



# **CONDENSATION, DAMP AND MOULD IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION POLICY 2023**

## Contents

### Table of Contents

1. Policy statement
2. Policy aims
3. Scope
4. Legislation.
5. Causes and definitions
Damp
Condensation damp
Rising damp
Penetrative damp
Mould
6. Responsibilities
Prevention
Diagnosis
Improvement works
Communication
Voids and Relets
Monitoring cases of condensation, damp and mould
7. Budget
8. Equalities statement
9. Policy review period

## 1. Policy statement

Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) recognises that condensation, damp and mould is linked to a number of adverse health outcomes, including respiratory conditions and increased risk of airway infections and can cause high levels of distress for our residents. The causes of damp and mould can be complex and difficult to diagnose and tackle. This policy is intended to provide a clear and consistent approach to effectively deal with condensation, damp and mould and its causes.

BFC is committed to delivering a proactive approach to tackling condensation, damp and mould within its temporary accommodation stock. We will work with our residents to ensure that properties are dry and warm. This policy ensures that we deliver a high standard of service to address and prevent cases of condensation, damp, and mould. It also seeks to ensure good practice in line with Government guidance and regulations relating to damp and mould.

## 2. Policy aims

The aims of the policy are to:

- Ensure that our residents live in a safe and healthy environment and have easy and accessible ways to report cases of condensation, damp, and mould.
- Ensure a consistent and excellent service in response to all reports of condensation, damp, and mould.
- Ensure empathetic and timely communication with residents and minimise any distress caused by condensation, damp and mould.
- Maintain the fabric of homes and ensure that a preventative approach is applied to tackle the risk of condensation, damp and mould in the stock portfolio.
- Embed a working culture where all colleagues are trained to see safety as their responsibility and do not assume that tenants' lifestyles are responsible for condensation, damp and mould.

## 3. Scope

This policy covers:

- The minimum legal and regulatory standards to which we must maintain our properties.
- The definitions and causes of condensation, damp and mould that we will use to address damp and mould.
- Our approach to addressing the causes of condensation, damp and mould.
- Our responsibility to provide a prompt, excellent service in response to reports of condensation, damp and mould including diagnosis, remedial work, communication and monitoring cases.
- Our responsibility to manage condensation, damp and mould.
- Our responsibility to support residents on how to manage and prevent condensation.

## 4. Legislation

The Government issued guidance on damp and mould in the home in September 2023 [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home](#). The guidance applies to all landlords and covers the following areas:

- an overview of the potential physical and mental health effects of living in a home with damp and mould

- which groups are particularly vulnerable to more severe health impacts
- relevant regulation and the legal responsibilities of landlords in relation to damp and mould in homes in England.
- recommendations as to what landlords should consider when responding to reports of damp and mould.
- recommendations as to what landlords can do to reduce the likelihood of damp and mould developing in homes.

Most importantly it makes clear that landlords should not blame tenants for damp and mould, have effective reporting systems in place, respond to reports of damp and mould seriously and sensitively, be proactive in improving their properties to reduce the risk of damp and mould and ensure they tackle the underlying causes of damp and mould.

There are also a number of existing legal standards and regulations on damp and mould in rented homes.

The current **Decent Homes Standard** provides a minimum expectation for the condition of homes. Under the Standard, landlords must ensure that properties:

- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing, including keeping properties free of serious hazards.
- Be in a reasonable state of repair.
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services.
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

Please see the Decent Homes Standard for definitions of the above. The Standard is currently under review by the Government.

This standard applies to all social housing that falls under the status of a Registered Provider and is regulated under the “Homes Standard” which sets expectations for Registered Providers of social housing to provide tenants with quality accommodation and a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service. Bracknell Forest Council is not a Registered Provider and as such is not required to meet these standards. However, we provide accommodation, including to vulnerable households, under our statutory homelessness duties and are committed to maintaining our stock in a reasonable state of repair and meeting and exceeding the statutory minimum standards.

The **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018** amended the 1985 Landlord and Tenant Act. It states that landlords must ensure that homes are ‘fit for human habitation’. The Act does not define ‘fit for human habitation’, but landlords are considered responsible for repairs, freedom from damp, ventilation, water supply, drainage and sanitary conveniences, facilities for the preparation of and cooking of food, and the disposal of wastewater.

Under the **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985**, we are responsible for:

- Maintaining the structure of the property and keeping it in good repair
- Keeping installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation in good repair and proper working order.

The **Social Housing Regulation Bill 2022** if passed into law, will require landlords to investigate and fix damp and mould in their properties within specified timeframes.

Other relevant pieces of legislation are:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Housing Act 2004 (including the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS))
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Regulatory Standards (Governance and Financial Viability and Home Standards)
- Building Safety Act 2022

## 5. Causes and definitions

### Damp

There are three main types of damp that affect our properties: condensation damp, rising damp and penetrative damp. Damp can be caused by a variety of factors and there can be more than one type of dampness present at any one time.

### Condensation damp

Condensation occurs when warm moisture in the air comes into contact with cold surfaces, or when levels of humidity inside are too high. Condensation can take the form of:

- Surface condensation
- Condensation inside a structure where vapour pressure forces water vapour through porous materials such as walls, which then condenses when it cools down.

Condensation can be caused by:

- Poor heating,
- Poor ventilation,
- Poor insulation,
- High humidity,
- Poor building design,
- Overcrowding.

### Rising damp

Rising damp occurs when moisture moves up from the ground through the structure of the building through capillary action.

The presence of rising damp can create or exacerbate a condensation problem

### Penetrative damp

Penetrative damp is caused by water penetrating the external or internal structure of the building. It can cause damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structures. This kind of damp includes water that enters the property through:

- Defective design and work on the structure of the property,
- Defective components including the roof, doors and windows,
- Defective water drainage systems,
- Leaking internal water pipes.

The presence of penetrative damp can create or exacerbate a condensation problem.

### Mould

Mould develops in damp conditions and grows on damp surfaces. Mould can produce allergens, irritants and toxic substances that can cause health problems.

## 6. Bracknell Forest Council Responsibilities

### Prevention

The Council will:

- Actively encourage residents to report condensation, damp and mould. Tenants can report problems by calling the Housing Management Team on 01344 351905 or emailing [Housing.Management@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Housing.Management@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)
- Maintain the Council's web pages with clear information and guidance on how to manage and report concerns around Damp and Mould .
- Seek to prevent condensation, damp and mould issues by developing and acquiring housing that allows residents to occupy their homes comfortably, without experiencing condensation and damp.
- Actively prevent damp in our existing housing stock and take action to address the range of causes of condensation, damp and mould. This includes addressing overcrowding, updating insulation and ventilation, and signposting residents for assistance with their heating costs. We will also work towards introducing a programme for the service and testing of ventilation equipment in individual homes.
- Use stock condition surveys and customer information to ensure a risk-based approach to condensation, damp and mould. We will use reports of problems and other data to understand where there are recurring problems, caused either by the property archetype, household composition, property defects or a combination of all three. BFC will target preventative remedial work where trends and causes are identified.
- Align our preventative approach with our overall asset management strategy. This sets out our planned approach to improving energy efficiency across our stock, including bringing all properties up to EPC Band C by 2030.
- Ensure all housing management staff are provided with training to understand the health risks of damp and mould and the greater health risks faced by some tenants and the importance of acting quickly to protect tenants. They will be trained to look for signs of damp and mould when carrying out home visits and talk to tenants about any specific concerns they may have. Staff have a responsibility to report all signs of condensation, damp and mould, follow record keeping procedures, and communicate with the necessary internal teams. Contractors will report dampness if they find it in on a visit to a property for any reason, or if they find it as part of their repair work, for example in concealed areas.

#### Diagnosis

- Carry out investigations of all condensation, damp and mould reports and correctly diagnose the cause of damp. BFC will use its Housing Surveyor if the results of its initial investigations are unclear
- Take initial action on any recommendations within 10 working days. This includes instructing contractors to complete work or writing to the resident to explain what will be done. BFC will use the Damp and Mould Procedure to determine the category of damp in each case and action will be based on severity.  
Inspect the home at least 6 weeks after remedial work has been carried out, to ensure that the issue has been fixed and damp and mould have not reappeared.

#### Improvement works

- The Housing Surveyor will write to the resident following any visit about condensation, damp and mould. Where remedial works are necessary, the surveyor will provide details of what works will be required and the timescales for completing

the work. Remedial works include but are not limited to mould treatment works. We will complete condensation, damp, and mould repairs within 20 working days and prioritise works based on risk.

- Improvement works will be carried out on a case-by-case basis to assist in the prevention, management and control of condensation including the installation of mechanical extractor fans, fresh air vents and insulation. If the issue is in a communal area or is a structural building defect, we are responsible.
- We will prioritise urgent cases where individuals are at increased risk of the health impacts of damp and mould exposure and will monitor these through to completion.

#### Communication

- We will respond to resident enquiries about condensation, damp and mould within 10 working days.
- Staff and contractors will attend arranged appointments. If an appointment is likely to be missed for unforeseen reasons, the resident will be informed as soon as possible, and the appointment will be rearranged.
- Where residents choose to manage condensation in their own home, staff will provide clear advice or signpost to further support which can be found on our website<sup>1</sup>. This may include a referral to support teams, including the Income Recovery & Debt Advice Team and Tenancy Sustainment Team to access advice around energy efficiency in your home<sup>2</sup> or funding such as the Household support fund<sup>3</sup>.
- All teams and departments will be responsible for effective internal communication to ensure a comprehensive approach to tackling condensation, damp and mould. The Head of Housing will have overall responsibility for monitoring the outcomes of remedial intervention.
- Where tenants are in receipt of support from other health and social care professionals, housing staff will look at how they might work with these professionals to better support tenants living in homes with damp and mould
- All staff will recognise when it is necessary to follow the Complaints Policy in dealing with condensation, damp and mould. We will make every effort to resolve the complaint directly with our tenants, whilst recognising and supporting their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage. All staff will follow record keeping procedures to ensure that complaints are handled effectively.

#### Voids/relets

- We will make reasonable checks are carried out as part of the void process and do any works required prior to relet. We will give advice at the start of a tenancy about preventing condensation and contacting us immediately if any concerns about mould developing.

#### Monitoring cases of condensation, damp and mould

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<sup>1</sup> [Tackling damp and mould | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/tackling-damp-and-mould)

<sup>2</sup> [Energy efficiency in the home | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/energy-efficiency-in-the-home)

<sup>3</sup> [Household Support Fund | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/household-support-fund)

- We will monitor open and closed condensation, damp and mould cases to ensure that problems do not persist and that interventions are concluded. Damp and mould cases will be reviewed at weekly Housing Management Team Meeting.

7. Finances

We will ensure there is sufficient budget within the budget setting process and capital programme submissions to treat damp and mould and carry out associated remedial repairs. A provision will also be made to ensure all staff receive relevant training.

8. Equalities

This policy will be implemented in accordance with Bracknell Forest Council's equality and diversity policy.

9. Policy review period

The policy will be reviewed every two years or as needed if there are legislative or regulatory changes