

## SAXON WEALD

# DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY

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### 1.0 Introduction and aims

- 1.1 In 2020, two-year-old Awaab Ishak died from a severe respiratory condition caused by prolonged exposure to black mould in his home. His tragic death led to the introduction of Awaab's Law, which comes into force on 27 October 2025. It sets strict legal deadlines for social landlords to investigate and fix serious hazards – starting with damp, mould, and emergency repairs. The law is clear: if a tenant reports a hazard, landlords must act swiftly, communicate clearly, and keep people safe.
- 1.2 This policy sets out Saxon Weald's approach towards dealing with damp, mould and condensation in our homes. Our aim is to:
- Embed a culture that puts the safety and wellbeing of our residents at the centre of what we do. Customers should feel safe, respected and listened to.
  - Treat customers fairly, adapting and tailoring our services to take individual needs into account.
  - Work in partnership with customers to address damp and mould, and to communicate with them in a clear and effective way. This includes ensuring that customers have accessible advice, guidance and support on reporting issues and (if necessary) managing and controlling humidity and condensation in their home.
  - Comply with statutory requirements and good practice. This means undertaking effective investigations and implementing remedial repair solutions to eradicate damp and mould in a timely way.
  - Develop a data-led, proactive and preventative approach to damp and mould in order to keep our customers safe and protect the fabric of our properties from deterioration and damage.
- 1.3 The scope of Awaab's Law means that it cuts across all the services we deliver. In particular, relevant linkages include:
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
  - Lettings Policy
  - Tenancy Policy
  - Responsive Repairs Policy
  - Lettable Standard Policy
  - Planned Maintenance Policy

## 2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy outlines our approach to damp, mould and condensation, in line with the requirements of Awaab's Law, in all our owned and managed homes, which includes:

- General needs homes
- Supported housing schemes
- Retirement and extra care schemes
- Shared ownership (see below)
- Leaseholders (see below)

2.2 In the case of shared ownership and leasehold properties, where the lease or warranty stipulates that we have responsibility for the fabric of the building or common areas, we will work with homeowners to address any issues in relation to damp, mould and condensation that are related to these obligations.

2.3 From 27 October 2025, landlords also have to address all emergency hazards (not just damp and mould) within 24 hours. Repairs that fall under this category are already defined as 24-hour emergencies in our repairs service standard and are not covered specifically in this policy.

## 3.0 Legal and regulatory requirements

3.1 The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Safety and Quality Standard sets the expectation that landlords will '*maintain tenants' homes so that they are safe and of a decent standard and provide a quality service*'.

3.2 The Housing Ombudsman published a good practice guide 'Spotlight on Damp & Mould' in 2021, setting out the approach they expect social landlords to take when dealing with any complaints about this area.

3.3 **Awaab's Law** is Section 42 of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Its primary aim is to ensure that landlords promptly investigate and repair health and safety hazards reported by tenants, such as damp, mould, and emergency issues, within strict, legally mandated timeframes. It also gives tenants the legal right to demand these repairs and holds landlords accountable for ensuring their homes are safe and healthy, and for providing clear records of their actions.

Landlords who fail to meet these legal requirements will face consequences, and tenants will have a legal route to hold them accountable.

3.4 In addition to the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, Saxon Weald will comply with all relevant legislation including:

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11)
- Housing Act 2004
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Home Standard, Regulator of Social Housing 2015
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims (England) 2021
- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

- Relevant health and safety legislation, including the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

#### **4.0 Responsibilities**

- 4.1 Every Saxon Weald colleague has a duty to ensure that any concerns related to damp, mould and condensation are reported.
- 4.2 We will work with our contractors to ensure they understand their role in reporting damp and mould (or any concerns they observe when in customers' homes). Mechanisms are in place to enable them to raise concerns via our Every Visit Counts initiative.
- 4.3 This policy is owned and led by the Executive Director of Customer Operations with support and engagement from the wider business, and with oversight from the Leadership Team and Board.
- 4.4 Operational delivery is led by the Assistant Director of HomeFix, with the support of the wider HomeFix Senior Leadership Team and our Operative workforce.

#### **5.0 Our approach**

We will:

- 5.1 Recognise the significant risks that can be caused by damp, mould and condensation and ensure that we have processes, resources, systems and training in place to provide an effective response in line with Awaab's Law.
- 5.2 Take all reports of damp, mould and condensation seriously, capturing and reporting each case and monitoring all concerns/cases through to resolution.
- 5.3 Triage issues of damp and mould using a combination of property and customer risk factors to determine the right response.
- 5.4 Carry out investigations, hazard removal (mould washdown), remedial repairs (or more major works where necessary) within the timeframes of Awaab's Law.
- 5.5 Provide clear and accessible information to customers about: the outcome of damp and mould investigations, the root cause of the issue, information about what works are needed, what will happen next and when it will happen. This includes maintaining clear and regular communication with customers until resolution of the issue.
- 5.6 Ensure that we take the needs of individuals into account and adapt how we deliver our service in line with their circumstances.
- 5.7 Upgrade ventilation systems where mould growth could be caused by excessive moisture in the home.
- 5.8 Provide and publish guidance and advice about the causes of damp, mould and condensation and ensure customers can easily report concerns. Where appropriate, we will support to help customers manage humidity levels in their home (being clear that this is not a lifestyle problem). Other advice and support can range from practical help such as offering a dehumidifier or a house clearance, through to financial advice or engagement with other support services.

- 5.9 Where significant works are required or where there are concerns about a customer's health and wellbeing, we will consider a temporary or permanent move in line with our Lettings Policy and Awaab's Law.
- 5.10 Ensure that colleagues (whether internal or external) have sufficient levels of expertise to identify cases of damp and mould and deal appropriately with it and its causes/remedies. Where necessary, this may mean the use of qualified external experts to determine root causes and remedies.
- 5.11 We will promote cross-departmental collaboration to manage condensation, damp, and mould issues effectively. We will share relevant updates, training, and best practices to ensure consistent service delivery.
- 5.12 We will clearly define expectations, timelines, and quality standards for contractors involved in inspections and remediation. We will ensure regular communication to monitor progress and resolve any issues promptly. We will provide regular updates to customers relating to the progress of works.
- 5.13 Make effective use of data to monitor cases and ensure compliance with Awaab's Law.

## 6.0 Types of damp

- 6.1 **Condensation** occurs when moisture in warm air meets a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. Factors increasing condensation can include lack of ventilation, inadequate heating, poor insulation, structural issues and high humidity. High levels of condensation can create an environment that enables mould to grow.
- 6.2 **Rising damp** is the movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building. Rising damp can be caused by missing or faulty damp proof course.
- 6.3 **Penetrating damp** occurs when water passes through the external structure of the building causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structures. The cause of penetrating damp is often linked to structural issues, faulty guttering, defective brickwork or windows, or problems with roofing. Penetrating damp can also be caused by internal leaks.
- 6.4 **Specific conditions** that can increase the risk of damp, mould and condensation include:
- Inadequate ventilation.
  - Inadequate heating.
  - Inadequate thermal insulation.
  - Poor building design and construction.
  - Building defects leading to water ingress.
  - Overcrowding.

## 7.0 Definitions, timeframes and actions

- 7.1 There are two categories of hazards defined under Awaab's Law. These are:

- **Emergency hazards.** These hazards are those that pose 'an imminent and significant risk of harm to the health or safety of the tenant in the social home'.
- **Significant hazards.** These hazards are those that pose a 'significant risk of harm to the health or safety of a tenant of the social home'.

#### Determining the severity of the hazard

- 7.2 We will triage cases in line with the guidance in Awaab's Law and have created a matrix to determine the hazard risk level. This means that we will consider the severity of the property issue alongside the circumstances of the household members.

We have defined higher risk customer groups as:

- Those over the age of 65
- Those under the age of 5
- Those with a respiratory health condition

However, this list is not exclusive and we will ensure we take into account any other circumstances that may put someone at risk.

- 7.3 We are committed to meeting the investigation and repairs timescales as required under Awaab's Law.

#### **Emergency hazards**

An investigation and relevant safety works (including removal of mould) will be undertaken within 24 hours. Where it is not possible to remove the hazard, we will arrange alternative accommodation for the customer.

#### **Significant hazards**

An investigation will be carried out within 10 working days. Relevant safety work (removal of mould) must be undertaken within 5 working days of the investigation.

For both types of hazards we will provide the customer with a prescriptive written summary of the investigation within 3 days of it taking place.

- 7.4 We will carry out remedial work, repairs or property improvements as below.

- 7.4.1 **Relevant Safety Work.** Immediate actions taken to make a property safe once a hazard has been identified. Examples include:

- Mould wash treatments
- Installation of dehumidifiers
- Temporary sealing of leaks
- Emergency heating or ventilation fixes

We will undertake these works within 5 working days of the investigation being carried out.

- 7.4.2 **Supplementary Preventative Work.** Follow-up actions designed to prevent the hazard from recurring and address the root cause of the issue. Examples include:

- Repairing roof leaks
- Improving insulation or ventilation systems
- Replacing faulty windows or damp-proofing walls

We will begin these works within 5 days of the investigation being carried out. Where this is not possible, we will physically start the works within 12 weeks and complete within a reasonable timeframe.

7.5 If there is a need for further investigation, we will carry this out within 28 days of the need being identified.

7.6 Some cases may not meet the threshold for Awaab's Law. For example, where there is only a small patch of mould and there are no high risk factors in the household. In this instance, we will still carry out an investigation within 10 days but any work would be treated as a routine repair under our 28-day timeframe.

#### Access to customers' homes

7.7 We have a legal duty of care towards our customers and to keep them safe. If we are aware of an issue of damp and mould, it is critical for the customers' health and wellbeing that we are able to access the property to carry out an investigation and any necessary works.

7.8 If we are unable to access a home to carry out works following three attempts/visits, this will be classed as 'No Access' and we will:

- Continue to try to contact the resident by the most suitable means (such as phone calls, texts, and letters) to request they allow us access to their home.
- Continue to visit the address to speak to the resident in person.

7.9 If our efforts to gain access to a property to ensure customer safety are unsuccessful, we may decide to apply for a legal injunction to allow us lawful access to the property to carry out the required works.

## **8.0 Data and performance reporting**

8.1 We will measure our compliance against Awaab's Law and report our performance to customers, our Executive team, and our Board.

8.2 We will develop a proactive approach to using data to determine if there are any particular property types or addresses with common damp and mould problems, so we may carry out preventative maintenance. We will also use the data provided by incoming cases to look for patterns and to constantly make improvements to our service.

## **9.0 Monitoring and review**

9.1 This policy will be reviewed annually to accommodate the full roll-out of Awaab's Law.

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

9.3 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, and to improve services.

## 10.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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 partners, families, friends or associated person’s protected characteristics, which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, 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.
- 10.3 No person experiencing damp, mould, or condensation 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.

<b>Version</b>	<b>Amendment</b>	<b>By</b>	<b>Date</b>
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
4.0	Full review and rewrite	Kath Hicks Executive Director – Customer Operations	Oct-25