

Damp & Mould Policy



Our Assets

Warrington Housing Association

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1. Purpose

The aim of this policy is to proactively manage the potential risks and promptly diagnose and prevent issues which may arise from damp and mould in our properties, including communal areas; committing to meeting the needs of our customers and providing homes that are safe, warm, dry and well-ventilated. Through this policy, we will establish appropriate processes, guidance, and knowledge to ensure all our properties are well maintained and free of damp and mould that could risk the health and safety of customers living in homes or buildings owned or managed by Warrington Housing Association (WHA).

This policy also sets out how we will support our customers to minimise the risk of damp and mould occurring and report it where there is evidence of its presence, this will also ensure that WHA meets its legal, contractual, regulatory and statutory obligations. WHA is committed to achieving net zero and is working towards improving the thermal efficiency of our properties, however increased insulation can result in less ventilation and therefore damp and mould. We will endeavour to ensure that all work to achieve an improved EPC rating does not have a negative impact on the property.

2. Scope

This policy explains how we will control, manage and eliminate damp, including but not limited to:

Who the policy applies to:

- Customers who rent their home under a tenancy agreement
- Customers who own their home through shared ownership where WHA has a repairing obligation under the terms of the lease.
- All property communal areas.
- Emergency or temporary accommodation.

What this policy will cover:

- Identifying the types of damp: rising, penetrating and condensation dampness, including internal leaks
- Identifying the responsibilities for WHA and our customers in dealing with damp and condensation.

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- Offering guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process to all customers living in our properties.
- Data gathering and reporting, identifying proactive methods in mitigating risk of all dampness.

The Policy should be read in conjunction with WHA's Repairs Policy.

3. Principles

WHA will:

- Comply with statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements and good practice.
- Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable repair solutions and improvements to eliminate damp including, managing, and controlling condensation.
- Ensure that the fabric of our properties is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp, mould and condensation and not at risk of falling into disrepair
- Respond to all reports of damp and condensation and complete any repair works/measures in line with the Responsive Repairs policy – this will be dependent on the severity and urgency of the problem, the complexity of the solution and the repair works/actions required
- We will make reasonable attempts to access the property to inspect and carry out the works. All logged repairs must have evidence of at least three attempts to contact the customer. Written communication must then be provided to the customer asking them to contact us to organise a new repair and record each attempt on our customer database.
- We will follow up each completed repair within six months of any damp and mould repair work being carried out.
- Ensure that customers are treated in a fair and consistent way.
- Focus on working in partnership with customers ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is provided
- Always communicate effectively in relation to the delivery of our responsive repairs service and provide a range of options for customers to report repairs

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- Ensure that customers have access to and are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp and condensation.
- Ensure budgets are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp, mould and condensation problems.
- Implement new data quality and insight measures to assist with informing us of the possible risks to our properties so that we can undertake proactive measures to eliminate damp, mould and condensation before it becomes a problem for our customers.
- Assess all void properties as part of our inspection process to determine if any incidence of damp and mould and ensure remedial work is undertaken prior to a new customer moving in.

4. Definitions

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

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.

Condensation Damp - Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. The conditions that may increase the risk of condensation are:

- Lack of ventilation within the property.
- Inadequate heating
- Inadequate loft insulation
- High humidity
- Overcrowding

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5. Roles & Responsibilities

Our Responsibilities

- Investigate in order to determine the cause of damp and condensation and carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with our repairs policy
- Undertake a property inspection when a repair is reported relating to suspected Damp, Mould & Condensation
- Ensure our staff are trained and competent in assessing the hazards of damp and mould and take appropriate and proportionate action.
- Diagnose the cause of damp correctly and deliver effective solutions based on the ethos of dealing with the cause of the damp not just the symptom and wherever possible fixing first time.
- Inform the customer of the findings of the investigations following a property visit. This will include identifying the possible causes of damp, recommending effective solutions and all necessary remedial works / actions / enhancements and the estimated timescales to complete the works / measures; keeping the customer updated throughout the process from inception to completion. Where appropriate we may use equipment like sensors to track levels of moisture.
- Ensure that only competent contractors will be employed to carry out any works and that the customer's possessions are adequately protected during the works.
- Insulate the customers' home in accordance with Decent Homes Standard to help reduce the likelihood of condensation occurring.
- Take responsibility for maintaining customers' homes to avoid penetrating and rising damp and for carrying out remedial action if these problems occur.
- Undertake reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation dampness. This may include but is not limited to: upgraded ventilation system installation, improved indoor air movement and quality best practices.
- Make good internal surfaces following any repairs work carried out ensuring that surfaces are prepared to a condition ready for the Customer to redecorate. Where there is need to decorate following remedial work carried out by WHA, we will provide a decoration voucher to cover the cost of the materials needed to make good the decoration.

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- Promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to minimise damp and condensation, particularly when there are no apparent causes relating to design or construction.
 - Ensure that all employees have an awareness of the policy and receive adequate training to enable them to report issues of damp mould & condensation and to support our customers.
 - Ensure that technical staff are trained and competent in the diagnosis of damp, condensation and mould issues.
- Provide information and guidance to our customers on the importance of ventilating their home to reduce the risk of damp and mould
 - Introduce a new data intelligence framework to enhance our customer and property information, which will shape our future investment programmes. We will always first consider whether the source of the damp and mould is a design, construction or maintenance issue which we can eliminate through work to the home. Where this is not the case additional support and advice will be provided to the customer on managing and controlling the occurrences of condensation damp. This support will be provided through the provision of advice and guidance literature and by working with our customers through our resident involvement network. If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day-by-day basis or a temporary decant to an alternative property. The customer will be supported through this process to find suitable accommodation. In some cases it may be necessary to re-house a family on a permanent basis if a medical professional advises that re-housing is the most suitable option. This will be considered in accordance with WHA's Lettings Policy.

6. Customer Responsibilities

It is the customer's responsibility to immediately report any evidence of rising and penetrating damp (see definitions) and faulty equipment that will affect the management of humidity and moisture in the home (faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, heating system failure etc.)

Customers must allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works. Where customers are considering making any changes within their home: for example, converting rooms into one room, adding extensions, converting non-habitable buildings/spaces into habitable, they must seek advice and permission from us in accordance with their tenancy agreement, to ensure that the proposed alteration would

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not contribute to the accumulation of damp, mould, or condensation, as well as ensuring alterations comply with building control and planning guidelines

Guidance to customers

Customers can help reduce the conditions that lead to condensation dampness by:

- Keeping the presence of moisture to a minimum e.g., covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outside (where possible), where it is safe to do so, keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.
- Adequately heating rooms – The World Health Organisation recommends 18°C.
- Keeping the house well ventilated e.g., opening windows during cooking / bathing, turning on and ensuring that the extractor fan or ventilation system installed in their home is regularly cleaned and working, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture.
- Following all advice and guidance issued by us on managing humidity and moisture in the home which can lead to condensation. This information can be found on the WHA website.
- If all reasonable efforts have been made to manage and control the presence of condensation and mould, and there is still an issue then the Customer should contact WHA immediately to report the problem.
- The tenancy agreement, licenses and long leases recommends that the customer arranges adequate household contents insurance for the home that they occupy.

Assisting our customers

Where internal conditions within a home for example, overcrowding and excessive hoarding of personal belongs are influencing health and wellbeing of the occupants or are preventing inspections or repairs works being carried out, we will provide support and assistance to review the customer's options that may include moving to more appropriate or alternative suitable accommodation. WHA has a discretionary fund which has been set up to assist customers. This may be offered for support with utility bills or other interventions which will protect the customer and our asset. Where decoration is required after works associated with damp and mould, decoration vouchers will be provided to assist with the provision of paint and equipment. Further consideration will be given to customers and their specific individual or family circumstances, with a view to

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providing assistance which may include painting of finished surfaces. The nature of the decoration will solely be at our discretion.

Risk Thresholds

Risk Thresholds Risk Indicators:

Risk Appetite	Risk Thresholds	Risk Indicators
We seek to avoid any health and safety concerns for our customers and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements. 	Number of damp and mould repairs received.
We seek to avoid legal, contractual, or regulatory breaches regarding disrepair	Asset KPIs	Number of Disrepair claims received.
We have zero tolerance for service failures including abandoned repairs.	Completing all necessary damp inspection checklists/HHSRS	Monthly monitoring of KPI performance.
		Number of complaints received

We will ensure WHA Board receives updates on reports of damp and mould through our quarterly assurance reports.

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