



This policy sets out how Longhurst Group will process and resolve issues with damp, mould and condensation reported or identified within its customers' homes and communal areas.

# Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

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**Part 1**

# About this policy

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## Document management

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<b>Directorate</b>	Finance
<b>Policy sponsor</b>	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer
<b>Policy owner</b>	Director of Responsive Repairs
<b>Policy author</b>	Head of Repairs and Maintenance
<b>Summary</b>	This policy sets out how Longhurst Group will process and resolve issues with damp, mould and condensation reported or identified within its customers' homes and communal areas.
<b>Target audience</b>	All employees, contractors, and customers.

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## Review process

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<b>Approval route</b>	Audit and Risk Committee – Group Board
<b>Approved by</b>	Group Board
<b>Approval date</b>	08 July 2024
<b>Review date</b>	08 July 2025
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## Part 2

# Overview

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### Intent

Ensuring that customers are safe in their homes and able to live comfortably is of the highest priority. Longhurst Group (the Group) is committed to providing homes that are well maintained and kept in good and safe repair, both for the benefit of existing customers and to maximise the long-term life of each asset.

This policy presents a clearly defined system of control for the management of damp and mould activities within each asset.

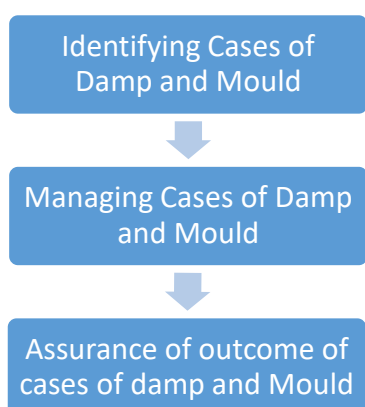
Implementation of this policy will ensure compliance with our legal and regulatory responsibilities. This policy has been written to address recommendations published by the Housing Ombudsman in their 'Spotlight on Damp and Mould' report. Additionally, this policy acknowledges the most significant risk remains the risk to the health and safety of Longhurst Group customers as identified by the NHS in 'Can damp and mould affect my health'.

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### Policy statement

This policy supports the Group's values and is a commitment to improving lives and supporting colleagues by taking a priority approach to damp and mould. We will take a proactive approach across all areas of our business to ensure issues of this nature are not seen as acceptable and we ensure that support is offered by us to our customers to ensure that any issues are resolved satisfactorily.

Longhurst Group will adopt a three-stage process as shown below, work will continue to address and improve methods by which damp and mould can be identified within our properties to 'find our silent customers'. The management of our cases will revolve around customer, building and usage with our options for remediation being the output. The final stage will be assurance including inspection of completed works, validating the impact of the works, annual re-inspection and recording any changes in the usage.



## **Scope**

The terms 'Longhurst Group' and 'the Group' incorporate all member companies and subsidiaries.

This policy applies to [all employees].

The policy does not form part of any colleague's contract of employment and the policy may be amended at any time.

## Part 3

# Policy details

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## Longhurst Group's Approach to Damp, Mould and Condensation

The Group will achieve and maintain effective management systems and will comply with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements as defined in this policy.

In implementing this policy our objectives will be to:

- Comply at all times with all current legal responsibilities and codes of good practice.
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould. We will take a proactive approach across all areas of our business to ensure issues of this nature are not seen as acceptable and we ensure that support is offered by us to our customers to ensure that any issues are resolved satisfactorily.
- Work in partnership with our customers to ensure our homes provide safe and healthy environments for customers to live.
- Ensure that customers have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive support, advice, and guidance on managing and controlling damp and condensation.
- Be supportive and responsive to customer vulnerabilities to ensure all customer needs, regardless of protected characteristics, are considered, addressed and solutions are agreed with customers.
- Ensure that our staff receives training to properly diagnose and respond to reports of damp and mould, in addition to understanding the causes and remedies of the causes and to understand the effects that damp and mould can have on the health of our customers.

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## Customer First Cross Departmental Review

Longhurst Group will work across departments to manage and seek to eradicate damp and mould.

This includes:

- Ensuring detailed records are kept when reports of damp and mould are made. An assessment of risk will be made with details recorded and logged on our system. This risk rating will be determined in line with current regulations (e.g., Housing Health and Safety Rating System, Decent Homes standards etc.) and will enable us to better understand the archetype of properties and components that are likely to suffer from damp and mould and to identify where issues may arise in similar properties, in addition to allowing for more effective tenancy support and aftercare.
- Proactively reviewing all Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) energy ratings of D and below for our properties to identify those at risk of damp, mould and condensation
- We will use our data to review, prioritise and target those properties at highest risk, as well as identify any damp, mould and condensation.
- Where extensive works may be required, we will consider the individual circumstances of the household, including any vulnerabilities, and whether it is appropriate to move resident(s) out of their home at an early stage.
- We will ensure that surveys to establish the presence of any damp and mould are

carried out by skilled and trained officers during any void period and when mutual exchanges are conducted.

## Risk Assessing

Longhurst Group will risk assess individual cases aligning with the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System) assessment criteria, classes of harm, likelihood and outcome. Due to the seriousness Longhurst Group view damp and mould this matrix simplifies the risk categories and assumes that damp and mould is treated as high harm or outcome.

<b>Extreme/severe 4</b>	<p><b>Response:</b> raise emergency order, triage with follow up surveyor appointment within 14 days. Discuss the potential for decant with relevant Heads of Service if the risk cannot be reduced or mitigated to an acceptable level.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Extensive damp and mould in multiple habitable areas, highly vulnerable residents, very young and elderly with chronic and or vulnerability factors.</p>
<b>Severe/serious 3</b>	<p><b>Response:</b> raise urgent order and book engineer to attend within 7 calendar days, triage with follow up surveyor appointment within 14 days.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> multiple areas of extensive damp and/or mould growth in areas of bedrooms, living rooms, bathroom mould growth, or dampness highly visible on surfaces, levels of vulnerability present, young and elderly residents with known vulnerabilities that exacerbate risk.</p>
<b>Serious/moderate 2</b>	<p><b>Response:</b> raise routine repair and book engineer to attend within 28 calendar day timescale, triage with follow up surveyor appointment within 14 days.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> multiple areas of damp and identified but limited in area and location, (e.g., under stair cupboard i.e., non-habitable space.) May be some low level of customer risk factor such as very young or elderly but no specific vulnerabilities</p>
<b>Moderate/low 1</b>	<p><b>Response:</b> monitor only</p> <p><b>Description:</b> little to no risk minor damp or mould around windows no identified in vulnerability matrix, to be monitored via tenancy health check form for any member of staff visiting the property.</p>

In the event that works are complex and can not be completed within the appropriate time scales, and the property cannot be made safe, Longhurst will decant the customer into suitable alternative accommodation.

### Risk Assessment score matrix

Score	Classification	Response
4	Emergency order raised	24 hours
3	Urgent order raised	7 days
2	Routine order raised	28 days
1	Monitor & tenancy health check	Monitor / contact if no contact in 12 months

### **Awaab's Law**

In response to the tragic death of Awaab Ishak the following timeframes have been introduced in line with the Government consultation.

As detailed in the above risk assessment emergency work where there is significant and imminent risk of harm regarding damp and mould, work will be completed within 24 hours and in all cases that require a surveyor visit this will be carried out within 14 days with the customer receiving a plan for remediation within those 14 days. If works are diagnosed as significant works will start within 7 days of diagnosis and if these works are of a particular complex nature timescales for remediation will be communicated to our customers.

### **Vulnerability Factors**

The most at-risk customers are the very young and elderly (HHSRS vulnerable age group under 14 years of age). Further consideration needs to be given where there are vulnerability factors in terms of damp and mould, this relates to known medical vulnerabilities such as asthma, allergies, chronic conditions and learning difficulties, where self-management present added complexities.

\* For dwellings where rooms are occupied for both living and sleeping, such as bedsits and small flats in multi-occupied buildings, then the presence of dampness may be more significant as occupants can be expected to spend a greater proportion of time exposed. This can be compounded if the room is also used for cooking. (The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005) |



## Part 4

# Policy implications

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## Roles and responsibilities

**All persons involved with the Group, whether Board Member, or employee have delegated responsibilities. The key roles and responsibilities are listed below.**

### Group Board

The Board is responsible for ensuring that there is an effective policy with controls in place, but delegation is the Management Team of the Group.

### Executive Management Team

The Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Directors collectively are the officers responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Group's objectives in this policy.

### Policy Sponsor – Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer

This person has strategic responsibility for the policy and how it relates to business plans, key strategies and other elements of the policy framework.

### Policy Owner – Director of [Responsive Repairs]

Responsible for the policy's suitability; effective implementation; and commissioning new policy development and periodic policy review.

### Policy Author – [Head of Repairs and Maintenance]

Responsible for drafting a new policy and proposing any amendments to an existing policy.

### Data Protection – Data Protection Officer

Responsible for identifying, assessing and mitigating privacy risks with data-processing activities that fall within the policy.

### Customer Engagement Team

Responsible for leading on policy consultation with customers and the Customer Forum.

### **Data protection**

This policy is enforced in conjunction with the Group's Data Protection policies and procedures.

A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been conducted to ensure that only data relevant to the case management is collected and stored and that access to this information is restricted to only necessary individuals. The data remains live for the entire tenancy period plus 6 years after.

On occasions, customer's may provide personal data to support the investigation of their complaint, this is stored in the Group's CRM, Dynamics. The information is held in accordance with the Group's retention period and is managed in line with the Group's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

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### **Safeguarding**

Policy adheres to the Groups Safeguarding Adults' policy and the Groups Safeguarding Childrens Policy.

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### **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

- It is expected that some groups may be more impacted by the effects of damp and mould than others on the basis of increased vulnerability, including older people, babies and children, and those with some disabilities and long-term conditions including respiratory problems, asthma, and compromised immune systems. The policy is expected to have a positive impact on these groups due to the provisions for advice and support that are included, and the provision of exceptions due to exceptional circumstances / consideration of vulnerabilities in deciding upon an appropriate course of action.
  - Tenants with a disability may be unable to resolve damp and mould problems themselves and may need assistance to help with causes. This will be mitigated by quick evaluation and resolution of any problems which may occur.
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### **Complaints and feedback**

All complaints relating to this policy will be thoroughly investigated and feedback provided those individuals. Monitoring of the key performance indicators referred to are generated and shared on a monthly basis.

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### **Risk analysis**

The Risk Analysis section within the Policy Development Plan (PDP) identified the following risks and mitigating actions:

- Failure to comply with the legal requirements could be far reaching in terms of regulatory response, reputational risk and financial.
  - Reputational and reduction in quality could result in challenges from many areas.
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### **Evaluation, review and performance reporting**

This policy will be reviewed on a [Annual] basis to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. A policy review may also be required earlier, in response to internal or external changes for example changes in legislation. Prompt and effective action will be taken where improvements are identified.

[The effectiveness of this policy will be assessed by key metrics including how many outstanding cases of damp and mould the Group have. This will be presented to the relevant committees quarterly to provide assurance with a particular focus on the effectiveness of this policy at each annual re-inspection of cases. Internal or external changes alongside customer feedback incorporating Tenant Satisfaction Measures, Consumer Standards and Codes of Practice.]

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### **Summary of local variations**

[No Variations.]

## Part 5

# Compliance

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## Legal and regulatory compliance

This policy fully complies with the Group's legal and regulatory obligations.

- Regulator of Social Housing Homes Standard
- The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for human Habitation) Act 2018
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents
- Social Housing White Paper
- Housing Ombudsman Report October 2021
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005
- The Decent Homes Standard

This list is not exhaustive, and policy authors will undertake thorough research and/or seek professional advice to ensure the Group meets its obligations and complies with the current and relevant legislation and regulations.

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## Related policies

- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Estate Management Policy
- Decant Policy
- Complaints Policy

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Part 6

## Appendices

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### A. Glossary of terms

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Legislation</b>	The legal requirements that must be followed.
<b>Policy</b>	A statement of intent describing our approach towards a particular activity or area – usually comprising a set of rules or standards that must be followed.
<b>Policy Development Plan (PDP)</b>	The document used to support planning policy development and review.
<b>Procedure</b>	An agreed way of doing things that describes how a policy will be implemented. The specific steps and/or actions that must be taken to put policy into practice and ensure a consistent service.
<b>Regulation</b>	The rules or standards set by a governing body such as the Housing Ombudsman, Regulator of Social Housing and Financial Conduct Authority.

## **B. Associated documents**

The following documents are associated with this policy:

- [Policy Development Plan]