

Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

1. Strategy Purpose

- 1.1** Unity Housing Association ("Unity") is committed to ensuring that every resident lives in a home that is safe, healthy, warm and free from unacceptable damp and mould.

This strategy sets out how Unity will:

- Take a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould.
- Meet all legal and regulatory obligations.
- Comply with Awaab's Law requirements.
- Understand and manage damp and mould risks across its stock.
- Protect the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Improve the quality and energy performance of homes.
- Provide a consistent, proactive and customer-focused response.
- Use data, intelligence and resident feedback to drive continuous improvement.

- 1.2** This strategy supports the delivery of Unity's:

- Repairs Policy.
- Asset Management Strategy.
- Complaints Policy.
- Resident Engagement Framework.
- Health and Safety Management Framework.

2. Strategic Objectives

Unity's strategic objectives are to:

2.1 Safe and Healthy Homes

Ensure all homes are free from Category 1 damp and mould hazards and are fit for human habitation.

2.2 Early Identification

Identify damp and mould risks before they become serious through inspections, stock intelligence, complaints analysis and planned investment programmes.

2.3 Timely Intervention

Respond quickly and effectively to reports of damp, mould and condensation and ensure action is taken in accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

2.4 Understanding Our Stock

Improve understanding of building performance, property condition and recurring damp and mould issues to inform investment decisions.

2.5 Resident Focus

Treat residents with respect, empathy and fairness, recognising that damp and mould can have a significant impact on health, wellbeing and quality of life.

2.6 Continuous Improvement

Use data, complaints, disrepair cases, audits and customer feedback to improve services and reduce future occurrences.

3. Strategic Context

- 3.1** Damp and mould remain one of the most significant health and housing risks facing social landlords.
- 3.2** The introduction of Awaab's Law and the strengthened regulatory framework require housing associations to take a far more proactive and accountable approach to identifying and resolving hazards.
- 3.3** Unity recognises that damp and mould can result from:
- Building defects.
 - Water ingress.
 - Leaking services.
 - Rising damp.
 - Penetrating damp.
 - Condensation.
 - Inadequate ventilation.
 - Thermal bridging.
 - Insufficient heating.
 - A combination of factors.

Unity will not assume that damp and mould is caused by customer behaviour.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This strategy operates within:

- Housing Act 2004.
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
- Awaab's Law (Phase 1 and 2)
- Building Safety Act 2022.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Consumer Standards issued by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports on Damp and Mould.

See Also Appendix 1 for Additional Legislation

5. Strategic Approach

Unity will adopt a five-pillar approach.

Pillar 1 - Prevention

Unity will seek to prevent damp and mould through:

- Stock condition surveys.
- Planned maintenance programmes.
- Energy efficiency improvements.
- Ventilation improvements.
- Building component replacement programmes.
- Void inspection processes.
- Retrofit and decarbonisation initiatives.
- Asset performance reviews.

Pillar 2 - Early Detection

Unity will identify cases through:

- Repairs reporting.
- Estate inspections.
- Stock condition surveys.
- Property visits by staff.
- Complaints.
- Disrepair claims.
- Vulnerability information.
- Contractor referrals.
- Tenant Satisfaction Measure intelligence.

All staff will be expected to report signs of damp and mould when visiting homes.

Pillar 3 - Effective Response

Unity will:

- Investigate all reports promptly.
- Prioritise risks to health and safety.
- Follow Awaab's Law requirements.
- Undertake specialist surveys where needed.
- Address root causes rather than symptoms alone.
- Complete remedial works within appropriate timescales.
- Undertake follow-up inspections to confirm resolution.

Pillar 4 - Resident Support

Unity recognises that some residents may require additional support.

This may include:

- Vulnerable households.
- Older persons.
- Residents with disabilities.
- Households with young children.
- Residents with respiratory conditions.
- Residents experiencing fuel poverty.

Support may include:

- Welfare checks.
- Additional visits.
- Temporary heating solutions.
- Dehumidifiers.
- Advice and guidance.
- Referrals to support agencies.
- Temporary decant arrangements where necessary.

Pillar 5 - Learning and Improvement

Unity will use:

- Complaints.
- Ombudsman determinations.
- Disrepair claims.
- Internal audits.
- Tenant feedback.
- Contractor performance reviews.
- Case reviews.

To identify lessons learned and drive service improvement.

6. Damp and Mould Service Standards

Unity will adopt the following standards:

Activity	Target
Emergency hazards	Attend within 24 hours
Significant damp and mould investigation	Within 10 working days
Written findings provided to resident	Within 3 working days of investigation completion
High-risk remedial works are raised	Within 5 working days where required
Complete non-emergency works	Within 12 weeks of works being raised
Follow Up courtesy call	Approximately 3 months after completion
Targeted/Sample follow-up inspections	Approximately 6 months after completion
Resident updates during complex cases	At least every 10 working days

These targets will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued compliance with legislation and regulatory expectations.

7. Data and Intelligence

Unity will maintain accurate records of:

- Damp and mould reports.
- Inspection outcomes.
- Diagnoses.
- Works completed.
- Root causes.
- Complaints.
- Disrepair claims.
- Vulnerability information.
- Repeat cases.

Unity will use this information to:

- Identify trends.
- Map hotspots.
- Inform investment programmes.
- Target preventative interventions.
- Monitor contractor performance.
- Improve service delivery.

8. Performance Monitoring

Performance information will be reported monthly to SMT and quarterly to Board.

Key measures will include, but not limited to:

- Number of damp and mould reports.
- Investigations completed within target.
- Written reports issued within target.
- Works started within target.
- Works completed within target.
- Number of repeat cases.
- Number of follow-up visits completed.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Complaints received.
- Complaints upheld.
- Open disrepair cases.
- Average age of live cases.
- Number of Category 1 hazards identified.
- Number of properties requiring temporary rehousing.

These indicators will be reviewed annually to reflect emerging regulatory requirements.

9. Competent Persons

Our staff and contractors will have the skills and knowledge to identify signs of damp, mould and condensation, and discuss with residents how to manage problems. Staff will be encouraged to look out for signs whenever they visit a resident's home.

We will check our contractors hold the relevant qualifications and accreditations when we procure them, and thereafter on an annual basis; we will evidence these checks and each contractor's certification appropriately.

10. Training

We will deliver training on this policy and the procedures that support it, through appropriate methods including team briefings; basic damp, mould and condensation awareness training; and on the job training for those delivering planned maintenance and repair works as part of their daily job. We will also encourage and promote awareness training for all other contractors that undertake works to our homes. All training undertaken by staff will be formally recorded.

We will share learning from complaints and the positive impact of changes made as a result within the organisation and externally, to promote a learning culture.

11. Quality Assurance

We will ensure there is a programme of post inspections in place to ensure the quality of repair work that is carried out to damp, mould and condensation. This will be:

- **20%** sample test carried out following complaints of damp, mould and condensation.
- **100%** of all works carried out to resolve disrepair claims.
- We will carry out an independent audit of our approach to identifying and addressing damp and mould, to specifically test for compliance with legal and regulatory obligations and to identify non-compliance issues for correction.

12. Resident Communication and Support

Unity will communicate clearly and transparently with residents throughout a damp and mould case.

Unity will:

- Keep residents informed of progress.
- Explain findings and proposed actions.
- Provide practical advice/leaflets on damp and mould prevention.
- Make information available through the website and customer publications.
- Support residents experiencing fuel poverty through signposting and referrals.
- Work with residents where overcrowding contributes to increased humidity levels.
- Seek to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity to avoid escalation into complaints or legal claims.

13. Governance and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board	Strategic oversight and assurance
Chief Executive	Overall accountability
Director of Housing Operations	Strategic lead and policy implementation
Property Services Manager	Operational management and delivery
Property Surveyors	Inspection, diagnosis and technical solutions
Customer Services Manager	Customer communication and reporting
Housing Services Manager	Access support, Temporary Accommodation, Tenancy Health Check (THC) intelligence, resident engagement and communication
Contractors	Repairs delivery and compliance
All Employees	Identification and reporting of damp and mould concerns

This governance structure aligns with Unity's Repairs Policy accountability framework.

14. Quality Assurance

Unity will operate a quality assurance framework that includes:

- Post-inspections.
- Case sampling/audits.
- Contractor monitoring.
- Complaints feedback.
- Customer feedback.
- Compliance reporting.
- Internal audits.
- Lessons learned reviews.

All upheld complaints relating to damp and mould will be reviewed to identify learning opportunities.

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Appendix 1 – Additional Legislation

This policy also operates within the context of the following legislation:

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Occupiers' Liability Act 1984
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006
- Building Regulations 2010 (England and Wales)
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010

Guidance and other related information:

- Housing, Health, and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Operating Guidance, 2006
- Pre-action Protocol for Housing Condition Claims (England) 2021
- Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report: It's not lifestyle (November 2021)