Damp and Mould Policy

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1. What this policy is for

1.1 The safety, health and wellbeing of customers living in homes owned or managed by Southway Wythenshawe Homes is our highest priority. This policy explains how Southway Wythenshawe Homes will prevent, identify, investigate, manage, and resolve damp and mould hazards to ensure homes remain safe, warm, healthy, and fit for habitation.

1.2 Southway Wythenshawe Homes adopts a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould. All reports will be treated as a potential risk to health and safety until robust investigation determines otherwise. Damp and mould will never be dismissed, minimised or attributed to customer behaviour without evidence-based diagnosis.

1.3 The objectives of this policy are to:

- Protect customers from harm.
- Comply with Awaab's Law and all applicable legislation.
- Ensure homes are free from damp and mould hazards.
- Prioritise vulnerable households.
- Deliver timely investigation and resolution.
- Maintain clear ownership of every case.
- Resolve root causes rather than symptoms.
- Use data and intelligence to proactively identify risks.
- Learn from performance, complaints, and case outcomes.
- Provide assurance to customers, the Board, and regulators.

2. Who this policy applies to

Applies To	Detail

Customers	All customers, license holders, and leaseholders where Southway Wythenshawe Homes has repair obligations
Homes	All homes and communal areas owned or managed by Southway Wythenshawe Homes
Employees	All employees
Contractors	All contractors and consultants acting on behalf of Southway Wythenshawe Homes
Partners	Any third-party delivering services relating to housing condition, repairs, or asset management

2.1 This policy covers:

- Damp.
- Mould.
- Condensation.
- Ventilation defects.
- Heating deficiencies.
- Water ingress.
- Structural defects contributing to damp and mould.
- Any related hazard falling within Awaab's Law or HHSRS requirements.

3. Regulation and Legal Requirements

3.1 This policy supports compliance with:

- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 incl. Awaabs Law.
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.
- Housing Act 2004 - incl. Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) & Decent Homes standard.
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.
- Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- Defective Premises Act 1972.

- Building Safety Act 2022.
- Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.
- Housing Ombudsman guidance and Spotlight Reports.
- Equality Act 2010

3.2 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will maintain systems, procedures and resources that adapt to future phases of Awaab's Law and any subsequent legislative changes.

4. What we will do

Governance & Risk Management

4.1 Damp and mould is recognised as a significant health, safety, and compliance risk. Southway Wythenshawe Homes will:

- Maintain oversight through its governance framework.
- Assess damp and mould risks through strategic and operational risk registers.
- Report performance and compliance to senior management and Board committees.
- Ensure adequate resources are available to deliver this policy.
- Undertake regular assurance reviews, audits, and compliance assessments.

4.2 Damp and mould risks will be reflected within Southway Wythenshawe Homes's Corporate Risk Register and operational risk framework, with regular reporting through governance structures.

Prevention and Proactive Identification

4.3 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will take a preventative and intelligence-led approach. We will:

- Use stock condition information.
- Analyse repair history.
- Monitor recurring cases.
- Use customer insight and vulnerability information.

- Assess void properties before re-letting.
- Identify high-risk homes.
- Link recurring damp and mould cases into planned investment, retrofit and asset improvement programmes such as ventilation upgrades.

Reporting and Case Management

4.4 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will:

- Provide multiple accessible reporting channels.
- Accept reports from customers, employees, contractors, advocates and third parties.
- Create proactive routes to inspect and ask customers about DAMP AND MOULD.
- Log all reports immediately into formal systems.
- Acknowledge all reports in writing and confirm next steps.
- Allocate ownership of every case to named colleagues.
- Maintain an audit trail from first contact to final closure.

4.5 Every damp and mould case will have a named case owner responsible for:

- Communication.
- Coordination.
- Escalation.
- Progress monitoring.
- Closure.

4.6 Responsibility remains with the case owner until completion.

Risk Assessment and Prioritisation

4.7 All reports will be risk assessed taking account of:

- Severity of damp and mould.
- Property condition.
- Health impacts.
- Household vulnerabilities.

- Duration of issue.
- History of recurrence.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Occupancy profile.

4.8 Mould Severity Classification

Classification	Description
Severe	Extensive visible mould, significant health risk, or vulnerability present
Moderate	Localised mould requiring urgent intervention
Slight	Early-stage mould requiring treatment and investigation

Vulnerability Framework

4.9 Enhanced prioritisation will be applied where households include:

- Children under five.
- Pregnant residents.
- Residents aged over 75.
- Customers with respiratory conditions.
- Immunocompromised residents.
- Disabled residents.
- Customers requiring or requesting reasonable adjustments.
- Households subject to safeguarding concerns. Risk categories may be increased where vulnerability presents additional risk.

4.10 Vulnerability will always take precedence over property condition alone when determining risk and response priorities. Cases involving vulnerable households may be escalated to a higher priority category irrespective of visible mould severity.

Response Times and Awaab's Law Compliance

Category	Inspection	Findings Issued	Make Safe from notification	Works Start
Emergency	< 24 hours	Within 3 working days	Within 24 hours	Immediate
Severe	< 24 hours	Within 3 working days	Within 24 hours	Within 5 working days
Urgent	< 7 calendar days	Within 3 working days	Within 5 working days	Within 5 working days
Non-Urgent Hazard	< 14 calendar days	Within 3 working days	As determined by inspector	Within 5 working days

Inspection and Diagnosis

4.11 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will adopt a Right First-Time approach. We will:

- Investigate all reports.
- Identify and evidence root causes.
- Avoid assumptions about lifestyle.
- Ensure consistent standards amongst employees and contractors.
- Provide customers with written findings within three working days of concluding investigations.
- Explain findings using clear and accessible language.

4.12 Decorative treatments, mould washes, and cosmetic repairs will never be used as a substitute for resolving the underlying cause except where required as part of a documented interim safety plan.

Communication Standards

4.13 Customers should not be required to chase Southway Wythenshawe Homes for updates or prompt action once Southway Wythenshawe Homes have the case. We will:

- Confirm receipt of reports.
- Explain inspection arrangements.
- Confirm diagnosis outcomes.
- Provide written findings.
- Confirm repair programmes.
- Provide updates at agreed intervals.
- Continue updates even where no material progress has occurred.
- Confirm completion and follow-up arrangements.

Remedial Works

4.14 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will:

- Resolve root causes.
- Deliver durable solutions.
- Minimise repeat visits.
- Prioritise health and safety risks.
- Consider wider building defects and investment requirements.

4.15 If we identify significant repair works are needed to address a hazard, we will normally start the work within five working days.

4.16 Larger or more complex major repairs will normally be completed within twelve weeks of surveyor diagnosis and keep you updated on progress.

4.17 Where completion exceeds twelve weeks, a senior manager-approved recovery plan will be shared with the customer.

Customer Support

4.18 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will:

- Treat customers with empathy and respect.
- Provide energy, heating, and ventilation advice.
- Support customers to access income maximisation services.
- Support customers affected by overcrowding.
- Provide reasonable adjustments.

- Consider temporary accommodation or rehousing where necessary.
- Support customers throughout any decant process.

Access

4.19 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will:

- Arrange appointments that are convenient and appropriate.
- Explain reasons for inspection and works.
- Work collaboratively to gain access.
- Use proportionate measures where health and safety risks exist.

4.20 Legal action to gain entry will only be considered where all reasonable attempts to gain access have failed and there remains a risk to health or safety.

Escalation and Significant Non-Compliance

4.21 Cases will be escalated where:

- Timescales are exceeded.
- Repeat visits occur.
- Vulnerabilities increase risk.
- Customer dissatisfaction is identified.
- Risks to health and safety increase.
- Damp and mould recurs.
- Specialist intervention is required.

4.22 Significant non-compliance will be reported to senior managers within 24 hours of identification.

4.23 Serious incidents & failures may be escalated to:

- Executive Team.
- Committee/Board.
- Regulator of Social Housing.
- Health and Safety Executive.
- Other relevant agencies.

Post-Works Assurance

4.24 Cases may only be closed where:

- Identified works are complete.
- Validation has been undertaken.
- The customer has been contacted and agreed.
- There is reasonable assurance that root causes have been addressed.

4.25 For higher-risk cases Southway Wythenshawe Homes will:

- Undertake a 3-month follow-up review.
- Undertake a 6-month recurrence check.
- Re-open investigations where recurrence is identified.

Ventilation Assurance

4.26 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will ensure homes are provided with effective ventilation systems appropriate to their design and construction.

We will:

- Cyclically Inspect ventilation systems.
- Maintain all ventilation systems.
- Complete annual testing of mechanical ventilation systems where installed.
- Maintain records of inspections and testing.

Training and Competence

4.27 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will maintain competency requirements for all colleagues and contractors involved in damp and mould management. This includes:

- Policy training.
- Technical training.
- Contractor competence checks.
- Qualification monitoring.
- Continuing professional development.

4.28 All employees visiting homes have a duty to identify and report damp, mould, or housing hazards regardless of their role.

Lessons Learned and Continuous Improvement

4.29 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will review damp & mould performance quarterly by triangulating data to identify trends, recurring defects, and service improvements. This will include:

- root-cause reviews
- recurring property-type analysis
- complaint trend reviews
- contractor performance reviews
- service improvement actions

Contractor Performance and Assurance

4.30 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will ensure that contractors:

- comply with all response and completion timescales;
- undertake evidence-based diagnosis;
- maintain required qualifications and accreditations;
- comply with communication standards;
- escalate safety risks immediately;
- support continuous improvement and learning reviews.

5. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and will be reviewed whenever this policy is updated. Southway Wythenshawe Homes will:

- Deliver services fairly and inclusively.
- Make reasonable adjustments.
- Provide communications in accessible formats.
- Consider disproportionate impacts on protected groups.
- Prioritise support where additional vulnerabilities are identified.

Action	Policy Change
Prioritise vulnerable customers	Enhanced risk assessment framework
Improve accessibility	Alternative formats and translation services
Support customers with protected characteristics	Reasonable adjustments process
Improve communication	Multi-channel communication standards

6. Who is responsible

6.1 The people responsible for overseeing this policy are listed below

Officer	Responsibility
Board	Strategic oversight and policy approval
Executive Director of Homes and Property	Policy ownership and assurance
Assistant Director Asset Management	Policy implementation and compliance
Head of Repairs	Operational delivery
Head of Asset Management	Proactive asset intelligence and investment planning
Managers	Monitoring, escalation, and compliance assurance
Employees	Identification, reporting, and compliance
Contractors	Delivery in accordance with policy requirements
Customers	Reporting issues and providing access

7. Monitoring and Reporting

7.1 Southway Wythenshawe Homes will maintain a comprehensive performance framework including:

- Number of reports received.
- Compliance with inspection targets.
- Compliance with Awaab's Law timescales.
- Works commencement compliance.
- Completion compliance.
- Repeat cases.
- Escalated cases.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Complaints and Ombudsman outcomes.
- Contractor performance.
- Follow-up success rates.
- Lessons learned actions.

7.2 Performance information will be:

- Reported to senior management.
- Reported to the Boards committees.
- Subject to customer scrutiny.
- Used to drive continuous improvement.
- Published where appropriate.

7.3 The Board will receive annual assurance regarding compliance with Awaab's Law, customer outcomes, significant incidents, performance trends, and service improvement actions.

7.4 Customers will have opportunities to influence service improvements through formal scrutiny arrangements, resident panels, and consultation activity.

7.5 The policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner where legislation, regulation or learning requires amendment.

7.6 The next review date for this policy is shown on the cover sheet.

8. Glossary

Word	Definition
Awaab's Law	Legal requirements and timescales for investigating and fixing specific hazards social rented homes.
Damp	Excess moisture affecting buildings.
Mould	Fungal growth caused by excess moisture
HHSRS	Housing Health and Safety Rating System, used to assess hazards in residential homes.
Root Cause	The underlying reason damp or mould exists.
Vulnerability	Circumstances increasing risk of harm.
Case Owner	Individual responsible for managing a case from report to closure.
Escalation	Process for increasing oversight and intervention.
Significant non-compliance	Serious failure with potential regulatory, legal or safety implications.
Post-Works Assurance	Activities undertaken to confirm successful resolution.