



Property and Housing Services

Damp and Mould Control Policy

for HRA Housing

(2025)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Policy

The Housing Ombudsman service requires social housing providers (e.g. local authorities, housing associations, etc.) to meet its 'Guidance on Damp and Mould (2021)'.

Accordingly, Havering Council (the Council) will take all reasonable steps to repair any Council property affected by damp or mould to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of the homeowners (e.g. tenants, leaseholders), their families and visitors.

This policy will ensure the council complies with the Housing Act 2004, which states that properties must be free from hazards at the most dangerous 'category 1' level, as assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), a risk-based evaluation tool.

This includes mould and all types of dampness. The policy will also support the council to meet the Decent Homes Standard, which states that social housing must be free from dangerous 'category 1' hazards. The Decent Homes Standard also states that social housing must be in a reasonable state of repair and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. Where the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) determines a provider has breached standards, it has a range of legal powers it can use, including enforcement powers.

1.2 Awaab's Law

Awaab's Law was introduced following the death of Awaab Ishak, who died following extensive exposure to damp and mould in his home. The law focusses specifically on the timescales for landlords to respond to complaints of damp and mould in social housing homes. On 20 July 2023, Awaab's Law entered the statute book through Clause 42 of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act. It effectively inserts into social housing tenancy agreements a term (called an implied term) that will require landlords to comply with new requirements.

This is to be set in detail through secondary legislation and will mean all registered providers of social housing (also referred to as 'social landlords') will have to meet these requirements and, if they fail to do so, tenants will be able to hold their landlords to account by taking legal action through the courts for a breach of contract. The government consulted on their proposal in January 2024

2. Background

2.1 Condensation

Condensation is the root cause of damp and mould growth.

Hot air from everyday domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning and washing releases moisture; which lands on cold surfaces such as windows, doors and walls (especially in older homes) to form water droplets. These droplets gather and can develop into damp.

Condensation can be avoided by ensuring your mechanical extraction within your kitchens and bathrooms are used. Adequate ventilation should always be applied.

2.2 Damp

Typically, damp manifests itself as wet patches and staining, which usually results as a musty smell.

Surfaces that remain damp can provide a suitable surface for mould to grow.

2.3 Mould

Mould is a form of fungus growth. It appears as fuzzy or as slimy patches. It, too, often has a musty smell.

Prevention is always better (and faster) than 'cure' when it comes to damp and mould control. Whilst the Council will take all reasonable steps to rectify any problems, many helpful tips on how to control and combat damp and mould are given in the Council's booklet entitled 'A guide to treating mould growth':

www.haverling.gov.uk/downloads/file/4386/damp-and-mould-advice-leaflet

3. How the Council deals with Damp/Mould

3.1 Our Commitments

We are committed to:

- Prioritising the cause, investigation and removal of damp and mould.
- Planning improvements in data and new Key Performance Indicators.
- Improving communication, both internally and with our residents
- Improvements in staff training.

3.2 In Unoccupied ('void') Homes

The Council will appoint a surveyor to inspect all premises reported to have damp and/or mould.

The surveyor will attend the property to assess any defective elements to the building and ensure the building is free from both rising and penetrative damp.

This would include checking:

- All plumbing installations
- The roof, guttering, and external façade
- The ventilation of the property, identifying any leaks or signs of condensation.

The surveyor will record accurate notes of their observations and report them to the Council. To avoid damp and mould, the Council will ensure all void properties have working extraction systems to the kitchen and bathroom areas, as well as a working heating system.

3.3 In Occupied Homes

The Council takes all reports of damp and mould seriously and will ensure that 100% of reported damp and mould cases are investigated.

The Council cannot always cure condensation linked to a historic building deficiency within the original design.

Where the repairs team cannot resolve a damp and/or mould issue, due to building design, it will be reported to our Capital team to be incorporated within any retrofit zero carbon major works projects moving forward.

The Surveying team will provide guidance on how to heat and ventilate the property as well as offer advice on how to best achieve/maintain a suitable living environment to prevent damp and mould growth.

For example; where domestic conditions, such as overcrowding¹ an excessive hoarding² of personal belongings are influencing the health and wellbeing of the occupants, preventing Council inspection or remedial work being possible.

4. How to report damp/mould

- 4.1 Any resident with concerns about damp & mould in their home should contact the call centre:

By letter to:

London Borough of Havering
Town Hall
Main Road
Romford
RM1 3BB

By telephone on:

¹ Overcrowding occurs when a living space is occupied by more people than it can comfortably accommodate. This leads to reduced ventilation and increased humidity levels.

² Excessive hoarding occurs when there is an accumulation of items in a living space that could potentially obstruct airflow and prevent ventilation as well as hiding damp patches or mould growth.

01708 434000

By email to:

callcentre.havering@mearsgroup.co.uk

Online by:

Logging in to your 'my housing' account.

Select the 'Repair' tab to log a repair.

Upon request, the Repairs service team can arrange a video call with a supervisor or surveyor within 24 hours (within normal working hours), who may raise emergency works as required.

Also, referrals can be made via healthcare partners such as GPs.

5. Further support for residents

5.1 Our Surveying Team

The Council's Surveying team appreciate that, on many occasions, damp & mould issues will be directly linked to building deficiencies that make certain constructions far more susceptible to condensation (such as in older properties).

5.2 Damp & Mould MOT

The Council offers affected residents a four-month damp & mould 'MOT' for those where surface based, mould forms (most notably over the colder, winter period). This service offers a regular, monthly mould wash for a maximum duration of four months.

Included are checks ensuring that extractor fans are working; the heating system is fully charged and vented; windows are watertight and opening casements are working.

Utilising a rapid-response mould removal and treatment team. They will be allocated to cases within target times to remove mould ahead of any longer-term preventative or remedial work.

5.3 Inspection and Resolution

We will post inspect all damp and mould cases and photograph the impact identifying the underlying causes of damp and mould, including building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation and condensation.

We will agree a plan of works with residents to ensure we resolve specific issue always tackling the underlying issue promptly and acting with urgency when concerns have been raised about tenant vulnerability, age and health.

We will Photograph and document the location of the mould before it is removed to help identify the source

5.4 Tenants with Vulnerabilities

Some residents, including young children and people with some health conditions, such as respiratory issues or immune deficiencies, and those with disabilities, are potentially more vulnerable and at greater risk because of damp and mould. When significant damp and mould issues are identified we will prioritise these repairs.

All council staff visiting homes, including those from Children's and Adults Social Care, will be asked to look for mould and report back any issues to Housing making clear if tenants have vulnerabilities, disabilities and health conditions

Through the investigation process, surveyors and other officers may identify tenant and/or housing-related issues that are contributory factors in the severity of any condensation mould cases. The surveyor will refer this to the resident services team to provide them guidance and support; for example, if the surveyor identifies:

- Mental health issues that cannot be resolved through the provision of an adaptation such as hoarding, the surveyor will make a referral to the resident services team. Resident services will work with the tenant and the relevant support team such as the Hoarding Pathway co-ordinators.
- A potential fuel poverty issue that is preventing the tenant from operating the mechanical and electrical systems in the property essential for managing condensation, then the surveyor, with the tenant's permission, will make a referral to the Income Management team, Financial Inclusion Officer. The Financial Inclusion Officer.
- will provide budgeting support and signposting to other agencies who can provide help and support.
- Housing-related issues, such as overcrowding or under occupation. The surveyor will make a referral to the Resident Services team who will support the tenant to access the housing register and local lettings processes to move to a more suitable property, if available.

6. Communication

6.1 Communicating with Residents

Communicating with residents in a timely and sympathetic way. We will follow up on every case and every visit.

6.2 Awaab's Law

Residents will be prioritised in accordance with the recommendations made for Awaab's Law, allocating a dedicated surveyor to case manage treatment where persistent damp occurs. They will be a dedicated point of contact and arrange the necessary work and ensure communications are maintained until the work is complete.

6.3 Complaints

If a resident is unhappy with the content of the initial damp report or with the advice given during the survey or is not resolved following the inspection, the resident can escalate this to the Complaints team via the Havering website.

The Council will endeavour to keep tenants informed of progress and confirm actions after each stage of the process.

7. Leaseholders

7.1 Inspections

For leaseholders, we will undertake an external inspection to all areas to the exterior of the building to identify any defects that may be causing damp and mould issues to the leaseholders dwelling. If the damp and mould is caused by a defect within the fabric of the building that is the council's responsibility, we will raise the remedial works required to resolve the defect.

7.2 Indemnity Insurance

Maintenance surveyors do not have any indemnity insurance to be providing written survey reports to leaseholders.

7.3 Fixtures and Fittings

The fixtures and fitting within the leasehold dwelling are the responsibility of the leaseholder.

8. Staff Training

6.1 Inductions and Training

Recognising that well-trained staff are key to the successful delivery of this policy, it will be covered in inductions for new officers and “refreshers” will be mandatory for current staff.

8.2 Unconscious Bias Training

Unconscious bias training will also be made available to ensure that the important intersections with other inequalities and disproportionalities are well understood by officers.

9. Equal Opportunities Statement

9.1 The Public Sector Equalities Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have ‘due regard’ to:

- i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

9.2 Protected Characteristics

Note: ‘Protected characteristics’ are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

9.3 Our Commitments

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

9.4 EqHIA

An EqHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) has been carried out and accompanies this policy. The Council seeks to ensure equality, inclusion, and

dignity for all in all situations. The Council will seek to ensure that this policy is, at all times, implemented in a manner that is fair to all sections of the local community.

9.5 Translation, Interpretation and Use of Data

All applicants for housing or re-housing will be invited to indicate if they wish to make use of the Council's translation and interpretation services, or if they require additional services to enable them to access and understand the policy to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in any way.

They also will be invited to provide details of ethnic origin, sexuality, disability and other equalities information. Provision of this information is not obligatory or a requirement for acceptance of an application.

However, such information will help monitor the number and types of protected characteristics requiring hostel support, and will help ensure that service improvement evolves in line with any changing local needs.

Equalities records will be kept and monitored to ensure hostel accommodations are offered and allocated fairly. This policy will be regularly reviewed ensure it is not operated in any way that could discriminate or disadvantage against any particular group of people. All information provided will be kept confidential and treated with respect at all times.

10. Data Protection statement

Havering Council takes personal privacy matters very seriously and will never share the individual's personal data without their prior knowledge, unless required to do so by law.

For full details about how the Council protects personal data, please visit [Havering Council Data Protection policy](#).

11. Dissemination and communication of this policy

Property and Housing Services will consult with all affected stakeholders, directly or indirectly, to ensure this policy fulfils its purpose to be clear and transparent.

This policy will be made available internally and externally in hard copy and electronic versions, as well as various formats – such as easy read, multi-lingual, braille and audio - upon request.

12. Implementation of this policy

This policy will take effect from April 2025.

Responsibility for the successful implementation of this policy will be with Havering Council's Assistant Director of Housing Operations.

12.1 Monitoring and review of this policy

In the interests of continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure it remains relevant, up-to-date and fit-for-purpose for the Council and the residents of Havering.

We will carry out regular quality checks on cases managed by our staff.

12.2 Delegated authority to make minor changes to this policy

The Assistant Director of Housing Operations, in consultation with the Director of Housing and Property, will be able to approve minor amendments; i.e. amendments that do not significantly change this policy or associated procedures.