

# Damp & Mould Policy

Housing Services

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## 1. Introduction

Guildford Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all of its homes are safe, warm, and free from hazards. Damp and mould can cause serious health problems, damage properties, and reduce residents' quality of life.

This policy sets out how the Council will prevent, identify, and address damp and mould in its housing stock. It supports our legal responsibilities as a landlord and ensures that we act promptly and effectively when issues are reported or found.

The policy also sets out the responsibilities of tenants and leaseholders in managing and preventing condensation and damp in their homes.

## 2. Legal and Regulatory Context

This policy supports the Council's duties under housing and landlord legislation, including:

- Housing Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 ('LTA 85'), Sections 9A to 13
- Housing Act 2004 (Housing Health and Safety Rating System)
- Decent Homes Standard

Under these laws, the Council has a legal duty to ensure that its homes do not contain hazards which pose a risk to the health or safety of residents. Section 10A LTA85 ("Awaab's Law") places specific legal requirements on social landlords to respond within set timeframes to reports of damp and mould.

We also follow the principles set out by Housing Ombudsman Service in its [Spotlight on Damp and Mould report](#), which requires landlords to adopt a **zero-tolerance approach** and act proactively.

## 3. Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure the safety and health of residents by identifying and resolving damp and mould hazards quickly.
- Comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- Take a **zero-tolerance approach** to damp and mould.
- Investigate and address the **root causes** of damp and mould, not just the symptoms.
- Provide clear and accessible information to residents.
- Ensure staff and contractors are trained and competent to identify and address damp and mould.
- Work in partnership with residents to reduce risks.
- Use data and stock intelligence to prevent problems in high-risk homes.

## 4. Definitions

- **Damp:** The presence of excess moisture in a building caused by rising damp, penetrating damp, or condensation.
- **Mould:** A fungus that grows in damp conditions, often appearing as black, green or yellow patches. Mould can be harmful to health and must be removed safely.
- **Significant hazard:** A serious risk to health or safety that must be addressed in line with Awaab's Law.
- **Emergency hazard:** An immediate danger to health or safety requiring a 24-hour response.
- **Out of scope:** Issues not covered by Awaab's Law but which may still be addressed under other housing legislation or maintenance responsibilities.

### 4.1 Types of Damp

- **Rising damp:** Moisture moving upward from the ground through the building fabric.
- **Penetrating damp:** Moisture entering through defects in roofs, walls, windows, or plumbing.
- **Condensation damp:** Moisture produced inside the property from activities such as cooking, bathing and drying clothes, respiration.

## 5. Responsibilities

### 5.1 Council Responsibilities

The Council will:

- Investigate and address reports of damp and mould promptly.
- Diagnose the cause of damp accurately and provide appropriate solutions.
- Ensure that emergency and significant hazards are dealt with in accordance with legal timescales.
- Provide residents with clear written information on what was found, what action will be taken, and when.
- Ensure competent contractors and trained staff carry out remedial works.
- Record and monitor reports of damp and mould to identify trends and target prevention work.
- Ensure properties are let in a safe and habitable condition, with any damp or mould issues resolved before letting.
- Offer alternative accommodation where it is unsafe for residents to remain in their home during works.
- Use asset data to identify and manage high-risk property types.

### 5.2 Tenant Responsibilities

Residents also have an important role in managing condensation and reporting problems early. Tenants are expected to:

- Report damp and mould as soon as it is noticed.

- Allow access for inspections and remedial works.
- Use heating, ventilation, and extractor fans appropriately.
- Keep vents and trickle vents open, where fitted.
- Manage moisture by covering pans, ventilating bathrooms, drying laundry safely, and keeping air flowing around furniture.

Where tenants need support (for example, due to vulnerability), the Council will work with them to manage and reduce risks.

### 5.3 Leaseholders

Leaseholders are responsible for managing and maintaining their homes, including damp and condensation issues, in line with their lease.

If leaseholder neglect affects neighbouring Council homes, the Council may take appropriate legal or lease-based action.

## 6. Reporting Damp and Mould

Residents can report damp and mould through:

- Telephone: **01483 505050**
- Email: **repairs@guildford.gov.uk**
- Online: Using the [damp and mould reporting form](#)
- In person: Millmead House, Guildford
- Post: Customer Services, Millmead House, Guildford, Surrey GU2 4BB

Information, advice and guidance on damp, mould and condensation are also available on our website.

## 7. Investigation and Response Times

The Council will follow the statutory response times set out under Awaab’s Law:

Hazard type	Investigation time	Written outcome	Start safety works	Further works deadline	Temporary accommodation
Emergency hazard	Within 24 hours	Within 3 working days	Within 5 working days	Within 12 weeks	Yes, if unsafe
Significant hazard	Within 10 working days	Within 3 working days	Within 5 working days	Within 12 weeks	Yes, if unsafe
Out of scope	As appropriate	As required	As required	As required	Not required

- If the first check is not in person and no work has started, tenants may request a **renewed investigation**.

- Where the cause is unclear, further investigation will be carried out as soon as possible.
- If the property cannot be made safe quickly, temporary accommodation will be offered.

## **8. Prevention and Early Intervention**

The Council will adopt a proactive approach to managing damp and mould by:

- Identifying high-risk property types through stock condition data.
- Carrying out planned works to improve ventilation, insulation, and heating systems.
- Training staff and contractors to recognise early signs of damp and mould.
- Providing tenants with information on managing condensation at sign-up and during tenancy.
- Integrating damp and mould monitoring into housing inspections, repairs visits and void works.

## **9. Equality and Vulnerability**

The Council recognises that some residents may be more vulnerable to the impacts of damp and mould, including:

- Young children
- Older people
- People with respiratory or other long-term health conditions
- People with disabilities

We will take additional steps to support these residents, including fast-tracking remedial works where appropriate and ensuring information is provided in accessible formats.

We are committed to ensuring our services are inclusive and in line with Equality Act 2010.

## **10. Data Protection and Privacy**

We will manage personal information in accordance with UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.

Information will be kept secure, used only for legitimate purposes, and retained in line with our data retention schedule.

## **11. Complaints and Escalation**

If a tenant is unhappy with how a damp or mould issue has been handled, they can make a formal complaint using the Council's complaints procedure.

If they remain dissatisfied, they can contact Housing Ombudsman Service for further support.

## 12. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or regulatory requirements change.
- Performance will be monitored through key indicators such as response times, completion times, and case outcomes.
- Regular reports will be presented to senior management and relevant committees to ensure accountability.

## Appendix A – Causes and Types of Damp (Technical Overview)

- **Rising Damp:** Caused by moisture travelling up from the ground. Often linked to failed damp proof courses or inadequate damp proofing.
  - **Penetrating Damp:** Caused by defects in the building fabric, including roof failures, leaking pipes, blocked gutters, or poor external pointing.
  - **Condensation Damp:** Caused by warm, moist air meeting cold surfaces, creating water droplets. Contributing factors include poor ventilation, inadequate heating, poor insulation, and overcrowding.
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## Appendix B – Preventative Measures (Property Level)

- Installation and maintenance of extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms.
  - Trickle vents in windows to support background ventilation.
  - Adequate loft and cavity wall insulation.
  - Regular gutter clearance and roof inspections.
  - Design solutions to address cold bridging where feasible.
  - Ongoing stock monitoring and investment programmes.
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## Appendix C – Tenant Guidance Summary

- Cover pans when cooking and keep doors closed in kitchens and bathrooms.
  - Use extractor fans where provided.
  - Open windows after cooking or bathing.
  - Keep heating at a consistent, moderate level.
  - Keep furniture slightly away from external walls to allow airflow.
  - Dry laundry outside where possible, or ventilate rooms well if drying indoors.
  - Report any damp, mould or ventilation faults early.
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## Appendix D – Related Documents

- [Repairs Policy](#)
- Tenancy Conditions
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Corporate Equality Policy](#)

## Appendix E Awaab's Law Process Flow

Note: This process does not include renewed and further investigation timeframes.

