

Damp and Mould Policy

1. Background

The safety and wellbeing of our customers is our top priority.

We want to provide safe, dry and warm homes for our customers, and to ensure that the fabric of the building is protected from deterioration due to damp and mould.

2. Purpose

This purpose of this policy is to provide clarity of the definition of damp and mould and to set out our approach to tackling damp and mould within our homes.

This policy helps both our customers and those involved in delivering our damp and mould service which is designed to:

- Work in partnership with our customers to ensure our homes provide safe and healthy environments for customers to live
- Carry out effective investigations to locate and address the cause of damp and mould
- Undertake reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to eradicate damp, including controlling condensation
- Ensure customers are supported to help manage and control damp and condensation and reduce the risk of it occurring
- To protect the fabric of our properties by stopping damp and mould issues at the earliest opportunity
- Comply with statutory requirements and good practice relating to damp and mould.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All rented homes owned fully by Midland Heart
- All homes where Midland Heart has landlord responsibilities
- Any communal areas owned or managed by Midland Heart

4. Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for the delivery of this policy lies with the Director for Assets and Delivery.

Responsibility for the operational procedure for damp and mould sits with the Priority Repairs Manager (Damp and Mould).

We have a specialist Damp and Mould Team, who are responsible for undertaking inspections, surveys and repair works at all levels to address the root cause of damp and mould and providing specialist advice and preventative support to customers.

All Midland Heart staff and contractors have a responsibility to report the early signs of damp and mould in a timely manner.

5. Types of Damp

The types of damp and mould covered by this policy include:

Rising Damp: The movement of moisture from the ground rising up to the structure of the building. Recognised by a visible tide mark on internal walls up to 1 metre high.

Penetrating Damp: Penetration of moisture through the fabric of the building from the outside to the inside or internal leaks causing damage to internal areas due to defective components such as:

- workmanship of the structure
- roofs, external walls, doors and windows
- Leaking internal waste pipe(s)
- Leaking supply pipes from water or heating supplies.
- Burst pipes

Condensation: Condensation occurs when warm air touches cold surfaces and condenses into water droplets which is known as condensation.

Condensation can cause damp areas on walls and on furniture. As a result, mould grows on these damp patches, causes musty smells, looks unsightly and if left untreated can lead to further complications. Mould is a fungus, a simple plant that will grow wherever there is moisture. Mould can appear as black pin pricks on walls, ceilings and furnishings and usually has a musty smell. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation is present and there is a lack of appropriate ventilation.

The conditions that can increase the risk of condensation are:

- Insufficient ventilation from not opening windows, doors or trickle vents or not operating mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens.
- Inadequate heating or draught proofing, undersized boilers or radiators.
- Inadequate insulation such as missing or defective wall and loft insulation.
- High humidity due to the presence of rising and penetrating damp.
- Poor building design construction, cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction.

Conditions that can lead to condensation are:

- Poor ventilation – lack of vents installed, not opening windows or doors regularly or when needed, blocking up vents, not turning on extract fans when bathing or cooking or extractor fans absent or not working, not enough space for air to circulate around furniture.
- Insufficient heating – not heating the house which can be a result of fuel poverty.

- Defective insulation – dislodged insulation in lofts or incorrectly installed insulation.
- High humidity – caused by penetrating damp or lack of ventilation that can become worse when steam is being created for example, during bathing and cooking.
- Overcrowding.

6. Our Approach to Damp and Mould

We operate a 2-stage approach to dealing with reports of damp and mould.

Upon the first report of a damp and mould situation (stage 1) we will arrange for a Repairs Operative from our Rapid Response Team to visit and treat the mould with an anti-fungicidal wash down treatment. We aim to do the wash down in 14 days and repairs in 28 days.

The customer will also be asked to send photos of their concerns to us to ensure immediate escalation to stage 2 can happen if required.

If upon reviewing the photos, or during the stage 1 visit, it is identified that the mould growth is serious in nature, or it appears to be a category 1 or 2 hazard under HHSRS standards it will be escalated immediately to stage 2.

At stage 1, where there are no signs of any structural causes, and ventilation and heating are adequate, advice is given on how to prevent a recurrence of mould growth.

If a further report of damp and mould is received for the same area within an 18-month period the case will be escalated to stage 2.

Any case at stage 2 will have a full damp and mould survey undertaken. This may include taking damp and humidity measurements. We will aim to complete this within 7 days from the date of initial stage 2 notification report.

Any works required to address the concerns raised (including structural, additional ventilation or heating) will be overseen by our Specialist Damp and Mould Team. All work at stage 2 we will aim to complete within 90 days, where possible we will get this done sooner.

If at stage 2 there are no property specific issues identified, and we are unable to support the customer with any improvements to heating or ventilation, we will allocate the case to one of our Customer Liaison Managers.

Customer Liaison Managers will work with the customer to identify the root cause of the problems and work with them to eradicate the mould issue. This will include, where needed, the installation of sensors to measure temperature and humidity to identify when condensation is forming.

If at any stage of this process we identify that fuel poverty is a factor then we will offer support through our Money Advice Team.

If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day by day basis or

a temporary decant to an alternative accommodation. [Our process for decant can be found here.](#)

Our Damp and Mould procedure (Appendix A) sets out further detail on our approach to diagnosis and the actions we will take in each circumstance. This will be dependent on the nature and severity of the issue.

7. Additional Support & Safeguarding

Where Internal conditions within a home, for example overcrowding, hoarding, are having an effect on health and wellbeing of the occupants, Midland Heart will provide advice and guidance to customers. This may include options to move to appropriate alternative accommodation or signposting to external support agencies.

Where the vulnerabilities of customers mean we are unable to complete treatment to damp and mould, we will engage with our Tenancy Services team, our safeguarding process and other relevant partner organisations to provide appropriate support to the customer and allow works to proceed.

Where we have received a claim for disrepair that relates to damp and mould we will act to ensure the legal process does not delay us completing works. We will consider whether to serve a notice of intent to enter and remedy on any cases involving a Category 1 or 2 hazard under HHSRS standard or where we believe there is a vulnerable person or where the hazard is prejudicial to health, safety and welfare of the Customer.

8. Exemptions

We will not undertake damp and mould works in any homes where it would not be our responsibility. Where damp and mould is occurring within a leasehold or shared ownership property, leaseholders are responsible for managing and maintaining their properties including damp and condensation in accordance with their lease agreement. We can however provide advice to leaseholders on how they may be able to manage these situations.

9. Customer Responsibilities

Customers play a vital role in helping us to keep homes safe. We will ask our customers to:

- Follow all advice and guidance issued by Midland Heart in respect of managing and controlling the return of damp and condensation. Details of the advice we offer on managing condensation can be found on our website.
- To let us know where all reasonable efforts have been made to manage and control condensation and mould, and this has not been successful.
- Frequently check for damp mould and immediately report any damp and mould issues to us as soon as they become visible. This includes any signs of rising or penetrating damp.

- Report any necessary repairs to their home that will affect the control of damp and condensation (for example faulty extractor fan, inability to open windows, lack of heating, roof leaks etc.)
- Keep to agreed appointment times and allow access for inspections and to carry out remedial works to address any damp and mould issues.
- To have household contents insurance which should include cover against flood damage.
- Undertake any redecoration following repair works carried out for damp and mould issues. We may contribute towards the cost of redecoration where repairs carried out to the external parts of the building have caused internal damage.
- Ensure that any installed monitoring equipment is kept plugged in and is not interfered with.

10. Equality and diversity

We recognise the importance of ensuring all our customers have equal access to our services. We will treat all our customers fairly, whilst valuing diversity with the aim to meet the needs and choice of people from all backgrounds.

As mentioned in section seven, we will constantly review the vulnerability of those living in our homes when we assess the risk of damp and mould. This will also consider the demographics of our Customers and what other needs they may have, to ensure we resolve the matter as quickly as possible for them and their families.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is available on request.

11. Complaints

If a customer is not satisfied by the way in which their repair has been dealt with, or in the way in which the work has been carried out, a formal complaint may be raised in line with our Complaints policy.

12. Monitoring

Our Damp and Mould Customer Scrutiny Panel will support us to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and scrutinise performance. 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. We will ensure our Operations Committee are provided with updates on the delivery of this project on a six-monthly basis.

13. Review

The Policy will be reviewed every three years and also in response to:

- Legislative changes;
- Regulatory Changes
- Government strategy or policy changes

Policy Document Control

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