

Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

Originator:	Policy and Strategy Team
OVH Approval Date:	February 2024
Review date:	February 2027

1	Introduction
1.1	Across the range of its properties for rent and low-cost home ownership, One Vision Housing (OVH) aims to provide homes that are warm, safe and free from hazards.
1.2	Key to this aim is the provisions OVH has in place to deal with issues of damp, mould and condensation in its properties.
1.3	<p>In operating this Policy, OVH will ensure it meets all legal requirements associated with keeping properties in a good state of repair. The most relevant areas of legislation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 – (which introduced the ‘fitness for human habitation – standard’ and repairing obligations for landlords) • The Housing Act 2004 and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005 – (HHSRS - which introduced a risk assessment approach for identifying and categorising potential hazards in properties and actions required to minimise the likelihood of harm) • The Homes (Fitness for Habitation Act) 2018 – (which amended the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 to ensure landlords properties are fit for human habitation at the beginning of the tenancy and throughout)
1.4	<p>The Policy also ensures OVH meets the requirements of the ‘Homes Standard’ of the Regulatory Framework adopted by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), the most relevant provisions of which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered providers must ensure that tenants’ homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government’s Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard unless exempted by the regulator • When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas • Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible

<p>1.5</p> <p>1.5.1</p> <p>1.5.2</p> <p>1.6</p> <p>1.6.1</p> <p>1.6.2</p> <p>1.6.3</p> <p>1.7</p>	<p>Access and Communication</p> <p>OVH is committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to everyone. OVH will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for it or use its services.</p> <p>Working with our customers we have established a Vulnerable Persons and Reasonable Adjustments Policy to ensure we make best use of every customer interaction to meet customers’ needs in our service delivery and ensure this information is kept up to date.</p> <p>Equality, Diversity and Human Rights</p> <p>OVH is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty with positive regard for the following core strands of equality; Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Gender Identity / Gender Expression, Sexual Orientation, Religion and / or Belief, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity.</p> <p>OVH also recognise that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio-economic circumstances, employment status, class, appearance, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or with AIDS, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.</p> <p>OVH will also ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation. OVH will endeavour to ensure Staff and others with whom it works, adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).</p> <p>The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● OVH Repairs, Maintenance and Planned Works Policy ● OVH Complaints, Appeals and Feedback Policy
<p>2</p> <p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p>	<p>Statement of Intent</p> <p>OVH aims to provide homes that are warm and safe for residents that are free from any known hazards (as per the Housing Health and Safety Rating System – HHSRS categories including any in relation to damp, mould or excessive condensation).</p> <p>OVH adopts a ‘zero tolerance’ stance to damp, mould or excessive condensation issues in its properties that may be detrimental in any way to health and well-being for occupants and their visitors.</p> <p>As part of this stance OVH will deploy its best endeavours to treat the outward signs of damp, mould or condensation and to tackle root causes when it is made aware of these issues from customer / third party reporting, through its own surveys or through understanding of archetypal property information.</p> <p>OVH will also ensure it manages its assets through reactive repairs / maintenance and lifecycle replacement / investment works to meet or exceed the prevailing Decent Homes Standards.</p>

2.5	OVH will provide accessible means by which customers and their representatives can raise repairs or service requests including any damp, mould or condensation issues. This will include provision of adequate staff resources to be able to respond to customer requests in a timely fashion.
2.6	OVH will also keep under review its staff resources for carrying out property surveys to be able to meet demand for these services from customers and to facilitate the development of proactive work programmes to tackle damp, mould and condensation issues in properties e.g. servicing or installation of mechanical ventilation units (where appropriate).
2.7	OVH will adopt a collaborative and partnership approach with its customers to dealing with issues of damp, mould or condensation in properties including provision of advice and support where this required.
3	Policy
3.1	Reporting damp, mould or condensation issues
3.1.1	<p>OVH customers or those acting on the customers behalf can report repairs or requests for service, including any issues that concern damp, mould or condensation in a number of ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via telephone on 0300 365 1111 • Via the 'My Account' customer access portal available on the OVH Website www.ovh.org.uk (including easy to follow diagnostics tool to enable accurate reporting), for non-emergency repairs only • Via direct contact with any OVH staff member or person working on OVH's behalf e.g. Neighbourhood Services Officers or Repairs and Maintenance Contractor Operatives
3.1.2	To ensure OVH instigates the appropriate response when calls are made to the Customer Contact Centre (on the 0300 365 1111 number) our call handlers are trained to ask appropriate questions leading to accurate repairs diagnosis and identification.
3.1.3	When reporting issues with damp, mould or condensation customers are encouraged, if possible, to send in photographs of the areas of concern via email which assists with the repair's diagnostics process.
3.1.4	Our call-handlers from our Customer Contact Centre are advised to ask customers if there are any concerns about damp, mould and condensation in properties on each call, even were this may not be the subject matter of the original service request.
3.1.5	We have also instructed front line operatives from our repairs and maintenance contractor to enquire with customers if they are experiencing any issues with damp, mould or condensation when they are attending properties, on all jobs, so these can be captured and actioned.
3.2	Response to customer reports of damp, mould or condensation
3.2.1	OVH will respond to all service requests received from customers or their representatives that involve issues with damp, mould or excessive condensation.

3.2.2	Depending on the extent of the issue, jobs may be issued for remedial works direct to OVH's repairs and maintenance contractor. These will be by appointment agreed with the customer and will be completed at the earliest opportunity.
3.2.3	Where OVH repairs contractor identifies that further, more extensive works or a technical survey is required they will notify OVH who will make contact with the customer to arrange access via an appointment.
3.2.4	Where it is not possible, from direct reporting, to diagnose the extent, severity / root course of damp, mould or excessive condensation issues or the customer makes OVH aware of any vulnerabilities they may have, OVH will arrange for a member of its surveying team to carry out a technical assessment of the property.
3.2.5	OVH will look to arrange a technical inspection at the earliest opportunity, however, during periods of peak demand in the winter months when damp, mould and condensation issues are most likely to occur it may take longer to schedule.
3.2.6	Where this is the case OVH will liaise with the customer on the nearest appointment slot and will keep them informed of any changes, including if earlier appointments become available.
3.2.7	Following a technical assessment, a full schedule of remedial works will be drawn-up and arranged with the customer via appointment(s).
3.3	Causes and treatments for damp mould and condensation
3.3.1	The outward signs of damp, mould and excessive condensation can often overlap, and it can be difficult to reach a conclusive diagnosis of the root course.
3.3.2	The most common of these issues is 'condensation' which occurs when moist, warm air cools quickly e.g. on contact with a colder surface and turns back into a liquid. This occurs through normal activities that are undertaken in the home such as cooking and bathing so is most likely to be found in kitchens and bathrooms.
3.3.3	Condensation can also occur if there is inadequate ventilation, or the outer fabric of a property is poorly insulated.
3.3.4	Whilst a small degree of condensation is inevitable in all homes, signs of excessive condensation include water running down the inside of walls / windows and pooling on flat surfaces.
3.3.5	<p>OVH will take a graded approach to dealing with excessive condensation in properties depending on the severity of the problem, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring existing natural ventilation points are working effectively e.g. windows open and close properly, trickle vents are functional, ventilation bricks are not blocked etc. • Ensuring mechanical ventilation points are working effectively e.g. extractor fans are serviced or where there are none present, installing such devices • In more severe cases consideration for installation of positive input ventilation systems or inclusion on programmed works for improved insulation and window upgrades

3.3.6	Whilst less prevalent than ‘condensation’, issues of ‘damp’ in properties are still reasonably common, especially in older properties or those of concrete panel construction.
3.3.7	Outward signs of damp can include wet patches on walls and ceilings, tide marks on walls, discolouration of wallpaper and plaster work, often accompanied by a musty smell.
3.3.8	The two main types of damp in properties are ‘penetrating damp’ where water ingress into properties comes from the outer fabric of the building or ‘rising damp’ where water is drawn-up from the ground.
3.3.9	Both types of damp are usually a result of a property defect e.g. may be caused by a leaking roof, leaking pipes, defective gutters or downpipes, missing or cracked brickwork / pointing, materials piled against properties such as soil or breaching of a properties damp-proof membrane etc.
3.3.10	Again, OVH will take a graded approach to dealing with these issues if they occur. This can range from remedying a simple defect e.g. fixing a leaking downpipe to more complex solutions that involve structural works and replacement of property elements such as damp-proof courses.
3.3.11	Both excessive condensation and damp can create problems with ‘mould’ in a property, which has many forms but commonly appears as black spotting or a furring around affected areas, which may be accompanied by a musty smell.
3.3.12	<p>The graded approach to treating problems with mould will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washing down of affected areas with anti-fungicidal treatment • Application of damp proof paint to the affected areas • Installation of physical features to improve ventilation as outlined in 3.3.5 above and remedying of any defective property elements
3.3.13	This will always be coupled with an assessment of the root cause and similarly if works are issued to deal with condensation or damp and mould is present, then the above actions will be combined.
3.4	Complaints and appeals
3.4.1	If for any reason customers are not satisfied with the response that OVH provides in regard to dealing with damp, mould and condensation issues, they may access the OVH complaints process which is detailed in full in the ‘OVH Complaints, Appeals and Feedback Policy’ (available via the OVH website: www.ovh.org.uk or by calling 0300 365 1111).
3.5	Provision of advice and support
3.5.1	Where any customer reports damp, mould or condensation issues in their properties OVH will adopt a collaborative approach to dealing with the problem.
3.5.2	This will include a clear explanation of any physical defects with the property and the work and likely timescales involved in putting them right.

3.5.3	It will also include the provision of advice for measures customers can take to help reduce the likelihood of damp, mould or condensation issues occurring and through referral or the provision of direct assistance ensuring any additional support needs are met.
3.5.4	In most cases through this approach, it will be possible to deal with damp, mould and condensation issues and find lasting solutions with minimal disruption to the customer. However, in complex cases that require extensive structural works to remedy this may not be achievable whilst the customer is still occupying the property.
3.5.5	Should this be required and, on a risk,-based approach, taking into consideration individual circumstances, OVH will work with the customer on finding suitable temporary alternative accommodation until all works are complete and it is safe to return to the property.

4	Implementation
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4.1	All OVH staff have a responsibility to be aware of the provisions within the ‘Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy’ to direct any customer enquiries they may receive and to take the appropriate action if they become aware of any issues with damp, mould or condensation they become aware of in OVH properties.
4.2	<p>OVH’s Asset Management Team will have responsibility for day-to-day operation of the provisions that are in place for dealing with damp, mould and condensation in its properties. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight and management of the repairs and maintenance contract and any planned investment works • Carrying out property inspections where these are required and raising appropriate works to remedy any damp, mould or condensation issues that are identified • Devising and managing risk-based proactive works programmes to treat damp, mould and condensation issues in OVH properties • Ensuring specification and works on other investment programmes factor in provision for adequate ventilation / damp, mould and condensation mitigation e.g. where insulation programmes or other energy efficiency / carbon reduction measures are carried out • Collating data and performance information to enable internal and external reporting • Working closely with customers and other OVH Teams e.g. Neighbourhood Services / Independent Living on provision of support for vulnerable customers, where this is required

5	Performance
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5.1	OVH will carry out a self-assessment against the recommendations in the Housing Ombudsman’s Spotlight Report into Damp and Mould and will publish the results on its website and will provide updates twice a year.
5.2	OVH will develop a suite of internal Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) on the management of damp, mould and condensation issues and these will be reported quarterly to the Executive Management Team and to the OVH Board.

5.3	OVH will also provide collated performance information to the customer representatives that attend the Service Review Group meetings and will also make information available via the satisfaction / performance reports that are published quarterly on the OVH website.	
6	Consultation	
6.1	All OVH Staff have been consulted in the development of this Policy. The OVH Tenant Policy Review Group have also been consulted on this Policy.	
7	Review	
7.1	This Policy will be reviewed every Three Years (from the date it is approved) by the Executive Management (EMT) Team to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation or regulations that impacts on the obligations of OVH or changes to OVH business practices.	
8	Equality Impact Assessment	
8.1	Was a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) required?	Yes
8.2	When was EIA conducted and by who?	An EIA was conducted by the Policy and Strategy Manager and the Operations Director (Assets and Compliance) in January 2024
8.3	Results of EIA	<p>It is recommended OVH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors the known customer profile information against all damp, mould and condensation cases / complaints / disrepair claims to identify if there are any trends that require addressing • Ensure on-going support is available for customers who have experienced these types of issues e.g. welfare benefit referral, assistance accessing cold weather payments etc. • Through proactive conversations with customers discover any groups where under-reporting may be an issue and develop action plan to raise awareness • Review the Policy when 'Awaabs Law' is enacted
9	Scheme of Delegation	
9.1	Responsible committee for approving and monitoring implementation of the policy and any amendments to it	Executive Management Team

9.2	Responsible officer for formulating policy and reporting to committee on its effective implementation	Operations Director – Assets and Compliance
9.3	Responsible officer for formulating, reviewing and monitoring implementation of procedures	Operations Director – Assets and Compliance

10	Amendment Log
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Date of revision:	Reason for revision:	Consultation record:	Record of amendments:
First Version – Not applicable- Approved on 20 th December 2022	First Version – Not applicable	See Section 6	First Version – Not applicable
20 th February 2024	In line with review Schedule	See Section 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no significant Amendments in this review • The EIA at Section 8 has been updated • In line with Board approved process the review period for this Policy will extend to every Three Years rather than annually