

NORTH VIEW Housing Association

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North View is a registered Scottish charity – charity registration number SC032963

PROCEDURE

DAMPNESS, MOULD AND CONDENSATION

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All North View policies and publications can be made available on tape, in Braille, large print and community languages.

For further details please contact us on 0141 634 0555 or email us on enquiries@nvha.org.uk

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure that will create a consistent approach to addressing cases of mould and condensation or dampness through to resolution and rectification of cause within our tenanted properties.

2.0 Four Main Categories of Dampness

2.1 Penetrating dampness

This type of dampness will only be found on external walls or, in the case of roof leaks, on ceilings. It only appears because of a defect in the structure of the home, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, missing roof tiles, loose flashing or leaking gutters. These defects then allow water to pass from the outside to the inner surfaces. Penetrating dampness is far more noticeable following a period of rainfall and will normally appear as a well-defined 'damp- patch' which looks and feels damp to the touch. 'Tide marks' will be left, even in periods of dry weather.

2.2 Defective plumbing

Leaks from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, are relatively common. They can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and stays damp whatever the weather conditions outside. An examination of the water and waste pipes in the kitchen and bathroom and the seals around the bath, shower and sinks will usually find the problem. In cases when leaks are not attended to, rot may become established in wooden joists and floor boards leading to a risk of collapse in severe cases.

2.3 Rising damp

This is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. The water gets through or around a defective damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the natural brickwork if the property was built without a DPC. Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms. It will normally rise no more than 36 inches above ground level (900mm) and usually leaves a 'tide mark' low down on the wall. White salts may also be visible on the affected areas. Rising damp will



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

NORTH VIEW HOUSING ASSOCIATION

29A Stravanan Road, Castlemilk, GLASGOW G45 9LY

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be present all year round but is more noticeable in winter. If left untreated, it may cause wall plaster to crumble and paper to lift in the affected area. Mould will rarely be seen where there is rising damp (and then only in the early stages). This is because rising dampness carries with it salts that prevent the growth of mould.

2.4 Condensation and mould growth

Condensation is caused by water vapour or moisture in the air, inside the dwelling, coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The drop in temperature causes water to form on the surface. This water may then soak into the wallpaper, paintwork or plasterwork.

Condensation can be more prevalent during the colder months and we often experience a spike in customer reports during Autumn and Winter. A symptom of condensation is mould growth which is usually found in the corners of rooms, north facing walls and on or near windows. It is also found in areas of little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls. It also forms in bathrooms and kitchens as they are high moisture areas or in properties which are overcrowded.

All homes are affected by condensation at some point, however, certain activities can increase the problem and good practices can eliminate this from becoming a bigger problem. Condensation and mould growth can often be a consequence of customer habits and other factors. Cooking, washing and drying clothes indoors etc. all produce water vapour that can only be seen when tiny drops of water (condensation) appear on colder surfaces such as walls, windows, ceilings or mirrors and often unseen on clothing, shoes and furniture.

The amount of condensation in a home depends upon a number of things, most importantly:

- how much water vapour is produced by the actions of its residents;
- how cold or warm the property is;
- how much air circulation (ventilation);
- how well the property has been insulated.

All factors will need to be looked at to reduce the problem. The first sign of a problem is often water vapour condensing on windows and other cold surfaces, which then takes a long time to disappear. This allows the surfaces to become damp resulting in mould growing on these damp areas.



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3.0 Contributory Factors of Dampness, Mould & Condensation

3.1 Fuel poverty

It is recognised that fuel poverty is a major factor in cases of condensation which can lead to mould problems when customers are unable to afford to heat their home effectively

3.2 Cold bridging

Cold bridging can be found in many areas including poorly installed cavity wall insulation for example. Where a gap occurs in the insulation, this can cause areas to become colder, which would then be at risk of increased condensation.

3.3 Blocked or broken ventilation

This would include blocked solum or air bricks and broken window trickle vents.

3.4 Radiators

Heating systems performance is not always at the standard required to prevent condensation. Radiators may be undersized for the room volume and can be located on internal walls creating colder external walls.

3.5 Missing/damaged render or pointing on brickwork

There could be various reasons for poor or broken pointing (i.e. the finish between bricks) on parts of a brick wall which may have created cold spots for condensation and penetrating damp. The same can also be true with damaged render systems.

3.6 Leaking guttering

Guttering can, over time, corrode, warp or sag causing leaking joints. Lack of effective maintenance can result in blocked or chocked gutters and downpipes that can, through time, cause damage to the fabric of the building.

3.7 Leaking roofs

This could be caused by many things i.e. damaged or missing tiles, damaged flashing, roof vents or chimneys, blocked gutters or simply that the roof has is approach the end of its serviceable life.

3.8 Unvented and condensing tumble dryers

These can produce excessive amounts of water vapour in the property, encouraging condensation.



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3.9 Environmental factors with in property

Excessive humidity within the home and the lack of adequate ventilation is a primary cause of condensation.

3.10 Rising damp

Rising damp can occur where there is missing or ineffective damp proof course or where a high ground level breaches the damp proof course.

4.0 The Importance of Ventilation and Heating

4.1 There should be a continuous low-level of background ventilation, that allows 0.5 air changes per hour.

4.2 Extract ventilation in kitchens and bathrooms is also important to remove steam from cooking, bathing and showering.

4.3 An appropriate heating system should be in place that is capable of maintaining a temperature between 18 and 21 degrees, and radiators should be utilised in all rooms to avoid a cold spots in the house for water to condense on.

4.4 Clearly there can be a conflict with affordability for some tenants, particularly for those with key meters, which may lead to some rooms being unheated.

A supportive and constructive approach needs to be taken if it is found that condensation and damp is only occurring in unheated or periodically heated rooms, especially if fuel poverty is a factor. In these cases, we will signpost the tenant to our Welfare Rights Officer for assistance.

5.0 When Dealing with a Damp Complaint from a Tenant

5.1 We will not use the word lifestyle. Instead, where relevant, we will discuss the internal environmental factors within the property with them.

5.2 We will not consider giving advice to a tenant to be sufficient action taken on damp and mould reports.

5.3 We will not tell the tenant to use a mould remover kit and keep their home warm without consideration of individual circumstances and thorough investigation of the reported problem.



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6.0 Procedure for Gathering Information and Taking Action in Respect of Damp and Condensation Report from a Tenant

6.1 We will:

- carry out an inspection within three working days of receiving a report;
- log the report on our data base and set up a file relating to that property;
- take photographic evidence of complaint;
- take meter readings;
- use appropriate equipment to both investigate and remedy the problem;
- give educational and informative information to tenants;
- discuss the situation with the tenant to get a better understanding of the problem from their perspective;
- if appropriate, use external contractors/specialists;
- in certain circumstances, use humidity and temperature sensors;
- if required, signpost the tenant to our Welfare Rights Officer;
- liaise with other RSLs, Environmental Health and energy advice agencies to seek, share and adopt best practice;
- have appropriate budgets in place to prevent and tackle damp and mould issues;
- monitor the complaint and liaise with the tenant over a six month period to ensure the problem has been dealt with effectively.

7.0 Survey

7.1 When an inspection in respect of damp and mould is carried out by an officer or a contractor, where practical and if appropriate, they will survey and record the following:

- the type and age of the property (i.e., tenement flat, semi-detached house and age of any extensions) and type of roof covering (i.e., slate, double roman concrete tiles);
- external wall construction;
- information on ambient temperature, relative humidity, and surface temperature of external walls;
- areas of dampness or mould growth;
- the number of rooms within the property including all wet rooms (wet room definition being a room that can create moisture i.e., it has a tap or toilet);
- sources of moisture production;
- heating system type;
- check if heating system and heat emitters are adequate to heat the space;
- building fabric and condition;



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- pipework;
- roof;
- rainwater goods;
- wall cavities and insulation;
- loft insulation;
- window and window surrounds (removal of surrounds may be required);
- all existing ventilation equipment including air bricks and trickle vents;
- if required, use a thermal imaging camera to check for cold spotting and insulation defects.

8.0 Training

- 8.1 Training will be provided for all staff to make sure that they are aware of this procedure. All Maintenance staff will also receive specific training to provide the skills and knowledge to comply with this procedure and associated policy.
- 8.2 We will ensure that all of our staff have training to raise awareness of and create a good understanding of damp and mould issues.
- 8.3 We will provide our staff with the skills to identify and differentiate between signs of damp and condensation and understand the causes and remedies.

9.0 Monitoring and Reporting

- 9.1 Actions taken and impact as a result of this policy and its procedures will be reported to the Maintenance Sub Committee on a quarterly basis
- 9.2 This Policy will be reviewed every three years and, as required by legislation, regulation or internal organisational change

End

reviews and amendments;-



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