

DAMP & MOULD

POLICY

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Executive Summary:
<p>This policy sets out what we will do to prevent and address damp and mould in our customer's homes, to help us to meet our corporate priority of ensuring our customers live in safe and warm homes.</p> <p>It sets out our legal and regulatory duties in respect of damp and mould, including what is expected to be required when Awaab's Law is implemented, and what we will do to ensure we comply with them. The policy includes details of the reactive and proactive work programmes we will operate to achieve this, and the measures we will take to ensure homes are free from damp and mould. It also sets out how we will monitor delivery of the policy.</p>

Policy Grouping/Directorate	Customers & Communities / Property Services	
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Notes:		

1 Introduction and Aims

- 1.1 As a landlord, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) is responsible for ensuring our homes are free from defects and poor repair which could cause damp and mould. We are also responsible for the maintenance and repairs to our homes, communal blocks and other properties we own and manage. This policy outlines our approach to identifying, treating and preventing damp and mould in our homes, to keep our homes in good condition and safe for our customers to live in, and to comply with our legal and regulatory duties in respect of damp and mould.
- 1.2 The key objective of this policy is to ensure our Senior and Executive Leadership Teams, colleagues, partners and customers are clear on our relevant legal and regulatory obligations and what we will do to comply with them. This policy provides the framework our colleagues and partners will operate within to meet these obligations.
- 1.3 The aims of the policy are:
- To ensure that RBH has identified and complied with all relevant legal duties in respect of damp and mould.
 - To set out how we will identify potential and actual damp and mould in our homes and take action to address this, so our homes are in good condition and free of damp and mould.
 - To provide clarity on how we will provide a timely and cost-effective damp and mould inspection and treatment service, setting out our responsibilities and those of our customers in maintaining our homes.
 - To provide clarity for customers on how we will prioritise inspections and treatments.
 - To set out how we will deliver damp and mould services in an accessible, equitable and fair manner, to meet the needs of individual customers and give them choice.
- 1.4 This policy forms part of our wider organisational commitment to driving a customer focused and value for money culture amongst colleagues and contractors and it will be shared with all relevant RBH colleagues and partners.

2 Context

- 2.1 The **Housing Act 2004** sets out the overarching legal requirement in respect of housing condition. This requires homes to be free of major hazards as set out by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), including damp and mould.
- 2.2 The **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985**, as amended by the **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018**, requires that rented properties are fit for habitation when they are first let, and maintained in this condition thereafter. Fit for habitation includes a requirement that the property must be free from dampness which is prejudicial to the health of the occupant(s).

2.3 This policy will support RBH to comply with the following regulatory standard:

Consumer Standards – Safety and Quality Standard

The delivery of this policy will support us to comply with the requirements set out in the Standard to:

- Identify and meet all legal requirements that relate to the health and safety of tenants in their homes and communal areas.
- Enable repairs and maintenance issues to be reported easily.
- Set timescales for the completion of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements, clearly communicate them to tenants and take appropriate steps to deliver them.
- Keep tenants informed about repairs and maintenance to their homes with clear and timely information.
- Ensure the delivery of repairs and maintenance to homes and communal areas is informed by the needs of tenants and provides value for money.

2.4 The government has confirmed its intention to introduce specific requirements and timescales to investigate and address hazards through **Awaab's Law**, which they propose will be implemented incrementally from October 2025. Some details are still awaited, and the government has yet to introduce the necessary legislation to enact any duties and to publish implementation guidance. However they have set out the following requirements, which this policy makes provision for:

- All emergency repairs to be addressed within 24 hours.
- Damp and mould 'significant hazards' to be addressed within a fixed timescale.

2.5 We will keep this policy under review as the government provides additional clarity about the required duties and will make any necessary updates to address any gaps.

3 Values

3.1 The policy fits with the mutual values of RBH:

Putting People First: We listen with empathy, respond with compassion, and make it easy for our customers to access our services and for our colleagues to deliver services. We work collaboratively with customers to address damp and mould and forge a sense of trust, and to ensure they live in safe and warm homes.

Doing What We Say: We earn trust through honesty, integrity, caring and keeping our promises. We take responsibility for the delivery of a cost-effective, customer focussed responsive service to address damp and mould in our homes, which provides customers with certainty.

Working As One: We embrace our mutuality and work together to deliver great outcomes for the people living in our homes and communities. We actively listen to our customers, with empathy and respect, and deliver services in a way that meets needs.

Delivering Quality: We invest wisely in our people and make it easy for them to deliver services and create places that our customers are proud to call home. This policy supports a forward-thinking approach to responding to damp and

mould in our homes and aims to address the symptoms and root causes right first time.

Open & Transparent: We are curious, embrace diverse ways of thinking and seek feedback to help us improve. We give RBH members and customers a say in the way we run our service, using customer feedback to inform improvement activity.

4 Policy Statement

4.1 We acknowledge and accept our responsibilities under the Housing Act 2004 and the Landlord and Tenant Act (as amended) as outlined in Section 2, and all other duties set out in relevant legislation. We accept our future responsibilities which will be introduced by Awaab's Law, and have already taken steps to comply with the principles and objectives of those duties. We take responsibility for meeting our repair obligations as detailed in the relevant tenancy, licence or lease agreement for each of our homes, and for working with our customers to support them in our respective responsibilities for preventing and addressing damp and mould in their homes.

4.2 Whilst we have set out our approach to preventing, identifying and addressing damp and mould in our homes in this policy, it is also aligned with our Repairs and Maintenance Policy, which sets out the headline reactive and planned programmes we will deliver to keep our homes in good repair. That policy also sets out what we will do to diagnose, prioritise and deliver repairs, including potential damp and mould treatments, and what we will do to make reasonable adjustments to meet customer needs. This Damp and Mould Policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

Damp and mould inspection and treatment programmes

4.3 We will operate proactive and reactive inspection and treatment programmes which will enable an effective and robust approach to identifying and recording potential and actual damp and mould in our homes, whilst delivering the necessary work to treat this, address the root causes, and reduce the risk of damp and mould in our homes. This will include proactive inspections and work programmes to identify and deliver repairs which are necessary to ensure our homes are safe and free from damp and mould when they are first let and then maintained to that condition thereafter.

4.4 We will operate the following inspection and treatment priorities and target timescales for any actual or potential damp and mould issues which are reported to us by our customer or any person or agency acting on their behalf, or which we proactively identify in any other way. We will aim to complete the inspection, treatment and root cause works within the following target timescales.

Priority level and description	Timescale	Which repairs will be included
Emergency An immediate	Attend within 24 hours to make safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immediate health and safety risk, including damp and mould hazards• Treatment of mould growth where this is extensive and pervasive and presents an

health and safety risk		immediate risk to the health and safety of the customer
<i>Urgent</i> A repair which needs to be undertaken in a timely manner to prevent or address a health and safety risk.	7 calendar days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mould treatment to address a category 1 damp and mould hazard or which presents a significant risk to the occupants of the property, but is not an immediate risk requiring an emergency response • Immediate repairs which are necessary to address a category 1 damp and mould hazard to ensure the property is safe for the customer
<i>Routine</i> Damp and mould which does not pose a risk.	28 calendar days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment of mould growth where this does not require an emergency or urgent response • Root cause works to address damp and mould where this does not require an emergency or urgent response
<i>Programmed</i> Repairs which require large, or specialist works, after the property has been made safe.	120 calendar days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large or complex repairs, or replacement of components, which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Are required following an initial responsive repair which has left the element or component in a safe condition; or ◦ Cannot be delivered within 28 calendar days as they require specialist manufacture or ordering of parts/equipment (e.g. doors and windows) • Repairs which can be delivered via a planned programme to obtain better value for money, for example large scale replastering, removal of damp / failed cavity wall insulation, renewal / replacement of external windows and doors

- 4.5 We will inform customers of the findings of the investigations at the time of the visit, including details of any treatment and root cause works we will undertake, and details of any further investigative works we need to carry out. Customers will be informed of the estimated timescales to complete these activities.
- 4.6 We will consider whether the conditions within the property and the works necessary to address them are such that we should arrange a temporary move in line with our Decant Policy, to ensure the customer is not exposed to risks and/or to allow for appropriate treatment and works to be completed. We will consider the circumstances of the customer and any known vulnerabilities in making this decision. In very extreme cases we may approve a permanent direct offer to move to another mutually acceptable property.

Customer adjustments

- 4.7 We will operate a robust process to identify and respond appropriately to any customer vulnerability or risk, including health condition, which impact on the potential risk to the customer or occupant / visitor to the property arising from

damp and mould. We will consider this when prioritising any inspection or treatment to address damp and mould, or carrying out root cause works, and in determining the most appropriate way of delivering the necessary work. Our prioritisation will consider the extent of damp and mould in the home and the known profile of the household to ensure the needs of children and vulnerable customers are taken into account.

- 4.8 We will also offer and make reasonable adjustments to deliver the required inspection, treatment or repair where this is necessary to meet a customer's needs

RBH responsibilities

- 4.9 The following are the responsibility of RBH in relation to damp and mould in our homes:

- As a landlord we are responsible for the provision, state and proper working order of:
 - The exterior and structural elements of the property, including roof, windows/doors, external fabric, drainage, rainwater goods and damp proofing to ensure the property is safe and weathertight.
 - Installations for personal hygiene, sanitation, drainage and food preparation, including properly installed and fitted toilets, baths / showers, wash hand basins and sinks which are sealed to adjacent surfaces and have appropriate splash backs and prevent water from causing damage to the structure and other components within the property.
 - Natural and mechanical ventilation sufficient to provide background and purge air changes throughout the property and to deal with peak moisture producing activities without allowing excess moisture to form condensation which could cause damp and mould to occur.
 - Sufficient and efficient space heating, which is controllable by the customer, to enable them to adequately heat all habitable areas of their property to a temperature which will prevent condensation from forming and prevent any risk to health.
 - Insulation sufficient to prevent excess heat loss from the property, and to prevent cold bridging or cold spots which will enable condensation to form which could cause damp and mould to occur.
- We are also responsible for maintaining the property in a good condition and for carrying out such repairs as are necessary to address defects and prevent risks to occupants or their visitors.

- 4.10 We also recognise the importance of providing appropriate help and support to our customers, particularly those who are vulnerable or are experiencing difficulties in maintaining the parts of their home which their tenancy agreement designates as their responsibilities. We will therefore provide appropriate advice and support to assist customers in meeting their duties, including advice and awareness raising on the causes of damp and mould and how to prevent and address it and report it to us. We will also provide advice and support on other matters which may impact on damp and mould or increase the risk to the customer, for example on income maximisation and managing their home.

Customer responsibilities

- 4.11 Whilst we acknowledge and willingly accept our responsibilities as a landlord, we recognise the importance of our customer's responsibilities in helping us to identify and address damp and mould in our homes. The following are the responsibility of our customer:
- Reporting damp and mould and repairs to us in a timely manner, so that we are aware of and can take steps to address this.
 - Providing access for any inspection, treatment, repairs or other visits to be carried out, at the time agreed with them.
 - Keeping in good repair and order the areas of their home for which they are responsible, in accordance with the conditions of the tenancy agreement or lease.

Monitoring and intervention to identify and address damp and mould

- 4.12 We will use relevant property and customer data and other key datasets to understand and identify potential indicators and risk factors for damp and mould in our homes, and take reasonable steps to address this. This will include triangulating relevant data to identify potential homes and customers where intervention is appropriate to address potential risks and to manage our resources.
- 4.13 We will ensure that relevant information about customers and homes across our different IT systems and sources is recorded and used to make decisions about where to target our resources to prevent the occurrence and, resolve problems relating to damp and mould.
- 4.14 We will use our data to ensure we know our assets and homes, and the archetypes of properties that are likely to suffer from damp and mould, as well as the components in our properties which may cause damp and mould. We will ensure plans and appropriate work programmes are in place to implement measures to resolve the issues we identify.
- 4.15 We will ensure damp and mould are assessed at every visit to a home, so that we are proactive in identifying potential and actual damp and mould.
- 4.16 We will ensure there is adequate ventilation, including mechanical ventilation where necessary, in kitchens and bathrooms prior to reletting our empty homes, together with heating and insulation. When damp and mould is found in an empty home, we will ensure that it is treated and/or repaired before the property is relet.
- 4.17 All homes identified with damp or mould will be investigated to identify the root cause(s) of any damp and mould, and we will ensure suitable and sufficient root cause works and control measures are put in place to prevent damp and mould re-occurring.
- 4.18 We will contact customers via email, telephone or visit, six, 12 and 18 months after the treatment to ensure that the initial treatment has been successful and will take appropriate follow up action if there are any indications this may have returned.

- 4.19 We will install environmental sensors in homes which we identify as being at particular risk of damp and mould, where this can assist with diagnosis of root cause issues, or support with monitoring to enable us to be proactive in reducing potential risks to customers. We will use the data gathered to support and educate customers where appropriate, to identify the need for interventions such as treatment and works, and also to improve our understanding of properties and customers which may be at greater risk so that we can take steps to address this.
- 4.20 We will monitor referrals from third parties, including health agencies and the Council, about potential or actual damp and mould risks in our homes, and will seek regular returns from the Council to provide assurance that all referrals have been appropriately made to us, and that we have assessed and acted upon them.

Managing risk

- 4.21 Risks relating to damp and mould will be included in the property services operational risk register, setting out our key risks and appropriate mitigations.
- 4.22 We will operate a robust process to investigate and manage any RIDDOR notifications submitted to the HSE in relation to damp and mould and will take action to address any issues identified and lessons we have learned, to prevent a similar incident occurring again.
- We will operate a robust process for dealing with and escalating any significant non-compliance with our legal or regulatory duties. Our definition of significant non-compliance is: any incident which has the potential to result in a material breach of legislation or regulatory standard, or which causes a risk to health or safety.
 - All non-compliance issues will be reported and escalated as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after the incident occurred, or of an RBH employee becoming aware of it.
 - Any non-compliance issue identified at an operational level will be formally reported to either the relevant Service Manager or Head of Service in the first instance, who will agree an appropriate course of corrective action with the Director of Property Services. The Director of Property Services will report details of the same to the Executive Leadership Team.
 - In cases of serious non-compliance, the Executive Leadership Team will consider whether it is necessary to disclose the issue to the Regulator of Social Housing as required by the regulatory framework, or any other relevant organisation such as the Health and Safety Executive. In such instances, the issue will also be reported to Board.

The issue will also be recorded and investigated in accordance with the RBH accident and near miss reporting process.

Training and competency

- 4.23 We will deliver training on this policy and the procedures that support it, through appropriate methods including team briefings, training courses and on the job training, for those delivering repairs and maintenance as part of their daily job. All training undertaken by RBH colleagues will be formally recorded.

- 4.24 We will check our contractors hold 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.
- 4.25 We will ensure RBH colleagues who work on damp and mould are competent to do so, and that inspectors and those who are involved in the treatment and remediation of damp and mould are appropriately trained and experienced.
- 4.26 We will provide awareness training to all staff on damp and mould, and this will be refreshed annually.

Customer communications

- 4.27 We consider good communication essential in the effective prevention and action to address damp and mould, and we will undertake regular engagement and promotion of the services and support we deliver. This will encourage and support customers to report damp and mould and any concerns about this within their home, and help us to engage with vulnerable and hard to reach customers. We will share information clearly and transparently and will ensure that information is available to customers via regular publications, including adding information to our website and social media channels.
- 4.28 Where we identify that customers, or groups of customers, are not accessing our services we will implement initiatives to understand the barriers and address them.

5 Monitoring

- 5.1 We will hold damp and mould records against each property we own or manage, as well as repairs and maintenance records.
- 5.2 We will operate a programme of post inspections and follow up checks to assess and monitor that damp and mould actions and works have been completed in accordance with this policy, and to support the effective monitoring of our budgets and financial expenditure.
- 5.3 We will monitor performance against the following indicators, and will set annual targets for each of these metrics as part of our annual business planning processes:
- Satisfaction that the home is well maintained (TSM TP04)
 - Satisfaction that the home is safe (TSM TP05)
 - Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard (TSM RP01)
 - % of homes with recurrence of damp and mould within six months of treatment
 - Damp and mould inspections completed within target timescale
 - Damp and mould treatments completed within target timescale
 - Number of live damp and mould inspections orders
 - Number of live damp and mould treatment orders
 - Number of overdue damp and mould inspection orders
 - Number of overdue damp and mould treatments orders
 - Average number of calendar days to complete damp and mould inspections

- Average number of calendar days to complete damp and mould treatments

5.4 We will periodically publish our performance against key indicators on our website, so customers have information about our current performance.

6 Review

6.1 All RBH strategies, policies, service standards and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.

6.2 This policy will go through the full policy approval process every three years and will undergo a desktop review annually. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with all relevant and statutory regulations.

7 Links with Other RBH Documents

7.1 This policy links to the following policies and strategies:

- Damp and Mould Strategy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Empty Homes Standard
- Complaints Policy
- Disrepair Policy
- Decant Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Chargeable Repairs Policy

8 Inclusivity statement

8.1 We are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all. We ensure that everyone is valued and respected. Our policies aim to be inclusive, and will comply with UK laws, including the Equality Act 2010, to create a diverse and supportive environment for people to thrive.

8.2 We understand not everyone absorbs information the same way. If you have any difficulty understanding or interpreting this document, please email people@rbh.org.uk or call Freephone 0800 027 7769. We will work with you to ensure your individual needs are met.