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Policy Review v3	Neil Williams, Ben Nevitte	Services	Repairs & Maintenance
Document Type	Policy- L1		

Damp, Mould and Ventilation Policy

1.0 Aim / Purpose of the Policy

1.1 This Policy sets out the activities and responsibilities involved in the control of Damp, Mould and Ventilation within the Coastline repairs service. Coastline aims to provide a consistently high-quality repairs and maintenance service for all our Customers and to maintain our properties to provide a well-functioning and safe environment.

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or when a change in legislation is received. It complies with the Government guidance issued in September 2023 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/damp-and-mould-understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-for-rented-housing-providers/understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-of-damp-and-mould-in-the-home--2#ministerial-foreword

1.2 This policy confirms our approach to diagnosis and use of independent expertise;

- The steps to be taken;
- Timescales, effective communication and appropriate mitigations; and
- Customer aftercare checks.

Information and advice are key tools in supporting Customers to prevent damp, mould and condensation. Reference to “lifestyle” as the primary cause is not used as these issues are a consequence or mixture of property construction, maintenance issues, lack of information, limited Customer choices, affordability to heat and or other specific vulnerabilities.

1.3 Damp and mould within the home can produce allergens, irritants, mould spores and other toxins that are harmful to health. Even if visible mould is not present, dampness alone can increase the risk of health problems. Excessive moisture can promote the growth of microorganisms such as mould and other fungi, certain species of house dust mites, bacteria or viruses. The more serious the damp and mould problem and the longer it is left untreated, the worse the health impacts and risks are likely to be. Damp and mould can cause disease and ill health in anyone, but people with underlying health conditions, weakened immune systems, and some other groups of people are at greater risk of ill-health from damp and mould. Some people who are exposed to damp and mould might experience poor mental health as a result of living in a home with damp and mould.

2.0 Background / Introduction

2.1 As a landlord Coastline is responsible for:

- Providing a Decent Home to enable the positive wellbeing of the Customer;
- Maintaining the home is a good state of repair; and
- Keeping the home free of damp, mould and condensation issues providing appropriate ventilation.

2.2 Within Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), Damp and Mould Growth, it includes risks to physical and mental health from House Dust Mites and mould or fungal growth as these are caused by dampness and/or high humidity, in particular;

- Reduced ventilation levels; and
- Increased humidity, especially beyond 70%.

2.3 The specification of ventilation equipment in kitchen and bathroom replacement projects will be robust and provide adequate extraction. Heating and insulation systems will be designed using good practice and take into account energy performance, archetype, location, elevations and potential use of the building.

2.4 Decarbonisation improvements will include the use of sensor technology and Internet of Things (IoT) where appropriate, taking into consideration ventilation standards and provide an opportunity to reduce the risk of poor internal environment in the longer term.

3.0 Legislation, Statutory Regulatory duties & references

3.1 We will ensure that we carry out damp and mould surveys in accordance with best practice and most recent versions of relevant policy and legislation, including the following:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985;
- Awaab's Law 2025;
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS);
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018;
- The Building Act 1984 & 2000;
- Building Regulations 2010;
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012;
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 & 2021;
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR);
- Equality Act 2010;
- Decent Homes Standard; and
- Right to Repair Regulations 1994.

3.2 In addition to in-house cyclical stock condition inspections, Coastline will ensure that their Supervisors and Surveyors implement regular independent site inspections using the expert in-house team.

4.0 Ventilation Policy Principles and Objectives

4.1 The key principles of the Damp, Mould and Ventilation Policy are:

- To provide dry, insulated, and healthy homes for Customers;
- To provide healthy internal living environments in all homes for Customers; and
- To ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp, mould and condensation.

We will achieve these aims by:

- Helping Customers understand how to reduce condensation
- Informing both Customers and staff about the health risks of living in damp and/or mouldy homes;
- The use of proactive surveys;
- Engagement of specialists;
- Providing high levels of support, for example hardship payments and signposting to energy switching advice where necessary; and
- Publicising damp remediation work that we can do

4.2 Training colleagues, contractors and operatives to:

- Spot signs of condensation, damp and mould and understand the causes and remedies of these;
- Understand and follow the Damp, Mould and Condensation Procedure and Flowchart (Appendix A);
- Carry out maintenance to reduce the occurrence of damp, mould and condensation;
- Know our stock and the archetypes of properties that are more likely to suffer from damp and mould issues;
- Understanding the components in our properties which may cause damp;
- Invest in both preventative and reactive measures;
- Plan resources to respond to higher demand in winter;
- Make sure that appropriate budget levels are assigned to reducing the cause of damp and mould;
- Provide colleagues with the correct equipment to assess damp in properties and find resolution to the problem if it is our responsibility;
- Comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements and with best practice relating to the provision of this service; and
- Treat Customers in a fair and non-discriminatory way.

4.3 Coastline will also work with other landlords to procure high quality products, share knowledge and experiences, liaising with Environmental Health and other energy advice agencies.

4.4 Customer-facing colleagues and third party contractors responsibilities will be included within training to increase knowledge and understanding of ventilation, condensation and water ingress in homes. Colleagues discovering poor internal environment within homes will take responsibility to report the issues and ensure that homes are referred for technical surveys, making every contact count.

5.0 The Main Principles

5.1 Outline of Customer Responsibilities

5.1.1 Mould can be caused by condensation and may adversely affect Customers' health and quality of life. Customers are responsible for looking after their homes to their best ability and for requesting and following advice to try to reduce the risk of condensation that results in mould growth.

Mould caused by condensation is usually black and typically grows in bathrooms, kitchens and bedrooms. Attention should be made to areas where wardrobes and other furniture items are placed which may reduce the circulation of air, leading to condensation. This can be particularly challenging when furniture is placed against external walls.

Customer support available:

- Customers can find advice about how to prevent or reduce condensation via Coastline's website;
- Contact our Damp and Mould team.

5.2 Coastline's Responsibilities

5.2.1 Coastline is responsible for;

- Responding sensitively and assess the issue with urgency to identify the severity of the damp and mould and potential risks to tenants;
- Always tackling the underlying issue promptly, and acting with urgency when concerns have been raised about tenant health. Landlords should not delay action to await medical evidence or opinion - medical evidence is not a requirement for action;
- Ensuring tenants are informed about the steps that will be taken to remove mould and address any underlying issues and the timeframes for the work;
- Prior to the removal of the mould, photographing and documenting the location of the mould, to help identify the source;
- Removing the mould to address the health risk to tenants;;
- Identifying and tackling the underlying causes of damp and mould, including building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation and condensation.
- Completing a post inspecting a minimum of six weeks after remedial work has been carried out, to ensure that the issue has been fixed and damp and mould have not reappeared. If damp and mould has reappeared, further investigation and intervention should be pursued;
- Maintaining the property to avoid penetrating and rising damp. Coastline is also responsible for carrying out remedial action if these do occur;
- Insulating the property in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and Building Regulations Approved Document L;
- The repair and maintenance to the structure of all its blocks of flats. Where reactive repairs or major works are identified to the structure or communal areas at the block; leaseholders who reside within the block, will be contacted by Coastline. They will then be consulted in accordance with the Section 20 consultation

procedures in instances where the individual leaseholder contribution cost will be in excess of £250;

- Identifying any overcrowded homes and monitoring each one with regular visits (see Appendix A);
- Providing ongoing, proactive, damp and mould surveys across the Coastline Housing stock. These will be carried out by ensuring every home has a visit each year by physical visits being carried out by Coastline colleagues or external contractors;
- Coastline is also responsible for correctly diagnosing any faults within Customer's homes and specifying remedial works to be completed within an appropriate timescale, in line with service standards.

5.3 Planned, Cyclical and Voids Works

5.3.1

- All planned maintenance specifications will include aspects to improve the internal environment of homes, for example extractor fans in bathroom and kitchen;
- Cyclical Maintenance Contracts will be in place to service and maintain specialist ventilation appliances within homes, for example Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) and Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery systems; and
- The Void Re-let Standard includes checks to ensure that ventilation equipment is serviced and functional, with any mould treated and eradicated before occupancy by customers.

6.0 Service Standards

6.1 Preventative Work

6.1.1 To reduce the occurrence of condensation, damp and mould in our homes we will:

- Carry out proactive mould, condensation and ventilation Customer surveys using repairs data to identify homes at risk;
- Promote information about how to reduce condensation;
- Identify a list of components most likely to cause damp;
- Liaise with our contractors to monitor these items and when operatives carry out repairs visits and arrange to replace any components where the condition has deteriorated, isbeyond repair and may result in damp;
- Use modern technology, in agreement with Customers, to monitor trends and humidity levels;
- Carry out a stock condition survey for each property every five years;
- Highlight any areas of concern at the time of each stock condition survey;
- Carry out work to fix any problems that are found;
- Tackle fuel poverty through a range of initiatives starting with those who are most vulnerable and in need. These include, replacing inefficient heating with traditional or renewable heating, insulation programmes and whole property 'retrofit works' which address all areas which affect the warmth of Customers home;
- Review each damp and mould works order raised after six weeks to see if the proposed solution has been effective;

- Ensure all maintenance teams follow damp and mould policy to prevent damp and mould by tackling issues when involved with works on the property:
- Raise Customer awareness by publishing a series of videos on the Coastline website; and
- Compare reports showing homes where there have been no repairs (excluding Blue Flame) reported in the last year compared with our last SCS visit date and proactively visiting these; and continually reviewing materials and paints to ensure that Coastline use the most up to date and effective products that are available.

6.2 Reactive Work

6.2.1 In line with **Appendix A – Damp, Mould and Ventilation Flowchart** when Customers contact us in relation to a Damp and Mould issue we will respond in accordance with timescales outlined within Awaab's Law.

From point of notification, we will:

- Investigate and complete all relevant safety works within 24hrs of a reported emergency hazard;
- Investigate significant hazards identified within 10 working days;
- Start repairs within 5 working days of a investigation, and complete repairs within a "reasonable timescale".
- Where works are unable to start within 5 working days; a written report will be provided to the Customer within 3 working days following the conclusion of the investigation;
- Where a vulnerability is present (that impacts a customer's health) repairs will be prioritised and completed within 24hrs;
- Carry out post inspections of remedial works 6 weeks after completion;
- Contact the Customer after 12-months for a 'property health check'.

6.3 New build homes will meet the ventilation requirements set out within Building Regulations Approved Document F and Domestic Ventilation Compliance Guide.

7. Damp, Condensation and Mould

It is important to undertand the differences between each as they have similar effects, however they are caused for different reasons.

7.1 Understanding Damp

Damp affects building structures (such as walls, floors, ceilings and foundations) and can occur in homes for a variety of reasons.

Irrespective of the type of damp (penetrating, rising or traumatic) landlords are legally responsible for addressing damp in their properties (see 'Legal standards on damp and mould in rented homes'):

Penetrating damp:
Penetrating damp is water that gets into the building from outside due to defects in the walls, roofs, windows or floors.

Rising damp:
Rising damp is moisture from the ground that rises up through parts of the buildings in contact with the ground (walls and floors); it is usually found in older properties and is often misdiagnosed. It can be identified through visual inspection and is often due to defective damp proof courses and membranes.

Traumatic damp:
Traumatic damp can be caused by leaking water from waste and heating pipes, overflowing baths or sinks, burst pipes or defective water storage vessels inside the building. Traumatic damp can also originate from outside the property, for example from another building or from environmental flooding

7.2 **Understanding Condensation**

Condensation occurs when moisture generated inside the home cools and condenses onto colder surfaces of the buildings (for example window frames, corners and low points on walls behind sofas or wardrobes).

When atmospheric moisture can no longer hold all the water vapour or when the air cools to its dew point condensation occurs. This is influenced by temperature and humidity and results in water droplets forming on cold surfaces providing the perfect environment for mould growth.

7.3 **Understanding Mould**

Mould is a type of fungus which grows in moist environments. Mould can cause adverse health effects as well as damage to buildings.

Mould often appears as small black spots and unlike rising or penetrating damp, condensation mould is caused by excess moisture in the air and not by structural defects.

Appendix A - **Damp, Mould and Ventiation Flowchart**