

Damp and Mould Policy

Policy ref:	Repairs and Maintenance
Policy holder:	Director of Property Services
Date approved:	May 2022
Approved by:	Board
Effective date:	March 2023
Review date:	March 2026

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy and associated operational procedure is to ensure that we define damp and mould for our customers and the approach we will take.
- 1.2 This policy aims to achieve outcomes for our customers and their homes to ensure we provide:
 - Safe homes and common areas for our residents
 - Early detection and notification of damp and mould issues is key
 - Assurance to external and internal customers that our approach to managing damp and mould is fit for purpose
 - Consistency and clarity on how we deliver services to an agreed standard
 - Raised awareness and ownership within both our customer and colleague groups

2. Scope

This policy covers all LiveWest rented, shared ownership and leasehold stock (depending on lease and responsibilities).

3. About this Policy

- 3.1 The safety and wellbeing of our customers, and colleagues are our top priority.
 - 3.2 We want to provide safe, dry, and warm homes for our customers, and to ensure that the fabric of the buildings is protected from deterioration due to damp and mould.
 - 3.3 To help us achieve this objective, we have developed a damp and mould policy which outlines our approach, communications and responsibilities for delivering this service.
-

3.4 Our Damp and Mould operational procedure sets out our approach to diagnosis in detail and what actions will be taken depending on the nature and severity of the issue.

4. Our approach to Damp and Mould

4.1 We have a risk-based approach to the management of damp and mould which is set out in our operational procedure.

4.2 We will triage all reports at an early stage and may use digital technology. This will include risk classification in line with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) as CAT 1 Severe or CAT 2 moderate/slight. Initial reports of damp and mould will be records as CAT 2 until inspected.

4.3 Depending on the severity and history, we will take a case management approach, this will include both removing the damp and/or mould hazard and investigating and addressing the root cause of the problem.

4.4 We may install damp and mould sensors in our customer's home to provide alerts to LiveWest (and our customers) about damp and mould.

4.5 We will be respectful of equality characteristics such as religion, beliefs, disability, and work with our customers to find a time suitable for them, enabling carers or family members to be present if required. We will keep customers fully informed on what work is required and why.

4.6 We will provide clear information and advice for customers. We want to encourage customers to report damp and mould issues in a timely manner so we can act and keep our property conditions free of damp and mould.

4.7 We recognise that communication and language can be a barrier to damp and mould reporting, and we will ensure that our services are delivered in such a way as to be fully accessible, this will include ensuring that advocacy, interpreting, and translation services are used when required.

4.8 For historic or complex cases, we will provide the customer with one point of contact.

4.9 In cases where we are unable to remove damp and or mould hazards quickly, we will consider either temporary or permanent decant in line with our decant procedure.

4.10 Action to remedy damp and mould will always be undertaken in a timely way and work will continue to address and remedy the hazard in all occupied homes including where:

- legal action is being taken either by LiveWest or the customer
- a customer has been identified as moving home
- the property has been identified for regeneration and disposal

- 4.11 Where access to undertake work is refused by customers, this will be appropriately documented and where necessary we will use legal action to gain access.
- 4.12 Once work is completed, we will collect and retain evidence of the work undertaken including photographic records of property condition.
- 4.13 Where we have undertaken work, we will contact customers at an appropriate time interval to undertake a follow up to check if the damp and mould has returned.
- 4.14 We will constantly measure our service resolution levels and feedback to ensure further service improvement for our customers.
- 4.15 We will ensure our inhouse colleagues and specialist contractors are trained in the awareness of damp and mould and of LiveWest's responsibility to address this.
- 4.16 All complaints about damp and mould will be separately identified and escalated to the relevant manager immediately (timescales & resolution in accordance with LiveWest's Complaints Policy).
- 4.17 When our properties are void, if there is a history of damp and mould, we will fit damp and mould sensors and investigate any root causes. We will complete works whilst the property is empty.
- 4.18 We will continue to undertake proactive stock condition surveys of our properties every five years. We will use property data including stock condition surveys and damp and mould sensors to identify homes at high risk from Damp and Mould and target our Cyclical and Planned programmes.
- 4.19 If a third-party contacts us to let us know there is damp and mould in the property, we will log this and action in line with this policy.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 The Director of Property Services will be responsible for the Damp and Mould Policy.
- 5.2 Regional Operational Managers for Minor Projects will be responsible for the Operational Procedure for Damp and Mould.
- 5.3 All colleagues are responsible for reporting damp and mould and should help keep our property conditions free of damp and mould.

6. Our Customer's Responsibilities

- 6.1 We will best be able to eliminate Damp and Mould from homes when working in partnership with our customers. As a landlord, we are committed to ensuring that homes are free from disrepair and have a good degree of thermal comfort. Our customers have responsibilities as part of this partnership too and we will clearly communicate these.
- 6.2 We will ask our customers to:
- Report any damp and mould issues as soon as they become visible, in their home or in communal areas
 - Keep their appointment or let us know in advance if it's no longer suitable
 - Allow us access when we make a reasonable request
 - Make sure an adult is at home if there are young people in the property
 - Follow any guidance and advice given by LiveWest on damp and mould
 - Be courteous and respectful to LiveWest Colleagues
- 6.3 Inadequate heating and/or ventilation are a significant cause of damp and mould. Customers are responsible for heating their homes and ensuring that they are ventilated, and that trickle vents are opened, and fuses are not removed from fans and positive input ventilation units.
- 6.4 We recognise that financial hardship can impact on a customer's ability to heat their home and we will seek to provide support through our "Cost of Living" hub, Tenancy Sustainment team and Crisis and Hardship grants.

7. Equality and Diversity

- 7.1 We recognise the importance of ensuring all our customers have equal access to our services which are relevant, responsive, and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers.
- 7.2 We will treat all our customers fairly whilst valuing diversity with the aim to meet the needs and choice of people from all backgrounds.
- 7.3 An Equality impact Assessment has been completed and is available on request.

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 We are fully committed to ensuring that the Damp and Mould Policy is fit for purpose, refreshed regularly, and challenged against the latest changes to regulation and best practice.

8.2 The policy will be reviewed every three years and more frequently if there are major changes to either regulation or legislation.

8.3 We will review customer feedback and identify areas for service improvement on a continuous basis in order to improve performance and to prioritise our work.

9. Legal Responsibilities

9.1 This policy has been written with regards to the following:

- The Regulator of Social Housings Consumer Standards
- The Housing Act 2004
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015
- Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Disability Discriminations Act 2005
- The Equality Act 2010

10. Linked/Associated Policies and other References

- Corporate Strategy 2021-2024, Vision and Purpose
- Environmental Strategy, Customer Service Strategy & Asset Management Strategy
- Health and Safety & Compliance Safety Policies
- Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk & Vulnerable Customers Policies
- Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- Damp and Mould Operational Procedure
- Decant and Emergency Moves and Temporary Housing Procedure

VERSION CONTROL

Version Ref:	Date of change	By whom	Reason
1.1	Mar 2023	Director of Property Services	Categorisation & customer responsibilities within our partnership