

Hexagon Housing Association Damp and Mould Policy

Document Owner	Property Services Director
Approved by	Directors Group
Approved date	August 2023
Prepared by	Repairs Manager and Policy Officer
Date of Next Review	August 2026
Lines of Defence/how is the document audited?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approval by DG 2. Report to Customer Services Committee of the Board and DG quarterly 3. Reviewed via Hexagon's Internal Audit programme

1. Scope and Aims

- 1.1 Damp and mould is one of the most pressing issues currently being faced by UK housing providers. This policy aims to integrate into our approach the learning from the Ombudsman's spotlight report on damp and mould and the learning from the tragedy of Awaab Ishak's death in Rochdale Boroughwide Housing. This policy also addresses the higher risk of the development of damp and mould that will likely result from the current cost of living and fuel costs crises.
- 1.2 This policy explains how Hexagon Housing Association (Hexagon) will respond to reports of damp and mould in resident's homes. This policy applies to all Hexagon residents; tenants, leaseholders and shared owners.
- 1.3 In this policy the term 'Hexagon' will refer to Hexagon staff and contractors.
- 1.4 The aims of the policy are to:
 - 1.4.1 Comply with recommendations found in the [Housing Ombudsman Spotlight report on damp and mould \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) 2021
 - 1.4.2 Ensure we have an effective approach to damp and mould in resident's homes and to reduce such cases so that residents can have warm, dry and healthy homes.
 - 1.4.3 Understand the distress that damp and mould can have on residents and deal with reports in a non-judgmental, supportive and empathetic way.
 - 1.4.4 Establish a clear and transparent framework on our approach to diagnosis and use of independent expertise including; timescales, effective communication, appropriate mitigations, and after care.
 - 1.4.5 Take a holistic and interdepartmental approach that recognises that, particularly during the cost of living and fuel cost crises, financial hardship is a risk factor in the development of damp and mould due to factors such as heating the home, overcrowding, and reduced use of electrical ventilation systems.
 - 1.4.6 Empower residents to effectively manage condensation in the home through clear and practical advice, such as leaflets co-produced with residents.
 - 1.4.7 Reduce damp and mould to protect the fabric of buildings as part of our approach to asset management and ensure that Hexagon stock improvement works do not result in any unintended consequences that would increase the risk of damp.

2 Equality and Diversity Impacts Assessment

- 2.1 An initial screening has been made via Hexagon's equality impact assessment and there are no adverse equality impacts identified.
- 2.2 This Policy will be implemented in accordance with Hexagon's responsibilities and duties under relevant legislation, including the Equalities Act 2010.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 The Hexagon Resident Advisory Group, the Hexagon Resident Repairs Group, and the Hexagon Resident Disability Inclusion Group were consulted on this policy in March 2023.

4 Policy Statement

- 4.1 Residents living in homes with damp and mould may be more likely to have respiratory problems, allergies, asthma, and other conditions that impact on their immune system. There are also other broader impacts on the mental health, education and career prospects of residents living with damp and mould. Hexagon will always recognise that whatever the cause, damp and mould causes real distress and disruption to residents and fuel concerns about health and wellbeing. Therefore, our approach will always be supportive, empathetic and solution focused.
- 4.2 Hexagon recognises that, whilst it is important to empower residents with information and advice on condensation, managing condensation in the home long-term can be very difficult, particularly where there is overcrowding, a lack of drying space, fuel poverty, and due to the age and design of some homes. In addressing damp and mould, Hexagon will avoid taking actions that solely place the onus on the resident. Hexagon will utilise independent advice to evaluate what mitigations, such as improved ventilation, we can implement to support residents.
- 4.3 Hexagon will take a holistic and cross-departmental approach to supporting residents experiencing damp and mould in their homes, and residents will be referred to Hexagon's Community Investment Team for further support. Hexagon recognises the role that the current cost of living and fuel cost crises will play in increasing the risk of condensation, damp, and mould in homes, and will utilise all

available resources through the Community Investment Team to support residents with this.

- 4.4 In severe cases of damp and mould, Hexagon will assess whether it is appropriate to temporarily or permanently move the household to another property, as per our Decant procedure.
- 4.5 Residents will raise issues of damp and mould through our repairs service. Where a resident raises a damp and mould issue to any other member of Hexagon staff, that staff member will report this to the repairs service. Repairs will be completed in line with Hexagon's Repair Priority Policy.
- 4.6 Hexagon will complete a comprehensive damp inspection of the property to identify possible causes of damp, such as rising damp, penetrative damp, or condensation, and assess works needed to rectify the issue. This will be completed by a specialist consultant or a Hexagon Surveyor. Hexagon will communicate the results of the inspection to the resident and the estimated timescales to complete the works, and keep the resident updated throughout.
- 4.7 When residents report damp and mould, Hexagon will ask about household vulnerabilities. Where extensive works may be required, Hexagon will consider the individual circumstances of the household, including any vulnerabilities, and whether or not it is appropriate to move resident(s) out of their home at an early stage.
- 4.8 The criteria used to assess vulnerability to damp and mould issues will include the following:
 - Households with a child aged 5 and under
 - Households with an adult aged 75 and over
 - People with respiratory conditions (including asthma and any allergy to mould)
 - People with cardiovascular conditions
 - People with compromised immune systems
 - People with existing skin conditions such as atopic eczema
 - People with physical disabilities
 - People who are pregnant

- 4.9 Hexagon will contact residents 6 months after the completion of damp and mould related repairs, or more frequently where required, to check that the issue remains resolved. Where reoccurrence is identified, or reported by the resident, Hexagon will investigate as per this Policy and raise any necessary works in line with Hexagon's Repair Priority policy.
- 4.10 Hexagon's will proactively identify damp and mould issues in Hexagon homes through stock condition surveys and complete all necessary works to resolve the issues identified. Hexagon aims to survey 100% of Hexagon homes on a 5 yearly basis.
- 4.11 Hexagon will identify and record cases of damp and mould in void and mutual exchange inspections and on home visits so that an early diagnosis leads to a strategy and action to remedy the problem. Where damp and mould issues are identified in a mutual exchange property, the incoming resident will be informed and repair works will be scheduled.
- 4.12 Where damp and mould is being caused by a leak coming from another property, Hexagon will investigate the source of the leak, promptly utilise the No Access policy and procedure where necessary, including applying for court orders, and use real time data loggers for leak detection where applicable. Where the leak is coming from another property that is not owned by Hexagon, we will pursue legal action where necessary to resolve the issue.
- 4.13 Hexagon will regularly review how we communicate to residents about damp and mould, and we will consult involved residents to ensure our communication is clear, effective, and supportive.
- 4.14 Whilst upgrading Hexagon homes ready for net zero and the Decent Homes Standard, Hexagon will comply with the updated ventilation rules in Approved Document F under the Building Act 1984, which came into effect in June 2022, to ensure that stock improvement works do not increase the risk of damp and mould in Hexagon homes.
- 4.15 Hexagon will also ensure that all new development designs comply with the ventilation rules in Approved Documents F, to proactively minimise the likelihood of the development of damp and mould in Hexagon's new buildings.

- 4.16 Hexagon will ensure that all relevant resident-facing staff, contractors and technical staff are trained and understand the approach to this issue including the ability to identify and report early signs of damp and mould.
- 4.17 Where properties are identified for future disposal or are within an area marked for regeneration, Hexagon will continue to offer the same high standard of health and safety related repairs service and continue to resolve damp and mould issues in these homes.
- 4.18 Hexagon will promote the benefits of the Complaints process and the Housing Ombudsman to residents as an appropriate and effective route to resolving disputes. Hexagon will continue to take action to resolve the damp and mould issue when a complaint is raised, without waiting for the complaints procedure to be completed, to ensure that raising a complaint does not cause delays to repairs.
- 4.19 Where a resident is pursuing a disrepair claim in relation to a damp and mould issue in their home, Hexagon will continue to attempt to resolve the repair until or unless legally required to cease repair works.
- 4.20 Hexagon will regularly review cases, missed appointments and complaints about damp and mould to learn from them and ensure continuous improvement. Performance on damp and mould will be reported to the Customer Services Committee of the Board and the Directors Group on a quarterly basis.

5 Relevant Hexagon Policies and Procedures

- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Compensation policy
- No Access Policy
- Repairs Priority Policy
- Decant Procedure

6 Related Guidance and Legislation

- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Ombudsman Damp and Mould Spotlight Report 2021

- The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Decent Homes standard 2006
- Building Act 1984
- Regulator of Social Housing [Home Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/home-standard)
- Building Regulations 2010 and Ventilation: Approved Document F

7 Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

Part one: Initial Screening

Name of policy, service or function	Damp and Mould Policy
Current or Proposed	Proposed
Persons completing Initial screening	Policy Officer
<p>This is a new policy that affects all Hexagon residents, including tenants and leaseholders. The policy is relevant to Housing Services, Customer Services, Property Services, and the Development & New Business Departments within Hexagon.</p> <p>This policy aims to comply with the recommendations found in the Housing Ombudsman 2021 Spotlight Report on Damp and Mould and to take an empathetic, respectful, and holistic approach to residents reporting damp and mould issues.</p> <p>Additionally this policy aims to establish a clear and transparent framework for our approach to diagnosis and repair, including clear timescales, communication and aftercare. This policy aims to take a proactive approach to identifying and resolving damp and mould issues, including through stock conditions surveys.</p>	

Analysis of relevant data

Data Type	Summary of Data	Analysis
Hexagon statistics	I have pulled the available demographic data of 816 Hexagon households who have reported damp and mould recently and compared these against the demographic spread across all Hexagon homes. The categories I looked at were Age, Gender, Disability, and Race/Ethnicity. Hexagon do not hold demographic data on the other protected characteristics at this time. There were no significant trends of any protected characteristic group reporting disproportionately high incidences of damp and mould issues, except that the percentage of reports made by women was disproportionate by an increase of 7.3% and the percentage of reports made by men was disproportionate by a decrease of 4.7%.	The difference in reporting by men and women could be due to a disproportionate number of women living in homes that are at a higher risk of developing damp and mould due to structural or occupancy factors. Alternatively, it may be that women are more likely to report damp and mould when it occurs, and men are more likely to not report damp and mould when it occurs. The former is addressed in this policy through the proactive use of stock condition surveys. The latter is not specifically addressed in this policy. I would advise that we complete another EQIA when

	<p>Please note that, whilst I have cross compared, Hexagon currently do not hold accurate data on Disability, so trends concerning this protected characteristic may not have been identified. Hexagon is currently addressing this lack of data through a Resident Profiling programme. I advise that this is assessed again at the review of this Policy once the Resident Profiling programme has been completed.</p>	<p>reviewing this policy in 3 years time and assess if our proactive approach has minimised this difference in reporting (suggesting the former was the cause) or if it persists and needs to be addressed by other means (e.g. awareness raising targeted at men)</p>
National/Regional	<p>From the English Housing Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 2 years to March 2019, an average of 3% of households in England had damp in at least one room of their home Mixed White and Black Caribbean (13%), Bangladeshi (10%), Black African (9%) and Pakistani (8%) households were more likely to have damp problems than White British households (3%) although households from Mixed White and Black African (11%) and Black Other (10%) backgrounds were more likely than White British households to have damp, findings for these groups are based on a small number of households and may not be reliable 	<p>National statistics suggest disproportionate impact of damp and mould based on race/ethnicity. This is not reflected in Hexagon's statistics, but should be monitored and assessed again when this policy is reviewed.</p>

Resident Involvement

Method	Feedback
Resident Advisory Group and Resident Disability Inclusion Group	<p>Resident Groups were consulted on this policy in March 2023 and raised concerns that Hexagon do not hold sufficient data on resident vulnerabilities to execute our duties under the Equality Act 2010. Hexagon are undertaking a Resident Profiling programme to increase the accuracy of the data we hold on our residents. In cases of damp and mould, Hexagon will ask the resident if they meet the criteria set out in section 4.8 of this policy when the resident is reporting the issue to us. This ensures we have the relevant data on every resident who has reported damp and mould to us and allows us to effectively meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010.</p>

Screening

Protected Characteristic	Is impact positive, negative, or none			Reason
	Positive	Negative	No Impact	
Age			X	No impact identified
Disability			X	No impact identified but organisational data on disability is low and this should be reassessed at the next review of this policy when the resident profiling programme has been completed.
Gender			X	There are a higher percentage of women reporting damp and mould than men. It is currently unclear why this is. This should be monitored and assessed again at the next review to see if this has been rectified through the proactive approach outlined in the policy.
Gender reassignment			X	No impact identified
Race			X	No issues currently identified
Religion or belief			X	No impact identified
Sexual orientation			X	No impact identified
Socio-economic status			X	Damp and mould is likely to disproportionately impact on those who are experiencing fuel poverty; this is addressed in this policy through a holistic approach and referrals to the Community Investment Team

Literacy			X	All information about the damp and mould policy, appointment times, damp survey results, etc, can be given to the resident verbally at their request.
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What are the arrangements for monitoring the policy and its impact on customers?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damp and mould cases and Hexagon's performance against the targets outlined in this policy will be monitored and reported on quarterly by the Responsive Repairs Manager to the Customer Services Committee of the Board and the Directors Group. • The Responsive Repairs Manager will regularly review complaints relating to damp and mould. • This policy requires approval of Hexagon's Directors Group. • This policy will be reviewed in 3 years time and another Equality Impact Assessment completed at that time to assess impact on customers.

As the initial screening does not indicate a negative impact on any protected characteristic groups, a full equality impact assessment will not be completed.