

Document Name	Damp & Mould Policy – NSDC owned homes
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Responsible Business Manager	BM Housing Maintenance & Asset Management, Housing Health and Well Being Directorate

## **DAMP & MOULD POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This policy has been developed to set out our approach to tackling and preventing damp and mould, sitting alongside our Responsive Repairs and Voids Policy and our Asset Strategy. In October 2021, the Housing Ombudsman issued a “Spotlight on Damp and Mould”, highlighting the approach they expect social landlords to take when dealing with tenants who complain about damp to them. This has included adopting a more customer centred approach to the issue and better response to managing complaints.

Sufficient evidence has been found to link exposure to indoor mould with upper respiratory tract symptoms. People living in homes with damp and mould may also experience depression and anxiety due to the conditions.

### **2. LEGISLATION REQUIREMENTS**

2.1 Awaabs Law was a new amendment to the Social Housing Act received royal assent in July 2023. This will enforce social landlord to remedy damp and mould within strict time limits. However, further guidance/regulation as to the relevant timescales and definitions are still awaited.

2.2 There are legislative requirements setting out what is considered to be a decent home. The Decent Homes Standard was updated in 2006 to take account of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). According to the Standard, for a home to be considered ‘decent’ it must:

- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- Be in a reasonable state of repair
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services, and
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

2.3 The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 amended the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, with the aim of ensuring that all rented accommodation is fit for human habitation. While it did not create new obligations for landlords, it required landlords to ensure their properties are fit for human habitation at the beginning of, and throughout, the tenancy. The Landlord and Tenant Act does not define “fit for human habitation”, but consideration should be given to repair, stability, freedom from damp, internal arrangement, natural lighting, ventilation, water supply, drainage and sanitary conveniences, facilities for preparation and cooking of food, the disposal of wastewater and any prescribed hazard. The Act also strengthened tenants’ means of redress where landlords do not fulfil their obligations, with the expectation that if tenants are empowered to take action against their landlord, standards will improve.

### **3. AIMS**

This policy aims to ensure Newark & Sherwood District Council takes a customer centred approach to damp and mould by:

- responding swiftly and effectively to incidents of damp and mould to safeguard the health and wellbeing of tenants and their families.
- Identifying homes liable to damp and mould and proactively preventing the occurrence in the first place, using good practices and design and where possible, smart technology.

### **4. OBJECTIVES**

The Council's key objectives are:

- To ensure we provide and maintain dry, warm, healthy homes for tenants.
- To give tenants clear guidelines on our response to reports of damp and mould.
- To work with tenants on promoting preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of mould.
- To ensure that the fabric of our homes is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould.
- To reach Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C for all tenants in NSDC social housing by 2030.
- To have a rolling programme of stock condition surveys which maintain accurate data on 5-year anniversary cycle.
- To use technology to help with management of damp and mould.

### **5. Achieving Our Objectives**

5.1 We will achieve our objectives by:

- Regular training for colleagues taking calls and visiting homes about our customer centred approach to tackling damp and mould.
- Ensuring that our teams are equipped with the correct equipment and knowledge to assess damp and mould issues in properties.
- Providing clear timelines for inspecting and responding to issues of damp and mould.
- Supporting tenants to identify issues at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensuring that we carry out damp and mould services in accordance with best practice and relevant policy and legislation.

- Knowing our stock and the types of properties that are likely to suffer from damp and mould and developing work programmes to reduce the likelihood of damp and mould occurring.
- Developing a strategy for tackling properties in conservation areas with limitations on renewals or improvements to main components (i.e., replacement of single glazed doors and secondary glazing for windows).
- Planning resources to respond to higher demand in winter by monitoring current demand and bring in resources as necessary.
- Supporting this policy with detailed procedures and agreed practices applied uniformly across all Business Units.
- Ensure that appropriate budget levels are aligned to reducing the cause of damp and mould.
- Complying with statutory and regulatory requirements and with best practice relating to the provision of this service
- ensuring investment programmes achieve an EPC 'C' programme for all properties by 2030.
- Advise tenants on the health risks and what they can do to reduce condensation and mould in their homes.

5.2 We will use Asset Management software to better plan and develop investment programmes that reduce the need for responsive repairs.

5.3 We may on occasion refer a case to other teams or agencies that may be of assistance in relation to with fuel poverty or lifestyle issues that may be contributing to damp problems within the property.

#### 5.4 Communication with tenants

We will use every opportunity to communicate with tenants about preventing and treating damp and mould.

Our teams working in the tenant's homes will talk to tenants about how their home is working for them, o look to identify if there is any disrepair or damp or mould present in the property and report to the repairs team.

We regularly remind tenants how to report repairs to us and are developing our digital offer so customers can not only report repairs online, but where appropriate, they can schedule them for appointment. Tenants can also report repairs in person or on the telephone.

We will develop information for tenants about how to identify damp or condensation problems with their property and what they can do to reduce the impact. This includes the importance of reporting any disrepair in the home as soon as it is identified.

We also have a comprehensive complaint handling system which we regularly

publicise to encourage tenants to make complaints to assist in the Council's learning and future service development to reduce the future need for complaints.

## 5.5 Inspection & Support

The Council's Tenancy & Estates team will provide support to vulnerable tenants to help sustain their tenancy including sign posting for financial support available at the time. They will also help tenants to access the repairs service if the damp is as a result of a structural issue within the property.

Similarly, the Council supports tenants who live in our designated sheltered and housing with care properties. This service makes regular contact with tenants including home visits and can assess properties where there are concerns about dampness, ensuring that repairs are reported through where there are structural issues. They will also either directly support or access other services to help sheltered and housing with care tenants to manage their homes to enable them to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible.

The Council also supports tenants with hoarding issues through referrals to local multi-agency panel.

All our tenanted properties are subject to an annual heating safety inspection. Our contractors and in-house repairs teams are trained to spot safeguarding issues and property concerns and we receive regular reports on concerns in relation to living conditions in properties.

## **6. REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually in collaboration with tenants or in response to changes in relevant legislation and/or other Council policies, procedures or agreements.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA)**

We are currently working on an Equality impact Assessment and the findings and mitigations actions will be added to this policy shortly.