South Yorkshire Housing Association | COME HOME | syha.co.uk

Dampness, Mould & Condensation Management

Policy

Document Title	Dampness, Mould & Condensation P&P
Version number	V6
Version date	October 2027
Author Title & Issuing Department	The Dampness, Mould & Condensation (DMC) Taskforce Property Services
Target Audience	All SYHA departments and customers

Approved By	The Decent Homes Taskforce
Date Approved	October 2027
Review Date	October 2030

Introduction

1.1 South Yorkshire Housing Association's (SYHA) Purpose is for our customers to settle, live well and realise their potential. At the heart of our Purpose is that our customers' homes are free from hazards, particularly damp and mould, and homes to be proud of. We take a zero-tolerance approach to tackling dampness, mould and condensation which will be evident in our culture and practice.

1.2 SYHA will ensure that all homes are dry, warm and healthy and that the fabric of buildings is protected from deterioration due to DMC. This includes both standard maintenance of the home by SYHA and a sufficient level of periodic heat that protects against deterioration of internal wall fabric.

1.3 This Version (7) implements the requirements of Awaab's Law and the government guidance issued in September 2024. It aligns SYHA's categorisation and response framework to the statutory definitions of "Emergency" and "Significant" hazards and introduces monitoring of statutory investigation and repair timeframes.

1.4 The Policy ensures a responsive, consistent and transparent approach to reports of DMC in customers' homes. Our approach builds on the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight on Damp and Mould: It's Not Lifestyle (Oct 2021).

1.3 1.5 DMC identification, delivery, management and oversight are everyone's responsibility across SYHA.

2. Definitions and Scope

2.1 This policy covers all incidences of dampness, mould and condensation.

2.2 **Dampness** can refer to both rising damp and penetrating damp. Dampness is an excess of moisture that can't escape from a structure, which can also go on to cause significant damage to the building, such as collapsed ceilings and rotten timber elements, such as windows and doors.

2.3 **Mould** is commonly found in damp conditions where moisture and condensation have settled. Mould will develop without proper ventilation due to the build-up of condensation from everyday activities like drying clothes indoors, cooking, and showering, which adds moisture to the air. Mould is a type of fungus. It spreads through spores, which are invisible to the naked eye but are in the air around us all the time and can quickly grow on surfaces where dampness persists, or water has formed into a visible covering.

2.4 **Condensation** is another major cause of mould. Condensation is usually caused when warm air collides with cold surfaces, resulting in mould. Excessive condensation will result in damp and mouldy conditions on most surfaces, such as walls, ceilings, furniture, tiles and windows. Condensation is often built up when activities of daily living are carried out which produce higher volume of warm air and moisture, such as cooking and bathing/showering.

2.5 **Activities of daily living** refer to activities within the home that may contribute to increased moisture levels in the air and should be considered when determining the causation of DMC. To be clear, using the term 'lifestyle' when engaging with customers on DMC cases will not be within our vernacular. Many of the activities used to describe 'lifestyle' are not unreasonable; therefore, a more collaborative approach must be taken with customers to identify cause and effect without creating an adversarial or a 'blame' type of relationship.

3. General Principles

3.1 All SYHA homes should be free from hazards that could affect our customers' health, safety and wellbeing and comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements. In particular the provisions introduced under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which will amend the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, otherwise known as Awaab's Law

3.2 SYHA will operate proactive and reactive processes for identifying and treating DMC. We will use the data held in our systems on both our homes and households to identify homes have, or be at risk of developing, problems with damp and mould. These include stock condition surveying, routine property inspections (such as VOIDs inspections) and health & safety-related inspections within our supported housing services.

3.3 Damp and mould prevention will form part of our routine and planned maintenance processes, such as energy-efficiency improvements, stock investment works, and void works. For example, when a property becomes vacant, and before re-letting, we will seek to identify and remedy any issues that may cause dampness. This may include ensuring doors and windows are serviceable and can effectively ventilate the property, ensuring extractor fans are working well, as well as applying damp prevention treatments where necessary

3.4 The type of actions required for reports of DMC is outlined further in this Policy. Queries relating to applying this Policy and Procedure should be immediately referred to a senior manager within the Property Services' Team.

3.5 Identifying the root causes of DMC can occasionally be a process of elimination, and our approach will address all overt root causes first. Due to the diversity of SYHA's assets, this could require several remedial actions to be tested. Property Services must assure customers that SYHA will keep all DMC cases open until satisfactorily resolved.

3.6 SYHA will take robust investigations into cases of DMC and ensure that all available repair solutions to address causes of DMC are taken. This will include the use of specialist contractors to ensure that root causes are efficiently identified.

3.7 In line with our Customer Promises, discussions with customers on matters relating to DMC will be done respectfully, in a strengths-based, empathetic way. SYHA will not prejudge customers on issues that may be attributed to DMC. DMC cases, when not managed correctly, are incredibly distressing for customers to observe. All employees managing cases are asked to bear this in mind and consider 'how would I feel if this was my home?'.

3.8 SYHA will provide information, advice and guidance to all customers at the start of their tenancy, and throughout, to raise awareness of DMC and what simple measures customers can take to reduce the risk of developing DMC in their homes. This will include common causes of moisture build-up developed through activities of daily living and how to take reasonable measures for prevention, such as the importance of ventilation and adequate periodic heating. Information should be in formats that are accessible to meet the customers' individual communication needs and preferences.

3.9 Information provided to customers should undergo regular customer scrutiny and feedback to determine that these strike the right tone and are effective in supporting customers to mitigate against DMC conditions. This will be requested from our Customer Scrutiny Panel.

3.10 Where issues relating to DMC cannot be attributed to an asset-related matter, and possible cause relates to activities of daily living within the home that create excessive levels of moisture, customers will be given practical and straightforward advice and information on methods of prevention in a sensitive way. Advice must consider communication needs and preferences and be provided in an accessible format.

3.11 Where actions require further investigations, customers must be clearly communicated with and informed of the next steps and date to expect further rectification. This must be recorded within our CX system and proactively followed up by the Property Services' Officer.

3.12 To ensure that SYHA is proactively identifying and diagnosing sources and cases of DMC in all of its assets, reports of DMC should include visits or enquiries to neighbouring properties to ascertain similar problems.

3.13 Data management will be integral to ascertain that cases of DMC have been resolved. Follow up on all reports of DMC must be carried out to ensure that the prevalence of DMC has been resolved and needs no further intention.

3.14 Property Services' Managers should ensure that the required learning and development is provided for all Property Services' Officers to ensure that they have the required technical and interpersonal skills to be able undertake robust analysis of DMC cases. This should be regularly refreshed to ensure that any instruction or guidance takes account of best practice. Information should also be regularly provided to non-technical teams that are regularly engaging with customers and their homes to empower them to identify possible signs of DMC and take the necessary action.

3.15 Where necessary, SYHA will engage specialist contractors to identify the root causes of severe cases of DMC, or, where this is has not been correctly remedied by previous interventions. All actions from surveying recommendations must be implemented in a timely manner.

3.16 Whilst it is not anticipated to be a necessary step, SYHA should consider how learning from Complaints and cases of 'put it right' can be factored into our approach and future delivery. Further review and analysis of all trend data and themes should be regularly scrutinised by the Decent Homes Taskforce.

3.17 Teams with shared responsibilities such as Customer Advisors and Property Services Officers should routinely collaborate to ensure that the right information is collected at the triage stage.

3.18 The Decent Homes Taskforce will regularly review data and learning from all DMC cases to enable SYHA to take a risk-based approach and reduce the reliance on the need for customers to report issues. This should include assessing asset types/build types, component types, or failure of components that would put other customers or assets at risk of experiencing DMC or any other factors indicating proactive investment/action would reduce the risk of DMC occurring.

3.19 Missed appointments and inspections should be tracked by Property Services to ensure that any initial reports of DMC that have yet to be verified are treated thoughtfully and sensitively. There may be genuine reasons or anxieties for customers not wishing to pursue initial reports of DMC. The Property Services Team will be responsible for tracking all failed access visits for DMC inspections and ensuring that proactive action is taken, including the need to take formal enforcement action if necessary to confirm that there is no DMC presence and that the case should be closed down.

3.20 We will attempt to carry out home visits for all cases of DMC on at least two occasions following a report of DMC. In cases of failed access, the next steps taken will be based on the following:

In cases of low/medium DMC where there have been no identifiable health risks to customers identified during the request for an inspection, after two failed home visits, the case will be reviewed by a Property Services Officer and a decision made whether the case is suitable to close down. This will take account of the level of DMC that has been reported and a review of any evidence that has been provided to assist in the management of the case, known household member health vulnerabilities and ant other information available on housing management system that would assist in making a balanced decision of whether the case is suitable for closing down. In closing down cases, customers must be written to outlining the reasons for the case to be closed and to make contact with SYHA as soon as possible should the DMC problem persist.

In emergency and high/significant cases of DMC, Property Services Officers will engage the Neighbourhoods Officer to facilitate access using the necessary clause with the Occupancy Agreement which outlines the responsibility of the landlord to maintain all relevant health and safety standards in our homes. High risk cases must not be closed down without the approval of the Head of Maintenance & Head of Landlord Services.

Records must be maintained in all aspects of the above.

3.21 The P&P recognises that, on occasion, it is necessary and mutually beneficial to engage a suitably qualified, neutral, external specialist to assist in the management of DMC cases. SYHA will engage specialist, independent and mutually agreed qualified surveyor when:

- Causation of DMC cannot be determine by SYHA's Property Services' Officer and further exploration is needed to determine root causes.

- There is disagreement between SYHA's Property Services Team and the customer on the suspected identified cause of DMC. Bringing in the third-party will be a helpful step in ensuring that the initial diagnosis of SYHA is correct or not, and whether there are any other factors that are contributing the presence of DMC which have not yet been identified by SYHA.

3.22 All cases of DMC must be considered an opportunity to quality assure our processes and use them as an opportunity for learning. Satisfaction surveying will be undertaken on DMC cases to determine whether the issue has been resolved, satisfaction with how the DMC case was handled, whether we were communicating actions/updates and any other feedback that will be helpful to know. The satisfaction survey is being developed alongside this P&P and will go live by November 2023.

3.23 When DMC cases are linked to disrepair claims made by, or on behalf of customers, all processes for responding to cases of DMC must be maintained alongside all other repair and maintenance responsibilities. At no time must any repairs and maintenance services to customers be suspended where disrepair cases arise. Any access challenges to fulfil repairs and maintenance duties must be clearly documented.

4. Prioritisation

4.1 We will prioritise our response to alerts of DMC in line with Awaab's Law and the aims of this policy.

4.2 This has meant aligning existing SYHA internal categories and processes with legislation

SYHA Category	New Legal Category	Explanation	Response
Emergency *(new)*	**Emergency (Awaab's Law)**	Having a material impact on health or safety of resident (e.g. severe mould affecting breathing, visible black mould in a child's bedroom)..	**Legal**: make safe within 24 hours SYHA: Emergency inspection

High	**Significant**	Serious damp or mould that could harm health if not addressed soon, but not an emergency. Follow Awaab's legal timeframes for investigation and repair.	**Legal**: Inspect within 10 days, Report within 3 days of Inspection Work to start within 5 days of Report SYHA: Contractor to attend within 5 days of alert Monitor to completiom

Medium	**Other** (not covered by Awaab's Law)	Fairly minor or early signs of damp or mould, which need investigation. Manage through normal repairs process, but upgrade if inspection finds a significant hazard.	**Legal** Outside Awaab's Law, **SYHA** Contractor to visit and clean Inspection on routine basis Monitor to completion
Low	**Other** (not covered by Awaab's Law	Minor signs of mould in areas such as windows and which have not spread and where the resident is prepared to treat and monitor themselves.	**Legal** Outside Awaab's Law, **SYHA** Provide advice. Inspect on rout

Examples – Emergency Hazards

Example	**Why classed as Emergency**
Extensive black mould in a child's bedroom where the child has asthma or a respiratory condition	Presents an imminent risk to health and requires immediate action to make safe or provide alternative accommodation.
Severe water ingress causing live electrical risk	Immediate danger to life/safety. Requires isolation of supply and emergency repair.
Collapsed ceiling due to saturated plaster or roof leak	Structural failure posing direct physical risk.
Widespread wet rot / fungal growth spreading rapidly in an occupied living area	Active decay that may compromise structure and health.
Heavy condensation with visible spores across multiple rooms in a home occupied by a clinically vulnerable person	Directly hazardous to a vulnerable resident's health.

Examples – Significant Hazards

Example	Why classed as Significant	Resident considerations
Persistent mould (>1 m²) in a main bedroom	Serious risk of respiratory illness if prolonged.	Worsened if tenant has asthma, COPD, or other chronic illness.
Penetrating damp through external wall	Long-term exposure can cause health harm and structural decay.	Priority escalated if vulnerable resident (elderly, disabled, young child).
Recurring seasonal condensation and surface mould	Suggests building or ventilation defect needing remediation.	May remain significant where occupant cannot easily manage ventilation (e.g. limited mobility, energy poverty).
Hidden mould behind units or flooring discovered on inspection	Could develop into health risk if left untreated.	Upgrade to emergency if vulnerable household or evidence of widespread spread.
Leak from upstairs bathroom causing damp patch on ceiling below	Medium–high risk of worsening; not immediate hazard.	Assess for vulnerability; may remain significant if room below is sleeping area.

Example Medium/Low Hazards

Example	Why classed as Medium or Low	Tenant considerations
Small mould patch (<0.25 m²) in well-ventilated area	Easily treated.	If vulnerable occupant or poor ventilation, may warrant escalation.
Condensation on windows only in winter mornings	Normal physical process; not hazardous.	Provide advice; consider energy affordability if persistent.
Minor flaking paint in bathroom	Cosmetic; treat at next decoration cycle.	Upgrade if tenant reports worsening or respiratory symptoms.
Mould behind furniture due to blocked airflow	manageable with guidance.	Provide education and follow-up; avoid blaming tone.

Slight tide mark with no active damp	Historic; monitor over time.	Note vulnerability – re-inspect sooner if health concerns.

5. Reporting & Monitoring

5.1 All cases of DMC will be monitored to conclusion

5.2 Monitoring will include performance against all legal requirements of Awaab's Law.

5.3 Compliance with standards will be monitored through the Health and Safety Committee to ELT and Audit and Assurance Committee.

6. Equality Impact Considerations

6.1 The approach set out within this Policy has undergone an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and has determined that particular considerations and processes need to be taken into account for the following groups with protected characteristics:

- Racially and ethnically diverse customers
- Customers with a disability
- Customers within a particular age group

Considerations identified within the EIA have been built into the process outlined above.

Appendix A Types of Damp, Mould & Condensation

Damp

4.1 Penetrating damp - Penetrating damp is caused by moisture coming through the walls rather than up them. It is most commonly caused by overflowing guttering, plumbing leakage, condensation, driving rain and vegetation growth.

4.2 Rising damp - Rising damp is caused by moisture rising from the ground and through brickwork via capillary action. This may have been caused if a damp proof course isn't present, or if it's failed.

Images of Rising Damp

4.3 Rising damp actions could include:

- Visual inspection to see if there's a damp course
- leaking pipework on both sides of the wall
- leaks on pipes within boxing spreading to other areas
- leaking gutters and visual inspection in the room below
- Specialist report and actions carried out as per report
- Engagement with those in neighbouring homes to ascertain the scale of the issue and whether proactive measure are needed to be taken elsewhere

Images of Penetrating Damp

4.4 Penetrating damp actions could include:

- Visual inspection of all external areas - this should be over brick joints, missing mortar, cracks in the render that may be allowing water behind, leaking gutters, overflowing gutters and roof leaks / tiles slipped or missing.
- Further inspection by contractor if no visible reasons.
- Engagement with those in neighbouring properties to establish if there are any signs of damp.

South Yorkshire Housing Association

COME HOME

syha.co.uk

Mould

Images of Mould

4.5 Mould commonly falls into four different types. These are:

- Green Mould – Fluffy in appearance. It can often grow on damp walls, inside cupboards, carpets and on damp fabrics and mattresses.
- White Mould - Fluffy in appearance, can be found in cool, damp areas such as cellars and usually growing on walls. White mould is often overlooked as it can look like efflorescence (which is when water leaves behind salt deposits). It is often seen on the surface of concrete or brickwork.
- Blue Mould - Usually appears in wetter rooms like bathrooms, usually on walls rising to ceilings. Steam from showers and bathing causing condensation will be a perfect feeding ground for this mould.
- Black Mould – The most common form of mould found in properties. This appears in most rooms, such as kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms.

Areas with high damp levels can form mould due to the right conditions to thrive. Other areas commonly affected are windows /doors and corners of rooms where the walls meet the ceiling.

4.6 Mould inspection actions and rectification could include:

- Visual inspection of the loft space to ensure that the insulation is correctly laid Insulation may have been disturbed by contractors carrying out previous works.
- Check air flow inside the building (trickle vent, windows openers and extractor fans are functioning).
- Add additional ventilation or trickle vents including possible PIV (positive input ventilation) units.
- Raise works order SOR code 442501
- Wash down with RLT Bactdet solution, apply one coat RLT Halophen solution & apply 2 coats of Biocheck.
- Further works maybe needed in severe cases.
- Engagement with those in neighbouring homes to ascertain the scale of the issue and whether proactive measure are needed to be taken elsewhere

Condensation

Images of Condensation

4.7 Condensation related inspections and actions could include:

- Check the room for visible reasons for the condensation.
- Ventilation, air flow and extraction must be checked.
- Window seals, trickle vents, loft insulation and heating are all key factors for reasons why condensation form ending in mould.