



Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

Originator:	Policy and Strategy Team
PCHA Approval Date:	March 2024
Review date:	March 2027

1	Introduction
1.1	Across the range of its properties for rent and low-cost home ownership, Pine Court Housing Association (PCHA) aims to provide homes that are warm, safe and free from hazards.
1.2	Key to this aim is the provisions PCHA has in place to deal with issues of damp, mould and condensation in its properties.
1.3	<p>In operating this Policy, PCHA will ensure it meets all legal requirements associated with keeping properties in a good state of repair. The most relevant areas of legislation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 –(which introduced the ‘fitness for human habitation – standard’ and repairing obligations for landlords) • The Housing Act 2004 and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005 – (HHSRS - which introduced a risk assessment approach for identifying and categorising potential hazards in properties and actions required to minimise the likelihood of harm) • The Homes (Fitness for Habitation Act) 2018 – (which amended The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 to ensure landlords properties are fit for human habitation at the beginning of the tenancy and throughout)
1.4	<p>The Policy also ensures PCHA meets the requirements of the ‘Homes Standard’ of the Regulatory Framework adopted by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), the most relevant provisions of which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Providers shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ensure that tenants’ homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government’s Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard ○ When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas

- Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible

1.5 Access and Communication

1.5.1 PCHA is committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to everyone. PCHA will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for it or use its services.

1.5.2 Working with our customers we have established a Vulnerable Persons and Reasonable Adjustments Policy to ensure we make best use of every customer interaction to meet customers' needs in our service delivery and ensure this information is kept up to date.

1.6 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

1.6.1 PCHA is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty with positive regard for the following core strands of equality; Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Gender Identity / Gender Expression, Sexual Orientation, Religion and / or Belief, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity.

1.6.2 PCHA also recognise that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio-economic circumstances, employment status, class, appearance, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or with AIDS, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.

1.6.3 PCHA will also ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation. PCHA will endeavour to ensure Staff and others with whom it works, adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).

1.7 The Policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- The PCHA Repairs, Maintenance and Planned Works Policy
- The PCHA Complaints, Appeals and Feedback Policy

2 Statement of Intent

2.1 PCHA aims to provide homes that are warm and safe for residents that are free from any known hazards (as per the Housing Health and Safety Rating System – HHSRS categories including any in relation to damp, mould or excessive condensation).

2.2 PCHA adopts a 'zero-tolerance' stance to damp, mould or excessive condensation issues in its properties that may be detrimental in any way to health and well-being for occupants and their visitors.

2.3 As part of this stance PCHA will deploy its best endeavours to treat the outward signs of damp, mould or condensation and to tackle root causes when it is made aware of these issues from customer / third party reporting, through its own surveys or through understanding of archetypal property information.

<p>2.4</p> <p>2.5</p> <p>2.6</p> <p>2.7</p>	<p>PCHA will also ensure it manages its assets through reactive repairs / maintenance and lifecycle replacement / investment works to meet or exceed the prevailing Decent Homes Standards.</p> <p>PCHA will provide accessible means by which customers and their representatives can raise repairs or service requests including any damp, mould or condensation issues. This will include provision of adequate staff resources to be able to respond to customer requests in a timely fashion.</p> <p>PCHA will also keep under review its staff resources for carrying out property surveys to be able to meet demand for these services from customers and to facilitate the development of proactive work programmes to tackle damp, mould and condensation issues in properties e.g. servicing or installation of mechanical ventilation units (where appropriate).</p> <p>PCHA will adopt a collaborative and partnership approach with its customers to dealing with issues of damp, mould or condensation in properties including provision of advice and support where this required.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Policy</p>
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.1.1</p> <p>3.1.2</p> <p>3.1.3</p> <p>3.1.4</p> <p>3.1.5</p>	<p>Reporting damp, mould or condensation issues</p> <p>PCHA customers or those acting on the customers behalf can report repairs or requests for service, including any issues that concern damp, mould or condensation in a number of ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via telephone on 0151 709 6878 • Via the ‘My Account’ customer access portal available on the PCHA Website https://www.pinecourt-housing.org.uk/ (including easy to follow diagnostics tool to enable accurate reporting), for non-emergency repairs only • Via direct contact with any PCHA staff member or person working on PCHA’s behalf e.g. Neighbourhood Services Officers or Repairs and Maintenance Contractor Operatives <p>To ensure PCHA instigates the appropriate response when calls are made (on the number 0151 709 6878) our staff are trained to ask appropriate questions leading to accurate repairs diagnosis and identification.</p> <p>When reporting issues with damp, mould or condensation customers are encouraged, if possible, to send in photographs of the areas of concern via email which assists with the repair’s diagnostics process.</p> <p>Our staff are advised to ask customers if there are any concerns about damp, mould and condensation in properties on each call, even were this may not be the subject matter of the original service request.</p> <p>We have also instructed front line operatives from our repairs and maintenance contractor to enquire with customers if they are experiencing any issues with damp, mould or condensation when they are attending properties, on all jobs, so these can be captured and actioned.</p>

3.2 **Response to customer reports of damp, mould or condensation**

3.2.1 PCHA will respond to all service requests received from customers or their representatives that involve issues with damp, mould or excessive condensation.

3.2.2 Depending on the extent of the issue, jobs may be issued for remedial works direct to PCHA's repairs and maintenance contractor. These will be by appointment agreed with the customer and will be completed at the earliest opportunity.

3.2.3 Where PCHA repairs contractor identifies that further, more extensive works or a technical survey is required they will notify PCHA who will make contact with the customer to arrange access via an appointment.

3.2.4 Where it is not possible, from direct reporting, to diagnose the extent, severity / root cause of damp, mould or excessive condensation issues or the customer makes PCHA aware of any vulnerabilities they may have, PCHA will arrange for a member of its surveying team to carry out a technical assessment of the property.

3.2.5 PCHA will look to arrange a technical inspection at the earliest opportunity, however, during periods of peak demand in the winter months when damp, mould and condensation issues are most likely to occur it may take longer to schedule.

3.2.6 Where this is the case PCHA will liaise with the customer on the nearest appointment slot and will keep them informed of any changes, including if earlier appointments become available.

3.2.7 Following a technical assessment, a full schedule of remedial works will be drawn-up and arranged with the customer via appointment(s).

3.3 **Causes and treatments for damp mould and condensation**

3.3.1 The outward signs of damp, mould and excessive condensation can often overlap, and it can be difficult to reach a conclusive diagnosis of the root cause.

3.3.2 The most common of these issues is 'condensation' which occurs when moist, warm air cools quickly e.g. on contact with a colder surface and turns back into a liquid. This occurs through normal activities that are undertaken in the home such as cooking and bathing so is most likely to be found in kitchens and bathrooms.

3.3.3 Condensation can also occur if there is inadequate ventilation, or the outer fabric of a property is poorly insulated.

3.3.4 Whilst a small degree of condensation is inevitable in all homes, signs of excessive condensation include water running down the inside of walls / windows and pooling on flat surfaces.

3.3.5 PCHA will take a graded approach to dealing with excessive condensation in properties depending on the severity of the problem, as follows:

- Ensuring existing natural ventilation points are working effectively e.g. windows open and close properly, trickle vents are functional, ventilation bricks are not blocked etc.

- Ensuring mechanical ventilation points are working effectively e.g. extractor fans are serviced or where there are none present, installing such devices
- In more severe cases consideration for installation of positive input ventilation systems or inclusion on programmed works for improved insulation and window upgrades

3.3.6 Whilst less prevalent than ‘condensation’, issues of ‘damp’ in properties are still reasonably common, especially in older properties or those of concrete panel construction.

3.3.7 Outward signs of damp can include wet patches on walls and ceilings, tide marks on walls, discolouration of wallpaper and plaster work, often accompanied by a musty smell.

3.3.8 The two main types of damp in properties are ‘penetrating damp’ where water ingress into properties comes from the outer fabric of the building or ‘rising damp’ where water is drawn-up from the ground.

3.3.9 Both types of damp are usually a result of a property defect e.g. may be caused by a leaking roof, leaking pipes, defective gutters or downpipes, missing or cracked brickwork / pointing, materials piled against properties such as soil or breaching of a properties damp-proof membrane etc.

3.3.10 Again, PCHA will take a graded approach to dealing with these issues if they occur. This can range from remedying a simple defect e.g. fixing a leaking downpipe to more complex solutions that involve structural works and replacement of property elements such as damp-proof courses.

3.3.11 Both excessive condensation and damp can create problems with ‘mould’ in a property, which has many forms but commonly appears as black spotting or a furring around affected areas, which may be accompanied by a musty smell.

3.3.12 The graded approach to treating problems with mould will involve:

- Washing down of affected areas with anti-fungicidal treatment
- Application of damp proof paint to the affected areas
- Installation of physical features to improve ventilation as outlined in 3.3.5 above and remedying of any defective property elements

3.3.13 This will always be coupled with an assessment of the root cause and similarly if works are issued to deal with condensation or damp and mould is present, then the above actions will be combined.

3.4 **Complaints and appeals**

3.4.1 If for any reason customers are not satisfied with the response that PCHA provides in regard to dealing with damp, mould and condensation issues, they may access the PCHA complaints process which is detailed in full in the ‘PCHA Complaints, Appeals and Feedback Policy’ (available via the PCHA website: <https://www.pinecourt-housing.org.uk/> or by calling **0151 709 6878**).

3.5	<p>Provision of advice and support</p> <p>3.5.1 Where any customer reports damp, mould or condensation issues in their properties PCHA will adopt a collaborative approach to dealing with the problem.</p> <p>3.5.2 This will include a clear explanation of any physical defects with the property and the work and likely timescales involved in putting them right.</p> <p>3.5.3 It will also include the provision of advice for measures customers can take to help reduce the likelihood of damp, mould or condensation issues occurring and through referral or the provision of direct assistance ensuring any additional support needs are met.</p> <p>3.5.4 In most cases through this approach, it will be possible to deal with damp, mould and condensation issues and find lasting solutions with minimal disruption to the customer. However, in complex cases that require extensive structural works to remedy this may not be achievable whilst the customer is still occupying the property.</p> <p>3.5.5 Should this be required and, on a risk-based approach, taking into consideration individual circumstances, PCHA will work with the customer on finding suitable temporary alternative accommodation until all works are complete and it is safe to return to the property.</p>
4	Implementation
4.1	<p>All PCHA staff have a responsibility to be aware of the provisions within the ‘Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy’ to direct any customer enquiries they may receive and to take the appropriate action if they become aware of any issues with damp, mould or condensation they become aware of in PCHA properties.</p> <p>4.2 The Sovini Group Asset Management Team (acting on PCHA’s behalf) will have responsibility for day-to-day operation of the provisions that are in place for dealing with damp, mould and condensation in its properties. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight and management of the repairs and maintenance contract and any planned investment works • Carrying out property inspections where these are required and raising appropriate works to remedy any damp, mould or condensation issues that are identified • Devising and managing risk-based proactive works programmes to treat damp, mould and condensation issues in PCHA properties • Ensuring specification and works on other investment programmes factor in provision for adequate ventilation / damp, mould and condensation mitigation e.g. where insulation programmes or other energy efficiency / carbon reduction measures are carried out • Collating data and performance information to enable internal and external reporting • Working closely with customers and the PCHA Team on provision of support for vulnerable customers, where this is required including provision of translation services for Chinese and South East Asian customers (where English is not spoken as a first language)

5	Performance	
5.1	PCHA will carry out a self-assessment against the recommendations in the Housing Ombudsman’s Spotlight Report into Damp and Mould and will publish the results on its website and will provide updates twice a year.	
5.2	PCHA will develop a suite of internal Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) on the management of damp, mould and condensation issues and these will be reported quarterly to the Departmental Management Team and to the PCHA Board.	
5.3	PCHA will also provide collated performance information to the customer representatives that attend the Customer Empowerment Panel meetings and will also make information available via the satisfaction / performance reports that are published quarterly on the PCHA website.	
6	Consultation	
6.1	All PCHA Staff have been consulted in the development of this Policy. The PCHA Customer Empowerment Panel were also consulted on this Policy.	
7	Review	
7.1	This Policy will be reviewed every three years (from the date it is approved) by the Departmental Management (DMT) Team to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation or regulations that impacts on the obligations of PCHA or changes to PCHA business practices.	
8	Equality Impact Assessment	
8.1	Was a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) required?	Yes
8.2	When was EIA conducted and by who?	An EIA was conducted by the Policy and Strategy Manager and the Operations Director (Assets and Compliance) in January 2024
8.3	Results of EIA	<p>It is recommended PCHA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors the known customer profile information against all damp, mould and condensation cases / complaints / disrepair claims to identify if there are any trends that require addressing • Ensure on-going support is available for customers who have experienced these types of issues e.g. welfare benefit referral, assistance accessing cold weather payments etc. • Through proactive conversations with customers discover any groups where under-

		reporting may be an issue and develop action plan to raise awareness	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Policy when 'Awaabs Law' is enacted 	
9	Scheme of Delegation		
9.1	Responsible committee for approving and monitoring implementation of the policy and any amendments to it	Departmental Management Team	
9.2	Responsible officer for formulating policy and reporting to committee on its effective implementation	Director of Operations	
9.3	Responsible officer for formulating, reviewing and monitoring implementation of procedures	Director of Operations	
10	Amendment Log		
Date of revision:	Reason for revision:	Consultation record:	Record of amendments:
First Version – Not applicable	First Version – Not applicable	See Section 6	First Version – Not applicable
5 th March 2024	In line with review Schedule	See Section 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no significant Amendments in this review The EIA at Section 8 has been updated In line with Board approved process the review period for this Policy will extend to every Three Years rather than annually