

Blairtummock Housing Association

DAMPNESS & MOULD POLICY

Title:	Dampness & Mould Policy
Purpose of Procedure:	Set out Policy for dealing with dampness and Mould complaints
Section:	Housing Maintenance
Date:	May 2024
Review Date:	May 2027
Charter Standards:	1 Equalities 2 Communication 4 Quality of Housing 5 Repairs, Maintenance & Improvements 11 Tenancy Sustainment

Background

- 1.1 Following a publication highlighting an English based Housing Association's failure to act on reported dampness and mould within one of its properties this issue was raised by the Ombudsman, Regulators and various politicians. The failure to deal with the issues resulted in the tragic death of a two-year-old child with the coroner specifically highlighting the mould issue to be the primary cause: - *"The tragic death of Awaab will and should be a defining moment for the housing sector in terms of increasing knowledge, increasing awareness and a deepening of understanding surrounding the issue of damp and mould."*
- 1.2 In response the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has acted by requesting all Scottish Housing Associations outline and evidence how they approach, mould and condensation issues, what actions taken and how individual occurrences of condensation and mould are dealt with when raised by tenants.
- 1.3 Blairtummock Housing Association are acting immediately to safeguard its tenants and moving forward this will also form part of the Tenants Safety report, which will be reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 1.4 Estimates in the UK are that between 10-50% of homes are affected by condensation and damp conditions. Social Housing and low-income communities, where this is often prevalent, has been found to be caused by overcrowding, lack of appropriate heating, ventilation, and insulation, also lack of support and guidance from landlords.

Aims of the Policy

- 2.1 One of Blairtummock Housing Associations main aims as stated in the nosiness plan is to “Provide high quality and affordable services, homes and environment for our community”. The association wants to ensure that our tenants and communities have warm, safe, and healthy homes to live in. In addition, we must ensure we meet our obligations as a landlord and provide assurance that damp and mould is managed adequately to ensure the safety of our residents.
- 2.2 The key objective of the policy will assist in the delivery of a damp and mould service that
- Complies with statutory requirements and good practice
 - Is proactive in responding to reports of damp and mould
 - Uses data to identify properties which may be at a higher risk of damp and mould to ensure early intervention
 - Undertakes effective investigations into the root cause of damp and mould
 - Takes appropriate and timely remedial action
 - Document and record all cases of damp, mould including date of initial complaint, date of inspection visit, property address, works issues and or advice given
 - Ensures properties are structurally sound
 - Ensure tenants have access to appropriate advice and guidance on controlling condensation
 - Ensure the fabric of our properties are protected from deterioration and damage caused by damp and mould

Definitions and causes of damp and mould

- 3.1 The 2023 report Putting Safety First: A briefing note on damp and mould for housing practitioners by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CiH) in conjunction with Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO), Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) and Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) states that

The root cause of damp or mould in properties can vary and in some complex cases there may be multiple causes. For example, penetrating damp can result from issues with the building leading to water ingress such as leaking pipes, cracks which allow rain in and blocked guttering. Rising damp can also arise from defects in the foundation. Both penetrating and rising damp are already included as criteria with the Tolerable Standard.

Condensation damp can arise when a combination of excess moisture in the air and poor ventilation cause water droplets to form on cold surfaces such as windows and walls. Daily living activities such as bathing, cooking and drying clothes can increase the humidity of the air, and where properties are inadequately heated and ventilated the risk of condensation forming is increased. This can lead to damp patches on walls, ceilings, and other cold surfaces which in turn create the conditions for mould to form. Mould can also arise in areas with poor circulation including behind furniture and inside wardrobes.

Tenant Responsibilities

- 4.1 Advice will be given to Tenants to assist with the prevention of dampness and mould by preventing and reducing conditions which can lead to damp or mould by
- Managing humidity levels in the home by keeping levels of moisture to a minimum e.g. covering pans while cooking, drying washing outside, keeping doors closed in bathrooms and kitchens when cooking or bathing
 - Ensure adequate heating in the home
 - Ensure maximum ventilation by keeping trickle vents open, opening windows regularly and allow air to circulate around furniture and using any fitted extractor fans
 - Wipe down condensation
- 4.2 Tenants are responsible for reporting evidence of rising and penetrating damp to the Association. Tenants or their nominated representative should report any issues as soon as possible including faulty vents or extractor fans
- 4.3 Tenants must allow the Association access to inspect the property and to carry out any necessary remedial work. Tenants should follow all advice and guidance issued and how to manage condensation, damp, and mould. If a tenants fails to take the advice and reasonable steps to reduce condensation and damp, the tenant **may/or will be ?** recharged for any resulting repairs required which are considered to be the result of this neglect.

Blairtummock Housing Association Approach

Prevention

- 5.1 The Association will use stock conditions surveys and ongoing monitoring of the condition of our housing stock to ensure a proactive data driven, risk-based approach to managing condensation, damp and mould within our properties.

Management of reported or diagnosed cases

- 6.1 BHA staff will recognise mould issues is distressing for our residents and a supportive approach will be taken
- 6.2 BHA staff will work in partnership with the tenant to resolve and increase understanding in how to reduce condensation and mould issues
- 6.3 BHA will ensure the fabric of our properties is not contributing to the dampness, condensation, and mould issues
- 6.4 BHA will contact the tenant within 48 hours of any complaint to arrange for a visit to carry out an inspection and assessment of the issue
- 6.5 The nature and extent of works required will be determined on the assessment and will be thereafter classified as an Emergency, Urgent or Routine in line the Repairs Policy
- 6.6 Ensure customer facing staff and partners are trained to assist with the identification, reporting and remediation of damp, mould and condensation. This will include providing staff with the knowledge to identify and distinguish between the causes and remedies
- 6.7 In some cases we will engage specialist consultants or contractors to assist with the identification of issues and suitable solutions

- 6.8 Take account of any issues when designing investment programmes
- 6.7 Comply with statutory and regulatory requirements and take cognisance of relevant guidance
- 6.8 Forced access, we will force access in relation to damp and mould in the following circumstances
 - After three instances of no access
 - Following staff concerns about repairs and the need for access to allow necessary repairs

Monitoring

7.0 The following will be monitored quarterly and presented to committee

- New cases raised in the quarter
- Cases resolved
- Caseload by type of stock & the area code
- Ongoing unresolved cases
- Resolution type e.g.– advice or works issued
- Time taken to resolve

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

8.1 Blairtummock Housing Association is committed to providing fair and equal treatment for all its stakeholders and will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage, and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation or any other grounds.

8.2 The Association will comply with Outcome 1 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter: *Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that: -*

□ *'Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services'.*

8.3 The Association will therefore seek to ensure that its employment and service delivery practices are not in themselves either directly or indirectly discriminatory, and as an organisation it will seek to actively promote equal opportunities and endeavour to achieve fair outcomes for all.

8.4 Our Equal Opportunities Policy sets out the principles that Blairtummock Housing Association will apply, to help ensure that discrimination does not occur. (See Separate Policy)

9 COMPLAINTS

- 9.1 Any tenant or customer who is dissatisfied with the operation of the Dampness and Mould Policy may make a formal complaint to the Association via the Complaints Policy, copies of which are available from the Association's offices or to view or download from our website.

- 9.2 Anyone who remains dissatisfied after following the Association's Complaints Policy will be advised that they have final recourse to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, information leaflets for which are also available from the Association's office.

10. REVIEW

- 10.1 The full policy and related procedures will be reviewed three years from the date of approval, or earlier should the need arise to reflect changing circumstances or changes in legislation or good practice standards.