



DAMP AND MOULD POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to manage instances of damp and mould within LJHA's stock. The ultimate goal is having all our homes as warm and dry places to live, free from impacts on residents health and enjoyment.

In achieving this, LJHA adopts a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould interventions.

Within this policy we lay out our overall framework to reduce and resolve dampness, including procedures for swift responses to reports from residents and also our proactive actions to prohibit their occurrence reducing the impact on residents, our homes and our reputation.

LJHA accepts that damp and mould can cause a significant amount of distress and inconvenience to residents, this policy seeks to ensure all residents reporting damp and mould are treated with respect and empathy.

SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

This document explains how we will aim to control damp and mould, this policy applies to:

- Tenants
- Shared owners – where LJHA has a repairing obligation under the terms of its lease
- Communal areas of schemes

This policy recognises damp comes in many forms, to be clear we understand these terms to mean

Penetrating damp: This is a result of water from the outside of a home (generally rain) entering the home through gaps, or defects, in the external property structure

and causing damage to the inside. These defects could be things like faulty gutters or badly fitted windows, missing roof slates, or even driving rain coming through walls where pointing/brickwork has perished over time.

Condensation: Condensation is the technical term to describe the point at which moisture in the air turns into physical liquid moisture on a cold surface (such as walls or windows). The air in any home will always hold some level of moisture, this is determined by many factors, moisture is produced by occupants breathing, by such activities as cooking, showering and the drying of clothes. Moisture is reduced by ventilation, heating and insulation levels within the homes. If the production and the removal of this airborne moisture becomes unbalanced then condensation can occur within the property, if untreated this can then lead to a source for mould to grow.

Rising damp: This affects the walls of buildings and occurs when moisture from the ground travels up through the walls by capillary action bringing salts with the moisture as it rises. Most modern homes have damp proof courses to protect against this but many older homes do not, although the presence of a damp-proof course is not always a guarantee against rising damp.

Leaks: A leak refers to water leaking out of a defective pipe or appliance. A leaking water pipe will leak constantly whereas a leak to a bath or washing machine may only occur when it is being used causing dampness in the home, the source can generally be located and repaired quickly.

IMPLEMENTATION

We will undertake both proactive and reactive measures to succeed in this area.

REACTIVE MEASURES

1. We will comply with all legal, statutory and regulatory requirements regarding repairs due to damp and mould.
2. We will immediately raise those clear and simple repairs necessary to solve damp and mould reports from residents, providing appointments where possible, expected completion dates and contractor details.
3. If the cause of the damp and mould cannot be readily identified we will deploy our maintenance technician to act or our surveyor to inspect depending upon the complexity of the issue. Both will be deployed within 5 working days at a time to suit the resident.
 - a. This inspection appointment will be booked in the SASSHA housing management system as a specific ****damp and mould**** surveyor inspection.
 - b. On completion the surveyor will update the surveyor inspection appointment within SASSHA of the outcomes and corrective action arranged to provide transparency to residents of our intentions.

- c. Any necessary repairs, or further exploratory investigations required will be instructed (ordered) within 1 working day of the damp and mould surveyor inspection appointment.
 - d. Any repairs arising from a damp and mould surveyor inspection will be post inspected by the surveyor in a reasonable time after completion.
 - e. All damp and mould surveyor inspections will receive a 3 month follow up. This may be a courtesy call from LJHA in the first instance to check on any potential reoccurrence or need to reattend.
4. We will have a robust and meticulous approach to physical diagnosis of damp and mould in residents homes, where necessary this will include;
- a. Taking time to listen to residents views and concerns.
 - b. A visual inspection of the whole property inside and out considering all potential areas for ingress of water from the outside and all possible areas for leaks of water from the inside.
 - c. If a more intrusive inspection is required we will, run taps, flush wc's, and use moisture meters to check for areas of damp and their source. On occasion we might need support from a contractor to gain access under floorboards and in service spaces safely.
 - d. During visits, officers will extend the scope of the survey to visit neighbouring properties to diagnose sources of dampness as necessary.
 - e. In most cases the LJHA surveyor will undertake most property inspections, if there are issues of leave, capacity or technical complexity then a suitably qualified external surveyor will be brought in to undertake the survey and provide a report, this will be done as quickly as possible.
 - f. We will share findings of inspections/surveys with residents to help them understand the issues and the next steps being taken to resolve the situation.
5. We will endeavour to rule out all signs of potential penetrating, rising or leaking damp before diagnosing any dampness as condensation. If condensation is diagnosed we will not place sole onus on the resident to resolve the situation, LJHA will put in place mitigations to support residents where no structural interventions into the property are appropriate, this may include;
- a. Providing up to 2 fungicidal treatments to the surface of the affected area.
 - b. Providing guidance to residents on how to reduce the likelihood of condensation,
 - c. Booking a return inspection in 3 months to support the resident.
 - d. During this time we will ensure our language is supportive of residents and does not seek to apportion blame.

6. At all stages of a damp and mould case we will endeavour to keep residents informed of progress and be transparent with any specialist surveys or findings.
7. On all voids surveys we will investigate for issues of damp and mould carrying out any corrective action before residents take up the tenancy.
8. Any LJHA home identified for actual or potential future demolition will not receive any lower standard of service while it is occupied by a tenant. LJHA will take positive steps to ensure living conditions are maintained equitably with other homes.
9. We will inspect all LJHA properties for damp and mould that are put forward for mutual exchanges before any offer of moving is authorised.
10. If extensive works are required, LJHA will consider the circumstances of the individual household and whether or not it is appropriate to temporarily move residents out of their home for this time.
11. The overall responsibility for the coordination of damp and mould complaints, reports and works is the Property Services Manager.

PROACTIVE MEASURES

LJHA are a small community facing landlord, we know and care about every single resident, rather than place the whole onus on our residents to report dampness we will take the risk-based decision to visit every single home on a regular interval. We recognise this is a big undertaking but we also recognise we have a higher proportion of vulnerable customers than most traditional associations and thus this approach is focussed on providing a high level of support.

This proactive approach means those residents who struggle to make their views heard/have difficulties communicating are routinely supported and visited, we aim to help these residents 'find their silence'.

We will implement a periodic tenancy visit programme this visit will allow LJHA to assess the property for damp and mould but also, if time allows for other aspects of the property condition and tenancy sustainability. This period will be no less than 18 months for each individual home, data to track this will form part of the management level performance report for LJHA.

Any evidence of damp and mould found on this tenancy visit will be reported to our Property Services Team for investigation/resolution whilst keeping residents informed of the action arising.

When undertaking planned property modernisation, newbuild activity or nett zero carbon activities LJHA will aim to ensure there are no unintended consequences around damp and mould.

We will work proactively with our contractors, that they feel empowered to refer to us any homes they feel are suffering from damp and mould as noticed during their day-to-day visits.

LJHA's RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To investigate queries and inspect our homes on reports of damp and mould from residents.
2. To diagnose and remedy the causes correctly by having engaged and informed staff, keeping residents informed of actions at each stage.
3. To use suitable skilled and competent contractors and agents to fully diagnose and remedy damp and mould.
4. To promote and provide guidance and advice to residents on the best methods to minimise the potential for damp, mould and condensation whilst also supporting our customers to do so.

RESIDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To report any evidence of damp within the property immediately, or the failure of any equipment that could contribute to damp and mould (e.g., heating or ventilation systems).
2. To allow reasonable access to LJHA staff, contractors or agents in order to diagnose or remedy damp and mould.

GUIDANCE/SUPPORT TO RESIDENTS

LJHA acknowledges there are many factors leading to the generation of excess moisture in a home, some of these are controllable, however others may be beyond residents or LJHA's control, such as energy costs and extreme weather events.

With this in mind there are some practical measures residents may undertake to reduce the risk of condensation and dampness in their homes.

- Reducing the circulation/generation of moisture where possible (e.g., keeping lids on pans when cooking, drying clothes outside if possible or keeping bathroom and kitchen doors closed when bathing or cooking).
- Adequately heating all rooms – The World Health Organisation recommends 18 degrees centigrade.
- Ventilating the home sufficiently, specifically when cooking or bathing but also a provision of healthy background ventilation by keeping trickle vents open, using all mechanical ventilations system provide effectively and allowing free air movement around furniture.

Any written guidance material provided to tenants about managing damp and mould will be reviewed with a formal LJHA tenant group before sent for print and used widely.

TRAINING

All members of staff will receive information and training relevant to damp and mould that is relevant to their role and responsibilities.

EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

1. We will receive reports from residents in many formats and take them all seriously. Reports of Damp and Mould may be made in person at our Stonegate Way Reception, in person to any LJHA member of staff, over the telephone, by email, through our website, social media or in writing, be it from the resident themselves or someone acting on their behalf.
2. 50% of our residents live within our sheltered housing stock and receive regular visits / contact from our Housing Support Team. This team are able to receive any repair or property related concern from residents and will arrange for the appropriate staff members to begin investigations/repairs.
3. We offer a range of support measures for residents with special needs or requirements to report damp and mould and have inspections and/or work carried out. This could be
 - a. Providing an interpreter
 - b. Large print correspondence
 - c. Working with advocates/family or friends
 - d. Any other reasonable adjustment
 - e. Temporary decant facilities

REVIEW

This Policy is drafted and reviewed in consultation with tenants via the Residents Consultative Group (July 2023).