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# Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

DRAFT

Effective Date: [Month / Year]

Last Revised: [Month / Year]

Next Revision Due: [Month / Year]

Policy Owner: [Department / Team]

Policy Contact: [Name, Title, E-mail/Tel. Ext.]

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## 1. SCOPE / PURPOSE

- 1.1. The aim of this policy is to proactively manage the potential risks and promptly diagnose and prevent issues which may arise from damp, mould and condensation in our properties, including communal areas; committing to meeting the needs of our contract holders and providing homes that are safe, warm, and dry.
- 1.2. Through this policy, Adra will establish appropriate processes, guidance, and knowledge to ensure that all our properties are well maintained and free of damp and mould that could risk the health and safety of contract holders living in homes or buildings owned or managed by Adra.
- 1.3. This policy also sets out how Adra will support our contract holders to minimise the risk of damp and mould occurring and report it where there is evidence of its presence, this will also ensure that Adra meets its legal, contractual, regulatory, and statutory obligations.
- 1.4. In addition to Adra's responsibilities the policy also sets out obligations that are expected from the contract holders.

## 2. DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. **Damp** refers to the presence of excess moisture in a room. Damp can be a serious problem as it can cause damage to a building's infrastructure. It is a problem that can affect any home no matter how large or small, damp is miserable to live with and a threat to health if left untreated. The most common form of damp is condensation. Please see section 2.3 below for various types of Damp.
- 2.2. **Where is Damp found?** Damp can occur anywhere in a home, though is typically found on walls and ceilings in kitchen and bathrooms, the perimeter of ceilings/top of walls in bedrooms. Damp can occur around the edges of, and on the surface of windows, and occasionally it can appear as a patch in the middle of a wall. It can also be found on the lower part of walls within ground floor rooms, or within the floor itself.

Its appearance can show as a wet patch, mould growth, or with a visible sign such as salts coming out of the wall. In severe cases plaster decay or blowing can occur. Condensation can also occur in roof spaces if they are not properly vented or insulated, causing sweating on the underside of roof felt.

### 2.3. What are the types of damp?

**Condensation** - This is typically defined by running water across a surface, caused by water vapour which has “condensed” from warm, moist air on contact with a cold surface. Warm air is able to hold more moisture than cold air, and the amount of moisture in the air is usually expressed as Relative Humidity (RH). Air which contains its maximum moisture content is said to be saturated, at which point it has 100% RH.

Indoor relative humidity should be between 40% and 60%, except for short periods of fluctuation. This range is the optimum to limit the occurrence of condensation and mould growth.

Anything that adds moisture to the air can contribute to condensation – even breathing adds vapour to the air around us. Most condensation cases can be resolved by adjusting internal environmental factors of the home. For guidance, please see **section 5** below.

It is important to note that in some circumstances natural condensation can occur when there may be no obvious causes, or a combination of less usual events occur. Building Research Establishment (BRE) Digest 297 (Reference), states

*“Condensation is always the result of air becoming saturated when it meets a cold surface, but the conditions under which it may occur in dwellings vary considerably. Broadly speaking, condensation is dependent on three interacting factors: the environment within the building, the building structure, and the natural climatic conditions outside the building.”*

**Interstitial Condensation** - This can occur where the temperature at a point where the structure is cold enough to cause water vapour to condense within it. This can lead to progressive saturation of masonry or cavity wall insulation.

**Cold Bridging** - This tends to occur in isolated areas, where a structural feature, or partial omission of insulation, lowers the temperature of part of a surface. This means this area will be colder and can trigger condensing of water vapour just at that point.

**Leaks (Traumatic Damp)** - This is obviously apparent where a pipe bursts or cracks. However, it can be more difficult to identify if there is a hidden cause gradually soaking the area affected. e.g., leaking underfloor pipes can give an impression of rising damp, as the structure will gradually absorb the water through capillary action.

**Water penetration** - This occurs where rainwater penetrates through the tiles on the roof, or the walls, windows, or doors. This may be due to a fault with one of those components, or as a greater volume of water is affecting an area e.g., leaking gutter

saturating the wall. It can also occur when ground levels outside are higher than the buildings damp proof course causing water to soak through the walls.

**Flooding** - events of flooding from rivers is a very low risk. Some properties have been affected by overflowing storm water culverts, and this is carefully managed. However, some estates are built into hillsides, and extreme rain events can cause flooding around the house. Where this occurs any weakness in construction can lead to water penetration.

**Rising Damp** - This is damp visible at low level to ground floor walls, or where a concrete floor is damp.

This is typically defined by a tidemark or change in surface condition of the plaster. It is important to differentiate this from water penetration to raised ground levels.

Rising damp is primarily caused by the capillary rise of ground water through the structure.

However, it can over time be due to the salts that are left from the ground water that has evaporated, causing walls or floors to become porous i.e., hygroscopic. Here the walls can absorb humid air from within the property.

In cases of rising damp, it is important to remove affected plaster and replace with a product that will combat the effect of hygroscopic damp.

**Perception Damp** - This typically relates to reports made by residents that it feels or smells damp.

**It feels Damp** - In cases where there is no visible damp, this can occur where the relative humidity in the property is naturally high, but the building structure is such that surfaces do not get cold enough for condensation to occur.

**It smells damp** - In cases with no visible damp, musty smells could be due to a lack of ventilation in the property.

In such cases it is important not to prejudge and investigate if there is potential for hidden damp or fungal growth, or interstitial condensation within the structure.

**Moulds and Fungal Growth** - This is the effect of the cause of damp. Moulds can grow when the indoor relative humidity persistently exceeds 70%. Most cases of mould are slight to moderate, but more severe cases can lead to the visible release of spore dust. Fungal growth is less common, and more associated with leaks and water penetration

event. Typically, the types are wet or dry rot in timber, but plaster or cellar fungus can occur.

### 3. **PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1. **Customer first approach** - Adra places a critical importance on contract holder safety. Welsh Housing Quality Standard developed by the Welsh Government requires that homes provided by social landlords meet the Tolerable Standard, are free from serious disrepair, are energy efficient, have modern facilities and services, and are healthy, safe and secure.
- 3.2. Adra must ensure that the dwelling is fit for human habitation (FFHH) as stipulated within the Renting Wales Homes Act 2016.
- 3.3. Any instances causing an immediate health risk to the inhabitants of the dwelling will be prioritised without delay. This would include treatment works to black spot mould as a short-term solution until the root cause has been identified and structural works have been scheduled and completed. In an extreme case, Adra would look to decant the contract holders without delay.
- 3.4. **A proactive approach** - Adra take a proactive approach to identifying any issues across their stock and will draw insight from as many sources as possible to identify instances of damp and mould and the causes. Stock data will be gathered and used to predict which properties are most likely to have issues with damp and mould.
  - On a small scale, this will include checking neighbouring properties for damp and mould when problems have developed in a nearby properties with similar characteristics.
  - On a larger scale, Adra will consider installing preventative measures, such as mechanical ventilation systems or smart sensors, in property types they have identified as being particularly susceptible to damp and mould.
  - When suitably qualified frontline staff (Property Surveyors) visits contract holders at their homes. If required, advice will be provided in relation to Damp, mould and condensation. The contract holder will also have an opportunity to raise any other property related issues.
- 3.5. **Tackling the root cause** - The aim of all responses to damp and mould issues will be to tackle the root cause of the problem. Adra staff or contractors sent in to respond to damp and mould will be trained to identify the root cause, particularly whether any issues with the building are contributing e.g. defective or inadequate ventilation, leaks or water ingress, or insufficient/defective insulation. They will have the equipment necessary to assess the scale of the problem.

Once diagnosed, works will be scheduled to address the causal factors ensuring a long-term solution is provided to our customers. Equally, should the damp and condensation be down to internal environmental factors, advice and guidance will be given to customers on how to better ventilate the property and minimise moisture content within the air.

- 3.6. **Safety First** - When responding to damp and mould cases, staff will consider the personal characteristics of tenants and whether anybody would have an increased risk to their health from living with damp and mould. Young children, older and disabled people, and people with lung conditions, compromised immune systems and certain other health problems are at increased risk of illnesses resulting from damp and mould.

Staff will consider the information they hold about households and ask about health conditions when tenants report issues with damp and mould. All instances of damp and mould will be responded to in line with Adra inspection and repairs timeline. (*see process map section 12*)

- 3.7. **Data / Intelligence Led** - It will only be possible to take an informed, proactive, and risk-based approach to dealing with damp and mould cases if Adra have the right information collected, stored and accessible to all relevant staff.

Adra will manage data in relation to Damp, Condensation and Mould via a spreadsheet that tracks each case. The information captured is discussed at regular meetings with Key staff and provides insight into trends and behaviours that may require further proactive investigation / communication campaigns.

- 3.8. **Void Properties** will be assessed for damp and mould issues. If required, all void properties will be treated, and all issues resolved before reletting the property.

The void standard includes steps like checking extractor fans and checking that all ventilation systems are working effectively as this helps prevent the build-up of excess moisture in the property. Other measures are also built into the void maintenance work, such as cleaning guttering / gullies etc.

- 3.9. **Working with our contract holders and partners** - Damp and mould issues are best resolved when harnessing the expertise of our assets, repairs, and housing teams, together with our contract holders' who have the experience of living in the home and specialist contractors to agree the right solutions.

All Adra Staff must report through the correct method if they are aware of any repair issues, defects, or damage in the dwelling.

Adra will encourage their contract holders to report problems as soon as possible and will share information with contract holders explaining the risks of living in a home with damp and mould, how to identify and report these issues, what steps Adra will take when reported and when any work will be completed.

Adra staff or contractors sent in to respond to damp and mould will be trained to identify the root cause, particularly whether any issues with the building are contributing e.g., defective or inadequate ventilation, leaks or water ingress, or insufficient/defective insulation. They will have the equipment necessary to assess the scale of the problem.

- 3.10 **Aftercare** - To be sure that efforts to treat damp and mould have worked properly, initial treatments will be supplemented by a follow up visit to check whether the problem has truly been resolved.

This will take place at least six weeks after the initial treatment, although any issues reported by contract holder in the meantime will be responded to promptly. (*See process map section 12*)

A follow up visit will not be required for low level condensation cases. These will be captured during routine Stock Condition Surveys although any issues reported by contract holder in the meantime will be responded to promptly.

In some cases, it may not be possible to adapt the property to work for a specific household without damp and mould reoccurring. This is a function of our ageing housing stock. Some older properties simply cannot be improved to meet modern living arrangements. In such cases, Adra will seek to rehouse the household to a more suitable property, with regular remedial and preventative work if a move cannot be arranged quickly. Adra must then decide whether that property might work for another (typically smaller) household, or whether it cannot safely be re-let. These properties will be appraised and discussed within Adra's Active Asset Management Group.

#### 4. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### 4.1 Roles and responsibility table

Role	Responsibility
Chief Executive	Senior Responsible Officer
Assistant Director of Assets	Strategic Lead Officer
Assets Investment Manager	Operational Lead Officer



Assistant Director of Repairs and Maintenance	Repairs and Maintenance work allocated to Trwsio, Adra's in house contractor
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## 4.2 Adra responsibilities

### 4.2.1 Inspection, assessment and diagnosis

- Undertake regular stock condition surveys as per the Adra WHQS Compliance Policy.
- Actively review data to make informed preventive decisions in relation to damp and mould.
- Undertake a property inspection by a suitably qualified person 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.
- Determine severity of the issue, risk assess and prioritise accordingly.
- If deemed unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day-by-day basis or a temporary decant to an alternative property.

### 4.2.2 Repairs / remedial action

- Ensure that only competent contractors will be employed to carry out any works and that the contract holder's possessions are adequately protected during the works.
- Carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with relevant Adra policies.
- 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 ready for the contract holder to redecorate. Where there is need to decorate following remedial work, Adra will provide a decoration voucher to cover the cost of the materials needed to make good the decoration.

### 4.2.3 Communicate / Advise / Recommend

- 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.
- Inform the contract holder 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 contract holder updated throughout the process from inception to completion.

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- This support will be provided through the provision of advice and guidance literature and by working with our contract holders through our resident involvement strategy (Adra 'Your Voice').

#### 4.2.4 Training

- Adra will identify key staff and stakeholders with training needs.
- Training will be provided as per required within Adra's training matrix.

#### 4.2.5 Planned pro-active maintenance works

- Continue to invest in our contract holders' homes to ensure all properties are free from disrepair, safe, secure and energy efficient.
- Take responsibility for maintaining contract holders' homes to avoid penetrating and rising damp and for carrying out remedial action if these problems occur.
- Continue to develop our use of data to shape our future investment programmes.
- Adra will always consider whether the source of the damp and mould is a design, construction, or maintenance issue.
- Where this is not the case additional support and advice will be provided to the contract holder on managing and controlling the occurrences of condensation damp.

### 4.3 Contract Holder responsibilities

In line with the contract holders' contract with Adra, it is the contract holder's duty to take care of the dwelling and to notify Adra of any defect or disrepair.

The contract holder has a responsibility to immediately report any evidence of damp (see definitions Section 3) as well as reporting any 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.)

Contract holders must allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works. Where contract holders are considering making any changes within their home: for example, converting rooms into one room, adding extensions, converting non-habitable buildings/spaces into habitable, they must seek advice and permission from Adra in accordance with Adra's Contract holder Alterations and Improvements policy, to ensure that the proposed alteration would not contribute to the accumulation of damp, mould, or condensation, as well as ensuring alterations comply with Adra policy, building control and planning guidelines.

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## 5 **GUIDANCE TO CONTRACT HOLDERS**

### 5.1 **Damp and Mould in your home**

We want our contract holders to live in comfortable homes where they feel safe. We also understand that damp is a problem that worries people.

Many things affect dampness, condensation, and mould, so Adra have created a damp, mould and condensation information sheet and a video which is available on the Adra Website. Both forms of communication provide our contract holders with some tips about the things you can do to prevent and reduce dampness in your home.

Despite the tips noted, we want to make it very clear that we understand that the problem can get out of your control.

If you have implemented these tips and are still seeing signs of damp, condensation, or mould – don't suffer in silence, please contact Adra so that we can help you.

### 5.2 **Assisting our contract holders**

Adra will ensure that contract holders are treated in a fair and consistent way. Daily living activities can increase the risk of condensation, but Adra contract holders, wherever they live and whatever type of house they live in, are entitled to live in a home free of damp and mould.

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

Adra will share information with contract holders to limit the build-up of excess moisture, this will happen alongside active work to the property, where required, to remove existing damp and mould and prevent its reoccurrence.

Adra has access to Energy Wardens who can provide contract holders with advice and assistance where a contract holder is struggling to pay energy bills or there are issues with energy supply. Adra also recognise that some of our contract holders may need help when it comes to meeting their repair responsibilities. Adra may, entirely at our discretion, provide a service in addition to the statutory and contractual responsibilities, to assist our contract holders who may need support to meet the conditions of their tenancy. Adra will make this assessment with the contract holder 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 or safety. This may include an extension to the scope of repairs which Adra 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 contract holders and their specific individual or family circumstances, with a view to assisting which may include painting of finished surfaces. The nature of the decoration will solely be at Adra's discretion.

## 6 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

### 6.1 Key legal and regulatory references.

- Welsh Housing Quality Standards
- Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016
- Fitness for human habitation (FFHH) - *Part 4 of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016*
- Approved Document F (Ventilation) Building Regulations

### 6.2 Related Adra Policies / Standards.

- Adra Ventilation Policy
- Adra Void Standards
- Adra Complaints and Concerns Policy
- Adra Disrepair Policy
- Adra Heating Policy

## 7 RECORD OF REVISIONS TO THIS PROCESS

### 7.1 Record of revisions table

Issue	Date	Comments (What has been revised?)	Written By	Approved for content
0	01/04/23	New policy	MG	

## 8 COMPLAINTS

8.1 Adra recognises your right to bring forward a complaint in relation to the exercise of this policy. Any such complaint will be dealt with under the CCpol01 – Complaints and

Concerns Policy. Adra will ensure that any decisions relevant to this policy are reasonable and comply with relevant policy and legislation.

**9 REVIEW OF DECISION**

9.1 Adra recognises the right to request a review of any decision relating to this policy. Any such review will be dealt with following our CCp04- Review of Decision process. Adra will ensure that any decisions relevant to this policy are reasonable and comply with relevant policy and legislation.

**10 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

10.1 Adra recognises the needs of a diverse population and always acts within the scope of its own Equality and Diversity Policy

10.2 Adra will ensure that the individual needs of applicants in accordance with this policy, regardless of age, gender, race, class, culture, sexuality, or disability are considered when assessing applications for accommodation.

**11 DATA PROTECTION**

11.1 As part of its development, this document and its impact on data privacy has been assessed via a Data Protection Screening, and actions will be implemented as required. Any data gathered for the use of this policy shall be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

11.2 Adra are committed to abide by the terms of data sharing agreements as well as any relevant legislation including GDPR.

**12 PROCESS MAP**

12.1 Damp and Mould Process Map

**To be completed via ADRA D&M Task and Finish Group**