

## Damp and Mould Policy

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<b>Policy Steering Group approval date</b>	

### Summary

This policy sets out Housing 21's approach to dealing with damp and mould in homes and communal areas that we maintain. It covers the services we provide to tenants who rent their home under a tenancy agreement.

For leaseholders, we will meet the responsibilities as set out in the terms of the lease.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Housing 21 aspires to embed diversity and inclusion within all our organisational activities to enable these principles to become part of our everyday processes.

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## Definitions

<b>Damp</b>
Damp generally describes what happens when water penetrates the structure of a building, causing damage. Damp is usually described as 'Rising' or 'Penetrative'.
<b>Condensation</b>
Condensation is a physical process that occurs when there is a build-up of moisture in the air. Condensation is caused when moisture held in warm air meets a cold surface like a window or wall and condenses into water droplets. If this happens regularly, mould may start to grow on cold ceilings, outside walls, around windows and in the places where air doesn't circulate well. Condensation can aggravate health problems like asthma, bronchitis, arthritis, and rheumatism.
<b>Mould</b>
Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp atmospheres. Mould in housing is often a consequence of water penetration and/or condensation in properties that are not adequately heated and/or ventilated. Mould will only grow on damp surfaces and in most cases, this is a direct result of condensation. Mould is unsightly, smelly and in addition to colonising in areas that are colder or have poor air movement (such as behind furniture) it affects soft materials such as clothes, furniture, carpets etc.

## Legislation

<b>Document</b>
Housing Act 1985
The Environmental Protection Act 1990
Homes (Fitness for Habitation) Act 2018
Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Recording System
Defective Premises Act 1973 (Section 4)
Decent Homes Standard 2006
The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11)
Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard
Home Standard, Regulator of Social Housing 2012
Equality Act 2010

## **1. Aims, Objectives and Approach**

Under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), damp and mould cases are categorised as Category 1 (Cat1) hazard, which is the highest, most serious form of hazard classification.

Housing 21 aims to take all reasonable steps to make sure our residents stay safe, healthy, and well in their homes. Damp and mould are issues which can have a serious impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents and cause damage to homes.

This policy sets out our approach to preventing and resolving damp and mould in our rented properties and communal areas of properties we own. Responsibilities for shared ownership and leasehold properties will be as set out in the terms of the individual leases.

## **2. Scope**

The policy identifies the management of damp and mould within Housing 21 properties.

This policy should be considered alongside other Housing 21 policies, key organisational strategies, and supporting guidance, this list is not exhaustive:

- Asset Management Strategy
- Repairs Handbook
- No Access Guidance
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Compensation Policy

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **3.1 Housing 21's Responsibilities**

- 3.1.1 We will ensure our employees have the skills and knowledge to identify signs of damp and mould and encourage them to look out for signs whenever they visit a resident's property.
- 3.1.2 When we receive a report of damp or mould, we will attend the property to determine the cause and seek to resolve the immediate issue. Any repairs that are required to be carried out will be dealt with in accordance with our Responsive Repairs Policy.
- 3.1.3 When a property becomes vacant and prior to re-letting, we will seek to identify and remedy any issues which may cause damp. This may include ensuring doors and windows are fully operational and can effectively ventilate the property, ensuring extractor fans are working, where necessary applying mould treatments.

- 3.1.4 We will provide information to residents to raise awareness about the causes of damp and mould, including advice on what residents can do to help prevent/reduce condensation and damp.
- 3.1.5 We know that some residents may struggle to afford to heat their homes adequately due to their income levels. Housing management teams will work with residents to ensure that they are receiving the income to which they are entitled.
- 3.1.6 We will seek to mitigate any increased risks of damp and mould arising because of our work to decarbonise our properties.
- 3.1.7 We will keep residents informed of any property inspections, diagnosis of issues and scheduling of works where required.

### **3.2 Resident Responsibilities**

Residents should report any problems to us as soon as possible.

- 3.2.1 Where damp is because of condensation, we will work with residents to take appropriate measures, this might include advice on how to control moisture levels or increase ventilation or heating, so that humidity levels are kept low.
- 3.2.2 It is important that residents follow the advice provided and do not take actions that could contribute to further problems e.g., turning off ventilation systems or sealing over air vents.
- 3.2.3 Residents must allow H21 and its appointed contractors access to their home to carry out works in accordance with the No Access Guidance.

## **4. Complaints and Compensation**

- 4.1 Complaints and compensation for works, decant and disturbance are considered under a separate policy.
- 4.2 Any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the resident as a result of managing the damp and mould need to be discussed with H21 and where possible, agreed in advance e.g., additional gas and/or electricity used for running any special equipment.

## **5. Measuring Performance**

- 5.1 We will capture and report on cases of damp and mould using information from inspections and testing, repair requests, conversations, complaints, risk assessments and the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- 5.2 The Asset Management Team will review all information relating to damp and mould. Reports may include, but are not limited to the reporting framework detailed below:

Information	Reported To	Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outstanding damp and mould formal stage 1 complaints</li> <li>- Outstanding damp and mould formal stage 2 complaints</li> <li>- Open disrepair claims related to damp/mould</li> <li>- Damp and mould cat 1 outstanding</li> <li>- Of which damp and mould cat 1 from HHSRS not actioned (over 1 month)</li> <li>- Damp and mould cat 2 from HHSRS outstanding</li> <li>- Of which damp and mould cat 2 from HHSRS not actioned (over 1 month)</li> </ul>	Property Compliance Report (Board)	Fortnightly
	Scorecard	Monthly
	Safety Forum	Every 8 weeks
	IDC	Quarterly
Assurance update in the Asset Management Board Report	Board	Quarterly

Suitable records, in respect of damp and mould will be kept and maintained up to date in line with the organisations [Document Retention Schedule](#)

## 6. Training

All employees will receive damp and mould training appropriate to their role.

## 7 Procedures

The following procedures accompany this policy:

- A. How to procedure – Reporting damp and mould
- B. How to procedure – Major works
- C. How to procedure – Complaints and compensation

## How to Procedures

### A. Reporting damp and mould

When a report of damp, mould or condensation is received, H21 will try to identify possible causes. Some causes may be obvious such as leaking gutters or overflows, and in these cases remedial repairs will be undertaken in a timely manner.

- A.1 Where the cause is not immediately obvious, a surveyor or specialist contractor may need to visit the property to complete an inspection. We will aim to make an appointment within 10 working days, agreeing a mutually convenient time with the resident. The resident will need to give access to their home for this appointment.
- A.2 The purpose of this inspection is to identify whether the issue is damp related (water penetration due to a building defect) or condensation related (normally linked to the thermal comfort and the way the occupants use their home).
- A.3 An inspection report will be produced and a summary of this will be provided to the resident when available (within a two-week period).
- A.4 Where condensation is diagnosed as the cause of damp, H21 will provide information and guidance to the resident. This information will include a discussion on the possible causes of condensation and some solutions that may help. In most cases, once these measures have been in place for a few weeks, the issue is reduced or eliminated.
- A.5 Where damp is identified as building related, the remedial works will be identified and scheduled in appropriately based on the survey recommendations.
- A.6 Where there several reports damp, mould or condensation in a particular court, a survey may be needed from a sample of properties to proactively establish if the problems are arising from the property design.



Housing 21 operates a devolved model for repairs. Most schemes have Court Managers which are on site and regularly visit flats, meet with our residents and are an early warning system for any identified defects. Court Managers raise and manage repairs on the court or draw on the expertise of our in-house surveying team to prescribe appropriate remedial action.



Our surveyors visit most of their schemes at least twice a year and conduct resident engagement meetings. This provides residents with a regular forum to report any concerns they may have to a technically qualified person who can inspect; advise; and arrange any required repairs or improvements.



We have produced a damp and mould brochure, which will be distributed to residents to advise them on the different types of damp and how to reduce the occurrence of condensation.



All our surveyors have received training in damp identification and have access to Protometer damp diagnostic equipment.



The surveying team undertake an annual HHSRS inspection to identify any risks which are present on each of their schemes. This includes a full inspection of communal areas as well as a sample of flats. Identified risks are prioritised as Category 1 and Category 2. Category 1 hazards constitute a Decent Homes failure.



We know that an efficient and effective heating system can help reduce condensation and damp. We have therefore been proactive ensuring our properties achieve an energy efficiency rating of EPC C or above. In addition, we are continuously exploring new innovative heating options such as electric boilers, air source and ground source heat pumps.



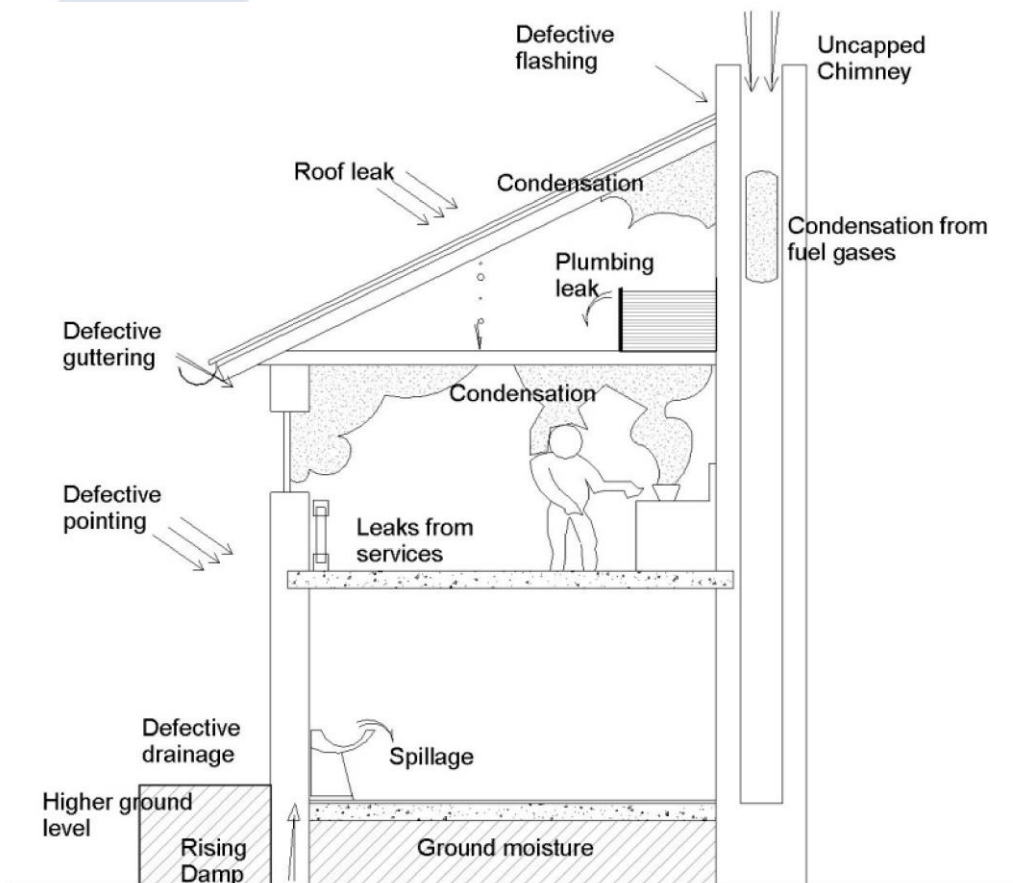
Category 1 & 2 risks identified through annual HHSRS are rectified as soon as possible and actively managed monitored going forward

### How we identify damp and mould

Housing 21 have taken a combined approach of reactive and proactive damp and mould identification and rectification.

Residents can report damp or mould either to their Court Manager in person or via the pull cord /intercom to enable rectification works or further investigation to take place.

The area-based surveyor undertakes an annual HHSRS assessment on a sample number of properties within a scheme which includes an assessment on damp and mould growth. Any dampness or mould identified through the HHSRS assessment is recorded and a managed action is put in place.

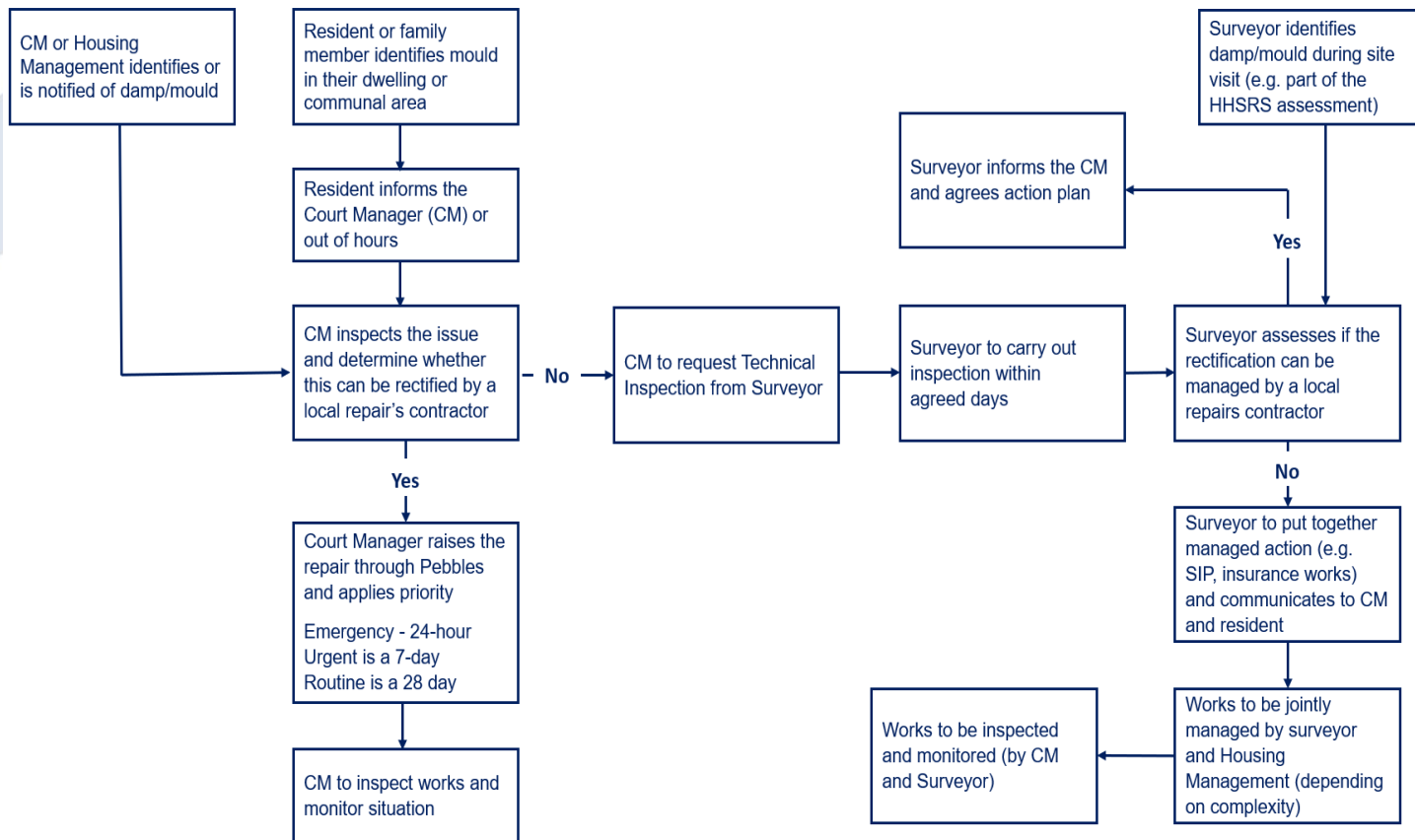


On sign up of a tenancy agreement, residents commit to keeping their homes in good decorative order and to report any repairs or faults. Void checks are carried out by Housing Management at the end of tenancy which will identify issues associated to damp and mould.

Although Housing 21 promotes independent living, Court Managers do enter each property twice a year to carry out the emergency pull cord tests. This provides an opportunity for the Court Manager to liaise with the residents and check for any damp and mould issues which may not have been reported. If damp and mould is identified during these visits, the Court Manager can arrange remedial measures or request support from the area-based surveyor if required.

If residents feel any issues have not been satisfactorily resolved, Housing 21 has a formal complaints procedure in place where they can be further raised / escalated.





Activity	Procedure
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**Raising a repair**

Court Managers can appoint local contractors to complete minor repairs/improvements on their Courts up to £1K (Gross), Housing Managers can authorise orders over £1K via the Pebbles system.

Repairs can be raised by the resident, their family, or a member of staff via the pull cord /intercom or by phoning the out of hours repairs line – **0345 603 0099**

**Requesting a technical inspection**

A Technical Inspection can be requested by a Court Manager

**Attendance**

The Court Manager raises the repair through Pebbles and applies the relevant completion timeframe. Emergency is a 24-hour response, Urgent is a 7-day response and Routine is a 28-day response.

If further investigation and works are required by the area-based surveyor a plan of action with timeframes are to be agreed with the Housing/Extra Care Manager, Court Manager and resident.

<b>HHSRS Assessment</b>	The area-based surveyor undertakes an annual HHSRS assessment on a sample number of properties within a scheme which includes an assessment on damp and mould growth. The Court Manager should also be asked whether they are aware of any damp and mould related issues onsite. If so, these should be investigated accordingly.
<b>Communication</b>	Biannual resident engagements sessions are held where residents can discuss any issues including damp and mould. The recent presentation material also has a specific section relating to this topic.  Damp and mould information leaflets have also been distributed to residents
<b>Complaints procedure</b>	If residents feel any issues have not been satisfactorily resolved Housing 21 have a formal complaints procedure in place where issues can be raised and escalated
<b>Leasehold, Oldham, Kent PFI, and market rents</b>	Literature is provided to all residents on how to identify, reduce and report condensation related issues. Inspections are aligned to Housing 21 core stock.  Kent PFI sites have an annual welfare visit that now includes a visual inspection of properties.

## B. Major works

- B.1 There may be extreme circumstances where it may be necessary for a resident to vacate their property, this might include:
- When major structural repairs, refurbishments or improvements are required to the property, which would pose considerable risk to the wellbeing of the residents, should they remain in occupation.
  - Where major works are required because of a statutory notice such as an Environmental Health Order having been served which would pose considerable risk to the wellbeing of the resident should they remain in occupation.
- B.2 Should moving out be necessary our Compensation Policy will be followed.

## C. Complaints and compensation

[Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure](#)