



salix h:mes

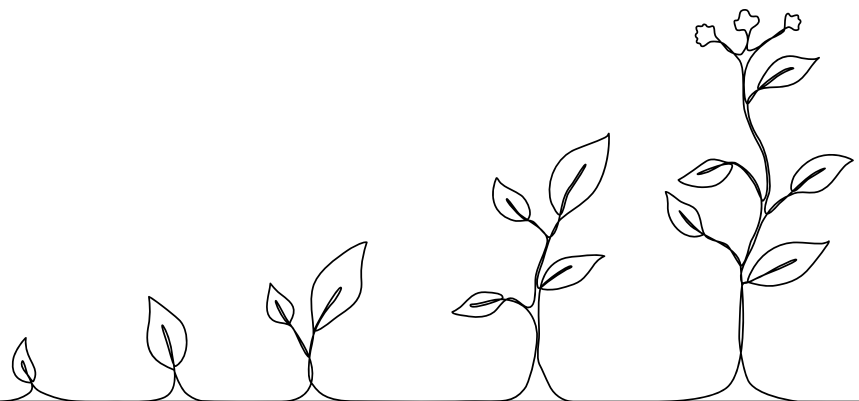
Tackling Damp, Mould and Condensation at Salix Homes

The story so far...

live • grow • thrive • together

Contents

Our commitment	3
Our approach	4
New ways of working	4
Reporting damp, mould and condensation	5
Improved communications	6-7
Making every visit count	8
Listening to customers	9
Michael Gove commends efforts to drive up housing standards	10
What's next?	11





Our commitment

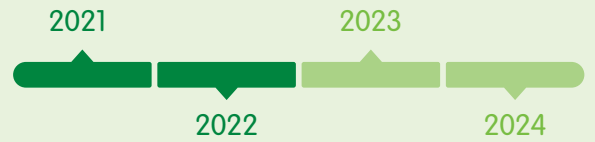
At Salix Homes, we take the condition of our homes very seriously and we are committed to making sure all our customers have a healthy and safe home, free from damp, mould and condensation, and crucially that customers are listened to if they do raise a concern with us.

We were all deeply saddened by the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in Rochdale. In the words of the coroner, it was a “defining moment” for social housing, and the tragedy has had a profound impact across the housing sector, and within our own organisation.

For us at Salix Homes, tackling cases of damp, mould and condensation in our properties is an absolute critical priority. We are committed to continuous improvement, and getting to know our customers and their homes better, to ensure they have the safe and healthy homes that everyone deserves.

**You can find out more
about our approach to
dealing with damp, mould
and condensation
[on our website.](#)**





Our approach

Following the publication of the Housing Ombudsman’s Damp Mould and Condensation Spotlight report in **October 2021**, we began to review our approach and processes in relation to cases of damp, mould and disrepair in our homes. This has been further accelerated by the **Social Housing Act**, the **Awaab’s Law** consultation and the new **Consumer Standards**.

At Salix Homes, we have adopted a proactive and robust approach to tackling damp, mould and condensation and have taken significant steps to increase resources and improve and strengthen our procedures.

Here’s some of the steps we have taken:

New ways of working

Policy:

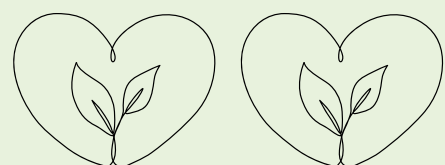
In **December 2022**, we introduced a new Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy which sets out our commitment to triage, survey and carry out mould treatment within four weeks of it being reported. As part of this new policy, if a customer had mould treatment carried out in their home, then we follow up with them 12 weeks later to ensure the issue has been resolved.

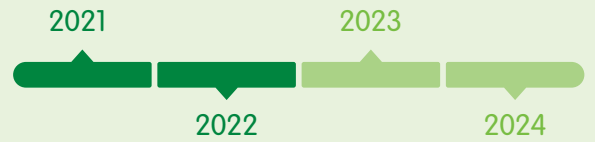
Training:

Since **July 2022**, all our frontline teams have undertaken dedicated training, to increase our knowledge and awareness of damp, mould and condensation and how we deal with it. As a matter of course, we ask customers if they have any concerns about damp, mould and condensation at every point of contact, whether it’s via our call centre, or during a routine repair, appointment or home visit.

Dedicated teams:

In **January 2023**, we established a dedicated Damp and Mould Team within our Repairs Service, employing additional officers and resources, focussed on tackling cases of damp, mould and condensation in our properties.





Reporting damp, mould and condensation

Easy reporting:

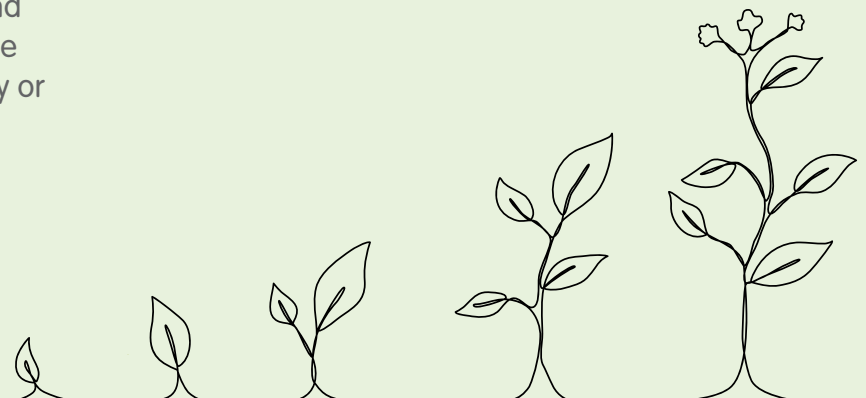
We've made it really easy for our customers to report damp, mould and condensation.

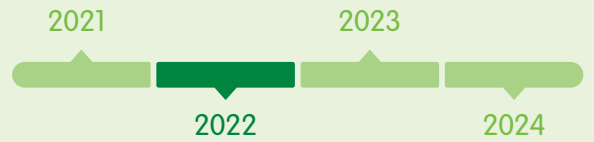
They can contact our call centre, report it to our officers in person, email us or report it online via the MySalix customer portal.

We have over 6,000 registered users on the customer portal and last year there were over 61,000 digital transactions completed through it, so it provides an effective communications platform. We also encourage people to report concerns about damp, mould and condensation that might be affecting the homes of anyone they know, like elderly or vulnerable neighbours.

Partners:

We've strengthened our relationships with partner agencies, such as the NHS, so they can easily report damp, mould and condensation directly to us if they have any concerns during visits to any of our customers' homes.





Improved communications

CEO and Chair letter:

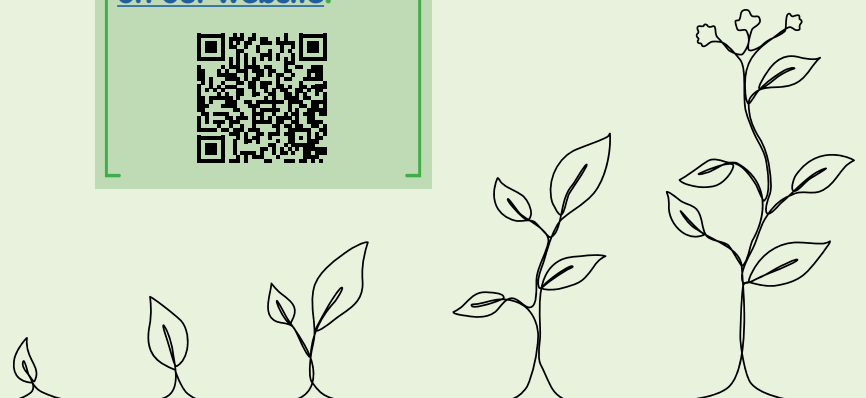
Following the tragic case of Awaab Ishak coming to light, our Chief Executive and Chair of our Board wrote a personal letter to all customers in **December 2022** to acknowledge that they may have concerns about damp and mould and remind them about the ways to report it. As a result of this letter, we saw an increase in the number of reports of damp, mould and condensation and we continue to encourage customers to report any issues to us at the earliest opportunity.

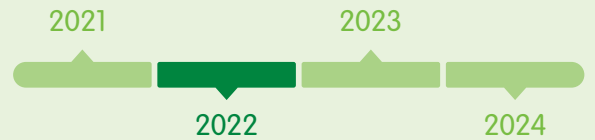
Transparency:

We report our damp, mould and condensation case numbers to our Board and include these in our performance figures, which are available on our website, as part of our commitment to being open and transparent.

View our latest performance reports on our website.

A green rectangular box containing the text "View our latest performance reports on our website." and a QR code below it.





Accessibility:

Salford is a diverse and multicultural city, and we are committed to ensuring our communications are inclusive and accessible, so we've reviewed all our customer communications for damp, mould and condensation in respect of tone, language and accessibility.

We have adopted a data-driven approach to get to know our customers and their communications needs. After English, the top three other languages in our communities

are Polish, Portuguese and Arabic, so we are committed to ensuring our communications are available in different formats and languages. In **late 2022**, we launched our new and improved website, which includes the Recite Me accessibility tool offering read-aloud functionality, multiple screen reading aids and styling options, as well as on-demand translation for over 100 languages.

Simple, pictorial communications

We have reviewed all our customer communications for damp, mould and condensation in respect of tone, language, accessibility and terminology to ensure our communications does not purport 'lifestyle' as being a factor in damp, mould and condensation and is empathetic towards the pressures our customers may be facing such as poverty and overcrowding.

We have a dedicated section on our website and a new damp, mould and condensation leaflet which is in line with the Ombudsman's recommendations for simple, pictorial communications with clear explanations of what damp, mould and condensation is, what we will do to tackle it and how to report it.

The image shows the cover of a leaflet titled 'Keeping you and your home safe' by Salix Homes. The cover features the Salix Homes logo at the top, the title in large white text, and a subtitle 'Your guide to damp, mould and condensation in your home' in smaller green text. Below the leaflet, there is a call to action box with the text 'Read more and download the leaflet.' and a QR code.

2021

2023

2022

2024

Make every visit count

In **November 2023**, to coincide with National Social Housing Safety and Compliance Week, we launched our Make Every Visit Count Campaign to encourage our workforce to think beyond their service area when meeting with customers.

Every visit with a customer is a chance to uncover additional needs and build stronger customer relationships. By looking beyond the specific reason for the visit, our colleagues are able to identify issues and provide assistance that might otherwise go unnoticed.

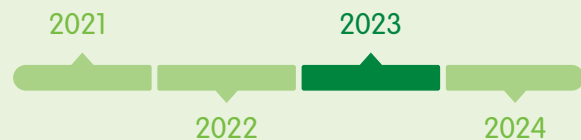
A key driver behind the campaign is encouraging colleagues to keep an eye out and be aware of the signs of damp,

mould and condensation when meeting with customers in their homes.

This pro-active approach has not gone unnoticed by our customers. Feedback from one customer following a visit from a surveyor said: ***“Not only did the surveyor look into the issue that I had reported, but he also noticed another repair that needed doing. He got someone out the next day and they fixed this for me too. I can’t thank him enough.”***

Our colleagues work hard to support our customers, but sometimes opportunities can be missed, so by taking a moment to think beyond our own roles and processes, we’re making a real difference for our customers.





Listening to customers

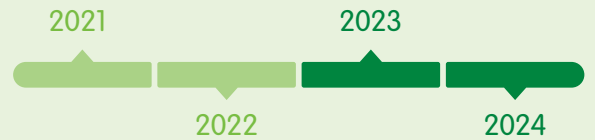
Our customers are at the heart of everything we do and we're passionate about ensuring their voices are heard and providing opportunities for them to help shape and improve our services.

In **2023**, we began a root and branch review of our Repairs Service, including our approach to tackling damp, mould and condensation. Central to this review was customer input through our Customer Committee, ensuring the customer voice is at the forefront of our discussions. We delved deep into analysing complaints, conducting consultations with dissatisfied customers, and gathering insights from colleagues and contractors involved in service delivery. We also completed a series of focus groups to further understand our customers' experiences and gather valuable feedback on areas needing improvement.

Moving forward, we'll be implementing a new repairs delivery service model, with additional resources and increased hours of operation, based on the feedback we received during the review.

Getting to know our customers:

In **summer 2023**, we launched a new operating model for our organisation, introducing new housing officers who present greater visibility and a friendly and familiar face across our communities. They are more focused and responsible for looking after dedicated neighbourhoods, so we can get to know our customers and their homes better.



Find out more
on our website.

Michael Gove commends efforts to drive up housing standards

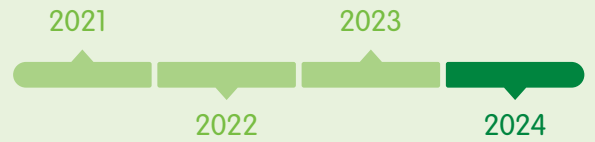
In **2023**, we secured funding through the Social Housing Quality Fund to install Switchee smart thermostats in more than 2,000 of our properties across Salford.

The devices deliver real-time data, acting as an early warning indicator to let us know if a property is at risk of damp, mould or condensation, and this supports our data driven approach to asset management.

The devices are used to measure the temperature, airflow and humidity inside the home, and if they detect an issue, they will send us a warning signal directly to let us know. To date, we have installed Switchee devices in 2,349 homes and the initiative has been given the seal of approval from Secretary of State Michael Gove.

In **March 2024**, Mr Gove wrote to GM Mayor Andy Burnham and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) which secured the funding on behalf of Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP), to compliment our collective efforts. He said: ***"I am pleased to hear that the funding to Greater Manchester has led to improvements to over 8,000 homes. I look forward to the completion of the improvement works and understanding the learning from the programme. This will be helpful for both GMCA and the Government as we continue to work together to improve the quality of social homes."***





What's next?

The Social Housing Act and the new Consumer Standards are paving the way for huge changes across the social housing sector. The Awaab's Law amendment is a crucial part of the reforms and tackling hazards in our properties is an absolute critical priority for Salix Homes. We take the condition of our homes very seriously and we are committed to making sure all our customers have a healthy and safe home, and crucially that they're listened to if they do raise a concern with us.

We will continue to adopt a proactive approach to tackling damp, mould and condensation in our homes, and we will regularly review and improve our processes to ensure a safe and healthy living environment for all our customers.

We're getting to know our residents and their homes better, we're improving and analysing our customer and property data, and we're better equipping our workforce to deliver

our services and meaningfully engage with residents.

We are increasing the frequency of our stock condition survey programme across all our homes and implementing a structured programme of tenancy audits and reviewing our home quality standards, to ensure we have a data driven approach to the management of our properties.

If there's any lesson to be learned from the Awaab Ishak tragedy, then it's the importance of listening to our customers, really listening, and acting upon what they are telling us.

Our new operating model and newly-launched values – Trustworthy, Successful and Inclusive, are all borne out of our commitment to get back to our roots and get to know our customers and their homes better, ensuring they have the safe and healthy homes that everyone deserves.



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