

MTVH response to Regulator of Social Housing's letter on damp and mould

1. Firstly, your approach to assessing the extent of damp and mould issues affecting your properties including how you assess the prevalence of category 1 and category 2 damp and mould hazards.

MTVH operates a zero tolerance approach to damp and mould. We introduced new policy and procedure in April 2022 which incorporates the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight report on Damp and Mould. Our policy supports our aim to ensure that all residents can live well and live in homes that are Warm, Safe and Dry.

We make it easy for residents to let us know if there are problems. We have created new resident resources, agreed and shaped by residents through our Customer Council, to help people identify problems and provide advice and support.

We encourage residents to report issues to us. We have dedicated resources on our customer website that provides people with detailed information and support and allows them to let us know easily if they have problems.

<https://www.mtvh.co.uk/manage-your-home/repairs/dealing-with-damp-and-mould/>

In addition, residents can use our 24/7 telephone Property Desk repairs service to report issues or log into their online portal through MTVH Online to report issues. We have instantaneous translation in our Property Desk. Our website features immediate translation into a wide range of community languages. All of our written materials are translated on request. We store information about our resident's communication preferences on our system. MTVH does not blame residents for damp and mould in their homes.

Reporting issues is everyone's concern at MTVH. All staff, operatives and members of our supply chain are encouraged to report back anything they see on their routine visits to our homes. Staff and contractors use the dedicated dampandmould@mtvh.co.uk email address to report any issues they see.

85% of our stock has a current Stock Condition Survey based on an in person visit by an independent stock condition surveyor. We do not clone data. Where stock condition surveyors identify potential hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) they are reported directly to MTVH.

All reports of damp and mould, from whatever source, are channelled to our Property Desk where the issues are reviewed by specially trained staff who undertake a first stage triage. All reports of damp and mould are recorded on our IT system with a tag which enables tracking and reporting.

In 2022 all of MTVH's front line technical staff went on a 2 day training course on damp and mould provided by HQN to refresh and enhance their skills. In addition, we have created a standard set of kit and equipment for all technical staff including protimeters, hygrometers, salts kits and floor boxes to enable them to make more consistent diagnosis of the causes of damp and mould and have these diagnosis supported by technical evidence.

Our Property Desk triage all damp and mould reports. Potential high risk reports and issues requiring inspection are tagged on our system and assigned to a named member of our technical team of surveyors. Reports requiring works are tagged on the system and issued to our supply chain and internal contract teams.

Damp and mould issues are dealt with as cases by named members of staff at MTVH rather than as unconnected repair requests. This allows us to take a whole house approach to the issues which are reported and ensure that there is clear ownership within MTVH for dealing with individual cases.

Surveyor reports are captured using a standardised report template which uses the iAuditor software to provide consistency. The reports contain photographic evidence and readings of temperature and humidity.

In September 2022 MTVH recruited a specialist Senior Surveyor dedicated to damp and mould. The Senior Specialist Surveyor supports other members of staff with diagnosis and advice.

Our policy is to revisit damp and mould interventions within 12 months of works being completed. This is an important part of our approach, combining our whole house approach to damp and mould with our focus on how a customer is able to live well.

We want to increase the proactive nature of our service. From April 2023 our Predictive Data Science tool will move out of BETA stage. This platform enables MTVH to pinpoint properties that share a risk profile with other homes that have previously experienced damp and mould but where we have no reports of problems from the resident.

We continue to adapt our policy and learn from others. Earlier this year we updated our policy on the treatment of silverfish on the basis of a recommendation from the Ombudsman which ties into our approach to managing damp and mould. We also undertook a review of our regeneration projects where residents are living in properties that are due for imminent demolition. Based on this review we have carried out additional investment works to ensure these properties remain weather and water tight while they continue to be occupied.

2. Secondly, and in content of that approach, your most recent assessment of the extent of damp and mould hazards in your homes, including the prevalence of category 1 and category 2 damp and mould hazards.

The data included here are correct as of 15th December 2022.

MTVH has 435 logged reports of potential damp and mould issues that has required an inspection from a surveyor or a member of the technical team.

This includes three category 1 hazards and 28 category 2 hazards.

In addition, we have identified 1,127 properties where we have carried out two or more repairs that could relate to a problem with damp and mould over the last two years.

3. Thirdly, given those findings, the action you are taking to remedy any issues and hazards, and ensure that your homes meet the Decent Homes Standard

We are carrying out works in each of the 3 properties with a category 1 hazard and are working to support the residents. Each of the 28 category 2 hazards have works underway, an inspection booked or access is being negotiated with the resident.

The 435 reports of damp and mould are in a programme of inspections which are being prioritised on the basis of severity. As inspections are completed, works are raised as appropriate and support provided to the households concerned.

The 1,127 properties which have had two or more damp and mould repairs in the last two years are part of a re-inspection process that will complete by the end of January 2023 with any necessary works being ordered as required.

Last year we invested £128m on repairs and maintenances to our existing homes. £37.7m of this overall investment was directly into fabric measures such as roofs, windows, heating systems and wall systems which address thermal comfort and create safe, warm and dry homes. We report this element of our work externally through Ritterwald accreditation.

Alongside existing repairs and maintenance expenditure on damp and mould, we have set aside £1.5m in our 23/24 budget specifically to fund works that would normally fall into longer term planned programmes such as internal wall insulation, upgrading ventilation and changing window systems. The purpose is to provide us

with a rapid response capability to making significant fabric improvements on individual homes.

MTVH has a £6m SHDF Wave 1 programme underway to create 1,200 warmer and more energy efficient homes by the end of March 2023. We have bid for a £18m programme from SHDF Wave 2.1 to fund similar works to an additional 2,083 homes over the next two years.

31 of our 38,000 social rented homes failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard in 21/22 which we reported to the RSH in our NROSH return in May 2022. None of those 31 failures were related to damp and mould hazards.

4. Lastly, tell us how you ensure that individual damp and mould cases are identified and dealt with promptly and effectively when raised by tenants and residents.

MTVH makes it easy for residents to report problems and concerns with damp and mould through the website, through the online portal MTVH Online and through our 24 hour Property Desk.

We've invested in staff training and support so that enquiries are dealt at the first point of contact by specialist staff in the Property Desk who triage the cases and assign contractors or technical inspectors to attend depending on the nature and severity of the report.

All reports of damp and mould are tagged in our IT system and assigned to named members of staff to manage. The tagging supports accountability and the reporting of all cases at any time. We have a Specialist Senior Surveyor available to provide support to our technical teams on more complex cases.

Severe cases and potential category 1 damp and mould hazards are inspected within a week of being reported. In depth reports are taken by our trained technical staff using software which captures detailed information about the property including the temperature and the humidity. Any works required are raised to our supply chain and the case is overseen and managed by the named surveyor.

We take a whole house approach to damp and mould. We provide advice for residents to help them make full use of all the features in their home which can reduce and mitigate damp and mould. This includes advice on use of the heating system, ventilation and fans. We have started to supply residents with data loggers which record temperature and humidity on an ongoing basis and through simple display icon, can alert residents to when humidity levels are rising or the temperature is too low.



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In addition we refer residents to our Additional Requirements team who work one on one with residents. Through this service we offer residents debt management, access to wider support and funding, fuel vouchers and further support to help them to live well.

We work with households and their medical teams and GPs and support them with rehousing requests. MTVH has an internal transfer system for residents who need to move home and we give the highest priority to residents whose medical conditions are such that they must move.

We will decant residents on a temporary basis from their home if it is necessary to carry out works to deal with the damp and mould. We have a specialist staff in place to manage the decant process and support the resident and their household where decanting is required.

In cases where residents have made a claim of Disrepair we will as a matter of policy seek to access the property and put right whatever issues are contributing to the damp and mould while at the same time managing the disrepair case. We write to solicitors acting for our residents telling them not to advise their clients to refuse access as we do not believe doing so is in the interests of the resident and their household.

We reinspect all cases where there have been damp and mould works within 12 months of those works completing to ensure we run through an entire year of changing seasons and check on the effectiveness of the works and to pick up any further requirements.