from outside, it is caused by moisture which is produced from inside the home.

Causes

The most common factors that allow moisture into a property include poor ventilation, leaking roof, failed damp proof course and plumbing problems such as a leaking washing machine or dishwasher. Walls can become damp for a multitude of different reasons.

6. Responding to damp and mould cases

Residents are asked to report to us any concerns regarding damp and mould as soon as they have noticed any issues.

An Operative from the asset team will be sent to the property to determine the cause and address any immediate solutions.

In some cases this may require further investigations of the source of the damp and mould and to seek if this is due to a repair issue that we are responsible for, at this stage this may not be as straightforward and require some intensive inspections.

Once completed a full report will be written at this stage with the findings to the head of service.

Where damp is due to condensations, we will work with the residents to look at preventative measures providing advice and guidance, increasing ventilation or heating so that levels are kept to a minimum. Where there is reoccurring damp or mould we will conduct a comprehensive risk assessment with a specialist provider, from this we may need to provide humidifiers, install more passive ventilation systems or applying mould paint, each case will be different and dealt with individually.

We will keep residents informed of the works that are required and why, the timetable of completion and if any changes to the works required, we will ensure notice is given to the residents. If no works are required, we will fully inform the residents of what steps they are required to take to keep the mould and damp from their homes.

For more complex works and a serious risk to an individual's health and well-being, the resident may have to move out of their home on temporary or permanent basis, we will ensure that detailed checks are made in the property before allowing a resident to move back after the works are completed.

We will follow our home loss and compensation policy during this time that the resident is away from their home, to ensure the resident is fully compensated during this time.

Our tenancy agreements allow us to gain access to resident's homes with appropriate notice under Health and Safety to carry out works at an agreed time, any resident obstructing these works, we will seek legal advice to gain access to complete the works.

Where residents are not satisfied with the actions we have taken to tackle the damp and mould within their homes, they have the right to complain and the complaints procedures are to be followed.

7. Preventative actions

We have an advice leaflet that all residents will be in receipt of at the start of the tenancy with us which gives clear advice and guidance on how to tackle damp and mould within their homes.

It gives top tips to tackle condensation and how they can maintain their own homes. It also advises of the reporting streams to follow when damp and mould are identified.

This advice leaflet is available on our website and will be placed in our newsletters on a regular basis.

8. Responsibility, monitoring and reporting

The Chief Executive has the responsibility for ensuring that this policy complies with regulatory, legislative and business plan requirements.

The Head of Operations has operational responsibility for the delivery of this policy.

All staff involved in repairs and maintenance activities are responsible for implementing this policy and will report any cases to the relevant senior staff member.

9. Training

Induction and regular training will be provided for all staff and contractors to make sure that they understand how to diagnose and remedy damp and mould.

We will ensure that all of our staff, and contractors have training to raise awareness of and create a good understanding of damp and mould issues, their impact and are aware of the internal processes in place to remedy.

10. Monitoring, Review & Evaluation

The Policy & Performance Committee monitors performance on damp and mould and will receive regular updates as part of the Property Services Report.

An evaluation report will be provided to the Board annually, by the Head of Operations, to ensure we maintain our property standard, learn from cases, and improve continuously.

11. Related Policies/Strategies

The following Policies, Strategies and Guidance should be referred to this policy:

- Asset management strategy
- Property Register
- Repairs Timescales
- Pre-lettings procedure for new tenancies
- Tenants Handbook
- Damp and Mould Charter
- Damp & Mould Leaflet
- Complaints policy
- Equality & Diversity policy

12. Policy Approval

This policy will be reviewed once every three years except where there is a need to take account of any changes to legislation, regulation or good practice.

Approval date:	May 2023
Approved by:	Policy & Performance Committee
Policy Author:	Head of Operations
Policy Owner:	Property Services & Asset Manager
Next review date:	<i>May 2026</i>