manningham
HOUSING ASSOCIATION



Damp and Mould Review

Customer Scrutiny Report

September 2026

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1 Background

1.1 This scrutiny review of damp, mould and condensation was agreed in response to the increasing regulatory focus on housing conditions, customer safety and compliance with Awaab's Law, alongside the importance of understanding customer experience and learning from cases where outcomes have fallen short. Damp and mould remains a key issue for tenants and a priority area for assurance and improvement.

1.2 A review of MHA damp & mould policy and process was approved by the Customer Experience Committee (CEC) on 22 October 2025 as part of the Annual Scrutiny Programme and was subsequently included within the Customer Scrutiny Forum's work plan. The scope and methodology for the review were agreed by the Scrutiny Forum in line with the approved scrutiny framework.

2 Scope

2.1 Further details the scope, approach and methodology of the review are contained within Appendix 1. The following objectives were covered during the scrutiny review: ;

- **Objective 1 - Understand and scrutinise customer service standards** in relation to damp, mould and condensation cases, and how these standards are embedded, communicated, and applied consistently across MHA, including across housing management, and repairs.

- **Objective 2 - Understand how effective damp, mould and condensation services are defined, recorded, and monitored**, including how good practice, learning, and compliance with regulatory and sector guidance (e.g. Housing Ombudsman and Awaab's Law principles) are implemented across the organisation.

- **Objective 3 - Scrutinise the level of customer care provided during damp, mould and condensation interactions**, including how MHA demonstrates value, respect, empathy, and fair and consistent treatment of customers throughout the end-to-end process—from first report, inspection, diagnosis, communication, works delivery, to resolution and aftercare.

3 Summary – Key Findings

- The Scrutiny Forum gained a clearer understanding of the end-to-end damp, mould and condensation (DMC) process across Customer Services, Surveying and Property teams, including how cases are logged, assessed, monitored and closed.

- While processes are in place and generally followed, the Forum identified that greater transparency and visibility of systems (e.g. screenshots or walkthroughs) would support more effective scrutiny and assurance.

- Recording and monitoring of DMC cases is undertaken through SDM, with timescales linked to severity and hazard; however, understanding of reoccurring cases and compliance timelines would benefit from clearer definitions and reporting.

- The Forum noted that repeat DMC cases are not always attributable to contractor performance and can be influenced by property condition, environmental factors, and customer behaviour, highlighting the complexity of managing DMC effectively.

- Customer communication was identified as a key area for improvement, particularly around accessibility, preferred language, method of contact, and ensuring information is understood by all customers.

- The Forum recognised good practice in identifying and flagging vulnerable tenants, including how this information is shared with contractors, while noting limitations in the detail contractors receive.

- Capacity and resourcing pressures were highlighted, particularly the increasing volume and complexity of casework, impacting surveyors and administrative processes.

- The Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy was reviewed and confirmed as broadly fit for purpose, with a small number of wording updates identified.

- Overall, the Forum welcomed the openness of officers and acknowledged positive practice, while identifying opportunities to strengthen compliance, customer experience, and proactive management of damp and mould risks.

4 Findings

4.1 Objective 1 – Customer Service Standards

4.1.1 The Scrutiny Forum reviewed how customer service standards relating to damp, mould and condensation (DMC) are defined, embedded and applied across Manningham Housing Association, particularly within Customer Services, Surveying and Property teams.

4.1.2 The Forum found that a clear process exists for logging DMC cases through Customer Services, with cases recorded on the system and appointments booked promptly. Staff demonstrated good awareness of the importance of timely action, particularly where cases involve vulnerable tenants or higher-risk hazards. Vulnerability flags are visible to Customer Services and surveyors, and contractors are notified where a customer is vulnerable, although without detailed information.

However, the Forum identified that the customer-facing process is not fully documented in a format accessible to scrutiny. Verbal explanations provided during the meeting were not reflected in the written documentation shared in advance, limiting the Forum's ability to effectively scrutinise consistency and compliance. Members highlighted that access to system walkthroughs, screenshots or flowcharts would improve understanding and assurance.

4.1.4 The Forum also noted that Customer Services staff face challenges balancing sensitivity with consistency, particularly when asking customers questions that may relate to lifestyle factors. While procedures are followed, staff expressed concern about causing offence, which can limit the information gathered at first contact.

4.1.5 Overall, customer service standards are in place and understood by staff, but the Forum found that clearer documentation, improved visibility of systems, and stronger alignment between written policy and practice would strengthen consistency and scrutiny.

4.2 Objective 2 – Effectiveness and Oversight of DMC Services

4.2.1 The Forum examined how DMC cases are defined, recorded, monitored and managed, including performance oversight, repeat cases and contractor management.

4.2.2 Findings showed that DMC cases are logged on SDM and linked to specific case numbers, with timescales driven by severity and hazard level. Surveyors assess cases, complete inspection reports, and raise works orders accordingly. Monitoring takes place through regular internal reviews and weekly case update meetings. The Forum noted that cases falling outside target timescales are not automatically indicative of poor

performance, as delays can be influenced by access issues, complexity of works, or external factors.

4.2.3 Repeat cases were a key area of scrutiny. The Forum found that when a tenant recontacts MHA regarding damp and mould, this is often logged as a new case rather than a continuation, which can make it harder to identify patterns and reoccurrence at a reporting level. Members raised concerns about understanding why cases reoccur, particularly where contractor performance, property condition, or wider environmental factors may be contributing.

4.2.4 Contractor management arrangements are in place, and where remedial works are found to be the contractor's responsibility, rework is undertaken at their cost. However, the Forum acknowledged the inherent complexity of damp and mould cases, where outcomes are not always clear-cut. Learning from completed cases, particularly those with delays or repeat issues, was identified as an area where oversight could be strengthened.

4.2.5 The Forum also noted capacity pressures, including increasing case volumes and administrative workload, which impact the ability of teams to manage and analyse DMC data effectively. Members recognised that improved data integration and resourcing could enhance proactive identification of risk and support regulatory compliance.

4.3 Objective 3 – Customer Care and Experience

4.3.1 The Forum scrutinised the level of customer care provided throughout the end-to-end DMC journey, from first contact to resolution and aftercare, using discussion of real-life scenarios and case examples.

4.3.2 Members found that customers are generally informed of inspection outcomes and next steps, and that surveyors explain findings and provide advice at the point of visit. Leaflets and written information are provided; however, the Forum questioned how effective these are in practice, particularly for customers with language barriers, low literacy levels, or limited digital access.

4.3.3 Communication and accessibility emerged as a significant theme. While Customer Services may explain letters verbally when customers call, the Forum identified that letters and reports are currently issued in English by default, with limited proactive exploration of preferred language or communication method. Members felt that asking customers how they wish to receive information, and in what format or language, would improve understanding and trust.

4.3.4 The Forum also discussed the customer perspective on timescales, particularly around compliance with Awaab's Law. While internal systems track deadlines, members felt that clearer communication to customers about expected timeframes and progress would help manage expectations and reduce dissatisfaction.

4.3.5 Overall, the Forum concluded that customer care is delivered with positive intent and professionalism, but that improvements in communication, accessibility, and feedback loops would significantly enhance the customer experience and reduce escalation.

5 Recommendations

5.1 The following recommendations are proposed by the Customer Scrutiny Forum based on the findings of the review.

No.	Recommendation
1	**Improve visibility and documentation of DMC processes** MHA should develop clear, customer-facing and scrutiny-ready documentation that sets out the end-to-end damp, mould and condensation process. This should include visual aids such as flowcharts, screenshots or system walkthroughs to demonstrate how cases are logged, monitored, escalated and closed. *Intended outcome:* Improved transparency, consistency and ability for customers and the Scrutiny Forum to understand and scrutinise the process effectively.
2	**Strengthen identification and reporting of repeat DMC cases** MHA should review how repeat damp and mould cases are defined, recorded and reported to ensure reoccurrences can be clearly identified, tracked and analysed. This should support learning from repeat cases and help distinguish between new issues, unresolved issues, contractor-related failures and wider property or environmental factors. *Intended outcome:* Better oversight of recurring issues, improved learning, and targeted preventative action.
3	**Enhance customer communication and accessibility** Customer Services and Property teams should proactively ask customers their preferred method of communication and language when managing DMC cases. Where possible, written communication and reports should be provided in accessible formats to meet customer needs, including consideration of literacy, digital access and language barriers. *Intended outcome:* Improved customer understanding, reduced escalation, and a more inclusive customer experience.
4	**Review customer information and advice provided** MHA should review the effectiveness of current damp and mould information provided to customers (e.g. leaflets, QR codes, verbal advice) to ensure it is

	accessible, understood and appropriate for different customer groups, including older tenants and those with limited digital skills. *Intended outcome:* Increased customer engagement with advice and reduced likelihood of avoidable reoccurrence.
5	**Support staff capacity and administrative efficiency** MHA should review resourcing and administrative support for DMC case management, including consideration of additional administrative capacity and improved system integration, to ensure surveyors and officers can focus on timely inspections, monitoring and compliance. *Intended outcome:* Improved efficiency, reduced pressure on frontline staff, and stronger compliance with regulatory timescales.
6	**Strengthen proactive and preventative approaches** MHA should continue to develop a proactive approach to identifying properties at higher risk of damp and mould, using available data to identify patterns across property types or locations, and consider preventative interventions where appropriate. *Intended outcome:* Reduced incidence of damp and mould, improved property condition, and better long-term outcomes for customers.
7	**Update Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy wording** The Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy should be updated to address minor wording issues identified by the Forum, ensuring clarity and alignment with current practice and regulatory requirements. *Intended outcome:* A clear, up-to-date policy that supports consistent application and customer understanding.

Appendix 1 – Scope, Approach and Methodology

1. Scrutiny Methodology

The Customer Scrutiny Forum undertook this review using an agreed scrutiny methodology. This included two formal Scrutiny Forum meetings:

- An initial meeting to agree the scrutiny methodology, terms of reference and scope of the review.
- A second meeting to undertake detailed scrutiny, including questioning officers, reviewing evidence, and discussing customer experience and compliance.

The Forum focused on obtaining assurance, identifying learning, and assessing whether services are delivered in a way that is effective, customer-focused and compliant with regulatory requirements.

2. Documents and Information Reviewed

As part of the review, the Scrutiny Forum considered a range of documents and information, including but not limited to:

- Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy
- Draft scrutiny scope and objectives
- Scrutiny methodology document
- Case information and examples of damp and mould cases
- Performance and compliance information relating to damp and mould timescales
- Customer feedback and complaint-related learning (where relevant)

Documentation was provided to members in advance of meetings to allow time for review and preparation.

3. Officers and Representatives Engaged

The Scrutiny Forum engaged directly with officers from across the organisation to understand processes, challenge practice and clarify evidence. This included representatives from:

- Customer Services
- Surveying
- Property and Asset Management

Officers explained their roles, systems and processes, responded to questions from Forum members, and provided clarification on customer journeys, compliance timescales, contractor management and case monitoring.

4. Customer Perspective and Scrutiny Approach

The review was conducted from a customer perspective, with Scrutiny Forum members drawing on lived experience, case examples and customer scenarios to test how processes work in practice. Particular focus was given to:

- Customer communication and accessibility
- Experience of vulnerable tenants
- Understanding causes of dissatisfaction and escalation
- Learning from repeat and complex cases

This approach ensured the review considered not only policy and process, but also how services are experienced by customers in real-life situations.

Forum members: Selected from Customer Panel (between 4-6 members)

Aims:

Objective 1 - Understand and scrutinise customer service standards in relation to damp, mould and condensation cases, and how these standards are embedded, communicated, and applied consistently across MHA, including across housing management, and repairs.

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Objective 3 - Scrutinise the level of customer care provided during damp, mould and condensation interactions, including how MHA demonstrates value, respect, empathy, and fair and consistent treatment of customers throughout the end-to-end process—from first report, inspection, diagnosis, communication, works delivery, to resolution and aftercare.

Approach and Methodology (Agreed by Scrutiny Forum on 06/01/2026):

Objective 1

Documents Review

- Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy
- Methodology
- Internal Audit Report

Interviews:

- Customer Services Rep on process of calls being received and how DMC cases are logged (5-10 minutes).
- Surveyor to discuss process as outlined in Policy.

Objective 2

Documents Review

- Performance report – list of all DMC cases since August 2025
- Highlight recurrent cases

Interviews:

- Surveyor / Property Assets Manager – To discuss what remedial measure MHA use for DMC and talk through repeat cases.
- Surveyor / Property Assets Manager – To discuss how DMC contractors are performance managed.

Objective 3

Documents Review

- Provide detail of 2-3 cases that have not been fully compliant with Awaabs Law ie delayed etc. Or cases where a complaint has been raised re DMC.

Interviews

- Surveyor/ Property Assets Manager to talk through detail of cases above.

Out of scope:

Complaints review