



# RCH Group Policy: Dampness & Mould

Policy Owner	Director Property Services
Policy Manager	Head of Property Services
Approval Body	RCH Board
Approval Date	26 <sup>th</sup> September 2023

## Contents

1. Scope	3
2. Introduction	3
3. Policy Statement and Responsibilities	6
4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	8
5. Review	8

This policy can be made available, in other languages and in other formats such as large print, audio format and braille as required.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This policy applies to all of River Clyde Homes residential properties and all RCH Group staff, including contractors and sub-contractors employed on the Group's behalf.

## 2. Introduction

2.1. Estimates in the UK are that between 10-50% of homes are affected by damp. Social housing and low-income communities where there are often overcrowding challenges, a lack of appropriate heating, ventilation, and insulation, can experience a substantially higher proportion of damp and mould than the national average.

2.2. We want to ensure that our customers have warm, safe, and healthy homes to live in. We have identified that some customers and parts of our stock portfolio can be more susceptible to condensation and possible damp related issues.

2.3. A more purposeful approach to the prevention, treatment and remediation of these issues will benefit our customers. Going forward our tools will include better data, improved reporting and identification of mould, condensation and dampness, end-to-end customer service with better joined up advice, guidance and support, and preventative technology systems.

2.4 The following is a summary of the legislation and regulations that impact the Dampness & Mould Policy.

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, as amended
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Building Scotland Act 2003, as amended
- The Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Tenements (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- BS7671:2018 - Requirements for electrical installations (IEE regs 18th Edition)
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- The Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015
- The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)
- Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
- PAS2035
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter

2.5 The Dampness & Mould Policy should also be read in conjunction with the following policies and strategies:

- Allocation Policy
- Estate Management Policy
- Repairs & Maintenance Policy
- Legionella Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Electrical Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Gas Safety Policy
- Customer Services Strategy
- Value for Money Strategy
- Void Management Policy
- RCH Tenancy Agreement
- Notifiable Events Policy

### **Causes & Definitions**

#### **Damp**

2.6 There are three main types of damp that affect our properties: condensation, rising damp and penetrative damp. Damp can be caused by a variety of factors and there can be more than one type of dampness present at any one time.

#### **Condensation**

2.7 Condensation occurs when warm moisture in the air comes into contact with cold surfaces, or when levels of humidity inside are too high. Condensation can take the form of:

- Surface condensation
- Condensation inside a structure where vapour pressure forces water vapour through porous materials such as walls, which then condenses when it cools down.

2.8 Condensation can be caused by:

- Low temperatures,
- Poor ventilation and indoor air quality,
- Poor building fabric,
- High humidity,
- Poor building design,
- Overcrowding.

#### **Rising damp**

2.9 Rising damp occurs when moisture moves up from the ground through the structure of the building through capillary action. The presence of rising damp can create or exacerbate a condensation problem.

### Penetrative damp

2.10 Penetrative damp is caused by water penetrating the external or internal structure of the building. It can cause damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structures. This kind of damp includes water that enters the property through:

- Defective design and work on the structure of the property,
- Defective components including the roof, doors, and windows,
- Defective water drainage systems,
- Leaking internal water pipes.

2.11 The presence of penetrative damp can create or exacerbate a condensation problem.

### Mould

2.12 Mould develops in damp conditions and grows on damp surfaces. Mould can produce allergens, irritants and toxic substances that can cause health problems.

### 3. Policy Statement and Responsibilities

3.1 RCH recognises that condensation, damp, and mould cases can cause high levels of distress for residents. Cases can be complex and difficult to diagnose. This policy is intended to provide a clear and consistent approach to effectively deal with condensation, damp and mould and its causes. RCH is committed to delivering a proactive approach to tackling condensation, damp and mould. We will work with residents to ensure that properties are dry and warm. This policy ensures that RCH delivers a high standard of service to address and prevent cases of condensation, damp, and mould.

3.2 RCH will comply with all Scottish Housing Regulator requirements and, in particular, adhere to the Notifiable Events Guidance in relation to this policy.

#### **Our Approach to Managing Dampness, Mould & Condensation**

3.3 We commit to:

- Providing and maintaining a comfortable, warm and healthy home, free from damp, mould or disrepair for our customers.
- Recognising that having mould issues in a home can be distressing for our customers and ensure we are supportive in our approach.
- Working in partnership with residents to resolve and understand how to reduce condensation, damp and mould issues.
- Making sure the fabric of our homes is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from, or contributing to, damp and mould.
- Visiting a customer's home within 48 working hours of a report of mould to assess appropriate action. Where this is not possible for the customer, we will arrange to visit their home as soon as possible thereafter. As part of this all cases of damp and mould will be categorised as follows:

**Category 1** – Requires a fungicidal wash down and decoration (completed in one appointment).

**Category 2** – As with category 1 but covering a larger physical area which will require a longer appointment to complete (completed in one appointment).

**Category 3** – More extensive mould with underlying issue which will require follow on repairs required after the initial treatment of the mould. This will require more than one appointment or a more structural fix following the treatment of the mould.

3.4 The nature and extent of the works required will be determined based on this assessment and thereafter will be classified as Emergency, Urgent or Routine in line with the timescales established in our Repairs and Maintenance policy.

3.5 We will:

- Ensure customer facing staff and partners are trained to assist the identification, reporting and remediation of damp, mould and condensation. This will include providing staff with the skills to identify, and differentiate between signs of damp and condensation, and understand the causes and remedies.
- Where appropriate, will also engage external specialist consultants to assist the rectification of damp, mould and condensation as well as the independence verification and validations of actions undertaken.
- Know our stock and the archetype of properties and components that have a higher likelihood to suffer from damp and mould.
- Minimise the number and impact of complaints.
- Plan resources to respond to higher demand. For example, during the winter months.
- Support our customers in ways to reduce damp and condensation in their home and how to make positive changes.
- Make best use of technology to help customers to best manage their homes and use technological insight to better understand cause and solutions.
- 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.

### **Forced access**

3.6 We will force access to in relation to damp and mould in the following circumstances:

- where there are three instances of no access then we will force access to the property in line with the tenancy agreement.
- where our technical staff highlight concerns and we get no access to further investigate and address the concerns we apply the same criteria as above.

3.7 In addition to the above, where tenants do need decanted to allow us to undertake treatment, we will aim to have suitable like for like temporary accommodation in place as soon as practicably possible. In some circumstances

given the degree of dampness and discussion with the customer we may require to decant them permanently.

### **Performance Monitoring**

3.8 The number of cases, current status and categorisation of cases of damp and mould will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Executive Leadership Team and the River Clyde Homes Social Landlord Operations Committee and Board.

## **4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

4.1 The RCH Group will apply this policy fairly and consistently. In implementing this policy, we will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other grounds. Our commitment to equality and fairness will apply irrespective of factors such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or other personal attributes.

## **5. Review**

5.1 This policy will be reviewed in its entirety every 2 years, unless an earlier review is required due to changes in legal, regulatory, or best practice requirements, or because monitoring and reporting reveals that a change in policy is required sooner.