



Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy



1.0 Policy Statement:

- 1.1 Community Gateway Association (CGA) are committed to ensuring our tenants' homes remain safe, secure and well-maintained.
- 1.2 CGA recognises the impact that damp, mould and condensation (DMC) can cause on the health and wellbeing of our tenants. Tackling damp and mould when it arises, and preventing issues where possible, is a priority for our organisation. The aim is to eradicate damp and mould wherever possible.
- 1.3 CGA treats all reports of damp and mould seriously and understands the health implications it may have if left untreated, particularly to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. These health risks include respiratory problems and/or other conditions that impact on the immune system as well as having an impact on the mental health of our tenants.
- 1.4 This policy has been developed to specifically address the problems associated with damp and mould highlighted in the Ombudsman's report, 'Spotlight on Damp and Mould – It's not Lifestyle' and the guidance issued by Government in September 2023. CGA has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould, ensuring that work is done to proactively identify and address issues where they may arise, and respond quickly and thoroughly when reports of DMC related issues are received.

2.0 Scope of CGA's Policy:

- 2.1 This Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy sets out how CGA will address and respond to reports of damp and mould within our homes. Specifically, this policy covers how the CGA will:
 - Work proactively to prevent damp and mould occurring in our homes.
 - Ensure any repairs or improvements to properties are cost effective, sustainable and meet affordability objectives, whilst responding to the requirements for decarbonisation.
 - Implement processes designed to:
 - Ensure a suitable and sufficient response to initial reports of damp or mould.
 - Identify the cause of damp occurring in our tenants' homes.
 - Order remedial works where required.

- Provide advice or other support to our tenants.
- Increase awareness for tenants through a range of communications and information on how to manage and prevent condensation in their home.
- Ensure staff have adequate training and knowledge of the causes of damp and mould and potential solutions (or advice).
- Have relevant and useful reporting and performance information to enable CGA to review damp and mould related repairs, target proactive remedial work and targeted interventions such as information campaigns and website content.
- Comply with all necessary legal and regulatory requirements.

2.2 This Policy applies to:

- All tenants who rent their homes under a CGA tenancy agreement.
- All leaseholders where a property defect falls under CGA's responsibility within the terms of their lease.

2.3 Commercial premises are excluded from this policy.

3.0 Aims and Objectives:

The key aim of this policy is to raise awareness of the issues surrounding damp and mould for those living in the CGA's domestic properties and to set out CGA's zero-tolerance approach to addressing and resolving reports of damp and mould in its tenanted and leasehold properties.

The key objectives for the CGA are:

- To proactively prevent damp and mould occurring in properties wherever possible.
- To ensure repairs to alleviate damp (for example work to guttering, roofs and drains) are carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimise impact on the health of tenants and damage to the structure, fixtures and fittings of the property.
- To raise awareness of issues relating to damp and mould, to ensure tenants can report concerns easily and in a way that suits their individual needs.
- To provide access to information in a variety of formats and access to support to help tenants prevent and reduce risks of damp and mould in their homes.

- To ensure a variety of methods are available to enable tenants to easily report damp and mould, and that those reports are investigated in a timely manner.
- To work with tenants to reduce the number of complaints and disrepair claims regarding damp and mould, and where these occur ensure they are investigated in a timely manner.
- To ensure all tenants are treated in a fair, respectful, empathetic and consistent manner.

4.0 Damp, Mould & Condensation Causes:

4.1 Damp is defined as moisture which is spread through the air or which collects on a solid substance, typically with detrimental or unpleasant effects. Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation is present.

4.2 Everybody produces moisture in their everyday activities, such as cooking and washing. Excess moisture can lead to condensation which can lead to issues of damp and mould if left untreated. Condensation happens when moisture in the air comes into contact with a cold surface, e.g. windows, creating water droplets.

4.3 Causes of condensation may be due to:

- Excess moisture– for example, pans do not have lids on when cooking and drying washing inside a home without adequate ventilation.
- Lack of ventilation – for example, windows are not opened, trickle vents are closed, extractor fans are not used, furniture is placed too close to external walls.
- Inadequate heating resulting in a home repeatedly being below 21 degrees Celsius.
- Defective insulation, for example where insulation has become dislodged in lofts.
- Overcrowding, for example, insufficient bedrooms for the number of occupants.

4.4 Damp also occurs when a fault in a building's basic structure lets in water from outside. This may result in:

- Rising damp – This occurs if there is a problem with the damp proof course. This is a barrier built into floors and walls to stop moisture rising through a

home from the ground. The usual evidence of rising damp is a 'tide mark' on walls that shows how high it has risen and is sometimes accompanied with a musty smell.

- Penetrating damp – This occurs if water is coming in through the walls or roof, or through cracks. It can be identified by a discolouration of internal walls or ceilings, the presence of tidemarks, blown or blistered plaster and rusted nails in skirting boards and floor timbers.

4.5 Causes of penetrating damp may be due to:

- Defective components – for example, external wall doors and windows, roof coverings.
- Defective or blocked rainwater gutter and pipes.
- Defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems.
- Water ingress through brickwork, leaks or defective design of the structure.
- Persistent flooding.

5.0 CGA's Responsibilities:

5.1 CGA will undertake internal and external stock condition surveys on all homes at least once every 5 years, including an assessment against the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to ensure homes are free from Category 1 and 2 hazards.

5.2 If repairs are identified as a result of proactive surveys undertaken via CGA's Homecare team, these will be ordered in line with CGA's Repairing & Maintaining Your Home Policy.

5.3 The information gained from all proactive surveys will inform our planned approach to maintenance and improvement works. Using data from proactive surveys CGA will coordinate a range of planned works to help reduce the risk of damp and mould and likelihood of condensation occurring. This work may include:

- Improving insulation both internally and externally.
- Upgrading/installing of mechanical extracts with humidistat control.
- Upgrading/installing of wet/dry heating system.
- Installing external wall insulation.
- Replacing roofs with breathable felt.
- Replacing external windows or doors.

- Other energy efficiency improvements.
- 5.4 To facilitate these works, the capital investment plans for CGA will prioritise Decent Homes Standards and Energy Efficiency standards.
- 5.5 CGA will work proactively to offer advice to tenants on recognising, reporting and preventing damp and mould. Tenants will also be able to access information on the website. Further, paper copies of the leaflets will be made available for tenants if they prefer. In addition, leaflets will be made available in alternative languages or formats if required.
- 5.6 In order to help vulnerable tenants CGA will maintain a programme of support including advice on benefits, potential savings and referrals into appropriate services, including those providing energy advice and fuel vouchers. Vulnerable tenants will also be signposted to other available support where appropriate.
- 5.7 In order to ensure issues of damp and mould are recognised and addressed as quickly as possible, CGA will deliver a rolling programme of training to staff, within the organisation. Training will include information on how to identify damp and mould issues, how to report issues and where tenants can access support. Repairs and maintenance staff will receive technical training on how to assess and treat DMC related issues.
- 5.8 Where a report about damp and mould is made CGA will investigate and arrange a prompt repair. The immediate action taken at this stage typically involves having the affected area cleaned and treated with anti-fungal paint. If the cause of the damp and mould is due to a failed component, for example as a result of perished sealant or leaking pipes, these repairs will be ordered and completed in line with current legislation.
- 5.9 If damp and mould issues are serious or recurring, CGA will undertake a survey of the property. The survey may include inspections of adjacent properties or communal areas if required. Once the source of the damp and mould is identified full remedial works will be ordered. Where required CGA will commission a specialist contractor to undertake surveys or complete necessary works.
- All works will be completed by appointment in a timescale agreed and shared with our tenants.
- 5.10 In order to effectively triage DMC, CGA will undertake a basic risk assessment for all reports of DMC at the initial point of contact with our tenants. This assessment will take account of any vulnerabilities or personal circumstances of the tenant and any household members that may be impacted by DMC. CGA aim

to carry out an initial inspection and / or remedial works within the following timescales:

DMC Risk:	Timescales:	Attended By:
Severe	5 Working Days	Surveyor
Moderate	7 Working Days	Surveyor
Low	10 Working Days	Operative
Very Minor	20 Working Days	Operative

- 5.11 In some cases, the works required to rectify damp and mould can be significant and disruptive. The tenant may also be vulnerable or at high risk of the negative health impacts of damp and mould. In these cases CGA will work with the tenant to identify suitable alternative accommodation while the works are undertaken.
- 5.12 In a small number of incidences, where CGA becomes aware of issues in properties, but is not able to gain access to a home to undertake repairs then in these instances, CGA will take a proactive stance and seek to gain access by engaging the tenant. Where this fails CGA will follow our agreed Property No Access Procedure.
- 5.13 CGA will ensure our tenants are provided with a named central point of contact to support them through their DMC repairs journey and will offer all ongoing communication in method tailored to our individual tenant requirements.
- 5.14 Ongoing development and delivery of the policy will be informed by collaboration with Gateway Central to ensure our services continue to meet the highest standards and are responsive to the needs of our tenants.

6.0 Tenant Responsibilities:

- 6.1 The responsibilities of tenants are set out in the Tenancy Agreement and include the requirement to:
- Report any repairs that the CGA are responsible for as soon as possible.
 - Provide CGA, or its approved contractors access to the property, provided a minimum of 24 hours' prior notice has been given, in order to do the following:
 - Inspect or survey, for any reason, the property or an adjoining property.
 - Carry out any repairs, servicing, treatment, modernisation, replacement or Improvement works or safety inspections.
 - Deal with any other matter for which the CGA are responsible including inspecting property condition and ascertaining household circumstances.

- 6.2 Whilst the above requirements for tenants are set out specifically in the Tenancy Agreement, there are small, practical actions tenants can take to prevent and reduce any conditions that can lead to condensation, damp and mould. These include:
- Managing humidity levels in the home and maintaining these at a healthy level. This can be achieved by keeping levels of moisture to a minimum, for example, covering pans when cooking, drying washing outside and keeping kitchen or bathroom doors closed when cooking or bathing.
 - Adequately heating rooms – ideally between 18 to 21C.
 - Keeping a home well ventilated, for example, opening windows when cooking or bathing, turning on and ensuring extractor fans are working, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture.
 - Informing CGA if their household circumstances change, particularly if someone moves into the property.
- 6.3 CGA's trained technical staff will provide room by room advice and guidance on how to reduce the risks associated with mould growth. Tenants should endeavour to follow all advice and guidance issued by CGA on managing and controlling damp, mould and condensation. Tenants will also be provided with relevant information on using heating and ventilation system efficiently.
- 6.4 Leaseholders and Shared Owners have different obligations with regards to maintaining their homes and should refer to their individual lease for more guidance. However, CGA will always provide relevant guidance and advice where necessary.

7.0 Reporting Damp, Mould & Condensation:

- 7.1 In all instance where tenants require additional advice or have concerns regarding signs of damp, mould & condensation they can be reported online via CGA's website at www.communitygateway.co.uk

Alternatively, tenants can call: 0800 953 0213 and select option 1, email repairs@communitygateway.co.uk or report any issues in person via CGA's office based at Harbour House.

8.0 Monitoring Performance:

- 8.1 CGA will monitor the effectiveness of our policy through the introduction of a suite of KPI's to monitor DMC demand and how we respond. This will include the following KPI's to be reported on quarterly basis with Managers, Senior Management, our Executive team and CGA's Board:

- DMC cases as a % of stock.
- Recurring DMC cases as a % of stock.
- Average days to fix DMC issues.

8.2 CGA tenants are at the heart of all we do, and as such feedback in relation to our performance is key to continually shaping our services. The quality of our services will be assessed through tenant satisfaction measures which include repairs, safety checks, and complaints information.

8.3 CGA will analyse complaints trends or patterns and utilise all available information to inform our future service development plans. Both positive and negative feedback will be shared with service managers to ensure a culture of continuous learning is fully embedded throughout our teams.

9.0 Equality & Diversity:

9.1 CGA recognise it delivers services to communities within which there is wide social diversity and is committed to providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity. CGA particularly recognises barriers faced by some members of the community in accessing services aimed to address damp and mould, and the potential health risks these barriers create for tenants.

9.3 CGA and its approved contractors aim to treat all customers fairly, with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status. To enable customers to have clear information and equal access to services, information will be made available in a range of appropriate languages and formats. A range of options for reporting repairs will also be maintained to enable all tenants to access our services.

9.4 This policy has been designed to be fully inclusive regardless of the ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious beliefs or disability. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in order to inform our policy throughout the development phase and to ensure any negative impacts on minority groups are appropriately mitigated.

10.0 Policy Review:

10.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner, in the event of major legislative or operational changes.

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