

Damp and Mould Policy

M.08

New Policy Date

November 2024

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November 2027

Equality and diversity policy statement

This policy document can be produced in various formats, for instance, in larger print or audio-format; and it can also be translated into other languages, as appropriate.

Our equality and diversity policy statement describes our key equality commitments that we use to develop all organisational services; this includes employment services and services to tenants and other customers.

Our core values include providing a fair and equal service for all people and this is detailed in our Equality and Diversity Policy. Our approach to implementing this policy will reflect that commitment.

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The Scottish Housing Regulator Reg. No: HAC231; Registered Scottish Charity No: SC038237;
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is recognised that Pineview Housing Association (PHA) has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, as supported by subordinate legislation, to provide for, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees, service users, contractors, the general public and others who may be affected by its undertakings.
- 1.2 PHA operates a Health and Safety Management System, which comprises a broad range of documented policies, procedures and arrangements for the effective control of risks to the health, safety and welfare of employees and others.
- 1.3 This policy forms part of the overall Management System and sets out the Association's specific arrangements for the management of damp, mould and condensation.
- 1.4 This policy is supplemented by detailed operational procedures to ensure that any reports of damp, mould or condensation (DMC) are managed efficiently, consistently and in line with this policy.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICE), in an article dated 5th December 2022 (23rd March 2023 update), highlighted that 'The latest Scottish House Condition Survey, published in 2019, established that relatively few of Scotland's homes suffered from dampness and condensation. 91% of all homes in all tenures (social, private rented and owner occupied) were free from damp and condensation'. The article further confirmed that 'the survey showed that 99% of social homes were free from damp and 86% were free from any signs of mould'.
- 2.2 On 1st December 2022 the Scottish Housing Regulator wrote to all Scottish RSL's in relation to dampness and condensation in Scottish Housing. The Regulator reminded all governing bodies and committees to consider the systems that they currently have in place to ensure tenants' homes are not affected by mould and dampness and that they should have proactive systems in place which can identify and manage any reported cases of mould and dampness timeously and effectively
- 2.3 The NHS Inform webpage (2nd February 2024 update) confirms the effects that dampness and condensation can have on various groups in society, "...if you have damp and mould in your home, you are more likely to have respiratory problems, respiratory infections, allergies or asthma. Damp and mould can also affect the immune system. Some people are more sensitive than others, including babies and children, older people, those with existing skin problem, those with respiratory problems and those with weakened immune systems".
- 2.4 In October 2021 the Housing Ombudsman for England produced a report titled "Spotlight on: Damp and mould – It's not lifestyle". The report was a case study of a number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman Service in England. It also made recommendations for the Housing Sector in general and landlords in particular.
- 2.5 In the report landlords were made aware of the tragic death of Awaab Ishak. Awaab was a two-year old toddler living in a flat that had severe mouldy conditions. The toxic environment in which he lived was ruled to be unfit for human habitation and a direct cause

of his death. This led to a review of how landlords dealt with mould in their properties and Awaab Law was introduced.

2.6 Although Awaab's Law directly applies to England, its principles and the proactive measures it promotes are universally applicable, emphasising the importance of swift, effective response to housing complaints and prioritising tenants' health.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 In the management of dampness, mould and condensation (DMC) we aim to:

- Provide and maintain a comfortable, warm and healthy home, free from damp, mould or disrepair for our tenants.
- Recognise that having mould issues in a home can be distressing for our tenants and ensure we are supportive in our approach to remediation and/or eradication.
- Provide a range of ways for tenants to report DMC and be treated in a fair, consistent and supportive way.
- Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable repair solutions and improvements to eradicate damp and mould including managing and controlling condensation.
- Ensure tenants have access to and / or provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling factors which could cause DMC in their homes.
- Work in partnership with tenants to resolve and understand how to reduce condensation, damp and mould issues.
- Ensure that vulnerable tenants are provided with the appropriate support to resolve issues through staff support or external statutory / non statutory agencies.
- Make sure the fabric of our homes are protected from deterioration and damage resulting from, or contributing to, damp and mould.
- Ensure that responsive repairs to alleviate damp are carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible to protect the health and wellbeing of our tenants and minimise damage to the fabric, fixtures and fittings of the property.
- Plan resources to respond to higher demand. For example, during the winter months.
- Provide staff with the skills and testing equipment to identify and differentiate between signs of damp and condensation and understand the causes and remedies.
- Support our tenants in ways to reduce damp and condensation in their home and how to make positive changes.
- Take account of the issues of damp and condensation when designing investment programmes, for example heating and ventilation.
- Comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements and sector best practice.

4. Scope of the Policy

4.1 The policy covers how we will manage instances where mould or dampness and mould growth is discovered within our properties.

This policy will cover:

- Identifying the types of damp: rising damp, penetrating dampness, dampness caused by condensation and internal leaks.

- Identifying the responsibilities of Pineview Housing Association and our tenants in dealing with damp and condensation.
- Offering guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process to all tenants and residents living in our properties.
- Identifying proactive methods in mitigating risk of all dampness.
- Recording visits and outcomes of inspections.

5. Types of Dampness

5.1 This policy relates to dampness in domestic property and covers the following types of dampness:

5.1.1 **Rising dampness** occurs when moisture from the ground rises through the structure of the building through capillary action. This is caused by building defects; usually a breakdown of a damp-proof course or damp-proof membrane in the floor which in turn allows moisture to enter the structure of the building. Some of the more common signs of rising dampness are brown “tide marks” just above skirting level around a room, wet patches appearing on walls, flaking, or bubbling plaster and in severe cases rotting flooring and skirting. Rising dampness is not normally associated with producing mould.

5.1.2 **Penetrating dampness** occurs when water penetrates the external structure of the building or when leaks occur within the building and therefore cause dampness, rot and damage to internal structure of the building. Penetrating dampness can be the result of several failures in a building such as:

- Water ingress due to defective or poor building design / workmanship of the structure at the time of construction.
- Defective components such as roof coverings, external walls, doors and windows.
- Defective or blocked rainwater gutters and pipes.
- Defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems and flooding due to burst pipes.

5.1.3 **Surface Condensation** - The air that surrounds us contains moisture. The amount of moisture that is contained in the air varies depending on the temperature of the air. Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air. Condensation occurs when moisture, held in warm air, meets a surface which is not as warm as the surrounding air. The air then cools rapidly and as a result the moisture contained within the air condenses, producing water droplets. This phenomenon is called condensation. Condensation can take two main forms. The first and most common is surface condensation which occurs when the inner surface of the structure is cooler than the room air. When this occurs the internal surfaces within a room become damp. If this process of condensation continues mould can appear on the internal surfaces of the room where the moisture droplets have formed.

5.1.4 **Interstitial Condensation** - The second type of condensation is rare and occurs when the process of condensation occurs inside the structure of the building. This is known as “Interstitial Condensation”. The cause of interstitial condensation is usually due to the defective design of ceilings, walls or floors and is caused by the vapour barrier being constructed in the wrong part of the wall.

5.1.5 The conditions that can increase the risk of condensation are as follows;

- Inadequate ventilation such as natural opening windows
- Trickle / background vents being closed, mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens not working or not in use.
- Inadequate heating such as undersized boilers and radiators or heating not being used. Heating by paraffin should not be used.

- Inadequate draught stripping
- Inadequate thermal insulation such as missing, or defective wall and loft insulation
- High humidity such as the presence of rising and penetrating damp and not covering pans when cooking or when drying laundry inside the house. When using showers or baths the extractor fan or window should be open.
- Overcrowding of items / persons: the more occupants who live in the same space the likelihood increases that moisture levels through normal living will increase.
- Cold Bridging: Cold Bridging can be found in many areas including poorly installed cavity wall insulation for example. Where a gap occurs in the insulation this can cause areas to become colder, which would then be at risk of increased condensation.

5.2 Damp and mould cannot be dismissed as a 'lifestyle issue'. While condensation is created by daily activities such as bathing, cooking and drying clothes, tenants should be able to complete these activities without being blamed for damp and mould developing.

6. Mould and Mites

6.1 Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation damp is present. Mould is part of a group of very common organisms called fungi that also includes mushrooms and yeast. It is present virtually everywhere, both indoors and outdoors

6.2 Mould may grow indoors in wet or moist areas that lack adequate ventilation, including walls/wallpaper, ceilings, bathroom tiles, carpets (especially those with jute backing), insulation material, wood, furniture, and clothing. If moisture accumulates, mould growth will often occur on indoor surfaces. Many different types of mould exist, and they all have the potential to cause health problems

6.3 In order to reproduce, mould produces tiny particles called spores. Spores are carried in the air and may cause health problems if inhaled by people who are sensitive or allergic to them

6.4 Health effects of mould exposure include a runny or blocked nose, irritation of the eyes and skin and sometimes wheezing. For people with asthma, inhaling mould spores may cause an asthma attack. Very rarely, people may develop a severe mould infection, usually in the lungs. It is important to note that most people will not experience any health problems from coming into contact with mould.

6.5 Whilst dust mites can be common in all homes, they can thrive in environments that are humid and warm. Whilst most people will not be affected by this, others can have an allergy to them. Symptoms of this type of allergy include:

- Runny nose or sneezing
- Coughing, wheezing and breathlessness
- Itchy skin or raised rash (hives)
- Itchy, red or watery eyes
- Itchy nose, mouth or throat.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Management Committee

7.1.1 The Management Committee will be responsible for:

- Overall corporate responsibility for the conduct of the business of Pineview Housing Association.
- Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the Damp and Mould Policy.
- Considering reports made by the Director / Housing Services Manager on the effectiveness of this policy and actual working practices.

7.2 Director

7.2.1 The Director will be responsible for:

- Holding ultimate accountability and responsibility for the development and implementation of this Damp and Mould Policy as they hold the most senior level of executive control within the Association.
- Making available all reasonable resources to the Housing Services Manager for the undertaking of their duties under this policy. The Director will also make available all reasonable resources to allow all others in the management chain to comply with their own defined responsibilities.
- Ensuring adequate lines of communication with the Housing Services Manager and taking all reasonable steps to comply with all reasonable requests and issues raised concerning DMC by the Housing Services Manager.
- Acting immediately if any serious deficiencies are identified and escalating any concerns to the Management Committee without undue delay.

7.3 Housing Services Manager

7.3.1 The Housing Services Manager will be responsible for:

- The practical delivery and implementation of this Damp and Mould Policy and for identifying amendments / updates for improvement. All such suggested amendments will be escalated to the Director without undue delay.
- Responding appropriately to any new and evolving legislation and guidance in relation to damp and mould to ensure required standards are met.
- Arranging regular stock condition surveys in accordance with our Stock Condition Surveys Policy.
- Monitoring to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this policy.
- Ensuring that staff receive appropriate damp and mould awareness training and are encouraged to develop and promote safe working practices and attitudes towards damp and mould.
- Providing all reasonable support to the Maintenance Officer to ensure their duties under this policy may be performed accurately and timeously.
- Ensuring adequate lines of communication with the Maintenance Officer and taking all reasonable steps to comply with all reasonable requests and issues concerning DMC raised by the Maintenance Officer.
- Escalating all relevant damp and mould issues, non-conformances, policy breaches and other material events to the Director without undue delay.
- Review and update as necessary this policy and associated procedures documents and report on its effectiveness to Management Committee.

7.4 Maintenance Officer

7.4.1 The Maintenance Officer will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Damp and Mould Register and Housing Management system is kept up to date and accurate. All cases of DMC will be logged and tracked via the Damp and Mould Register and Housing Management system.
- Advising on / implementing appropriate anti DMC measures required in connection with PHA properties, alterations to existing properties etc.
- Advising on / implementing technical and legislative matters on DMC, ensuring compliance according to the relevant codes of practice and statutory requirements.
- Ensuring that DMC follow up repairs or issues are dealt with appropriately and timeously.
- Informing the tenant of the findings of the inspection / investigation. This will include identifying the possible cause of the DMC, recommending effective solutions and remedial works / actions.
- Ensuring that the tenant is kept updated throughout the process from initial report to completion.
- Ensuring that DMC documentation is kept readily available, in good order and up to date at all times.
- Ensuring that all planned works, day to day repairs and maintenance and refurbishments are carried out in accordance with the building regulations and other relevant legislation and take into consideration protective and preventative DMC measures.
- Ensuring that suitably qualified contractors are used when addressing repairs linked to DMC including ensuring that all contractors use approved products and have appropriate training in using these products.
- Inspection, specification of works and contractor management.
- Post inspections of contractors' work on site.

7.5 Senior Housing Officer

7.5.1 The Senior Housing Officer will be responsible for:

- Assisting the Housing Services Manager to review and update as necessary this policy and associated procedures documents.
- Ensuring regular estate management and property inspections are carried out. Where potential DMC risks are identified, appropriate actions are taken to record and deal with appropriately in accordance with PHA procedures.
- Ensuring the self-reporting of DMC in the home is encouraged through Pineview's newsletter, social media and website.

7.6 Housing Services Staff

7.6.1 All Housing Services staff have a responsibility to comply with this Damp and Mould Policy. This includes but is not limited to:

- Observing all instructions, information and training related to DMC.
- Acquainting themselves with the DMC measures and procedures that are applicable to their working environment and ensuring that they attend DMC training sessions arranged for them.
- Completing visual checks when visiting PHA properties and report any issues and obvious defects.

- Taking a proactive approach in identifying and rectifying any external defects that could cause water ingress into PHA properties.
- Seeking to identify any issues with DMC within PHA properties and report any repairs.
- Reporting any obvious defects or shortcomings in PHA's DMC arrangements or procedures to the Housing Services Manager or Director as soon as possible.

7.7 Tenant Responsibilities

- Immediately report any repairs which includes any evidence of mould, rising and penetrating damp and faulty equipment that will affect the management of humidity and moisture in the home (such as faulty extractor fan, unable to open windows, heating system failure etc).
- Please allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works and follow up post inspections when works completed.
- If you are considering making any changes within your home for example, converting rooms into one room, adding extensions, converting non-habitable spaces / buildings into habitable, you must seek advice and permission from us in accordance with your tenancy agreement. This is to ensure that the proposed alteration would not cause or contribute to the accumulation of damp, mould or condensation, as well as ensuring alterations comply with safety, building control and planning guidelines.

8. Tenant Guidance

8.1 Tenants can help reduce the risk of the conditions that lead to damp, mould and condensation in their home by:

- Improving ventilation and moisture control by leaving a gap between furniture and external walls; using (and regularly cleaning) extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms; closing internal doors when cooking or bathing / showering; covering pans when cooking; drying laundry outdoors (if possible) and opening windows and / or window trickle vents periodically.
- Adequately heating rooms.
- Following all advice and guidance issued by us on managing humidity and moisture in the home which can lead to condensation. This information can be found on Pineview's website.

8.2 We appreciate that some of our tenants may need help when it comes to heating their homes. Please contact us as we can provide sources of advice and assistance where a tenant is struggling to pay energy bills or there are issues with energy supply.

9. Documentation / Record Keeping

9.1 The Damp and Mould Management System relies upon the maintenance of a range of documentation. The following records will be kept readily available, in good order, up to date and available for scrutiny at any time:

- Damp and Mould Policy and Procedures Documents.
- Copy of the current damp and mould register.

- Damp and Mould training records.
- Record of inspections, remedial works, tenant notification / advice and follow up inspections.

10. Training and Development

10.1 The training requirements of Management Committee and staff will be regularly assessed to ensure that they have the necessary skills to effectively implement and monitor this Damp and Mould Policy.

11. Complaints

11.1 Anyone who is not happy /satisfied with the service they have received as a result of this policy has a right to complain. Please see the Association's Complaints Policy for details on how to do this.

12. Review /Consultation

12.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation or monitoring / reporting reveals that a change in policy is required sooner.

12.2 Procedures and working methods may be altered more frequently where this is needed.

12.3 Policy review will involve consultation with our tenants, our Customer Forum and any other relevant stakeholders as appropriate. We will take account of any views or representations in revising our policy and service provision to assist in the development of effective service delivery.