

Damp and Mould Procedure

October 2023

1. Introduction

The health and safety of our customers is our number one priority. We believe everyone has the right to live safely and comfortably in their home. We are committed to working with our customers to prevent damp and mould in our properties and to resolve it when it does occur. By this we mean taking a proactive approach to understanding how damp or mould may occur in our properties and take the necessary steps to deal with problems reported to us by our customers.

Ensuring that the appropriate resources, skills, systems, and procedures are in place to support this is vital. This will help ensure this is delivered effectively and efficiently, and that Gentoo continues to be compliant with the Decent Home Standard.

This document covers Gentoo's planned delivery model including staffing resources, systems and practices that work together to ensure Gentoo's damp and mould objectives are achieved. This document will naturally develop over time as Gentoo seeks to achieve continual improvement in the way that it understands and captures damp and mould information so it can plan, procure, and manage the delivery of its policy.

Gentoo's approach to damp and mould is guided by four main principles:

- Proactive identification of damp or mould
- Listening to and empathising with our customers
- Case management
- Competence and professionalism

This document includes how we seek to:

- Proactively identify damp and mould in our properties to avoid relying solely on our customers telling us about problems in their homes.
- Proactively work with our customers to prevent damp and mould.
- Learn from damp and mould cases and use data as part of our continuous improvement and review.
- Ensure our colleagues and contractors have the right training to do their jobs to a high standard helping us to manage damp and mould in our properties.

It will also detail:

- At an operation level, how the Group or a specific business area of the Group manages a specific activity in relation to damp or mould.
- The specific roles and responsibilities of those involved in managing the specific activity which the procedure or process relates to.
- The categorisation of the condition of the damp and mould.

1.1 Prioritisation of damp and mould

All reports of damp and mould are given a severity categorisation using pre-determined criteria. This is based on the key factors that influence the likelihood and severity of harm as identified in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Operating Guidance, to determine if the case is slight, moderate or severe. This includes consideration of:

- The extent or size of the dampness and/or mould within the building.
- The location of the damp and/or mould. Habitable rooms (e.g. living rooms, bedrooms) or non-habitable rooms (e.g. kitchens, bathrooms and hallways).
- The length of exposure to the damp and/or mould issue i.e. if the issue has occurred previously or if it is being reported for the first time.
- The vulnerability of any residents within the dwelling i.e. the presence of anyone aged 14 or under or anyone with a low immune system or chronic breathing difficulties.

1.2 Damp and mould assessment criteria

- **Slight**

When the priority has been identified as slight, the Customer Support Assistant (CSA) will raise a job and agree a suitable date and time with the customer for the Rapid Damp team to attend within 10 days. If any follow up remedial repairs are required, these will be raised for the Repairs Team to attend within 28 days.

- **Moderate and Severe**

When the priority has been identified as moderate or severe, the Customer Support Assistant will raise a job and agree a suitable date with the customer for the Inspector to attend within 10 days. If any follow up remedial repairs are required, these will be raised for the Repairs team to attend within 28 days.

Customer Support Assistants have discretion to decide if the first visit needs to be carried out by the Rapid Damp team or an Inspector, irrespective of the assessment outcome, based on information provided by the customer.

2.0 Reactive response

- **Customer identification**

Customers may contact Gentoo to report issues of damp and/or mould using the dedicated number: 0191 525 5500 or by emailing csc@gentoogroup.com

- **New case**

Where the customer is reporting the issue for the first time the CSA will create a new case on our internal system called Genforce. Using the information provided by the customer, the CSA will include a description of the issue and the location of the damp and/or mould within the property.

The CSA will ask pre-determined questions to determine the severity of the issue, using the guidance below:

- **Extent** – number of rooms affected and approximate size of the affected area
- **Location** – habitable or non-habitable rooms
- **Reoccurrence** – new or existing issue and if existing, number of times and when
- **Vulnerability** – any vulnerable people living in the property
- **Cause** – possible cause

The CSA will ask the customer to confirm their email address and inform them that a case has been opened and a Case Coordinator will be assigned.

- **Existing case**

For existing case the CSA will create a task, in Genforce, against the original case and transfer this to the allocated Case Coordinator to follow up. If the damp and/or mould situation has got worse since the initial assessment, the CSA will re-assess, raise any repairs required, update the case and raise a task for the allocated Case Coordinator to follow up.

- **Cases received via email to the Contact Centre**

The CSA will contact the customer to carry out an assessment over the phone. If they are unable to get in touch with the customer, the case will be transferred to the Case Management Team to follow up.

3.0 Proactive identification

The Group take a proactive approach to identify the prevalence of damp and/or mould across its housing stock. This is done through a rolling program of stock condition surveys and cases reported by customers and colleagues. This data is analysed and a risk profile of the Group's stock developed to enable the Group to take preventive measures where possible.

- **Stock condition surveys**

Each stock condition survey includes an inspection of the property to identify any visible signs of damp and/or mould. During the inspection the Stock Condition Surveyor will record all visible evidence of damp and/or mould throughout the property and categorise the severity.

Where damp and/or mould has been identified the Stock Condition Surveyor will contact the Customer Contact Team, whilst in the property with the customer. The CSA will raise a case, assess and raise repairs based on the information provided by the Stock Condition Surveyor.

- **Void properties**

All empty properties will receive a visit from an Empty Property Officer who will assess the property for damp and mould. Where identified, they will take steps to identify the cause and take suitable action(s) to repair the cause to reduce the likelihood of problems recurring once the property is re-let.

- **Visits to customers' properties**

Colleagues from across the organisation visit properties for different reasons. The Group has asked all colleagues to actively look for signs of damp and/or mould in properties, where it is more likely to occur, and take the required action.

- **Visit from Housing Team**

During visits from the Housing Team, colleagues will assess the property and identify any vulnerabilities, communication requirements, language barriers or disabilities and capture any reasonable adjustments. They will also identify if this is a new issue or an ongoing case.

- **New case**

Where this is a new case, Housing colleagues will contact the Customer Contact Team, whilst in the property with the customer. The CSA will follow the steps outlined in section 2.

- **Existing case**

Where the case is ongoing, Housing colleagues will create a task, in Genforce, against the original case and transfer the case to the allocated Case Coordinator to follow up. If the damp and/or mould situation has got worse since the original assessment the Housing colleague will raise a task for the Case Coordinator to carry out a re-assess and raise any repairs required. Where the case is closed, the Customer Support Assistant will create a new case, linking back to the original case and the case will be transferred to the Case Management team for investigation.

- **Visit from Property Team**

During visits from the Property Team, customers may report issues to the Officer, who will identify if this is a new issue or an ongoing case.

- **New case**

During the visit the Property colleague will attempt to treat the area(s), where possible. Where not possible the Property colleague will contact the Contact Centre Team, whilst in the property with the customer. The CSA will follow the steps outlined in section 3.

- **Existing case**

Unresolved cases will be reported to the Case Coordinator who will contact the customer and take appropriate action to resolve the issue.

4.0 Case management

All damp and/or mould cases are overseen by a Case Coordinator. The Case Coordinators are responsible for ensuring customers are kept up to date and cases are resolved in line with this process.

Once a case has been created, the allocated Case Coordinator will email the customer, within 48 hours of the issue being reported. Where the customer has no email address a letter will be issued.

The standard email / letter provides the details of the Case Coordinator and their role and offers advice on reducing condensation in their home.

The Case Coordinator will contact the customer to check the repair and any remedial repair work have been completed in line with agreed repair completion dates.

The Case Coordinator will update the customer where any changes to the planned action is required, taking appropriate action to ensure the work remains on track and follow the escalation process, where appropriate. They may also offer additional support, such as referrals to specialist support services, such as the Group's Money Matters team.

Once all inspections and associated work have been completed the Case Coordinator will update the status and move the case into aftercare 1.

Throughout the case, the Case Coordinator will liaise across business areas to ensure appropriate action is taken to resolve the issue, including internal and external follow up appointments and work with the customer to arrange suitable appointment times for work to be completed.

Where customers are required to move out of their property until the issue is resolved, the Case Coordinator will work with the Repairs Manager and Housing Manager to arrange appropriate accommodation.

The Inspector may decide that no action is required following their visit, where this is the case, they will communicate with the customer to explain the reason for this decision and update the Case Coordinator who will update and close the case.

Aftercare 1

35 working days after the case has been closed, a CSA will contact the customer to find out if the damp and/or mould issues have been resolved. If resolved, they will send an email to the customer advising that a further aftercare call will take place in 10-12 months. They will update the case status to aftercare 2.

If the issues have not been resolved the case will be re-assessed and the Case Coordinator will decide the severity of the issue using the pre-determined questions.

If the severity is:

- **Slight or moderate**

A job will be raised and a suitable date and time will be arranged with the customer for an Inspector to attend. The process will then follow the steps outlined from section 2.

- **Severe**

The case will be transferred to the Specialist Building Team who will aim to attend the property within 1 week. On completion of the inspection, they will email the Case Coordinator outlining actions required. The Case Coordinator will try and contact the customer to provide an update. If after a couple of attempts they are unable to speak to the customer, they will send an email advising that a further aftercare call will take place in 10-12 months and update the case status to aftercare 2.

Aftercare 2

10 months after the case was moved to aftercare 2, the Case Coordinator will contact the customer to find out if the damp and/or mould issue has been resolved. If resolved, they will send an email to the customer advising that the case has been closed. If the issues are still ongoing the case will be re-assessed and moved into case management where the Case Coordinator will determine the severity of the issue using the pre-determined questions.

If the severity is:

- **Slight or moderate**

A job will be raised and a suitable date and time will be arranged with the customer for the Inspector to attend. The process will then follow the steps outlined from section 2.

- **Severe**

The case will be transferred to the Specialist Building team who will aim to attend the property within 1 week. On completion of the inspection, they will email the Case Coordinator, outlining actions required. The Case Coordinator will try and contact the customer to provide an update. If after a couple of attempts they are unable to speak to the customer, they will send an email advising that the case has been closed.

5.0 No access procedure

If a customer misses an appointment relating to damp and/or mould this will be referred to the Compliance and Customer Contact Team.

The Compliance and Customer Contact Team will work with the customer to arrange access until the work is completed. Once all the work has been completed the case will move to Aftercare 1 status and will be picked up by the Case Coordinator.

If access is not gained, the Compliance and Customer Contact Team will consider serving the customer with a Pre-Notice of Seeking Possession letter and thereafter a Notice of Seeking Possession if access is not gained.

6.0 During the repair visit

During the repair visit the Repairs Operative will take appropriate steps to resolve the issue. They will take before and after photographs and discuss prevention techniques with the customer, leaving the required resources e.g. foam spray and a guidance leaflet on how to keep the area clean.

If during the visit the severity of the case needs to be updated, the Inspector or Repair Operative will inform the Case Coordinator who will work with the customer on the next steps.

7.0 Complaints

If customers are not happy with how we have responded following the reporting of an issue with damp and/or mould, they can make a complaint by contacting the Customer Voice Team. Once a complaint has been made, it will be allocated to a Customer Voice Partner. The Customer Voice Partner will make contact with the customer to determine the issue and inform of the next steps. All stage one complaints will be investigated and responded to in 10 working days.

Where complaints are not resolved in line with the customer's expectations, they can choose to escalate to stage 2.

At stage 2 the Customer Voice Lead will acknowledge the complaint and complete a full review of the complaint. All stage two complaints will be investigated and responded to in 20 working days.