



<b>Policy title:</b>	Damp and Mould Policy		
<b>Scope:</b>	This policy sets out the organisation’s approach to tackling the presence of damp and mould and its root causes in our customers’ homes.		
<b>Policy owner &amp; job title:</b>	Head of Assets and Sustainability		
<b>Approver:</b>	Executive Team		
<b>Date:</b>	Mar 2024	<b>Review Due Date:</b>	Mar 2026

### POLICY SUMMARY

Aspire is committed to a zero-tolerance approach to the presence of hazardous levels of damp and mould in our customers’ homes that could risk the health and safety of those occupying or visiting.

Aspire will never assign blame or imply that a customer’s “lifestyle” is responsible for the presence of damp and mould in their home, but will be clear in communicating any measures that can be taken by customers to support resolving or preventing damp and mould.

Our Asset Management Strategy 2022-25 includes a Customer Home Standard Commitment that homes will be free from hazardous levels of damp and mould.

Our approach to monitoring and responding to cases of damp and mould recognises the impact that exposure can have on customers’ health and well-being and prioritises cases accordingly.

The policy has been cross-referenced with other organisational policies to ensure consistency of approach to dealing with damp and mould in customers’ homes and any associated complaints.

## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

### **1.1 DEFINITIONS**

#### **Condensation**

Condensation occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with cooler surfaces. The causes of condensation can include a lack of adequate ventilation to the property and specifically rooms where build up of moisture is high such as kitchens and bathrooms. If left untreated, the presence of condensation can cause mould growth on surfaces.

#### **Damp**

Damp is generally caused by a failure of a property's structure or external fabric and there are two main types:

Penetrating Damp- When moisture enters a property because of a structural or external defect

Rising Damp- When the property's Damp Proof Course (DPC) or membrane fails and moisture from the ground rises and damages finishes and decoration.

#### **Mould**

Mould is formed due to excess moisture which is caused by condensation or damp. Mould can be a threat to physical and mental health and there is evidence that there is a link between exposure to mould and health conditions such as respiratory problems, allergies or asthma.

Damp and mould related health outcomes may affect people regardless of age or current health, although the elderly, children and those with pre-existing medical conditions, such as respiratory conditions or weakened immune systems, are most at risk.

### **1.2 RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Landlord responsibilities**

Aspire is responsible for maintaining the structure and components of its properties. We will ensure that all services relating to damp and mould are carried out in accordance with best practice and legislation, including the following:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Section 11
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System
- Fitness for Human Habitation Act

- Decent Homes Standard
- Housing Act 1985, 1988, 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Defective Premises Act 1972

In order to meet our obligations, we are committed to:

- Making the reporting of damp and mould clear and straightforward for customers
- Following up on all reported instances of damp and mould in a timely manner and prioritising cases where health concerns have been raised by a customer
- Prioritising mould wash inspections to remove any immediate hazard and where necessary follow up with a diagnostic survey and complete any necessary remedial work
- Ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to undertaking technical surveys, mould washes, completing remedial works and for delivering front line training relating to damp and mould.
- Prioritising cases where customers in homes have known vulnerabilities, underlying health conditions and weakened immune systems and are at greater risk from the presence of hazardous levels of damp and mould
- Providing support and advice to our customers, through various channels, on how to minimise condensation within the home
- Signposting customers to money advice and housing related support where appropriate
- Training and educating front line staff to recognise the presence of damp and mould and mechanisms in place to report it for further appropriate action
- Training provided for Board members to understand the causes, dangers and remedies of damp and mould to enable effective oversight and assurance
- Being proactive in reviewing data to inform targeted surveys of properties that have an increased likelihood of experiencing damp and mould
- Where hazards cannot be effectively remediated within policy timescales temporary relocations will be agreed and prioritised with customers
- Maintaining a continuous improvement plan to ensure compliance with our obligations and incorporate best practice in our approach

### Customer Responsibilities

Customers must immediately report repairs and instances of damp and mould to Aspire to ensure that the property is well maintained.

Customers are required to always allow Aspire and its contractors access to complete surveys and carry out remedial works.

Customers will be provided with and have access to advice and guidance on how to reduce mould and condensation in their home which must be followed to support resolving or preventing damp and mould in the home.

Customers are responsible for ensuring that no damage occurs to the property intentionally in line with the obligations in their tenancy agreement.

### 1.3 PROCESS

The process for responding to reports of damp and mould are detailed in Appendix 1 This sets out a two-stage process, with escalation opportunities throughout.

Stage 1 will consist of a triage inspection and mould wash. If there are no signs of any structural cause or significant repairs required to building components, and ventilation and heating are adequate, advice will be given on how to prevent a recurrence of mould growth. If there are signs that structural issues or repairs are required to remedy the root cause of damp and mould the case will be escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2 will consist of a full damp and mould diagnostic survey being undertaken. This will involve an inspection of the whole property taking damp and humidity readings. If the root cause is structural damp a schedule of works will be developed and issued to the necessary contractors. At Stage 2 we will also consider upgrades to improve ventilation within the property.

Once the works are completed our customer should experience an improvement in their home conditions in relation to the presence of damp and mould.

If a property which has undergone a Stage One triage inspection reports mould again within a 12 month period it will automatically be escalated to Stage 2.

All properties which have undergone a Stage 1 triage inspection will be contacted six months after works have been completed to check if there is still mould growth within their home. If this is confirmed a Stage 2 diagnostic survey will be booked to fully assess the property and a further mould wash will be arranged.

All Stage 1 and 2 surveys will be assessed against the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and given a Category 1 (Severe), Category 2 (Moderate) or typical rating.

Following Stage 2, if no property specific issues are identified, and we have supported the customer where possible with improvements to heating or ventilation, but mould is still reported to be present by the customer, we will consider the following options

- installation of sensors to measure temperature and humidity
- signposting to money advice/ energy efficiency

In some circumstances we may consider the commission of an independent survey to validate the Stage 2 findings.

We will commit to the following timescales (**working** days) to respond to reports of damp and mould at Stage 1 and Stage 2:

- Mould Wash- (Normal Priority/ Moderate HHSRS ) 15 Days, (High Priority/ Severe HHSRS) 5 days
- Survey Inspection- 10 days, priority health risk cases 3 days
- Routine Repairs -20 Days

There may be occasions where repair works are complex and/or structural which require materials, equipment, asbestos surveys, or are weather dependent, which impact on delivery timescales. When this is the case, works will be programmed as promptly as possible, with continued liaison with the customer, whilst continuing to assess risk and mitigating hazards in the meantime.

When leaseholders who live in flat blocks report issues of damp and mould it will be triaged to ascertain if the cause could be structural and related to the communal block which we are responsible for, if so a stage 2 survey will be arranged. We will not carry out any damp and mould works to areas which would not be the landlord's responsibility.

Rooms outside the habitable part of a property eg. sheds/store rooms/ single skin stores do not form part of the habitable property and it is unreasonable and impractical to attempt remedial action. Where reports are received from customers within these areas, advice and guidance will be given on improving ventilation and reducing moisture.

#### 1.4 COMPLEX CASES

**Major Works** - Complex cases involving significant remedial work may require a temporary decant from the home. On these occasions, any reasonable costs in relation to the temporary move will be fully covered by Aspire and a key liaison officer provided throughout the process to support our customer and minimise inconvenience.

**Overcrowding**- Where overcrowding is identified and can be seen contributing to mould growth a referral will be made to the Locality Team to discuss housing options with the customer.

**Health Concerns**- All Stage 1 and 2 damp and mould inspections are assessed against HHSRS, any category 1 (severe) cases will be prioritised for remedial works.

**Disrepair Cases**- Where disrepair cases are received a condition survey will be promptly completed to confirm any items of disrepair. Where repairs are identified

these will be scheduled and completed in line with repair timescales. If access is denied or challenging, the necessary action will be taken to achieve access through the legal process in line with the tenancy agreement.

**Fuel Poverty**- where colleagues visit properties and recognise that a customer may be experiencing fuel poverty the necessary referral mechanisms are in place for referrals to be made to Money Advice Team, or for help and support with finances.

**New Build Properties** – where properties remain within the defects liability period, Aspire will align its process with the requirements of this policy and liaise with the developer to achieve a resolution to the presence of damp and mould.

### 1.5 COMMUNICATION

Reporting of issues relating to mould and condensation will be accessible to customers through our usual communication channels.

We will share the results of diagnostic surveys with our customers with a summary of the repairs to be completed.

Information and guidance is available to customers on our website relating to damp and mould.

Colleagues and Board members will receive training to raise awareness and develop understanding of damp and mould issues, related issues (health), causes and measures to resolve these. The mechanisms for referral of instances of damp and condensation will be communicated to colleagues.

### 1.6 COMPLAINTS AND ESCALATION

Any complaints relating to the delivery of this service area, including MP and Councillor enquiries, will be dealt with in line with our Customer Feedback policy.

Any applications for compensation will be treated in line with our Customer Feedback policy and any awards made will reflect the extent of any service failures or detriment caused to the customer.

We are committed to learning from complaints in relation to damp and mould and will take the necessary steps to learn from these and enhance our service offer.

### 1.7 VALUE FOR MONEY

We are committed to ensuring that property repair issues relating to mould and condensation will be identified and resolved early and quickly.

We are committed to understanding any trends or patterns in cases of mould and condensation that may be caused by property defects to identify appropriate intervention measures. This will be done through effective record keeping of reports and regular trend analysis.

We will continue to identify opportunities to further understand the performance of our homes through smart technology.

### **1.8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

This policy has been considered against our Equality and Diversity Policy and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed.

### **2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEE**

All employees are required to be aware of the provisions of the policy and to follow the procedures in place to respond to damp and mould in customers' homes.

### **3. RESPONSIBILITY OF ASPIRE**

Aspire is required to comply with all relevant legislation and any subsequent legislation or regulations in relation to damp and mould.