



St Albans
City & District Council

MOULD AND DAMP POLICY

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Introduction

This policy is to act as guidance for the treatment of damp and mould throughout St Albans City and District Council's housing stock.

Types of damp covered by this policy are.

- i. Rising Damp
The transference of moisture from the ground through the structure of a building via capillary action normally terminating 1 linear metre above ground
- ii. Penetrating Damp
Water penetrating the structure of the building (external walls, roofs) which could cause damp, rot, condensation, or damage to the internal surfaces.
- iii. Condensation Damp
Moisture held within warm air comes into contact with a cold surface causing water droplets to form and potentially mould to grow. This can be due to surface condensation when the inner surface is cooler than the air temperature or where water vapour pressure forces moisture through a porous material.

Conditions that can heighten the potential for mould and damp to occur are

- Inadequate ventilation of a property (trickle vents, mechanical extraction, non-mechanical ventilation)
- Inadequate heating of a property, (radiator renewals, draught proofing)
- Inadequate thermal insulation of a property, (lack of cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, external wall insulation)
- High humidity within a property, (potential leaks i.e. penetrating damp or rising damp passing moisture through the structure)
- Poor design or construction, (cold bridging due to lack of cavity wall/loft insulation)
- External leaks leading to penetrating damp, (missing pointing to external walls or roof leaks)
- Ground conditions causing rising damp to appear internally, (underground leak, fractured drain causing the ground to become saturated)

Aims of Policy

- To ensure that tenants are treated in a fair and consistent manner for all reports of mould and damp,
- To comply with the statutory requirements/legislation and good practice relating to mould and damp issues,
- To work in partnership with contractors, tenants, and leaseholders to ensure that a safe and healthy property is maintained, in terms of damp and mould matters,

- Investigate reports of damp and mould in a timely manner and implement all reasonable repairs and improvements to eradicate or manage damp including the management of condensation within the property,
- Ensure that tenants and leaseholders have access to, and are provided with, comprehensive advice and guidance on how to manage their property to minimise condensation within their home,
- Ensure that the fabric of the building is protected from deterioration and damage, thereby minimising the potential for condensation or damp to occur,
- Allocate funding through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and government schemes to upgrade the external fabric of the building in accordance with any practicable measures identified,
- Undertake feasibility studies on assets to establish suitability and future usage,

Scope of Policy

The scope of this policy identifies how St Albans City and District Council, through its Asset Management team (reactive repairs and capital improvements), will assist its tenants and leaseholders to manage or eradicate damp and mould.

This includes.

- All St Albans City and District Council owned and managed properties (including temporary accommodation),
- All leasehold properties within St Albans city and District Council owned blocks, where the external fabric of the building could be causing an internal defect,
- Informing residents about the different causes of mould and the types of damp (condensation, rising damp, penetrating damp),
- Identifying both St Albans City and District Council's and tenant's responsibilities for managing, and dealing with, damp and condensation,
- Providing guidance to tenants on how to manage and eradicate mould and damp within the property,
- Ensuring that all reports of moderate and excessive damp and mould affecting Council housing assets are followed up with a surveyor visit, with appropriate equipment to determine the cause and identify measures aimed to eradicate or reducing the problem to a tolerable and/or manageable level. This could be a combination of building fabric/ventilation measures and advice to residents on how to minimise condensation in their home,
- Where the cause cannot be determined by St Albans City and District Council's Asset Management team, consideration will be given to engaging 'external' mould and damp specialists to provide detailed reports and recommendations to eradicate and/or provide further advice to residents,

Responsibilities

Both St Albans District Council and its tenants are advised of, but not limited to, the responsibilities listed below.

St Albans City and District Council

- Investigate to determine the type of damp present within a property and carry out remedial repairs to rectify the cause,
- The Council will inform tenants of the findings of the investigation including the cause of damp and necessary remedial works required and any other effective solutions to mitigate the cause of damp,
- Provide and publish on the Council's website and newsletter, general advice on dealing with damp and mould within a property prior to the actual site visit to assess the situation during which any further advice on measures that can be taken to reduce damp may be communicated,
- To keep the tenant updated with their query on damp and mould in their property from inception to completion,
- Ensure that staff have adequate training and equipment to effectively determine the cause of damp where practicable and provide reasonable solutions and/or remedial actions,
- Where required, engage with specialists to undertake detailed surveys of the property, and provide advice and recommendations to rectify any causes of damp,
- Ensure competent contractors are employed to undertake remedial works to rectify root cause/s,
- If it is unsafe for the residents to remain in the property whilst the works are being carried out, alternative temporary accommodation will be made available. Tenants will be supported with the move,

Where internal conditions within a property are having an impact for example sharing of bedrooms and overcrowding, the Council will provide support and assistance to consider a tenant's housing options. This may include applying for a transfer, a mutual exchange or advice on accessing the private rented sector,

- Through the Council's energy efficiency related work programmes, target and improve the thermal efficiency of any poorly insulated homes to ensure the associated heating system is working as effectively as practicable,
- Explore and use new technologies, for example Goldeni, to monitor humidity levels in properties and evaluate the results, identifying solutions for those properties,
- Carry out regular surveys to identify mould and damp within the Council's housing stock and use that data to inform works required within the capital investment program and energy works,
- Undertake follow up visits by a surveyor, after works have been completed, where necessary. This is to check that the measures have been effective in resolving the issues of damp and mould in the property and to determine whether any further measures are required

Tenant and Leaseholder responsibilities

- Report any concerns of mould, condensation, or damp to St Albans City and District Council via the appropriate methods, (repairs line 01727 819256, digitally Stalbansrepairs@morgansindall.com)
- Keep moisture within a room to a minimum by using ventilation methods within the property, (mechanical and non-mechanical extraction, window ventilation)
- Adequately heat rooms, ideally between 18 and 21 Degrees Celsius. Where tenants may find this difficult due to energy costs, support tenants to ensure that they are receiving all the benefits and support they are entitled to,
- Keep the property well ventilated via the provisions supplied within the property including windows and extractor fans,
- Follow advice and guidance supplied by the Council,
- Allow access for inspections and remedial works to rectify causes of damp and/or mould,
- Manage, where practicable, condensation within the property by; not drying clothes on radiators, opening windows where possible, using extractor fans provided ensuring vents are not blocked and that they are open,

Review

The policy will be reviewed yearly or earlier if:

- There is any change to legislation
- There is a change to the council's strategy or policies

Links

For further information on roles and responsibilities please consult

- Tenancy handbook
- Tenancy agreement
- Leasehold agreement
- Homes fit for habitation act
- Building safety bill