

Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

Directorate: Property Services

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Salix Homes has a zero-tolerance approach to damp, mould and condensation within our customers' homes. This policy ensures that Salix Homes delivers an effective and timely response to all reports of damp, mould and condensation, and ensures that proactive measures are in place which provide early identification of cases, and effective measures ensuring that cases are followed up to establish the success of the interventions applied.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. The aim of this policy is to ensure that Salix Homes provides an effective response to reports of damp, mould and condensation within our customers' homes, alongside setting out our proactive approach to identify unreported cases.
- 2.2. In October 2021, the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) issued a spotlight report on damp and mould setting out the expected approach for landlords in relation to cases of damp and mould, a further follow up report was published February 2023.
- 2.3. The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) is increasing the emphasis on landlords to increase their focus in this area and ensure that all homes meet the decent homes legislative standard. This supports Salix Homes zero tolerance approach to damp and mould and crystallises the need to ensure all reports are treated seriously, addressed appropriately and promptly, and that customers are safe in their home.
- 2.4. Salix homes response to damp, mould and condensation, and its policy, has been formed after taking giving consideration of the Government guidance provided in the publication: Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home.
- 2.5. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, aims to introduce a more effective system of regulating social housing, of which, the inclusion of Awaab's Law entered the statute on 20 July 2023, details of which are currently under consultation, details of the consultation include the following:
 - Timescales for initial investigations of potential hazards;
 - Requirements to be placed upon landlords to provide written summaries of investigation findings;

- Timescales for completing works;
 - Timescales for completing repair works;
 - Timescales for emergency repairs;
 - The circumstances under which properties should be temporarily decanted to protect residents health and safety;
 - Requirements to be placed upon landlords to maintain adequate record keeping throughout repair works.
- 2.6. Following the consultation, secondary legislation will be brought forward to bring Awaab's Law into force. This policy will undergo review after that time.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) – an executive non-departmental public body that looks at complaints about registered providers of social housing.
- 3.2. Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) – an executive non-departmental public body that regulates registered providers of social housing in England.
- 3.3. Private Sector Leasing (PSL) – Privately owned homes that are managed by Salix Homes on behalf of the landlord.
- 3.4. Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) - a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings.
- 3.5. Damp Proof Course (DPC) – a protective barrier against damp rising up the walls of a building.

4. Salix Homes will ensure that:

- 4.1. All reports of damp and mould are treated seriously, and that the organisation works with customers to resolve any issues by:
- All reports of damp and mould will be correctly logged and categorised on the Accuserv repairs management system and CRM system.
 - No blame or emphasis is placed on the customer at any time.
 - All operational colleagues receive training on the risks of damp and mould, and how Salix Homes addresses reports of damp, mould and condensation.
 - All reports of damp, mould and condensation are addressed - even in cases where the property is being considered for disposal, regeneration or is due for investment works. This also applies to PSL properties, however, for mould eradication only.
- 4.2. Cases of damp and mould are addressed promptly.

- All reports of damp and mould will have the initial triage and inspection, and any identified mould will be eradicated within 28 days of access being provided. Further follow on work to treat any underlying causes will then be completed within our published response times. All cases will be categorised against the Housing Health and Safety Rating System during the survey, this will be recorded on the Accuserv repairs management system.
 - In severe cases (class 1 hazards), or where a customer is medically vulnerable, customers will be offered a temporary move out of the property at the earliest opportunity to reduce the risk whilst treatment and intervention takes place, in order to minimise the risk. This may include providing hotel accommodation where an alternative property is not available and this will be agreed with the customer prior to the move taking place.
- 4.3. Damp, mould, and condensation can cause serious health problems, as well as damage to customers' homes and/or belongings. Salix Homes staff will be trained in the use of equipment to assess damp in properties to find effective resolutions to the problem. It's important to understand the different types of damp and what causes it.
- 4.4. Understanding different types of damp;

Rising damp	<p>This is damp that rises up from the ground and into the walls of your home, drawn up by a process called capillary action. It happens in homes with no damp proof course (DPC) or where the DPC has been damaged.</p> <p>Rising damp is unlikely to cause black mould, because the salts in the water inhibit its growth.</p>
Penetrating damp	<p>This is caused by damp getting through the walls, via missing pointing, roof leaks or other building defects. This can happen anywhere in your home but will be located close to where the defect is.</p> <p>It will be more noticeable directly after rain and will leave a noticeable damp patch on your walls or ceilings.</p> <p>Black mould can occur with penetrating damp due to prolonged moisture content.</p>
Defective plumbing and leaks	<p>Damp can also be caused by leaking or defective plumbing, commonly occurring in bathrooms and kitchens.</p> <p>Black mould can occur with defective plumbing due to prolonged moisture content.</p>
Cold bridging	<p>Damp can be also caused by cold bridging, cold bridging is caused by a colder element in the structure or fabric of the building allowing coldness to pass through, colder areas are more susceptible to condensation related issues.</p>

<p>Condensation</p>	<p>Condensation is a natural process that occurs when moisture from within the air comes in contact with a cold surface and turns into surface water.</p> <p>It is important to provide sufficient ventilation to allow moisture generated by daily living to escape.</p> <p>Of all the causes of damp and mould, condensation is the most likely to cause black mould.</p>
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4.5. Effective aftercare is in place following treatment and intervention relating to damp and mould.

- All reports of damp and mould will be followed up 12 weeks after treatment with a CRM notification into the damp and mould team workstream, this is followed up with a 13 week email to the customer. If the customer does not have an email address, the system recognises this and sends a notification email to Salix Homes damp and mould team inbox. The customer is then called to ensure the intervention has been successful and no reoccurrence.

4.6. Proactive action is considered in all cases where condensation is identified as the cause of any damp and mould.

- When surveying cases of damp, mould and condensation, Salix Homes surveyors are to consider if there is requirement for increased ventilation.
- Ensure adequate heating systems are installed, adequate and operational.
- All proactive measures will be discussed with the customers so they understand the cause of condensation and have a clear understanding of how the preventative measures will help manage the impact of condensation.

4.7. Measures are in place to proactively identify and address cases of damp and mould.

- During routine tenancy visits, repair appointments and other property visits, Salix Homes colleagues will ask customer if they have any problems with mould or condensation and will look for early warning signs during their visit. This will be recorded on the CRM system which will create an automatic referral to the disrepair, damp and mould team to generate a further inspection and treatment.
- All properties are inspected on a minimum of a three-year cycle through either tenancy audits, home safety checks or stock condition surveys if they have any damp and mould within their home.
- All damp and mould cases are triaged and surveyed.
- Salix Homes will ensure that all works contracted / purchased will be procured in accordance with Salix Homes Procurement Policy. Void inspections will specifically check for signs of damp, mould and condensation appropriate treatment and remediation will be carried out prior to the property being re-let.
- Where an issue has been identified, Salix Homes will work with the customer to resolve including arranging appropriate appointments to carry out remediation works. In cases where access is not provided by the customer, Salix Homes will consider legal action to provide such access in order to carry out treatment and

remedial works.

- 4.8. All complaints regarding damp, mould and condensation are dealt with efficiently, providing timely responses and give customers access to recourse where things have gone wrong.
- Salix Homes has a clear Complaints Policy and procedure which sets out clear timescales for response and sets out our approach to escalation where customers are unsatisfied with the response they receive.
 - Ensure customers are aware that the Complaints Policy can be used alongside the pre-action protocol to provide more timely and effective recourse to complaints.
 - The process for contacting the Housing Ombudsman Service is published in the Complaints Policy and will be provided to customers following the conclusion of the Salix Homes complaints process.

5. Monitoring / Performance / Targets

- 5.1. Benchmarking - Whilst there is no recognised specific bench marking data on damp, mould and condensation, Salix Homes are part of the Greater Manchester Damp and Mould Group, where challenges, policies and best practice is shared and discussed.

Salix Homes are members of the Echelon group, this is a platform where nationwide RSL's and suppliers meet to discuss, disrepair, damp, mould and condensation. The working group delivers damp, mould and condensation workshops, presentations and best practice discussions.

- 5.2. **Provide a prompt and measured response to reports of damp, mould and condensation** – All reports of damp and mould will have the initial triage and inspection, and any identified mould will be eradicated within 28 days of access being provided. Further follow on work to treat any underlying causes will then be completed.
- 5.3. **Proactive approach to condensation** – Where damp and mould may be the result of condensation, proactive measures such as; additional thermal insulation, ventilation, positive pressure units and/or air monitoring devices will be considered where appropriate, together with appropriate signposting to any relevant support to the customer.

Proactive installation of Switchee Smart Thermostats are being installed in circa 2,300 properties which have been deemed most at risk of damp, mould and condensation, as part of Salix Homes proactive approach to reducing Damp and mould in customers' homes.

These devices provide remote data on the humidity, temperature, and heat loss within the properties that they are fitted and identify properties that may be at risk of damp, mould and condensation. These devices have live monitoring alerts which

trigger when properties are most at risk of Damp and Mould and condensation due to atmospheric conditions in properties. Once an alert is received this will trigger a visit to the property concerned from Salix Homes to identify any action or support required for the customer.

- 5.4. Early identification – All properties are inspected on a minimum of a three-year cycle through either tenancy audits, home safety checks or stock condition surveys. Additionally, during each customer interaction Salix Homes proactively ask customers the following question:

Do you have any damp and mould within your home?

Every 'Yes' answer creates a damp, mould and condensation case, 100% of damp and mould cases are triaged and surveyed, and where necessary, mould eradication and remedial works carried out.

- 5.5. **Categorisation** – All reports of damp, mould and condensation will be categorised in-line with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and recorded appropriately on the CRM system by the surveyor.
- 5.6. **After care** – All reports of damp and mould will be followed up 12 weeks after treatment with a follow up survey via email and/or CX feedback.
- 5.7. **Reporting** – Stringent oversight arrangements are in place for reporting cases of damp, mould and condensation to the senior management team (SMT) and the Board. SMT receive monthly case numbers and performance figures, and Board received quarterly detailed reports including performance, analysis of cases including customer and property types, and an update on proactive measures being undertaken.

6. Roles / Responsibility

- 6.1. Overall responsibility for Salix Homes response to damp, mould and condensation lies the Salix Homes Board. This is supported by the executive and senior management and operational teams to ensure effective delivery of the policy and ensure Salix Homes Meets its responsibilities to maintain homes to required standards, in accordance with the law, and regulatory requirements.
- 6.2. The key roles of delivering the Damp Mould and condensation policy are as follows:
- 6.3. **Director of property services** - Reporting to executive Management team on performance and compliance and overall strategy.

- 6.4. **Repairs and Maintenance Manager** - Delivery of repairs and Maintenance services, including Damp and mould team, strategy, and performance, to ensure, adherence with legislation, policy, and performance requirements.
- 6.5. **Disrepair, Damp Mould and Subcontracts Manager** - Operational delivery and oversight of Damp, Mould and Condensation case management and ensuring adequate training and refresher training is delivered throughout Salix Homes front facing teams. Reporting and monitoring on performance against Key performance indicators.
- 6.6. **Salix Homes surveyors** - Conducting HHSRS assessments on Properties identifying underlying causes of Damp Mould or condensation and producing schedule of works or proactive remedies to resolve cases of damp mould or condensation.
- 6.7. **Repairs Planning Team** - Scheduling surveying appointments and remediation works for Damp, Mould and Condensation cases.
- 6.8. **Customer Support Centre** - Asking and recording on each inbound call if a customer has any mould in their property. Asking customers regarding any mould in their homes.
- 6.9. **Damp and Mould Admin Team** - Triaging reported cases supporting Surveyor appointment bookings.
- 6.10. **All front-facing teams** - Reporting cases and asking customers regarding any mould in their homes. All Salix front facing staff during every contact made with the customer.

7. Legal and regulatory Compliance

- 7.1. Salix Homes is required to comply with statutory requirements and rules and guidance issued by the Government and its departments. The following is a non-exhaustive list of legislation relevant to this policy:
 - Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11)
 - Housing Disrepair Protocol – Civil Procedure Rules (revised)
 - The defective Premises Act 1972 (Section 4)
 - Occupiers Liability Act 1957
 - Occupiers Liability Act 1984
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Equality Act 2010
 - The Homes Act 2018 (Section 10 - Fitness for Human Habitation)
 - Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004)
- Minimum Level of Energy Efficiency standard

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8.1. Salix Homes is committed to promoting and embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our workplaces and the communities we serve.

- Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents;
- Diversity is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences;
- Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.

8.2. We are committed to meeting our obligations and duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to promoting equal opportunities both in the provision of services and in our employment practices. We will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity

8.3. We also recognise that Socio-economic background is an area where inequalities exist and commit to addressing this disadvantage and inequality in our communities where able to do so.

8.4. We are also mindful of our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 8.5. Where reasonable to do so, Salix Homes will make any reasonable adjustment to ensure compliance with the Act.

9. Related Documents

- Salix Homes Repairs Policy, Procedure and Handbook
- Salix Homes Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Salix Homes Empty Property Procedure
- Salix Homes Asset Management Strategy
- Salix Homes Disrepair Policy and Procedure
- Salix Homes Private Sector *Leasing (PSL) Policy and Procedure*