

# Damp and Mould Policy

Asset Services

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## 1. Purpose

The aim of this policy is to proactively manage the potential risks and promptly diagnose and prevent issues which may arise from damp and mould in Riverside properties, including communal areas; committing to meeting the needs of Riverside customers and providing homes that are safe, warm, and dry.

Through this policy, Riverside will establish appropriate processes, guidance, and knowledge to ensure all Riverside properties are well maintained and free of damp and mould that could risk the health and safety of customers living in homes or buildings owned or managed by Riverside and its subsidiaries.

This policy also sets out how Riverside will support our customers to minimise the risk of damp and mould occurring and report it where there is evidence of its presence, this will also ensure that The Riverside Group meets its legal, contractual, regulatory and statutory obligations.

## 2. Scope

This policy explains how Riverside will control, manage and eliminate damp, including but not limited to:

### Who the policy applies to:

- Customers who rent their home under a tenancy agreement, including Riverside Scotland and One Housing Group; customers under a licence.
- Customers who own their home through shared ownership where Riverside has an obligation under the terms of the lease.
- All property communal areas.
- Emergency or temporary accommodation.

### What this policy will cover:

- Identifying the different types of damp: condensation, penetration, rising and traumatic.
- Identifying the responsibilities for The Riverside Group and our customers in dealing with damp and condensation.

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- Offering guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process to all customers living in our properties.
- Data gathering and reporting, identifying proactive methods in mitigating risk of all dampness.

The policy should be read in conjunction with Riverside's Repairs Policy.

### 3. Principles

Riverside will:

- Comply with statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements and good practice.
- Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable repair solutions and improvements to eliminate damp including, managing, and controlling condensation.
- Ensure that the fabric of our properties is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp, mould and condensation.
- Respond to all reports of damp and condensation and complete any repair works / measures in line with their Responsive Repairs Policy, or Repairs and Maintenance Policy if in Scotland, complying with all legislation. This will be dependent on the severity and urgency of the problem, the complexity of the solution and the repair works / actions required.
- We will make reasonable attempts to access the property to inspect and carry out the works. **All logged repairs must have evidence of at least three attempts to contact the customer. Written communication must then be provided to the customer asking them to contact us to organise a new repair and record each attempt on our customer database.**
- We will follow up each completed repair within six months of any damp and mould repair work being carried out.
- Ensure that customers are treated with respect and empathy.
- Focus on working in partnership with customers ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is provided.
- Always communicate effectively in relation to the delivery of our responsive repairs service and provide a range of options for customers to report repairs.
- Ensure that customers have access to and are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp and condensation.
- Ensure budgets are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp, mould and condensation problems.

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- Implement new data quality and insight measures to assist with informing us of the possible risks to our properties so that we can undertake proactive measures to eliminate damp, mould and condensation before it becomes a problem for our customers.

## 4. Further Information & Support

### Definitions:

- **Damp:** The build-up of moisture in a property which can lead to the growth of mould and other microorganisms.
- **Condensation Damp:** When moisture generated in the home cools and condenses onto colder parts of the buildings (for example window frames, corners and low points on walls behind sofas or wardrobes). Normal occupant activities such as showering, drying laundry and cooking can generate moisture. If this moisture is unable to escape from the property, it can build up in the air and over time, can lead to damp and mould growth.
- **Penetrating Damp:** Water that gets into the property from outside due to defects in the walls, roofs, windows or floors.
- **Rising Damp:** Moisture from the ground that rises up through parts of the property in contact with the ground (walls and floors).
- **Traumatic Damp:** Can be caused by leaking water from waste and heating pipes, overflowing baths or sinks, burst pipes or defective water storage vessels inside the property. It can also originate from outside the property, for example from another building or from environmental flooding.
- **Mould:** A type of fungus which grows in moist environments. It can cause adverse health effects, as well as damage to buildings. Mould can often look like black, white or green patches.

### The conditions that may increase the risk of condensation are:

- Lack of ventilation within the property.
- Inadequate heating
- Inadequate loft insulation.
- High humidity
- Overcrowding

### People most at risk of health issues from damp and mould:

Damp and mould pose a risk to everyone's health; however, the following groups are more vulnerable to significant health impacts:

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- People with pre-existing conditions who are at risk of their condition worsening and have a higher risk of developing fungal infections and/or additional allergies.
- People of all ages who have a weakened immune system, such as people who have cancer or are undergoing chemotherapy, people who have had a transplant or other people who are taking medications that suppress their immune system.
- People living with a mental health condition.
- Pregnant women, their unborn babies and women who have recently given birth, who have weakened immune systems.
- Children and young people whose organs are still developing and are therefore more likely to suffer from physical conditions such as respiratory problems.
- Children and young people who are at risk of worsening mental health.
- Older people.
- People who are bedbound, housebound or have mobility problems making it more difficult for them to get out of a home with damp and mould and into fresh air.

## Riverside England and Wales:

- Housing Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Landlord And Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11)
- Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Recording System
- Defective Premises Act 1973 (Section 4)
- Home Standard – Inc. Decent Homes Standard
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard
- Riverside Decant Procedure
- Riverside Empty Homes Standard
- Riverside Our Planned Standard
- Riverside Responsive Repairs Policy
- Riverside Customer Home Improvement Procedure
- Riverside Complaints Policy
- Tenancy Agreements
- Safeguarding Policy
- Riverside Financial Redress Procedure

## Riverside Scotland:

- The Scottish Housing Regulator Performance Standards.
- The Scottish Housing Quality Standards / EESH (Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing)
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Environmental Health Protection Act 1990
- Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2004
- Tenements Scotland Act 2004
- Procurement Regulations
- Right To Repair

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**Riverside's Responsibilities:**

- Identify and address the underlying causes of damp and mould, including building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation and condensation.
- Carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with our Repairs Policy.
- Undertake a property inspection when a repair is reported relating to suspected damp, mould and condensation.
- Diagnose the cause of damp correctly and deliver effective solutions based on the ethos of dealing with the cause of the damp, not just the symptom and wherever possible, aim to fix first time.
- Inform the customer of the findings of the investigations following a property visit. This will include identifying the possible causes of damp, recommending effective solutions and all necessary remedial works / actions / enhancements and the estimated timescales to complete the works / measures; keeping the customer updated throughout the process from inception to completion.
- Ensure that only competent contractors will be employed to carry out any works and that the customer's possessions are adequately protected during the works.
- Insulate the customer's home in accordance with Decent Homes Standard / Scottish Quality Housing Standard / Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) to help reduce the likelihood of condensation occurring.
- Take responsibility for maintaining customers' homes to avoid penetrating and rising damp and for carrying out remedial action if these problems occur.
- Undertake reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation dampness. This may include but is not limited to; upgraded ventilation system installation, improved indoor air movement and quality best practices.
- Make good internal surfaces following any repairs work carried out ensuring that surfaces are prepared to a condition which is ready for the customer to redecorate. Where there is need to decorate following remedial work carried out by Riverside, we will provide a decoration voucher to cover the cost of the materials needed to make good the decoration (please see Section 6.4).
- Promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to minimise damp and condensation, particularly when there are no apparent causes relating to design or construction.
- Ensure that all employees have an awareness of the policy and receive adequate training to enable them to report issues of damp mould and condensation and to support our customers.
- Ensure that technical staff are trained and competent in the diagnosis of damp, condensation and mould issues.
- Introduce a new data intelligence framework to enhance our customer and property information, which will shape our future investment programmes.
- 'Make Every Contact Count' – all colleagues have a responsibility to look out for signs of damp and mould and report it (for example, during tenancy visits or yearly gas checks).

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Riverside will always first consider whether the source of the damp and mould is a design, construction or maintenance issue which we can eliminate through work to the home. Where this is not the case, additional support and advice will be provided to the customer on managing and controlling the occurrences of condensation damp. This support will be provided through the provision of advice and guidance literature and by working with our customers through our resident involvement network.

**If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day-by-day basis or a temporary decant to an alternative property. The customer will be supported through this process to find suitable accommodation.**

In some cases, it may be necessary to re-house a family on a permanent basis if a medical professional advises that re-housing is the most suitable option. This will be considered in accordance with Riverside's Lettings Policy and local arrangements which apply within local authority areas.

### Customer Responsibilities:

- Immediately 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 (such as faulty extract fan, unable to open windows, heating system failure etc).
- Please allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works. If you need to reschedule an appointment, please contact us to rearrange.
- If you are considering making any changes within your home (for example converting rooms into one room, adding extensions, converting non-habitable buildings/spaces into habitable rooms) you must seek advice and permission from us in accordance with your tenancy agreement, to ensure that the proposed alteration would not contribute to the accumulation of damp, mould or condensation, as well as ensuring alterations comply with building control and planning guidelines.

### Customer Guidance:

Customers can help reduce the risk of excess moisture in their home by:

- Improving ventilation and moisture control by leaving a gap between furniture and external walls, using (and regularly cleaning) extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms, closing internal doors when cooking or bathing/showering, covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outdoors (if possible) and opening windows and/or trickle vents periodically.
- Ensure that the home is adequately heated – the World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests that 18°C is the ideal temperature. A room temperature of 20°C may be more appropriate for the old, young or unwell.
- Following all advice and guidance issued by us on managing humidity and moisture in the home which can lead to condensation. This information can be found on the Riverside website.

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- If all reasonable efforts have been made to manage and control the presence of condensation and mould, and the issue is on-going then you should contact us immediately to report the problem.
- The tenancy agreement, licenses and long leases recommends that the customer arranges adequate household contents insurance for the home that they occupy.

### Assisting Our Customers:

Where internal conditions within a home (for example overcrowding and excessive hoarding of personal belongings) are influencing the health and wellbeing of the occupants or are preventing inspections or repair works being carried out, we will provide support and assistance to review the customer's options that may include moving to more appropriate or alternative suitable accommodation.

Riverside has an Affordable Warmth Team who can provide customers with advice and assistance where a customer is struggling to pay energy bills or there are issues with energy supply.

We also recognise that some of our customers may need help when it comes to meeting their repair responsibilities. We may, entirely at our discretion, provide a service in addition to the statutory and contractual responsibilities to assist our customers who may need support to meet the conditions of their tenancy. We will make this assessment with the customer based on their individual needs, including whether there is anyone else who might reasonably assist them, and whether there are any immediate risks to their health and/or safety. This may include an extension to the scope of repairs which we carry out. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Where decoration is required after works associated with damp and mould, decoration vouchers will be provided to assist with the provision of paint and equipment. Further consideration will be given to customers and their specific individual or family circumstances, with a view to providing assistance which may include painting of finished surfaces. The nature of the decoration will solely be at our discretion.

## 6. Risks

Risk Appetite	Risk Thresholds	Risk Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We seek to avoid any health and safety concerns for our customers and others.</li> <li>- We seek to avoid legal, contractual, or regulatory breaches regarding Disrepair.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements.</li> <li>- Compliance with all Asset Key Performance Indicators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of damp and mould repairs received.</li> <li>- Number of Disrepair claims received.</li> <li>- Number of abandoned jobs relating to damp and mould.</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We have zero tolerance for service failures including abandoned repairs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completing all necessary damp inspection checklists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monthly monitoring of KPI performance.</li> <li>- Number of complaints received.</li> <li>- Customer satisfaction scores.</li> </ul>
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## 7. Appeal & Complaints

Riverside aim to meet all its obligations to carry out repairs within statute and the Responsive Repairs policy. If we do not, our customers can contact us and inform us of this. We will respond to complaints regarding our repairs service in line with our Complaints Policy and Customer Feedback Procedure.

## 8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Riverside is committed to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. We strive to be fair in our dealings with all people, communities and organisations, taking into account the diverse nature of their culture and background and actively promoting inclusion. This policy aligns with Riverside's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) and has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

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