



Bristol City Council Housing and Landlord Services

Damp and Mould Policy

Version 2

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out how Bristol City Council’s [BCC] Housing and Landlord Services’ responds to reports of damp and mould in residents’ homes by:

- Applying up-to-date government guidance on the health risks of damp and mould.
- Explaining what might make a resident more vulnerable to damp and mould.
- Establishing when damp and mould is treated in residents’ homes.

BCC Housing and Landlord Services will use this policy to deliver a damp and mould service that meets legal definitions and timescales to ensure the health and safety of Council residents in their homes.

This policy and its associated procedure should be read in conjunction with the Repairs and Maintenance Policy, Asset Management Strategy, and Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustment Policy.

2. Scope

BCC Housing and Landlord Services will respond to reports of damp and mould:

- In parts of the building for which Bristol City Council, as landlord, is responsible and has control to fix.
- Where it is the result of home or building defects, disrepair or lack of maintenance.
- Where it has not been caused by unauthorised adaptation or deliberate property damage by the tenant.
- Where it is a significant or emergency hazard.

All other premises managed by Bristol City Council’s Corporate Property Services, Facilities Management or Building Practice Teams are not within the scope of this policy.

3. Aims and objectives

The aim of this policy is to ensure Bristol City Council is compliant with regulations and provides an effective response to reports of damp and mould in Council homes.

This objectives of this policy are to:

1. Establish and maintain procedures to ensure a consistent response to reports of damp and mould in Council homes.
2. Prevent the occurrence of damp and mould through proactive, data-led maintenance, early identification and tenant support.
3. Promote continuous improvement by monitoring performance, learning from complaints and tenant feedback, and aligning with legal and regulatory standards.

4. Roles and responsibilities and authority

As a Registered Provider of Social Housing, Bristol City Council accepts responsibility to remove damp and mould hazards which present a significant risk of harm to residents.

BCC Housing and Landlord Services becomes aware of a potential hazard when an agent of the Council becomes aware of the damp and mould. As agents of Bristol City Council, all staff must be familiar with this policy and their role within it.

All BCC resident-facing staff are responsible for reporting damp and mould in residents' homes using the accepted means of reporting detailed in this policy.

Third-party contractors are responsible for informing BCC Housing and Landlord Services of damp and mould.

The Principal Accountable Person [PAP] holds responsibility for building safety.

The Director of Housing and Landlord Services and the Head of Repairs and Maintenance are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Team Managers in BCC Housing and Landlord Services are responsible for ensuring staff have read and understood this policy document.

A full list of relevant Roles and Responsibilities is in Appendix A.

5. The policy

5.1 Legal Context and Consumer Standards

Damp and mould is listed amongst the Housing Health and Safety Rating System [HHSRS] hazards and is covered by the Housing Act 2004. The HHSRS is a list of hazards which can occur in the home. It provides a tool for local authorities to assess the level of risk the hazard presents to persons living in or visiting the home.

The Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025, or Awaab's Law, implies a term into all social housing tenancy agreements in England. As a Registered Provider of Social Housing, Bristol City Council must comply with the prescribed requirements to address significant and emergency hazards within set timeframes.

This policy incorporates the Safety and Quality and Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standards, governed by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

5.2 Tenants Rights

Bristol City Council tenants have the following rights:

- The right to repairs.
- To be kept informed as to the timing and progress of repair works.
- To express dissatisfaction through the Internal Complaints Procedure in the first instance. Alternatively, through the Housing Ombudsman or other legal remedy.

5.3 Definition of damp and mould

Damp

Damp occurs in areas where there is too much moisture in the building structure. There are different types of damp depending on their cause:

- Penetrating damp
- Rising damp
- Condensation damp

Mould

Damp conditions can lead to the growth of mould, which is a type of fungus.

If untreated, mould can have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of the resident household.

Damp and mould in the home can cause or contribute to the following health impacts which can worsen the longer it remains untreated:

- Respiratory conditions, because it predominately affects the airways and lungs.
- Certain skin conditions and fungal infections, due to damp conditions.
- Mental ill-health, due to, for example, unpleasant living conditions or social isolation.

Damp and mould are likely to occur to varying degrees in residential buildings, particularly during the colder months, and is not the fault of residents.

BCC Housing and Landlord Services accepts its responsibility to:

- Provide residents with information on how to avoid or manage damp and mould.
- Remove damp and mould from residents' homes in line with prescribed regulations.
- Address the causes of damp and mould in residents' homes.

5.4 Reporting damp and mould

BCC Housing and Landlord Services can be made aware of damp and mould through any of the following means:

- Webform report
- Verbal report either from the tenant or someone on their behalf
- Notification from third party, including contractors
- Notification from a regulatory body (e.g. Building Safety Regulator)
- Identification during other works, routine inspection or visit.

Residents are encouraged to report any damp and mould using the webform to ensure that:

1. All necessary information is collected.
2. The named tenant can be contacted via up-to-date contact information.

Some residents may face barriers to reporting, or acting on guidance about, damp and mould. BCC Housing and Landlord Services is committed to engaging proactively with residents to support them to live safely at home, by:

- Making reasonable adjustments to meet resident need, for example residents can report damp and mould by phone to the Citizen Support Service if they are unable to use the webform.
- Providing resources in accessible formats to help residents identify, prevent and manage the damp and mould.

For more detail on how BCC Housing and Landlord Services makes reasonable adjustments to respond to resident need.

5.5 How BCC responds to reports of damp and mould

BCC Housing and Landlord Services must begin the reasonable steps to address potential damp and mould in a resident's home as soon as BCC is made aware of the potential hazard.

BCC is made aware of a hazard when one of its agents either identifies damp and mould in a resident's home or has damp and mould reported to them, even if in passing, for example to a caretaker or Citizen Services. An agent of the landlord is someone who is either directly employed by BCC or commissioned by BCC Housing and Landlord Services and covered by its liability.

BCC Housing and Landlord Services take all reasonable steps to comply with the prescribed regulations which are as follows:

5.5.1 Identifying the potential hazard

The occurrence of damp and mould is not considered a hazard in isolation, but it is given this definition from how it might affect the person or persons exposed to it.

5.5.2 Significant or Emergency Hazard

Whether the damp and mould is considered a hazard, and therefore requires a statutory response, is decided by the level of risk it poses to that particular household.

The statutory definitions are as follows:

Significant hazard

A significant hazard is one that presents a significant risk of harm to the health and safety of a resident and/or their household.

Whether a hazard presents a significant risk of harm is defined with consideration given to the individual's circumstances, especially age and health, to assess the likelihood of harm and the potential severity of that harm.

Emergency hazard

An emergency hazard is one which poses an imminent and significant risk of harm to the health or safety of the tenant and/or their household.

For the purposes of this policy, damp and mould is to be responded to as an emergency hazard where it is having a material impact on a tenant's, or household member's, health—for example, their ability to breathe.

Other emergency hazards, for example significant leaks or structural defects, may make occurrences of damp and mould worse and should be considered when determining the appropriate level of response. For example, damp and mould which does not fall within the scope of Awaab's Law may be addressed as part of the response to an emergency hazard.

5.5.3 'Initial Determination'

When damp and mould is reported, BCC Housing and Landlord Services will make an initial determination about whether it poses a significant or emergency risk to the tenant household.

This assessment is made by a competent investigator who uses existing and new information to consider:

1. The severity of the damp and mould, i.e. slight, moderate, severe.
2. The location of the damp and mould in the resident's home.
3. Resident vulnerability factors, e.g. health conditions and age.
4. Property risk factors, e.g. EPC rating, building age.

5.5.4 Definition of resident vulnerability for housing hazards

There are some residents who are more at risk of the physical or mental health effects of exposure to damp and mould. The government has defined these vulnerable groups as:

- Persons who have a pre-existing health condition, such as allergies, COPD, cystic fibrosis, other lung diseases and cardiovascular diseases, or
- A weakened immune system, such as cancer or persons who have had a transplant or who are taking immunosuppressive medications.
- Children and young people whose organs are still developing.
- Older people.

Other factors which increase the level of risk include:

- A reduced ability to report or act on guidance concerning damp and mould, for example if a resident has a learning disability or neurodiversity, or who has a history of insecure housing or homelessness,
- Pregnancy, because unborn babies and new mothers might have a weakened immune system,
- A person being bedbound or having limited mobility and therefore more likely to have continuous exposure to damp and mould in their home.

BCC Housing and Landlord Services will never make assumptions based on resident factors; similarly, it accepts that some hazards can pose a danger to anyone and not exclusively to persons who are deemed to be more vulnerable.

Please see BCC Housing and Landlord Services' Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustment Policy for further detail.

5.6 Types of investigation

The type of investigation depends on whether the damp and mould is a significant or emergency hazard:

Significant hazard

A standard investigation will be carried out within 10 working days of BCC Housing and Landlord Services first becoming aware of the damp and mould.

The purpose of this investigation is to confirm whether it is a significant or emergency hazard and identify works to make the home safe and prevent the recurrence of the hazard.

A new standard investigation will be carried out at every material change to the hazard or change in how the hazard is affecting the tenant household's health.

For example, mould may grow elsewhere in the home, or the tenant might become pregnant.

An exception to this regulation is where the Council has already considered that circumstance in a previous investigation.

If during the standard investigation the competent investigator has reason to believe that the damp and mould is an emergency hazard, the investigation will be completed as an emergency hazard in line with prescribed timescales.

Emergency hazard

An emergency investigation will be carried out within 24 hours of the competent investigator having reasonable grounds to believe that the damp and mould presents an imminent and significant risk to the tenant household.

The purpose of this investigation is to confirm:

- 1) If the damp and mould is a significant or emergency hazard, and
- 2) Identify works to make the home safe from damp and mould and to prevent its recurrence.

A table detailing the types of investigation and relevant timescales is in Appendix E.

5.6.1 How to Request an In-Person Investigation

BCC Housing and Landlord Services uses video and photo evidence to conduct its investigations and will not attend in-person unless explicitly requested by the named tenant.

Where a tenant has previously had a remote investigation but specifically requests an in-person investigation, BCC Housing and Landlord Services will carry out a renewed investigation unless any of the following apply:

- Works to prevent the recurrence of damp and mould have already begun.
- Further safety work to address an emergency hazard is required.
- A further investigation is required.

The named tenant can request an in-person investigation within 10 working days if the remote investigation concludes that there is no emergency hazard, or if an emergency hazard is found but no emergency safety works are identified.

5.6.2 What Happens if the Investigation Fails to Find the Cause

Where the standard, emergency, or renewed investigation has failed to identify the root cause of the hazard, BCC Housing and Landlord Services will begin further investigation as soon as reasonably practicable.

The further investigation should be carried out in person if:

- That is explicitly requested by the named tenant, and
- No in-person investigations have happened previously, at the standard or emergency investigation stage.

5.6.3 Written summary to the tenant

BCC Housing and Landlord Services will send a written summary of the investigation findings to the named tenant within 3 working days of the standard or emergency investigation having been concluded.

If all required works have already been completed within those 3 days, BCC Housing and Landlord Services is not required to provide a written summary but will notify the tenant that the works have been completed.

Where multiple investigations have taken place, a written summary shall be given for each.

5.7 Damp and Mould Repair Work

The timescale for damp and mould repairs is determined by whether the damp and mould is a significant or an emergency hazard:

Significant hazard

Where an investigation has identified a significant damp and mould hazard, BCC Housing and Landlord Services will complete the identified safety works within 5 working days of that investigation having been concluded.

Emergency hazard

If an emergency hazard is identified, relevant safety works will be completed within 24 hours, even if a further investigation is pending.

BCC Housing and Landlord Services will take reasonable steps to ensure that homes which have been made safe will be kept safe until all works are completed.

5.7.1 Further works to prevent damp and mould recurrence

If further works are required which cannot be completed within 5 working days, BCC Housing and Landlord Services will take reasonable steps to arrange completion within 12 weeks of the investigation having concluded.

Damp and mould remedial works shall be completed within a reasonable time period and to the required standard. Please refer to the Repairs and Maintenance Policy for more detail.

5.7.2 Provision of Suitable Alternative Accommodation

If the home cannot be made safe, BCC Housing and Landlord Services will offer suitable alternative accommodation to the resident and their household. Alternatively, the tenant may choose to stay with friends or family or to stay in their home while safety works are carried out.

Where the resident household decides to remain in their home while relevant safety works are carried out, BCC Housing and Landlord Services will provide the occupants with information about how to keep safe.

The provision of suitable alternative accommodation extends to the tenant's household, including children who stay at the property at least one night a week. Other factors that are considered when determining the suitability of the alternative accommodation are:

1. Household composition and bedroom need.
2. Accessibility for tenants with a disability or physical health condition.
3. Location of the alternative accommodation in respect to places of work, education and support networks.
4. The length of time the tenant household is expected to reside in the alternative accommodation.

BCC Housing and Landlord Services will make every effort to minimise the length of stay in the alternative accommodation. The provision of alternative accommodation will end when:

- The relevant safety work is completed.
- An investigation concludes that there is no significant or emergency hazard.
- The tenant household no longer wishes to remain in the alternative accommodation and the named tenant gives notice to the Council in writing.

5.7.3 How BCC measures the status of damp and mould cases

The information below outlines the decision-making framework for BCC Housing and Landlord Services based on the stage of the damp and mould case and the actions taken:

- **Open Case:** Damp and mould reported; survey and wash down completed; survey sent; all associated repair works relating to defects that contribute to damp are in progress and within prescribed timescales.
- **Closed Case:** Survey complete, hazard removed, survey sent, and no defects noted.
- **Closed Case:** All repair orders for reported defects are completed. Work orders for improvement works (e.g. installation of extractor fans) are raised and scheduled within prescribed timescales.
- **Monitoring Case and Closed Case:** All damp and mould works have been completed. The case will be monitored for 12 months, with residents contacted every 3 months.
- **Closed Case:** All reports of 'slight' damp and mould have had information resources sent to the resident household for advice on managing and preventing mould growth.
- **Closed Case:** Damp and mould inspection confirmed no presence of damp and mould. The issue was due to water ingress (e.g. roof leak, burst pipe), and confirmation has been received that repairs are completed.

This information helps BCC Housing and Landlord Services to:

1. Standardise case status to ensure consistent classification.
2. Meet regulations on timescales and monitoring.
3. Provide a transparent service by clarifying when a case should remain open, be closed, or enter a monitoring phase.

5.7.4 Use of contractors

BCC Housing and Landlord Services commissions external contractors to carry out certain repair works and accepts responsibility for ensuring that all representatives adhere to the statutory, regulatory, and procedural requirements outlined in this policy document.

5.7.5 Accessing residents' homes

BCC Housing and Landlord Services has a right of entry to a tenant's home, in accordance with the tenancy agreement, when:

- It is requested at a reasonable time of day, and
- The tenant has been given at least 24-hours' notice.

If a tenant refuses access, either directly or indirectly, BCC Housing and Landlord Services will follow its Gain Access Procedure.

5.8 Equality and Diversity

An Equalities Impact Assessment [EqIA] has been carried out and agreed by the Equalities Team.

5.9 Complaints

BCC manages complaints in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code [CHC].

Residents are encouraged to make a complaint through BCC's internal complaints procedure [ICP] if they are dissatisfied with the quality of the landlord services provided.

Refer to the Compensation Policy for information on the circumstances when BCC will consider refunds, compensation, or reimbursement of costs for residents failed by landlord services.

More information can be found in the Corporate Complaints Policy.

Property condition claims are managed by the Housing Condition Claim Team. Further information on Property Condition Claims can be found in the Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

6.1 Publishing

This policy will be published on the BCC Website and communicated to relevant operational teams via policy briefings and other appropriate communications.

6.2 Review

This policy will be reviewed in 3 years or sooner if there is a change to legal or regulatory requirements, in accordance with our procedures.

6.3 Monitoring and Reporting

Service delivery and performance is measured against the Housing and Landlord Services Performance Framework.

BCC uses performance management to enhance service delivery standards and improve tenant experience by measuring against the following Key Performance Indicator [KPI]:

- Compliance with the social landlord health and safety related statutory requirements.
- Active damp and mould cases having an inspection undertaken within target timescale.
- Damp and mould cases rectified within target timescale.

Performance is reported to the Executive Leadership Team and the Homes and Housing Delivery Committee for assurance.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Roles and responsibilities

Interim Director of Housing Property

- Reports to the Executive Management Team and Homes and Housing Delivery Committee on damp and mould performance and compliance.
- The Transformation Director is also the Health and Safety Lead and is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Consumer Standards as set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, 2023.
- Ensures all staff within the directorate are aware of health and safety issues and the steps needed to tackle them.

Asset Management Lead

- Provides input regarding the Housing Improvement Plan budget.
- Maintains asset data and reports to the regulator as necessary.
- Works with operational teams to identify priorities for repair and planned maintenance.

Head of Responsive Repairs

- Oversees day-to-day repairs.
- Ensures adequate training and refresher training is delivered across the repairs service.
- Monitors compliance with legislative timeframes.

Damp and Mould Manager

- Manages damp and mould cases.
- Delivers training and refresher training to front-facing teams.
- Reports and monitors performance against key performance indicators.

Operational Managers – Repairs and Maintenance (excludes Planned Programmes)

- Collaborates with Asset Management to prioritise properties for work programmes.
- Manages contracts with input from Construction Programme/Project Managers.
- Considers referrals into planned programmes and reprioritises accordingly.
- Oversees work programmes and commissions contractors via open tender.

- Manages contracts, budgets, payment applications, and variations.
- Holds monthly contract management meetings and agrees additional repair works.
- For planned maintenance, assesses referrals for component replacement where repair isn't viable.

Surveyors (Project/Quantity) and Project Managers (Surveyor and Construction)

- Manages projects on-site.
- Agrees required works and refers to Operational Managers if works exceed delegation limits.
- Communicates about access, repairs, and refusals.
- Collates approved works and costs.
- Signs off on installations.

Repairs Coordinators / Customer Liaison Officer / Senior Technical Support Officer

- Sends communications to tenants about expected works.
- Schedules works and supports property access.
- Processes invoices, closes orders, and updates housing management system (Keystone) with certifications and warranties.
- Supports day-to-day contact with contractors, especially regarding access.

Contractor (Agent)

- Engages tenants per their own approved policies and procedures.
- Identifies and completes repairs.
- Highlights components needing replacement.
- Provides progress reports and completes directed works.
- Repairs property defects within prescribed timescales.
- Maintains communication with BCC to report progress, confirm completion, and escalate issues.

Contractor (Third-party)

- Follows the same responsibilities as agents.
- Reports damp and mould to the Damp and Mould Team if identified during routine works.

Citizen Services

Asks and records during each inbound call whether a Council resident has damp and mould in their home.

All resident-facing staff

- During routine visits or contact, inquire about damp and mould issues.
- Check for signs and note early warnings.
- Report damp and mould in Council residents' homes.

Appendix B – Legal and Policy Context

Legal, regulatory and other external guidance

The following is a non-exhaustive list of legislation relevant to this policy:

- Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025
- Equalities Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing Act 1996
- Housing Act 2004
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004)
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended by Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018)
- Decent Homes Standard [DHS]
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957 (amended 1984)
- Defective Premises Act 1972 (Section 4)
- Housing Disrepair Protocol Civil Procedure Rules
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Building Act 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Minimum Level of Energy Efficiency Standard

Related policies

- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Vulnerable and Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Corporate Complaints Policy
- Compensation Policy
- Tenancy Changes Policy (Decants)
- Asset Management Strategy

Appendix C – Glossary of terms

- **Damp:** Excess moisture in a property that can lead to structural damage and health risks. Often caused by condensation, leaks, or poor ventilation.
- **Mould:** A type of fungus that grows in damp environments. It can pose serious health risks, especially to vulnerable individuals.
- **Significant Hazard:** A hazard that presents a substantial risk of harm to the health and safety of a tenant or their household, assessed based on individual circumstances such as age and health.
- **Emergency Hazard:** A hazard that poses an imminent and significant risk to health or safety, requiring urgent response (e.g. affecting breathing).
- **Written Summary:** A document provided to the tenant within 3 working days of an investigation, detailing findings and actions taken or required.
- **Further Works:** Additional remedial or preventative actions required to fully resolve a damp and mould hazard, initiated within 5 working days or scheduled within 12 weeks if not immediately practicable.
- **Initial Determination:** The first assessment made within 24 hours of a report to determine whether the hazard is significant or an emergency.
- **Standard Investigation:** A formal inspection conducted within 10 working days to assess the hazard and identify necessary safety works.
- **Emergency Investigation:** An inspection carried out within 24 hours when there is reasonable belief that the hazard poses an imminent risk.
- **Renewed Investigation:** A follow-up inspection requested by the tenant, especially after a remote investigation, to reassess the hazard.
- **Further Investigation:** A deeper inspection initiated when the root cause of the hazard is not identified during previous investigations.
- **Suitable Alternative Accommodation:** Temporary housing provided to tenants when safety works cannot be completed within required timescales, considering household needs and accessibility.

- **Resident Vulnerability:** Factors that increase a tenant’s risk from damp and mould, such as age, health conditions, or ability to report issues.
- **HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System):** A risk-based evaluation system used to assess potential hazards in residential properties.
- **Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025, also known as Awaab’s Law:** Legislation introduced to ensure timely action on damp and mould hazards in social housing, following the death of Awaab Ishak.
- **Prescribed Requirements Regulations 2025:** Legal standards under the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 that mandate specific actions and timescales for addressing hazards.

Appendix D – Damp and mould repair timescales

Emergency Hazards

Necessary safety works must be carried out as soon as reasonably practicable, and within 24 hours of BCC first being made aware of the hazard.

Significant Hazards

Investigation must be conducted within 10 working days of BCC first being made aware of the potential hazard.

Relevant safety works must be completed within 5 working days of the investigation concluding.

Written Summary

Must be produced and sent to the named tenant within 3 working days of the investigation concluding.

The completion date is defined as the date the summary is either posted (Royal Mail 1st Class) or emailed to the tenant.

Further works

As far as reasonably practicable, further works should be started within 5 days of the investigation concluding.

If not possible within 5 days, reasonable steps must be taken to start works within a maximum timeframe of 12 weeks.

Appendix E – Types of investigation

- Emergency investigation: within 24 hours
- Standard investigation: within 10 working days
- Renewed investigation: when an in-person assessment has been requested by the tenant following a remote investigation, within 10 working days
- Further investigation: when one of the above investigations has not determined the root cause of the damp and mould