

BELGRAVE NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING ASSOCIATION DAMP AND MOULD POLICY

Aims of damp and mould policy

The following are aims of the damp and mould policy:

- To ensure that the co-op provides homes that are dry, warm and healthy
- To ensure that the fabric of the co-op's homes is protected from deteriorating due to damp and mould
- To listen with empathy and respect to member concerns about damp and mould
- To take action and provide appropriate support to members who express concern about damp and mould

Delegated Authority

- 1 The co-op delegates its service provider to operate this damp and mould policy and authorises them to act in accordance with delegated authority in respect of the co-op's repairs, asset management and decant policies.
- 2 The co-op delegates its Operations Sub-Group to take decisions in respect of damp and mould that are over and above the authority delegated to the service provider in respect of the repairs, asset management and decant policies.
- 3 The co-op delegates the Chair to make decisions in respect of damp and mould where urgent actions are needed where it is not possible to wait until the next Operations sub-committee or committee meeting.

Damp and Mould

- 4 **Damp** in a home is caused by excess moisture. Homes could be affected by any of the three common types of damp:
 - **Condensation** – this is the most common form of damp in rented properties. It appears when excess moisture in the

air meets a cold surface, such as a cold wall or window. Condensation is made worse by inadequate ventilation, heating or insulation and tends to be worse in Winter.

- **Penetrating damp** – this is caused by water coming through external walls or the roof. It can occur when there is an internal leak or plumbing problem.
 - **Rising damp** – this occurs when moisture beneath the building is soaked up into the brick or concrete. It is a common problem on the ground floor and cellars/basements of older houses.
- 5 **Mould** - damp can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden window frames.
 - 6 The growth of mould can appear as a cloud of little black dots and has an unpleasant smell.
 - 7 Damp humid conditions can also provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply. The presence of mould and dust mites can make existing respiratory conditions such as asthma and bronchitis worse.
 - 8 The only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of the dampness.

Proactively seeking cases of damp and mould

- 9 The co-op will proactively seek to identify instances of damp and mould in the co-op's homes as follows:
 - The co-op will provide information to co-op members about damp and mould and encourage them to report any instances to the service provider.
 - The service provider will ensure that staff visiting and contractors working in co-op members' homes are aware of

the signs of damp and mould in homes and report any instances they come across to the service provider.

- The co-op's Membership and Communities Officer will be particularly briefed on damp and mould to enable them to identify any cases when they are visiting members.
- Where the co-op is aware that a co-op home is suffering from damp and mould, appropriate neighbouring properties will be visited to discover whether they are also suffering from similar problems.

Actions the co-op will take in respect of damp and mould

- 10 If a member reports an incidence of damp and mould or if the co-op becomes aware of damp and mould in a co-op home through other means the co-op will ensure that a surveyor who has knowledge of damp and mould issues and their causes investigates the home to give an opinion as to what is causing the damp and mould.
- 11 If the surveyor considers that minor actions within the service provider's delegated authority will resolve the problem, these actions will be taken as quickly as possible.
- 12 If the surveyor considers that more major actions are necessary to resolve the problem the matter will be reported to the Chair and the Operations Sub-Group alongside recommendations to resolve the problem and as to whether the member living in the home will need to be decanted in order to resolve the problem.
- 13 The co-op will consider decanting a member where damp and mould problems cannot be resolved with the member in situ and in some cases where the health of the member or their family are being seriously adversely affected by the damp and mould. If it is considered that decanting is necessary, discussions will take place with the member and the decant will take place in accordance with the Decant Policy.

- 14 It is in the interests of the member and the co-op that any damp and mould is cleaned as quickly as possible. If damp and mould is detected in a co-op home, the co-op will aim to ensure that it is cleaned as soon as it appears, either by asking the member to clean it regularly or through some other means.

Communications

- 15 The co-op and the service provider will ensure that members who report damp and mould problems are treated with respect and empathy, understanding that the co-op's property is their home and that living with damp and mould is a blight on their and their family's lives.
- 16 Once a member has reported a damp and mould issue or where the co-op becomes aware of a damp and mould issue, the service provider will ensure that:
- the member is informed within 10 working days about the surveyor's opinion regarding the damp and mould and what, if anything, the co-op will do to address the issue
 - if the case is an ongoing issue, regular communication with the member will take place after that to keep them informed with regards the co-op's intended actions to address the problem.
- 17 The service provider will ensure that the member living in the home is aware that, as well as discussing the issue with the service provider, they can contact either the Chair or the Membership and Communities Officer if they wish to.
- 18 The co-op will ensure that information is periodically circulated to members about damp and mould and what members may be able to do to minimise moisture in the home.

What the member can do to minimise damp and mould

- 19 Everyday activities such as cooking, cleaning and bathing add moisture to the air inside homes, which can lead to

condensation and the growth of mould. The only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of dampness. The co-op will circulate to members a checklist of actions (Appendix A) that the member may take to minimise the potential for damp and mould.

- 20 The co-op will consider each damp and mould report on a case-by-case basis and will recognise that some members may not have the resources to comply with all the damp and mould checklist. For example, members may struggle to pay for heating in all rooms of their home or they may have no alternative but to dry clothes within the home.
- 21 Where it may be the case that damp and mould is either caused or exacerbated by members not being able to comply with items on the damp and mould checklist, the co-op will discuss the best courses of action with the member concerned. The co-op will pay particular regard to members who may have health issues that make it difficult for them to comply.

Thermal efficiency

- 22 When carrying out works to improve thermal efficiency of co-op homes, the co-op will carefully consider improved ventilation to offset any potential for damp and mould to develop because of changes. In particular, the co-op will usually include upgrading mechanical fans as part of kitchen and bathroom replacement programmes.

Risks to be avoided:

- The co-op does not respond appropriately to member reports of damp and mould
- The co-op over-emphasises members' "lifestyle" when responding to reports of damp and mould
- The co-op is either not aware of or does not address the causes of damp and mould problems in its homes
- The co-op does not communicate as it should with its members about damp and mould.

Appendix A – damp and mould information and checklist

Damp in a home is caused by excess moisture. Homes could be affected by any of the three common types of damp:

- **Condensation** – this is the most common form of damp in rented properties. It appears when excess moisture in the air meets a cold surface, such as a cold wall or window. Condensation is made worse by inadequate ventilation, heating or insulation and tends to be worse in Winter.
- **Penetrating damp** – this is caused by water coming through external walls or the roof. It can occur when there is an internal leak or plumbing problem.
- **Rising damp** – this occurs when moisture beneath the building is soaked up into the brick or concrete. It is a common problem on the ground floor and cellars/basements of older houses.

Mould - damp can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden window frames. The growth of mould can appear as a cloud of little black dots and has an unpleasant smell.

Damp humid conditions can also provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply. The presence of mould and dust mites can make existing respiratory conditions such as asthma and bronchitis worse.

The only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of the dampness.

Produce less moisture

Moisture in the home can lead to or exacerbate damp and mould. Where there is a potential problem with damp and mould, the following may reduce the amount of moisture produced:

- Keeping the kitchen door shut and leave the windows open and/or extractor fan on when cooking.

- Hanging washing outside if possible. Avoid drying washing on radiators. If you need to dry clothes indoors, open the window and close the door of the room where clothes are drying so that moisture can escape outside rather than circulate around your home.
- Not overcrowding your home. More people and pets living in your home means that more moisture will be produced.

Reduce excess moisture

- If windows or surfaces are wet, drying your windows, windowsills and surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom regularly
- Opening the bathroom window and/or keeping the extractor fan on when taking a shower or bath
- Keeping trickle vents in windows open. They are designed to ventilate your accommodation without causing draughts.
- Opening your bedroom window (for up to 20 minutes) in the morning and airing your bedding. A window slightly open may be as good as one fully open.

Heat your home

- Having a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house by keeping the heating on at low all day in cold weather will help to control condensation. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. It will cost more initially to warm the walls, but when the walls are dry your heating bills will reduce.
- Not putting your heating on for short periods of time (one hour or less) – this will make the problem worse. The air will absorb moisture quicker than the walls can warm up. When the heating is turned off, the air will cool quickly and condensation will be formed cooling the walls further.

- If you can, trying to keep your home properly heated. It usually helps to have a low background temperature of at least 15 degrees in all rooms.

Remove mould growth

- Removing mould growth as soon as you see it
- Wiping down or spraying walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries an HSE “approval number” or a weak water and bleach solution.
- Not removing mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner because this may disturb the mould spores and can increase the risk of breathing problems.

Ventilate your home

- “Cross ventilating” your home – opening a small window downstairs and a small one upstairs (ideally on opposite sides of the home or diagonally opposite if you live in a flat). At the same time, open the interior room doors as this will allow drier air to circulate throughout your home. This cross ventilation should be carried out for about 30 minutes each day.
- Ventilating your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window or using an extractor fan if possible.
- Keeping a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls, and where possible placing wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.
- Not over-ventilating your home by leaving the windows open as your walls will lose all the heat stored in them. Only open the windows for a short period at a time so that any moisture is able to escape. Then close your windows, leaving a small gap of about 5mm. It is advised to open the windows slightly any time that condensation is forming on the glass.