

# Damp and Mould Policy

Jigsaw

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# 1 Aims

1. We want to do everything we reasonably can to make sure our residents stay safe, healthy and well in their homes. Damp and mould are issues which can have a serious impact on the health and well-being of our residents, and cause damage to homes.
2. This policy sets out Jigsaw Homes Group (JHG) approach in dealing with damp and mould in our homes and communal areas.

# 2 Scope

3. This document should be used by all employees, customers and stakeholders of JHG to understand the obligations placed upon JHG to maintain a safe environment for their customers and employees within the homes of each customer and within all buildings.
4. This policy applies to all buildings within JHG's portfolio where JHG have the responsibility to maintain the asset.

# 3 Policy Statement

5. In October 2021 the Housing Ombudsman issued a report to social landlords, recommending that they adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould. The report recognised the challenges for landlords tackling these issues, and identified best practice and 26 items for landlords to implement including:
  - Greater use of intelligence and data to prevent issues.
  - Adopting a consolidated policy for actions it may be take based on diagnosis.
  - Reviewing communication with residents to improve tone .
  - Improve access to complaints to resolve issues, including alongside disrepair claims, and learn from them.
6. Our policy is that we will:
  - Provide dry, warm, healthy and safe homes for our residents which are free from any hazards.
  - Comply with legislative, regulatory and contractual (including tenancy and lease) obligations.
  - Ensure the fabric of our homes is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp.
  - Treat residents reporting damp and mould with empathy and respect and will not prejudge the reason for any issue.

- Take responsibility for diagnosing and resolving damp and mould in a timely and effective way.
- Support residents in resolving damp and mould where they result from the use of the home, and provide our residents with appropriate, clear, sensitive, practical and accessible advice.
- Communicate with our residents clearly and regularly regarding any actions we plan to take and any actions our residents are advised to take.
- Ensure staff are trained to enable them to spot potential causes of damp, mould and condensation so they can advise residents, diagnose problems and provide solutions.

### 3.1. Causes

7. Mould is a type of fungus. It spreads through spores, which are invisible to the naked eye but are in the air around us all of the time and can quickly grow on surfaces where dampness persists or water has formed into a visible covering.
8. Dampness is an excess of moisture that cannot escape from a structure, which if left can lead to further significant property damage.
9. There are four main causes of dampness. It is important to understand the difference between them because they each need different solutions:
10. **Water leaks** from defective supply and waste pipework (especially in bathrooms and kitchens) can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and stays damp regardless of the prevailing weather conditions. It is the result of a problem or fault with the home, which requires repair.
11. **Rising damp** is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. Water gets through or around a defective damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the masonry that was built without a DPC. Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms it will be present all year round but can be more noticeable in winter. It is uncommon but is generally the result of a problem or fault with the home, which requires repair.
12. **Penetrating damp** appears because of a defect in the structure of the home, such as damaged brickwork, missing roof tiles, loose flashing or leaking rainwater goods. These defects allow water to pass from the outside to the floors, walls or ceilings. Penetrating damp is far more noticeable following a period of rainfall and will normally appear as a well-defined 'damp-patch' which looks and feels damp to the touch. It is the result of a problem or fault with the home, which requires a repair.
13. **Condensation** is the most prevalent type of dampness and is caused by moisture in the air (water vapour) inside the dwelling coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. This moisture develops through everyday activities such as cooking and drying clothes. The drop in temperature causes liquid water to form on the surface and then soak in. It is usually found in kitchens, bathrooms, the corners of rooms, on north facing walls and on or near windows - all places that either tend to have a lot of moisture in the air, or to be cold generally. It is also found in areas

of low air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

14. All homes in England can be affected by condensation because the climate is often cool and wet. Normal household activities also constantly release moisture into the air. Good practice in the home minimises and alleviates condensation, and in many cases will prevent it causing dampness and persistent mould. However the root cause can be a problem that requires a repair or an improvement to the home. In others, a different solution may be needed (for example, in cases of severe overcrowding).

### **3.2. Preventative Action**

15. We will take action to identify homes that have, or may be at risk of developing, problems with damp and mould. We will use data on our households and homes to help us understand the risk profile in relation to damp and mould.
16. We will seek to mitigate any increased risks of damp and mould arising as a result our work to decarbonise our homes.
17. When a property becomes vacant, and prior to re-letting, we will seek to identify and remedy any issues which may cause damp. This may include ensuring doors and windows are serviceable and can effectively ventilate the property, ensuring extractor fans are working well, as well as applying mould treatments where necessary.
18. We will provide information on our website, and through other channels, to raise awareness about the causes of damp and mould. This will include details about how everyday activities in the home can generate condensation and what residents can do to help prevent damp through, for instance, ventilation, controlling the build up of moisture and adequate heating. Where there is mould growth, we will provide advice on how this could be treated.
19. Our staff and technicians will have the skills and knowledge to identify signs of damp and mould and discuss with residents how to manage the problem. Staff and technicians will be encouraged to look out for signs whenever they visit a resident's home and report it through their hand held device.

### **3.3. Dealing with Damp and Mould**

20. Residents will be encouraged to report any problems with damp and mould as soon as possible. When we are notified of a problem through Connect our trained staff will determine the severity and type of issue affecting the tenant and property. This will determine the next steps in dealing with the issue including raising a repair, raising an inspection or providing advice. If the issue is relatively minor and the tenant is given advice they will be encouraged to call back after 2 weeks if the problem persists or is getting worse. If the tenant does not call back a trained member of staff will call them within 4 weeks to understand if the problem has been resolved. If the problem persists an inspection will be arranged.
21. Sometimes finding out what is causing damp and mould is not always straightforward and could be due to a combination of factors. Any repairs that are required to be

carried out will be dealt with in accordance with our Responsive Repairs Procedure and Planned Maintenance Procedure.

22. Where damp is as a result of condensation, we will work with our tenants to take appropriate measures to prevent the damp and mould occurring. This might include advice about how to control moisture levels or increase ventilation or heating, so that damp levels are kept low.
23. When a particularly severe or recurring damp or mould issue is identified we will undertake a comprehensive assessment which might result in a range of actions to support the resident depending on their circumstances, including providing and funding dehumidifiers, the installation of positive pressure ventilation, mechanical or passive ventilation systems, dry lining walls or applying mould resistant coverings, as appropriate, on a case by case basis.
24. We will keep tenants informed of any property inspections, diagnosis of issues and the timetabling of works, where these are required. This includes explaining to them why work might be needed and what work might be done. If any changes to the programme of works are needed, we will keep them informed.
25. We will give residents advice on how to prevent damp and what they should do to remove mould. However, we recognise that not every resident will be in a position to resolve damp and mould themselves. We will provide appropriate support in such cases in relation to the specific circumstances and the individual customer's needs through our Tenancy Matters Team.
26. We know that some residents cannot afford to heat their homes adequately due to their income levels. We will work with residents to ensure that they are receiving the income to which they are entitled through our Money Advice Team.
27. Where homes are overcrowded humidity will tend to be higher and this increases the likelihood of condensation. We will work with the tenant and explore solutions which may include the tenant moving to a more suitable home if this is available and appropriate.

## 4 Monitoring and Delivery

28. The monitoring of this Policy will take place by:
  - The level of complaints received regarding damp and mould.
  - Monitoring of disrepair cases.
  - Annual property inspection undertaken by our trained Gas Engineers.
  - An internal audit inspection.
  - Regular meetings across departments.

## 5 Legislation and Regulation

- Defective Premises Act 1972.
- Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11).
- Housing Act 2004.
- Decent Homes Standard 2006.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Home Standard, Regulator of Social Housing, 2015.
- Homes (Fit for Habitation Act) 2018.

## 6 Related Policies and Procedures

- Asset Management Strategy.
- Compensation Policy.
- Complaints Policy.
- Customer Contact Strategy.
- Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Responsive Repairs Procedure.
- Planned Maintenance Procedure.

## 7 Document Control

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Responsible Officer/s:	Andy Marshall Group Director of Asset Management
Date of Approval:	1 December 2022
Approved by:	Group Board
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## Creating homes. Building lives.

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