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| Damp and Condensation  Policy |  |
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Useful Definitions:

**The Councils** – Refers to the South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council.

**Landlord** – This will be the named Landlord on the Tenancy Agreement and will be either South Oxfordshire District Council **OR** Vale of White Horse District Council

**The Service Provider –** This means the appointed sub-contractor for the Councils who will implement the terms of the Policy. As of 30 October 2023, this will be Soha Housing.

**Tenant/s –** Person/s who occupy the property which is owned or leased by the Landlord.

Damp and Condensation Policy

**Policy Statement**

1. This policy sets out how The Councils will work together with its tenants to identify, manage and eradicate all forms of damp and condensation mould quickly and effectively.
2. The policy applies to all the Councils tenanted properties, and the internal communal areas of blocks of flats and schemes owned and managed by the Councils. The policy covers the services provided by The Service Provider and its Contractors.

**Aim of the Policy**

1. The Service Provider will adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould. In doing so, they aim to provide a prompt, efficient and customer focused damp and condensation mould service that will ensure:

* Tenants are treated in a fair and consistent way.
* The Service Provider provide a safe and healthy home for our tenants and their families to live
* Reports of damp and mould can be easily reported by residents using a variety of methods including by phone, in person, email, website, in writing etc.
* The Service Provider will have robust systems in place for effectively recording and handling reports of damp and mould. All reports of damp and mould will be handled as a high priority with any agreed remedies completed in a timely manner.
* All completed damp and mould remedial work carried out is post inspected to check the problem has been fully eradicated.
* The Service Provider will employ a specialist damp and mould contractor to complete whole house damp inspections and any remedial work required.
* The Service Provider will clearly and regularly communicate with its residents regarding actions taken or otherwise to resolve reports of damp and mould. The Service Provider tenants will also have access to comprehensive advice and guidance on damp and condensation including what it is, how it’s caused and how The Service Provider can remedy the problem.
* The Service Provider will comply with statutory requirements, good practice and the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman’s ‘Spotlight on Damp and Mould’ report – October 2021.
* The fabric of our residents’ homes is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and condensation.
* The Service Provider staff and contractors have the skills, training and experience required to provide a highly effective damp and condensation mould service.
* This policy will be updated in accordance with any changes to legislation and best practice.

1. The Service Provider aims to apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, age or any other matter which may cause a person to be treated with injustice. Contractors carrying out damp and condensation remedial work to our homes are expected to adhere to The Service Provider’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy & Policy.

**Definitions of Damp**

1. The Service Provider is committed to the provision of an excellent damp and mould service and will ensure any reports they receive of damp and mould are dealt with swiftly and efficiently.
2. The Service Provider will also ensure our homes continue to be well maintained with key components such as heating systems, windows and doors and insulation replaced in accordance with agreed life cycles, which will reduce the risk of damp and mould forming in our tenant’s homes.
3. Performance of staff and contractors will be monitored by the Service Provider to ensure any damp and mould issues reported are dealt with in a timely manner.
4. The Service Provider will assess the use of technology that proactively identifies properties that may experience damp and mould issues.
5. The types of damp covered by the policy are as follows:
6. **Rising Damp**

The movement of moisture from the ground rising up through the structure of the building through capillary action.

1. **Penetrating Damp** (including internal leaks)

Water penetrating the external structure of the building or internal leaks causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure. The cause can be the result of, for example:

* Water ingress due to defective or poor original design / workmanship of the structure.
* Defective components for example roof coverings, external wall doors and windows.
* Defective or blocked rainwater gutters and pipes.
* Defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems.
* Flooding due to burst pipes.

1. **Condensation Damp**

Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. This can take two main forms:

1. Surface condensation arising when the inner surface of the structure is cooler than the room air.
2. Condensation inside the structure (interstitial) where vapour pressure forces water vapour through porous materials (e.g., walls), which then condenses when it reaches colder conditions within the structure.

The conditions that can increase the risk of condensation are:

* Inadequate ventilation e.g., a lack of opening windows, trickle/ background vents and mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens.
* Inadequate heating e.g., undersized boilers and radiators, draught stripping.
* Inadequate thermal insulation e.g., missing or defective wall and loft insulation.
* High humidity e.g., Presence of rising and penetrating damp, not covering pans when cooking, drying laundry inside the house etc.
* Poor building design and construction – specific cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction.
* Overcrowding.

1. If damp and condensation issues are not remedied it can lead to mould forming on windows, walls, floors and ceilings within the home. The level of mould within a home will worsen over time if the problem goes untreated.

**Implementation**

1. All reports received of damp and mould will be tracked from receipt of the information to completion of any inspections/ work required and sign off by The Service Provider via agreed workflows.
2. The Service Provider has a specialist damp and condensation control contract in place to deal with any reports they receive of damp and mould. The specialist damp contractor is able to provide the level and breadth of damp and mould services from surveying and diagnosis to all aspects of remedial, restoration and associated building works.
3. All damp and mould orders are post inspected on completion to ensure the work that has been completed has eradicated the problem.

**Complaints**

1. The Service Provider will widely advertise and promote its complaint service to tenants via a range of methods.
2. If a tenant isn’t satisfied with any aspect of the damp remediation work, they can lodge a complaint with The Service Provider. This can be done in person, by letter, or the website.
3. Once a tenant has exhausted the complaints process and remains dissatisfied, they are able to refer their complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). However, tenants can contact the HOS for advice at any point during the complaints process and The Service Provider and/or The Councils will advise how they can do this.
4. The Service Provider will share learning from complaints and the positive impact of changes made as a result within the organisation and with residents.
5. The Service Provider systems will allow complaints data to be analysed effectively and identify themes, trends and learning opportunities.

**Damp and mould – Service enhancements**

1. The Service Provider has produced a bespoke action plan aimed at further improving the damp and mould remediation service they provide to the Councils residents.
2. The Service Provider have also agreed to fully implement all 26 recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman’s ‘Spotlight on damp and mould’ report that was published in October 2021. The Service Provider will prioritise the implementation of recommendations and actions, completing key tasks in order of importance and the positive impact they will have on the damp and mould service they provide to our tenants.

**Resident Involvement**

1. The Service Provider involves residents in selecting contractors and monitoring contractor performance.
2. The Service Provider will continue to provide its residents with comprehensive advice and guidance on damp and condensation including what it is, how it’s caused and how The Service Provider will work with residents to remedy the problem.
3. Together with residents, The Service Provider will review the information, materials and support provided to residents to ensure that these strike the right tone and are effective in helping residents to avoid damp and mould in their homes.
4. The Service Provider will review with its residents, their initial response to reports of damp and mould to ensure they avoid automatically apportioning blame or using language that leaves residents feeling blamed.

**Monitoring/Responsibility**

1. The Head of Service for the Councils will be responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.
2. Completion of damp inspections and work orders are monitored by staff routinely and are included as part of the monthly health and safety report which is distributed to members of The Service Provider’s Senior Leadership Team.
3. This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if there are changes to legislation or regulation.
4. Context:

RSH Consumer Standards

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards#consumer-standards>

Housing Ombudsman’s spotlight report on damp and mould, October 2021

[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Spotlight-report-Damp-and-mould-final.pdf](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Spotlight-report-Damp-and-mould-final.pdf)