

# Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

Pinnacle Group



## Purpose

This Policy outlines how Pinnacle Group will comply with the Regulatory framework for Social Housing in England as outlined below:

Pinnacle Group must meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the residents in their homes.

## Aims and Objectives

Pinnacle Group is committed to providing high quality, safe homes, and an environment where our residents can thrive. This policy has been developed to ensure that we meet this promise.

We believe it is important to have a specific policy to address damp, mould, and condensation. The policy includes proactive interventions, our approach to diagnosis, actions considered appropriate, effective communication, and aftercare.

This policy applies to all properties managed by Pinnacle Group. In some cases, Pinnacle Group will not hold a landlord duty of care in respect of damp, mould and condensation in leaseholders' or shared owners' homes.

## Why manage damp, mould, and condensation?

The presence of, and subsequent mismanagement of damp, mould and condensation issues can have a severe negative impact on residents. Several unfortunate examples have demonstrated that failure to deal with such issues can lead to appalling medical issues and even deaths.

Recent changes to legislation, in particular the introduction of the Homes for Habitation Act and Social Housing White Paper, have rightly sought to improve standards within the social housing sector, instil a focus on resident voice and influence and to drive greater accountability to residents across the sector.

## Damp, mould and condensation

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

- Condensation – this is the most common form of damp in 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 of older properties.

**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.

## Proactively seeking cases of damp, mould and condensation

Pinnacle Group will proactively seek to identify instances of damp, mould and condensation as follows:

- We will provide information to residents about damp, mould and condensation and encourage them to report any evidence of rising and penetrating damp (see definitions) and faulty equipment that will affect the management of humidity and moisture in the home (faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, heating system failure etc to their Property Manager.
- Our Property Managers will proactively raise any potential issues related to damp, mould and condensation when attending properties, irrespective of whether a resident has made a formal communication relating to the issue.
- Where we are aware that a home is suffering from damp and mould, neighbouring properties will be visited, if possible, to discover whether they are also suffering from similar problems.

## Action

If a resident reports an incidence of damp, mould and condensation or if we become aware of damp, mould and condensation problem we will arrange for a contractor or surveyor who has knowledge of damp, mould and condensation to attend the property to give an opinion as to what is causing the issues.

If the contractor or surveyor considers that minor actions will resolve the problem, these actions will be taken as quickly as possible.

If a contractor or surveyor considers that more major actions are necessary to resolve the problem the matter will be reported to the Property Manager alongside recommendations to resolve the problem and as to whether the resident living in the home will need to be decanted in order to resolve the problem.

We will consider decanting a resident where damp, mould and condensation problems cannot be resolved with the resident in situ and in some cases where the health of the resident or their family are being seriously affected. If it is considered that decanting is necessary, discussions will take place with the resident and local authority. The decant will take place in accordance with the Decant Policy.

It is in the interests of the resident and Pinnacle Group that any damp, mould and condensation is cleaned as quickly as possible. If damp, mould and condensation is detected in a home, we will aim to ensure that it is cleaned as soon as it appears, either by asking the resident to clean it regularly or through other means.

## Communication

We will ensure that residents who report damp, mould and condensation problems are treated with respect and empathy, understanding that the property is their home and that living with damp, mould and condensation is a blight on their and their family's lives.

Once a resident has reported a damp and mould issue or where we become aware of a damp, mould and condensation issue, we will ensure that:

- The resident is informed within 10 working days of the contractor's or surveyor's opinion regarding the damp and mould and what, if anything, action we will take to address the issue.
- If the case is ongoing, we will communicate regularly with the resident and inform them of an action plan to resolve the issue.

## What residents can do to minimise damp, mould, and condensation.

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.

We will circulate information (Appendix A) with actions that residents may take to minimise the potential for damp, mould and condensation.

Pinnacle Group consider each damp, mould and condensation report on a case-by-case basis and will recognise that some residents may not have the resources to comply with all the damp, mould and condensation information provided. 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.

Where it may be the case that damp, mould, and condensation is either caused or exacerbated by residents not being able to comply with items on the damp, mould and condensation checklist, we will discuss the best courses of action with the resident concerned and relevant local authority.

## Monitoring & quality control

We will monitor implementation of this policy using the following measures:

Performance Reported	Reviewed by	Frequency
Number of damp, mould and condensation works raised	Operational Team	Weekly
Percentage of works completed within timescale	Operational Team	Weekly
	Director of Rental	Monthly
Average days to complete related works	Operational Team	Weekly
	Director Of Rental	Monthly
Number of outstanding works to be completed	Operational Team	Weekly
	Director Of Rental	Monthly
Stage 1 & 2 complaints received relating to damp, mould and condensation	Director Of Rental	Monthly
	Board	Quarterly
Complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman relating to damp, mould and condensation	Director Of Rental	Monthly
	Board	Quarterly
Active disrepair cases relating to damp, mould and condensation	Director Of Rental	Monthly

	Board	Quarterly
Actions and learnings	Director Of Rental	Quarterly
	Board	Quarterly

## Policy implementation & responsibilities

Our Board of Directors retains overall accountability for the policy.

We will ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that a Damp, Mould & Condensation Register is maintained.

Pinnacle Housing operating on behalf of Pinnacle Group will conducting periodic visual inspections and non-face to face resident engagement on the condition of damp, mould and condensation found within a property, to ensure identified issues are rectified and are not reoccurring. The frequency of this visit will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

## Damp, Mould, and Condensation Register

We will compile, maintain and utilise internal decision making to prevent future issues, a database of properties where damp, mould and condensation have been recorded together with all pertinent information relating to the issues raised, property archetype and status of resolution – The Damp, Mould and Condensation Register. We will update the Register when:

- Issues are raised by residents
- Information is obtained during property visits or building/ maintenance work

The register will be reviewed by board members every quarter.

## Review

In the absence of changes to legislation or working, this policy will be reviewed in conjunction, at least every 12 months.

## Appendix A – Damp, mould and condensation information

**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 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 of older properties.

**Mould** - damp can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics. The growth of mould can appear as a cloud of little black dots and has an unpleasant smell. 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.
- Opening the bathroom window and/or keeping the extractor fan on when taking a shower or bath
- 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, the more people and pets living in your home means that more moisture will be produced.
- Wiping the windows each morning with a dry cloth if you wake up to condensation. Once you have done this, open the window slightly for an hour maximum.

### Ventilation

If your home has poor ventilation there is an increased chance of moisture building up in the air, which can lead to mould and damp forming. The following can help to improve ventilation:

- Keeping trickle vents in windows open. They are designed to ventilate your home without causing draughts.
- Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls to allow airflow, and where possible placing wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.
- Don't over-ventilate your home by leaving windows open in cold weather for long periods 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.

## Heat your home

If you can, trying to keep your home properly heated. It usually helps to have a low background temperature of between 18-21 degrees.

- Having a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house will help to control condensation. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms.
- 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.

## Remove mould growth

It's easier and more cost effective to clean mould when it first appears.

- Only use mould treatments that is approved by the Health and Safety Executive and has an approval number.
- A combination of different methods, such as using paints that resist mould growth, may be necessary to address the problem.
- You must always follow the instructions on product label. This will include application, ventilation, protective clothing, and action to take in the event of an accident.
- If you are in any doubt or the mould keeps returning, please seek professional advice either from your Property Manager, or a mould specialist contractor.