



Damp, Mould and Condensation Management Policy (Red Kite Group)

1. Purpose

The aim of this Red Kite Group policy, in the first instance and as far as reasonably possible is to prevent the occurrence of damp, mould and condensation (DMC) in our tenant's homes and where DMC occurs, to manage its consequences and impact in an efficient and effective way.

To achieve this aim, we will take a proactive approach and act promptly in instances where DMC is reported. Our proactive approach involves investing in and undertaking energy efficient measures and repairs to improve and maintain the fabric and internal living environment of our tenant's homes.

We have adopted a data led, proactive approach using the comprehensive stock condition data we hold which is regularly reviewed and informs proactive action requirements needed. The intelligence we gain through general visits to our tenant's homes and that received through dealing with individual instances of DMC reported, all help to inform and support our proactive approach.

This policy provides an effective DMC approach which is based on a 'zero tolerance' principle. In delivering this we will;

- Ensure that tenants and leaseholders are treated in a fair and consistent way
- Assist our tenants and where appropriate our leaseholders to maintain a safe and healthy internal environment within their home
- Take the necessary actions through our responsive repairs and planned investment programmes to maintain our tenants' homes to a high standard and avoid instances, due to the condition of the home that result in damp and condensation
- Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable solutions and improvements to prevent damp, mould and condensation occurring but where this is reported, act swiftly to manage and eradicate issues
- Provide practical solutions, information and advice to help tenants manage and control condensation
- Regularly review budgets and resources available to ensure we have the capacity to address any damp and mould cases identified
- Not delay undertaking works if a complaint or legal case is being pursued by the tenant.

We will comply with statutory requirements that impact on DMC but will seek to go beyond these requirements where we can. This policy excludes sheds and outbuildings and areas not classed as part of the internal structure of a home i.e. habitable areas.

2 Definitions

Our approach in dealing with DMC has been shaped by and is consistent with the Housing Ombudsman issued “Spotlight report on Damp and Mould”, which highlights the approach expected of social landlords. Our aim is to follow the Housing Ombudsman recommended proactive approach to dealing with tenant complaints complement.

Damp, mould and condensation is treated in a similar way and afforded the same level of priority as compliance related activity thus ensuring the risks associated are progressed with similar priority.

Where we refer to our homes in this policy, we include any tenanted homes irrespective of whether homes have been identified for future disposal or marked for regeneration.

3 Responsibility

The Head of Property is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy and for ensuring that relevant staff are informed and trained on its content as required.

4 Legal Framework

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11 – Repairs and Maintenance Pre-Action)
- Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Disrepair
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating
- Decent Homes Standard

5 Key Principles

5.1 Responding to reports of DMC

Our response to any notification of damp, mould and condensation will be responded to in accordance with our comprehensive end-to-end management process. Appropriate tracking of cases is fundamental to ensure that matters are progressed against the standards and timescales set out in our detailed Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) procedures.

Whilst we will be consistent in our response, we will adjust priority response times according to vulnerability and health matters of those affected.

We adopt a sympathetic and supportive approach but as stated will treat DMC in the same way as other compliance related disciplines such as gas and electrical safety etc. Therefore, we will follow a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach ensuring that where DMC cases are reported or identified we act quickly, inspecting the home through pre-appointed visits undertaken by experienced and trained technical staff capable of assessing and diagnosing all types of DMC matters.

5.2 Case management

We actively monitor DMC cases through to completion this will include in cases where access may be subsequently refused, following legal options such as injunctions to gain access. All cases will be closed by confirming in writing to tenants that we believe the DMC matter has been resolved. This will only happen after further contact with tenants following a predetermined period, dependant on the type and extent of the DMC reported originally and the subsequent works undertaken. We will ensure that tenants are kept informed throughout the DMC process as required.

We make it easy for tenants to self report DMC cases either in person, online and by telephone, enabling us to raise cases quickly and conveniently.

We provide detailed information and advice on DMC through our website, leaflets and general one to one discussion. We understand that DMC can result from the lack of the ability to heat a home. We will help support tenants in extreme cases through financial support and providing nonstandard items such as carpet and thermal curtains (this will not be a standard approach and used in very exceptional cases following a robust assessment process).

We will sign-post tenants to support agencies and partners that can also provide additional support and advice. The wellbeing of our tenants will always be at the forefront of decision making.

Our Case Review Panel will assess complex cases that require actions needed beyond physical works such as where decanting/rehousing may be required. In assessing cases of rehousing and decanting we will ensure that any required works needed in the first instance are not delayed.

In cases where the home can and should be adequately and affordably ventilated and heated, we will work with our tenants to try and resolve the issue. In these circumstances a move to another home will not necessarily result in a better outcome for the household and therefore we will work collaboratively to get to a resolution.

We understand that there is a balance in such cases but are committed to undertake all works reasonable to ensure we help tenants resolve DMC that are not a result of a building defect, building design or landlord failure etc.

5.3 Proactive management of DMC

During the various visits we undertake to tenant's homes, through general inspections and Home Check visits and programmed stock condition surveys etc the opportunity will be taken to assess condition and building defects that may lead to DMC problems, this will also include instances such as self neglect, hoarding, overcrowding and poor behaviour etc.

Regular reviews of reports of DMC will also look at any trend analysis to identify where proactive plans can be put in place.

Through our extensive investment programmes and continuous maintenance activity we will improve the thermal efficiency of our tenant's homes and maintain them to a high standard. Appropriate technology and new materials will be considered and where appropriate installed where these can help improve the internal environment of homes and reduce the risk of DMC.

Our new build homes are designed and constructed to reduce the risk from DMC (greater consideration to this area is given where we develop the homes directly).

We have self assessed our DMC processes and approach against the twenty-six suggested recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman and have designed our processes to meet with these suggested good practice requirements. Our tenant groups will oversee this policy and our performance against it.

5.4 Complaints and dissatisfaction

For tenants who are not satisfied with the way we will have dealt with their DMC case there is the opportunity to use our formal complaints process which includes the ability to appeal against formal complaint outcomes as well as escalate to the Housing Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied with our conclusion. Whilst we do all we can to prevent complaints we use the feedback we receive as positive information and use this to learn and improve services accordingly.

5.5 Training and competency

Our staff receive regular training to ensure they have the correct level of knowledge for diagnosing and addressing DMC situations and can spot signs which may lead to problems. Our technical staff are required to reach an accredited training standard to ensure they have the knowledge to adequately deal with the various issues that cause DMC and can adequately diagnose/remedy these. Our frontline staff and our contractors dealing with DMC related matters are competent and trained appropriately.

6 References

Regulatory Framework for Social Housing

Housing Ombudsman – Spotlight Report – Damp and Mould

The key documents and references are listed in the legal framework section of this document.

7 Related Strategies Policies & Procedures

This document should be read in conjunction with our

- Managing Damp, Mould and Condensation Procedure
- Responsive Repairs Policy
- Access Procedure
- Asset Management Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy (draft)
- Feedback Policy and Procedure
- Compensation Policy and Procedure

Staff roles listed in the **Competency Standards section** must be acquainted with contents of this document and have had documented instructions and training on its use. Authority to amend can only be undertaken by the **Process owner** with the relevant **Delegated approvals**.

For information on interpretations and instructions staff should contact the **Subject Matter expert** or **Process owner** and under no circumstances should any deviation be permitted without prior approval as above.

| Document Controls | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Version: | 1 | Effective date: | December 2022 |
| Subject matter expert drafter: | Repairs Manager Technical officer | Process owner: | Head of Property |
| Related pod: | Property | Related policy: | Repairs Policy |
| Review period | 3 Years | Next review due by: | December 2025 |

| Delegated approvals | | | |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>The 3 lines of defence have been checked within the framework and are valid</i> | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Approved by Director | <i>M. Haines</i> | Approved Date: | 14 December 2022 |
| Approved by EMT | N/A | Approved Date: | N/A |
| Approved by Board/Committee/RRT | N/A | Approved Date: | N/A |