



SAXON WEALD

DAMP, CONDENSATION AND MOULD POLICY

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1.0 Introduction and aim

1.1 This policy sets out Saxon Weald's approach towards damp, condensation, and mould problems in our homes. Our aim is to provide a service that will:

- Ensure that residents are treated in a fair and consistent way.
- Comply with statutory requirements and good practice.
- Work in partnership with residents to address damp and mould problems.
- Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable remedial repair solutions to eradicate damp, including managing and controlling humidity and condensation.
- Ensure that residents have access to and are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling humidity and condensation in their home.
- Ensure that the fabric of our properties is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and condensation.

2.0 Background

2.1 Saxon Weald has made significant reinvestment in its housing stock since being formed in 2000. However, we recognise there is still work required to establish the full extent of buildings that are vulnerable to humidity issues, due to age and construction type, in order to eliminate the problem as far as possible.

2.2 Whilst past cavity wall insulation programmes have, in the main, helped to alleviate cold properties, there are occasions where these works have contributed to a change in building conditions, resulting in an adverse effect.

2.3 Our ongoing planned works programmes provide a proactive 'front-footed approach' to eliminating damp and humidity problems. However, it is recognised that it may take some time before our entire housing stock has been brought up to a common standard, where all anti-humidity measures have been implemented.

- 2.4 In the meantime, it essential that other indicators of damp and humidity issues are considered, and not just a complaint's led method of identification. This policy and associated procedure are intended to ensure a robust and consistent approach to the investigation and resolution of damp, humidity, and subsequent mould issues.
- 2.5 Rising energy costs, high inflation and increasing poverty levels are resulting in residents having to make stark choices when it comes to heating and utilising their homes as they normally would. This, along with the design, age and thermal values of our properties are key contributors towards increasing damp, condensation, and mould issues, which are on the rise nationally, manifesting in an urgent need to identify effective and sustainable solutions.
- 2.6 In October 2021, the Housing Ombudsman identified that, due to the high rate of upheld decisions against landlords, a fresh approach to the investigation and resolution of damp, condensation, and subsequent mould issues was necessary.
- 2.7 Whilst the Housing Ombudsman acknowledged the complex nature of cases, along with the varying circumstances and root causes of mould, they attributed blame for the rise in adverse decisions to an underlying theme adopted by social housing landlords.
- 2.8 The Ombudsman identified that, historically, it was customary practice for landlords to take a 'defensive position' by associating the root causes of the problem to that of the resident's 'lifestyle'. This 'defensive position' is now seen as both the cause of strained resident and landlord relationships, as well as a loss of trust and confidence from residents in their landlord.
- 2.9 Along with the negative publicity often associated with this type of disrepair, this lack of trust and confidence impacts strongly on resident satisfaction and the reputation of social housing landlords. This has led the Ombudsman to demand a change in culture, behaviour, and approach.
- 2.10 The Housing Ombudsman is clear that social landlords are expected to consolidate and adopt a comprehensive policy in relation to damp, condensation, and mould. This policy and guidance will enable Saxon Weald to manage damp, condensation, and mould issues both effectively and consistently.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy covers all Saxon Weald properties that are tenanted and excludes any properties which are let to a third party which have a full repairing lease.

4.0 Definitions & causes

- 4.1 **Penetrating damp** (including internal leaks) - water penetrating the external structure of the building or internal leaks causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces or structure.

4.2 **Condensation** – occurs when the moisture held in air comes in to contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. This can take two main forms:

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

4.3 **Mould** - is a natural organic compound that develops in humid conditions and grows on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation is present.

4.4 Specific conditions that can increase the risk of condensation and mould are:

- Inadequate ventilation.
- Inadequate heating.
- Inadequate thermal insulation.
- Poor building design and construction.
- Overcrowding.

5.0 Legal & Regulatory Expectations

5.1 Saxon Weald will comply with all relevant legislation and regulation, including:

- Housing Act 1985/1988
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985 Section 11 – Repairs & Maintenance
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing, Health & Safety Rating System
- Decent Homes Standard

5.2 Saxon Weald's related policies include:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Responsive Repairs Policy
- Lettable Standard Policy
- Planned Maintenance and Improvement Policy

6.0 Policy

6.1 Saxon Weald recognises that condensation, damp, and mould issues are a cause of distress, disruption, and frustration to our residents. In managing and addressing these issues, Saxon Weald will:

- Adopt a customer centric ‘no blame’ approach.
- Train our staff in recognising and understanding the signs and causes of damp, condensation, and mould.
- Take responsibility and ownership of issues; following them up with a speedy and thorough investigation of the building fabric, a robust diagnosis of the underlying causes and the implementation of sustainable solutions.
- Be proactive in our approach to preventing and managing damp, condensation, and mould through establishing and implementing planned programmes of works on properties with known or potential problems.
- Proactively inspect & survey properties on a regular basis and use other opportunities to collect and report issues with mould in our homes.
- Gather and use stock condition and complaints data to inform reinvestment decisions, ensuring that funds are spent where they are most needed.
- Establish, promote, and implement a transparent framework, which sets out our approach to analysis, diagnosis, and resolution.
- Provide clear and timely advice to help residents manage and eradicate humidity, condensation, and mould effectively.
- Work with the residents to co-design meaningful solutions, which acknowledge and promote a shared responsibility.
- Ensure effective communication with residents affected by damp, condensation, and mould, being clear about the action to be taken, the timescales within which the action will be completed and the aftercare arrangements.
- Ensure that clear, accurate and reliable records of all damp, condensation and mould issues are kept.
- Do all practicable work required to identify “silent sufferers”.

6.0 How residents can help

- 6.1 Residents can help manage humidity and condensation in their home and it is Saxon Weald’s responsibility to work with them to provide the necessary advice and support to enable them to do so effectively.
- 6.2 Advice to residents and their responsibilities are set out in the Tenancy Agreement, Tenants Guide and our “Tackling Condensation” leaflet. Saxon Weald will ensure that our landlord obligations are met in all instances.

7.0 Value for Money

- 7.1 As a responsible landlord, it is our duty to help residents maintain and live in their homes safely and effectively; thus, increasing property efficiency and reducing financial outlay on utility costs. This will be achieved through an effective planned investment programme, taking a proactive approach to resolve damp, condensation, and mould issues, and providing useful information and support to residents on how to optimise the efficiency of their homes.

7.2 Staff will receive training to understand the differences between penetrating damp and condensation that can cause mould growth. This will enable earlier intervention; help reduce costs and improve customer satisfaction.

8.0 Monitoring and review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years in accordance with our review timetable or in the interim period if any major legislative or regulatory changes require it.

8.2 Any customer that is not satisfied with our approach in assessing and managing their damp and mould concerns may make a complaint, which will be investigated and responded to in line with our published complaints procedure.

8.3 Saxon Weald will collect, record and report information on damp, condensation, and mould issues, on a regular basis, to the Board and Executive Team for monitoring and assurance purposes; as well and to the Property Investment Team to assist with operational performance monitoring.

9.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

9.1 Equality and diversity affects all aspects of our business and, as such, its principles are integral to everything we do. As a landlord and an employer, Saxon Weald aims to recognise and respond positively to people's differences, while providing equality of opportunity in relation to the services and careers we provide and support.

9.2 This means that no person or group of people, either working for Saxon Weald or seeking housing, services, employment or contracts from us, will be treated less favourably because of their or their partner's, family's, friend's or associated person's protected characteristics, which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including race and ethnicity, nationality, immigration status), religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. This includes individuals either already serving on or applying to join our Board.

9.3 No person experiencing damp, condensation or mould in their home will be discriminated against, or receive a lesser service, because of their protected characteristics or for bringing these matters to Saxon Weald's attention.

Version	Amendment	By	Date
1.0	New document	Simon Farmer	May-15
2.0	Revision and update	Ian Bamforth	May-18
3.0	Full review and rewrite	Tarquin Taylor	Nov-22