

	<b>Title</b>	Damp and Mould Policy		
	<b>Reference</b>	Corporate	<b>Owner</b>	Assistant Director of Property Services
	<b>Approved by</b>	Customer Committee	<b>Approval date</b>	February 2024
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## Index

Policy Statement .....	2
1. Purpose and scope.....	3
2. Responsibilities and risk .....	3
3. Policy details and guidance .....	3
4. Supporting documentation and key legislation .....	6
4.1 Forms.....	6
4.2 Guidance .....	6
4.3 Legislation and regulation .....	6
4.4 Related policies .....	7
5. Monitoring and reporting.....	7
6. Definitions.....	7
7. Equality and diversity .....	7
8. Appendices .....	8
9. Policy approval.....	8

## Policy Statement

NCHA is committed to ensuring our customers stay safe, healthy and well in their homes. As a social landlord we are responsible for making sure our properties including communal areas are free from damp and mould that could have a serious impact on the health and wellbeing of our customers and cause damage to homes.

To demonstrate our commitment to addressing damp and mould we will:

- Provide decent and safe homes for our customers which are free from hazards.
- Ensure the fabric of our homes is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp.
- Treat customers reporting damp and mould with empathy and respect and we will not prejudge the reason for any issue.
- Take responsibility for diagnosing and resolving damp and mould in a timely and effective manner where they result from issues requiring repair.
- Support customers in resolving damp and mould where they result from the way the home is being used and provide appropriate, clear, sensitive, practical and accessible advice.
- Communicate with our customers clearly and regularly regarding any actions we plan to take and any actions our customers are advised to take as a result of damp and mould issues.
- Ensure front line, customer facing colleagues and NCHA approved contractors are trained to enable them to spot potential causes of damp, mould and condensation so they can advise customers, diagnose problems and provide solutions.
- Make reasonable adjustments for vulnerable customers and will consider the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Comply with legislative, regulatory and contractual (including tenancy and lease) obligations.

## 1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 This policy defines NCHA's approach to proactively manage the potential risks and promptly diagnose and prevent issues which may arise from damp and mould in our properties including communal areas and outlining support available to meet the needs of our customers.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all customers who rent their home under a tenancy agreement or occupy under a licence and to leaseholders in line with the responsibilities set out in the terms of their lease.

## 2. Responsibilities and risk

### 2.1 Responsibilities

- All customer facing colleagues and operatives for spotting signs, reporting, signposting and recording information they gather
- Customer Experience colleagues to triage reports of damp and mould
- Technical Inspectors for inspection, remediate where possible, diagnosis, advice and offering solutions
- Operational managers for the above teams in ensuring the policy is understood and followed for existing and new colleagues
- Senior managers for reviewing and reporting on the effectiveness of the policy and ensuring compliance with its aims

### 2.2 Failure to comply with this policy and the regulatory and legislative requirements contained within it could result in:

- A financial penalty, regulatory downgrade and reputational damage
- Properties confirmed as a Category 1 hazard (of which damp and mould are one) as part of the Housing, Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) will fail the Decent Homes Standard

## 3. Policy details and guidance

### 3.1 Causes

#### 3.1.1 There are four main causes of dampness in homes and it is important to understand the difference between them as different solutions will apply dependent upon property type and age:

- **Water leaks** from defective supply or waste pipework (especially in bathrooms and kitchens) can affect both internal and external walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and stays damp regardless of the prevailing weather conditions. It is the result of a problem or fault with the home which requires repair. Who is responsible for the repair depends on where and why the leak happened.
- **Rising damp** is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. Water gets through or round a defective damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the masonry that was built without a DPC. Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms. It will be present all year round but can be more noticeable in winter. It is extremely uncommon but is generally the result of a problem or fault with the home which requires repair. This will usually be NCHA's responsibility.
- **Penetrating damp** appears because of a defect in the structure of the home such as damaged brickwork, missing roof tiles, loose flashing or leaking rainwater goods. Penetrating damp can also be caused by a change to the outside ground level (usually because of landscaping) where the ground level has been increased and as such bridged the DPC, the same issue can arise from a build-up of rubbish stored against the outside wall bridging the DPC. These defects

allow water to pass from the outside to the floors, walls or ceilings. Penetrating damp 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. It is the result of a problem or fault with the home which requires repair. Who is responsible for the repair depends on what the fault is and where it happens.

- **Condensation** is the most prevalent type of dampness and is caused by moisture in the air (water vapour) inside the dwelling coming into contact with a colder surface such as a window or a wall. The drop in temperature causes liquid water to form on the surface and then soak in. It is usually found in kitchens, bathrooms, the corners of rooms, north facing walls and on or near windows – all places that either tend to have a lot of moisture in the air or to be cold generally. It is also found in areas of low air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

3.1.2 All homes can be affected by condensation because the climate is often cool. Normal household activities also constantly release moisture into the air. Good practices in the home minimises and alleviates condensation and in many cases prevents it causing dampness and persistent mould. On occasion however the root cause can be a problem that requires a NCHA repair or an improvement to the home. In others a different solution may be needed (for example, in cases of severe overcrowding).

## 3.2 Preventative action

3.2.1 We will use insight from our damp and mould risk register to identify homes that are or may be at risk of developing problems with damp and mould. We will develop the risk register when more data becomes available, for example from installed environmental sensors, and will prioritise inspecting properties at most risk. We will use data on our households and homes to help us understand the risk profile in relation to damp and mould. We will combine insight from the risk register with our fuel poverty register and conduct annual check ins with households deemed to be at risk.

3.2.2 We will mitigate any increased risks of damp and mould arising as a result of our work to decarbonise our homes, by following PAS2035 procedures and the principle of 'no insulation without ventilation'.

3.2.3 When a property becomes vacant and prior to re-letting we will seek to identify and remedy any issue which may cause damp. 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 mould treatments where necessary.

3.2.4 We will provide information on our website and through other channels to raise awareness about the causes of damp and mould. This will include details about how everyday activities can generate condensation and what customers can do to help prevent damp through, for instance ventilation, controlling the build-up of moisture and adequate heating. Where there is mould growth we will provide advice on how this could be treated. This information will be made available at the start of and throughout the tenancy.

3.2.5 Our colleagues and contractors will have the skills and knowledge to identify signs of damp and mould and discuss with customers how to manage the problem. Colleagues will be encouraged to look out for signs whenever they visit a customer's home.

### **3.3 Dealing with damp and mould**

- 3.3.1 Customers are required to report any problems to us as soon as possible after noticing a problem and this may be reported in a variety of ways. All received reports will be subject to the damp and mould triage script, guidance and operational process, included with this policy.
- 3.3.2 All reports of damp and mould will be subject to a triage to determine whether it is a high risk, medium risk, or low risk. All high and medium risk reports will be inspected by a Technical Inspector within the following timescales:
- High Risk – 1 working day
  - Medium Risk – 5 working days
- All low risk reports will be raised as a works order to be completed within 28 calendar days.

Reports of damp and mould only requiring an advisory response will be recorded on the system.

- 3.3.3 All reports of damp and mould that have been identified by other sources, for example a Community Coordinator visit, any conversation about the tenancy, a gas service etc, will be forwarded to the Customer Experience Team within 1 working day, for the above triage to be carried out. Colleagues will use the core system or their field-based tools to record the details, including any vulnerabilities and photos.
- 3.3.4 All works carried out to address damp and mould, irrespective of risk will be post inspected within 6 to 12 weeks. A follow up contact by the Customer Experience Team will be made within 6 weeks from the post inspection to assess whether the issue has been fully resolved. The triage and operational process will be followed should any further inspection be required. At this stage we will also consider alternative approaches to resolving the issue. Households affected by persistent damp and mould will be accepted onto the Transfer List if they wish to be rehoused.
- 3.3.5 Where we have identified a repeat case, defined as the same issue in the same location recurring, we will install an environmental sensor for ongoing monitoring. Identification of repeat cases will be captured during the triage.
- 3.3.6 We will keep customers informed of any property inspections, diagnosis, issues and the timetabling of works where these are required, including any changes to the programme of works. We will explain why work might be needed and what work might be done. Where work is not required, customers will be informed and we will explain the reason why no further work is needed and the steps they should take.
- 3.3.7 For more complex cases particularly where more intrusive building work is required and/or there is a serious health risk to the customer or member of their household, we may require them to move out of their home either temporarily or permanently. We will consider the individual circumstances of the customer and their household. We will ensure the appropriate checks are carried out at the property to ensure it is safe for the customer and their household to return to.
- 3.3.8 Our tenancy and lease agreements require customers to allow NCHA colleagues and appointed contractors access to their home to carry out works at the agreed appointment time. If we are unable to gain access and the integrity of the property, its fabric and/or the safety of the customer

or those in the vicinity of the property are compromised, we will follow an approved procedure in order to gain access. This may include but is not limited to obtaining an injunction for access.

3.3.9 Where damp and mould is a result of condensation we will work with our customers to support them in taking appropriate measures to prevent the damp and mould occurring. This might include advice about how to control moisture levels or increase ventilation or heating, so that damp levels are kept low. We will encourage customers to follow the advice and explain the implications of any activity that could worsen the problem such as turning off ventilation systems or sealing over air vents.

3.3.10 In line with our Complaints and Compensation policies we will pay compensation as a result of our failure to deliver the service(s) we have committed to. This includes where furniture or belongings have been damaged and/or distress and inconvenience have been caused. Each case will be considered on its own merits taking into the account the individual circumstances of the customer and their household.

### **3.4 Supporting our customers**

3.4.1 We will give customers advice on how to prevent damp and what they should do to remove mould. We recognise however that not every customer will be in a position to resolve damp and mould themselves. We will provide appropriate support in such cases in relation to the specific circumstances and the individual needs of customers. We will consider support in the context of wider issues such as arrears, impacts of the cost of living challenges and poor physical and mental well-being.

3.4.2 We know that some customers cannot afford to heat their homes adequately due to their income levels or energy costs. We will work with customers to ensure they are receiving the income to which they are entitled and in some cases we will provide financial or other support.

3.4.3 Where homes are overcrowded humidity will tend to be higher and this increases the likelihood of condensation. We will work with customers in this situation and explore solutions which may include moving the customer to a more suitable home if this is available.

### **3.5 Training**

3.5.1 We will ensure all relevant colleagues and contractors have the required knowledge and skills to diagnose and remedy damp and mould. This will be delivered as part of the mandatory training programme and role specific guidance.

## **4. Supporting documentation and key legislation**

### **4.1 Forms**

Damp and Mould triage script and guidance  
Damp and Mould operational process

### **4.2 Guidance**

Customer and colleague damp and mould guidance

### **4.3 Legislation and regulation**

[Defective Premises Act 1972](#)

[Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)  
[Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 \(section 11\)](#)  
[Housing Act 2004](#)  
[Decent Homes Standard 2006](#)  
[Equality Act 2010](#)  
[Home Standard – Consumer Standards 2015](#)  
[Homes \(Fitness for Human Habitation\) Act 2018](#)  
[Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims \(England\) 2021](#)

#### 4.4 **Related policies**

NCHA Compensation Policy  
NCHA Complaints Policy  
NCHA Disrepair Policy  
NCHA Repairs Service Standard  
NCHA Disturbance Policy  
NCHA Decant Procedure  
NCHA Access Policy  
NCHA Transfer Policy

#### 5. **Monitoring and reporting**

- 5.1 Property Services managers are responsible for monitoring repairs, and the performance of our contractors. Issues relating to damp and mould will be jointly monitored by Property Services and Communities managers. The Senior Leadership team will also monitor all aspects of this policy with updates from the Assistant Director of Property Services. NCHA's response to dealing with damp and mould will also be included in the external audit programme and independently audited.
- 5.2 We ask customers how satisfied they are with the service we provide, using a variety of methods (telephone, SMS, online). These surveys take place at different times, such as after the completion of a repair, after a customer has moved into a property etc.
- 5.3 This policy will be reviewed every 2 years unless legislation, business or sector developments require further amendments. This will ensure that the policy continues to meet the stated objectives and take account of good practice developments.

#### 6. **Definitions**

**Damp** – is an excess of moisture that cannot escape from a structure and which can cause significant damage to the building such as collapsed ceilings and rotten timber elements like windows or doors.

**Mould** – is a type of fungus that spreads through spores which are invisible to the naked eye but are in the air around us all the time that can quickly grow on surfaces into a visible covering where dampness persists or water has formed.

#### 7. **Equality and diversity**

- 7.1 This policy has been written in line with NCHA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Equality Statement. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

**8. Appendices**

None

**9. Policy approval**

- 9.1** This policy has been approved prior to issue by the Director of Development and Assets or if applicable, by NCHA's Board, Customer or Care Committees.