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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out Lewisham Council's approach to investigating reports of damp and mould, diagnosing causes and recommending solutions in the residential properties we own and manage. It works alongside our Repairs Policy and supports a key priority in our Housing strategy "*improving the quality, standard and safety of housing in Lewisham*".
- 1.2 This policy is supported by processes which we will continue to review, to ensure we are doing everything that is reasonably in our power to reduce the incidence, and adverse effects, of damp and mould in our residents' homes.

2. Introduction and Scope

- 2.1 Damp and mould has been highlighted as a key barrier to people living healthily in their homes. Like most housing providers across the UK, we have been re-examining our approach as to how best to address damp and mould and meet the requirements of Awaab's Law which is due to take effect from 27 October 2025.
- 2.2 At this time, as highlighted in our housing strategy, we are facing increased pressure on council finances, while residents are also experiencing rising living costs. This means both landlords and residents are all having to carefully consider how best to use limited resources to maintain, upgrade, and heat our homes.
- 2.3 We recognise causes and effects of damp and mould are wide ranging. While some causes– such as tracing and fixing a leak- can be relatively straightforward, others can be more complex to diagnose, treat and prevent. This may require a range of tools and techniques to resolve or support a resident to help us keep under control.



- 2.4 Different measures will be appropriate according to the type of property, the root, and secondary causes, as well as the type of tenure – which may mean in some cases we take a more active role in resolving and sometimes our role is more advisory. So, for example our responsibilities for work in a leasehold property differ to that in a tenanted property that we own and manage, but we may still require access to trace a problem.

3. Definitions and key facts

For the purposes of this policy and associated procedures we use the following definitions for key terms:

Damp

- 3.1 Damp – where localised, excess moisture builds up that has no means of escape.
- 3.2 While it may present itself in different ways, the root of the problem is almost always excess moisture. Damp can occur when a fault in the building's basic structure lets in water from outside. It may occasionally be rising damp, but more commonly is penetrating damp, which occurs when water is coming in through the walls or roof or through cracks. (For example, under a loose roof tile, leaking pipes, waste overflow).
- 3.3 Leaks from faulty or inadequate pipes are a major cause of damp within a property. Even the smallest of leaks can eventually lead to penetrating damp and wet rot.
- 3.4 As damp usually occurs in areas that never have chance to dry out and have little air movement, regularly ventilating a room, and even moving furnishings away from exterior walls and corners to allow air to circulate better, can help.

Condensation

- 3.5 Condensation - caused when moisture held in warm air meets a cold surface like a window or wall and condenses into water droplets.
- 3.6 Causes can include anything that releases water into the air - cooking, bathing, washing and drying clothes, sweating, and even breathing! Warm air containing moisture from these activities is held in the air until it hits something cool, like a wall or window, and because cold air holds less water than warm air, droplets form. In the UK, condensation occurs most often in winter, because the building is colder, and windows are opened less, so moist air cannot escape.
- 3.7 As we invest in work programmes (such as insulating a property and replacing doors and windows) to keep properties warmer, these measures may end up contributing to moisture build-up and consequently increased levels of condensation and mould, unless ventilation is also added and used properly. Eliminating moisture may include opening a window, keeping ventilation open and unblocked (for example trickle vents and air bricks), using a dehumidifier, and increasing air temperature by heating the property.
- 3.8 Overcrowding owing to the number of people in a property can also increase the likelihood of condensation being present. Overcrowding of furniture or possessions in a

property can also reduce the air flow and the escaping of moist air which can lead to condensation.

3.9 The 3 main ways to tackle condensation are therefore:

- Stop moisture building up
- Ventilate your home
- Keep your home warm

Mould

3.10 Mould - This is the common term used to describe the various types of fungi that thrive in moist areas.

3.11 It frequently appears alongside condensation on cold outside walls and surfaces, and in places where the air does not circulate well. The moisture created can also damage clothes, furnishings, and decoration, and leaves a musty smell. It can aggravate health problems like asthma, bronchitis, arthritis, and rheumatism.

Water Ingress

3.12 Water ingress - This is when water penetrates its way into a building allowing water into unwanted areas. It is also referred to as penetrating damp.

3.13 If areas of a home are exposed to ongoing water ingress, it is likely there will be a formation of mould.

4. Our commitments and responsibilities

4.1 We will treat all reports of damp and mould seriously.

4.2 While we want to be consistent and fair, this does not mean we operate a 'one size fits all' approach, especially where it comes to damp and mould. We will take a solution focused, holistic approach wherever we can, which puts the resident, not just the property, at the centre of the resolution. This may involve multiple teams across our services, for example to help us consider a specific circumstance or additional risk when taking action.

4.3 We will use a triage process and ask key questions to help us determine the cause of a damp or mould issue and to help us understand the extent of any risk, including whether it is classed as a significant risk¹ which then falls under the remit of Awaab's Law. This process includes consideration of any underlying vulnerabilities of the individual(s) in the property.

4.4 The triage process will determine the next steps and will result in an appropriate response in line with our priorities and response times. We will follow this up with remedial action to solve the problem, and where we cannot immediately determine what action to take, we will follow this up with visual investigation, additional lines of enquiry, or follow up visits to help us to resolve the issue.

¹ [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-of-damp-and-mould-in-the-home)

- 4.5 Where a potential hazard is identified, we will investigate within 10 working days of being made aware of it. A written summary of findings will be provided to the resident within 3 working days of the investigation including details of any hazard(s) identified, next steps, an anticipated timeline for repair, and a schedule of works.
- 4.6 If the investigation indicates that a reported hazard poses a significant risk to the health or safety of the resident, we will complete relevant safety works and begin or take steps to begin any further supplementary works to prevent the hazard from reoccurring within 5 working days of the investigation concluding. A timeline for the completion of works will be detailed in summary report.
- 4.7 Where further supplementary works are required and it is not possible to begin them within 5 working days, we will start these as soon as reasonably practicable and within 12 weeks of the investigation concluding.
- 4.8 If there isn't a potential hazard we will still communicate clearly and keep residents informed of what action we will be taking, why we are taking it, and when we will do it (date or timeframe).
- 4.9 The table below sets out our repair priorities and response times for addressing damp and mould issues:

Repairs priorities and Response times		
Emergency (E)	Within 24 hours	For repairs that remove immediate danger to people, avoid flooding or major damage to the property; make the property secure; restore total failure of sanitation; water or electrical supply, or total loss of heating in winter. We will complete the repair at the time, if we can. If we cannot, we will make the situation safe and carry out any follow-up work as an urgent or routine repair in normal working hours.
Urgent (U)	Within 5 working days	For urgent work to prevent damage to the property, or where there is a significant risk of harm, safety or security risk. Includes partial failure of sanitation; water or electrical supply; and heating systems.
Routine (20)	Within 20 working days	Other repairs work that does not fall into the emergency and urgent categories above.

- 4.10 Where we are unable to complete a repair on a single visit, or within our expected timeframes, we will proactively keep the resident updated with progress including arrangements for repeat or rearranged visits and satisfactorily complete repair works within 'a reasonable time period' considering the resident's needs.
- 4.11 Where we are unable to take immediate action to fully resolve the issue, we will continue to communicate with the resident and may offer an alternative interim solution where needed or advice and support to limit the impact, until we can offer a more permanent solution. Where an issue is outside of our responsibility or control, we will try to offer straightforward and realistic advice, and deliver this with respect and empathy.
- 4.12 If the investigation finds a hazard that poses a significant, or a significant and imminent, risk of harm or danger, and the property cannot be made safe within the specified timescales above, we will use our temporary relocation process to arrange for the occupant(s) to stay in suitable alternative accommodation until it is safe to return.

- 4.13 Residents will be given a case reference for works being carried out. Where we require specific information to be returned to us – for example a hygrometer reading, photographs, or information relating to a temporary move, we will give residents a specific point of contact.
- 4.14 We may contact a resident following the completion of work, or case closure, to arrange a follow up inspection, monitor the effectiveness of a solution, or gather feedback so that we can continue to learn what works well.
- 4.15 We will use data held about damp and mould and property condition, including our stock condition surveys, to proactively learn lessons and implement solutions/mitigations where appropriate.
- 4.16 We will continue to improve the way we gather and analyse data to help us learn and proactively work to reduce future damp and mould issues across our housing stock. Where appropriate, we will work with partners and experts outside of the organisation to ensure our approach remains up to date and effective.

5. Working with residents, and other assistance

- 5.1 Our Repairs Policy reminds residents and leaseholders of their responsibilities with regard to:
- Providing access - to repair, monitor or investigate
 - Reporting repairs promptly
 - Their repair and maintenance responsibilities
 - The terms of their tenancy or lease
 - Insurance
- 5.2 We recognise the importance of working with a resident to help us resolve issues. We may require a resident to undertake an action or stop a particular action. This can include providing access promptly to stop a leak, limiting water condensing, improving ventilation or air circulation, and preventing or clearing mould growth. We may also recommend other actions or sources of advice that we ask a resident to follow or consider – such as a referral to an appropriate source of advice or support.
- 5.3 A responsible adult (over the age of 18), must be present to allow us access. We will record the visit as 'no access given' where this is not the case. Where other routes have been exhausted, and/or where there is a statutory or regulatory requirement, or a health and safety reason for entering a property we will, where necessary, pursue legal measures such as obtaining a warrant to gain entry. However, enforcement action to gain access will usually be a last resort.
- 5.4 We may ask for additional information to help us to better understand what may be contributing to a problem, or what the impact may be on the household. This could include personal information about how and when a property is lived in or heated, a health condition, or even finances. While a resident is free to disclose or withhold such information, we will aim to be clear why we are asking this - which is to help us to get a fuller picture of the issues and challenges and arrive at a person-centred solution. Any information disclosed will be processed in line with data protection principles.

- 5.5 Where we require an action to be taken, make a recommendation, or ask for additional information, we will aim to use clear language and instruction – which may include demonstrating an activity. We will check that residents are clear what we are asking them to do and will check if they need further support to carry out the action. Wherever possible, we will use a resident's preferred method of communication.
- 5.6 Where there is a cause and effect of a resident action, or inaction, which has either directly caused or contributed to property damage, we may take enforcement actions in line with the terms of the tenancy, licence, or lease. We may recharge certain costs to put things right in line with our Rechargeable Costs Policy.
- 5.7 Where a leaseholder or other landlord is responsible for undertaking or authorising work to stop a leak, or prevent damp and mould spread, we expect them to carry this out promptly, and failure to do so may result in further action.

6. Monitoring and reporting performance

- 6.1 We will implement this policy through comprehensive damp and mould processes and procedures, which will have specific reporting and monitoring criteria. This will include clear individual case records, active and closed case numbers, property data, causes, solutions used to resolve a case and their timescales, recorded correspondence and satisfaction data.
- 6.2 We aim to improve our capability to analyse and take an increasingly data-led approach to preventative work, to better understand and address patterns, and inform how we plan asset investment. This may include collating and analysing information from resident feedback, surveys, repairs, and voids work.
- 6.3 We will contact residents following their damp and/or mould repairs to check if their request has been resolved satisfactorily and that the damp and/or mould has not returned.
- 6.4 Lewisham Council's Housing Executive Team will monitor damp and mould management through key performance indicators, reported monthly.
- 6.5 We will publish our damp and mould performance for residents to see.

7. Legislation and regulation

- 7.1 Legislation and regulation relevant to this policy includes, but is not limited to:
- Housing Act 1985
 - Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
 - Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
 - Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 including Awaab's Law
- 7.2 We will keep this policy and associated processes under review, and will respond to changes in legislation, regulation, as well as considering emerging good practice. This

includes for example updates in building safety legislation and the review of the Decent Homes standard.

8. Equality, diversity, and inclusion

- 8.1 An Equalities Analysis Assessment (EAA) was conducted as part of the development of this policy and concluded that changes should have a **positive** impact on residents with the protected characteristics. This is because Awaab's Law introduces stricter timescales and legal consequences for landlords who fail to address damp and mould issues promptly, ensuring that vulnerable residents are better protected from prolonged exposure to poor housing conditions.

9. Communication and consultation

- 9.1 Residents have been consulted on this policy and the accompanying procedure through a dedicated damp and mould working group that operated fortnightly between April 2025 and June 2025. Feedback on both documents has helped to further shape them.
- 9.2 We are continuing to widen the amount of training we offer staff – whether at a specialist level, or more widely to other staff to be able to identify and report possible cases of mould proactively. We will make this policy and its procedures available to staff via our intranet.
- 9.3 We will keep this policy available to residents through our website and will share additional information relating to preventing and identifying damp and mould in other communications with residents – individually as a problem occurs, and more widely as appropriate.
- 9.4 Complaints will be handled under our Housing Services Complaints Policy and processes.

10. Related documents

Related documents which support and complement this policy include but are not limited to:

- Required access policy
- Repairs policy
- Temporary relocation (decanting) policy
- Compensation, reimbursement, and remedies policy
- Rechargeable costs policy
- Vulnerable residents policy
- Disrepair policy



11. Reviewing this policy

- 11.1 Amendments to this policy not reflecting a major change of policy may be made by the Executive Director for Housing in consultation with the Director of Law and Corporate Governance. Such changes will be reported to Members annually.

Replaces: Damp, Mould and Leaks Policy (January 2024) <i>Updated to ensure compliance with Awaab's Law (v 2.0)</i>	
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