



Policy title:	Damp and Mould Policy		
Scope:	This policy sets out the organisation’s approach to tackling the presence of damp and mould and its root causes in our customers’ homes.		
Policy owner & job title:	Head of Assets and Sustainability		
Approver:	Aspire Housing Board		
Date:	April 2023	Review Due Date:	April 2024

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
- Completing a diagnostic survey and any necessary remedial work at every property where the presence of damp and mould is reported
- Ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to undertaking technical surveys, completing remedial works and for delivering front line training relating to 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
- Being proactive in reviewing data to inform targeted surveys of properties that have an increased likelihood of experiencing damp and mould
- 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

When a customer reports an issue with mould, damp and condensation a few questions will be asked to try and understand the cause or issue. Where causes are obvious (eg. Leaking gutters/overflow) they will be reported in line with the repairs

process. Where the cause is not obvious a survey will be arranged via our specialist surveyor.

The survey will diagnose the root cause of the mould growth. If the root cause is damp a schedule of works will be developed and issued to the necessary contractors. If the root cause is identified to be condensation, and there are no remedial works that can be undertaken to alleviate the problem, the relevant advice and signposting will be provided to the customer.

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

We will commit to the following timescales (working days) to respond to reports of damp and mould:

- Survey Inspection- 20 days, priority health risk cases 3 days
- Mould Wash- (Moderate) 10 Days, (Severe) 3 days
- Non-Structural Works- 15 Days
- Structural Works- 40 days

Where major work is needed that requires customers to be decanted, it may not be possible to complete the structural works in the above timescales. There may also be occasions where structural works require materials or equipment, or are weather dependent, which can also impact on the above timescales. Where this is the case, works will be programmed as promptly as possible, with continued liaison with the customer, whilst continuing assessing risk and mitigating hazards in the meantime.

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

We will contact all customers within 12 weeks after repairs have been completed to confirm that the issue has been resolved. If customers are still experiencing damp and mould a further follow up inspection will be organised.

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 damp and mould inspections are assessed against HHSRS, any category 1 (severe) cases will be prioritised for remedial works. Following a survey if mould is identified a repair job will be raised for the mould to be removed, thereby removing the hazard and any repairs required will then follow. At the survey, confirmation will be sought on whether any customers within the household have health issues and this will be assessed against a risk matrix and works accelerated as required.

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.

All colleagues will have 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 no additional provisions are required.

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.