

Landlords Advice Booklet

Condensation & Damp



Ridgewater
Energy

Commissioned by:



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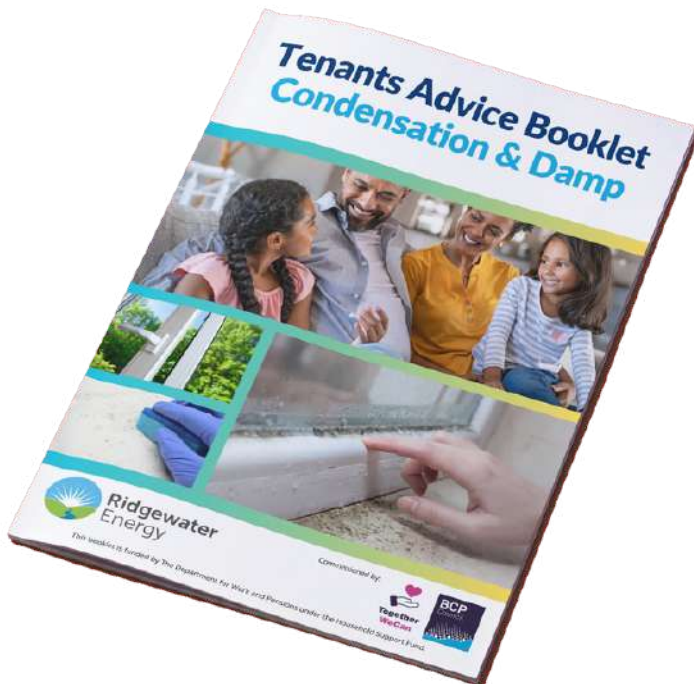
Tips and advice stated in this booklet are suggestions and therefore may not be applicable to every home. Seek professional advice if you are unsure and always follow manufacturers guidelines when using any product.

Website links may be updated periodically, try searching the relevant words in Google to find the new website link.

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A Tenant's Advice Booklet for Condensation and Damp is also available for you to provide to your tenants.



What causes condensation?

During the Autumn and Winter, many homes experience condensation.

This happens when warm moist air comes into contact with a cold surface, like a window, a tiled area, a toilet cistern, mirrors or an external wall.

This results in water droplets forming on those surfaces, which can lead to smelly black mould, which can in some cases lead to health issues. It can also cause considerable damage to items such as clothes, furniture, shoes, books and decorations.

Condensation can occur in any property, it can be just as severe in a very modern home, as it can be in an old draughty home.

This is because some modern homes may be very well insulated and heated, but not have sufficient ventilation.

Some older homes may be well ventilated, but may not be insulated well enough, to be able to heat up properly and maintain that warmth.

Did you know:

- A family of four can produce up to an extra 30-40 litres of water from breathing each week, and all this can be added to the air in the home!
- Drying clothes indoors can add up to 10-15 litres of moisture each week – more if it's big thick jumpers and towels you are drying!
- Other household activities like showering, bathing and washing can add an additional 20 litres of moisture each week!

Types of damp

These two types of damp can usually be identified as they often leave a tidemark or watermark on walls, floors and ceilings.

Penetration damp:

- Rain can seep through the roof where a tile is damaged, or find a way through the walls if the pointing is bad, or where there are cracks in the wall.
- Leaky drainpipes - if guttering is damaged or blocked, then water can saturate walls, doors etc.
- Plumbing defects - damp can appear where minor water leaks occur, usually easy to spot under the sink, basin, radiator, boiler or bath. Sometimes the leak can be concealed under the floor or inside the fabric of the building.



Rising damp:

- This is found exclusively on ground floor walls and is usually due to a faulty damp proof course or the property having no damp proof course at all.



Mould growth

Mould growth occurs when mould spores found in the air around us germinate on contact with damp surfaces; the mould will show itself as black spots on the wall.

Products used to remove or prevent undesirable growths, such as mould on external and internal surfaces, require approval under the Control of Pesticides Regulations (COPR) as surface biocides.

Any product used must have the relevant approval under the COPR and must be used in accordance with its approval conditions. Details of products approved under COPR can be found on the Health and Safety Executives (HSE) website at:

www.hse.gov.uk/biocides/copr/approvals.htm 

There is some general guidance about using biocides/pesticides safely (which you should refer to before using any mould cleaning product) on the Health and Safety Executives (HSE) website at:

www.hse.gov.uk/biocides/using.htm 



Your responsibilities

There are a number of legal standards that private and social landlords must adhere to. A lack of compliance puts tenants at risk and places the landlord at risk of enforcement action and prosecution. Many of the regulations currently in place, can also be of help when considering how to minimise the occurrence of condensation, damp and mould in the property.

- The 'Housing Health and Safety Rating System' (HHSRS) which BCP and other councils use to enforce standards within private rental properties, includes identifying hazards of property condition/repair as well as excess cold.
- Fitness for Human Habitation Standards: It is designed to ensure that all rented accommodation is fit for human habitation and to strengthen tenants means of redress against the minority of landlords who do not fulfil their legal obligations to keep their properties safe.
- Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards – ensuring your property is compliant with the current energy efficiency standards in the private rental sector. This should mean that you are more likely to have a well-insulated property, with a more efficient and affordable heating system, giving the tenant an increased chance of keeping your property free of condensation and mould.



Understanding and addressing the health risks

- Respond sensitively and assess the issue with urgency to determine the severity of the damp and mould and potential risks to tenants.
- Identify and tackle the underlying causes. Inform tenants about the steps you are taking and inspect the home at least 6 weeks after remedial work has been carried out, to ensure the issue has been fixed.
- Have a clear process in place to document, manage and act on reports of damp and mould.
- Make the necessary interventions to ventilation, energy efficiency and building deficiencies before damp and mould occur.
- Landlords should consider what support they can provide and signpost tenants to about what they can do to reduce damp and mould.



People most at risk of health issues

While damp and mould pose a risk to anyone's health and should always be acted on quickly, it is particularly important that it is addressed with urgency for the groups mentioned below, as they are more vulnerable to significant health impacts:

- COPD, cystic fibrosis, other lung diseases and cardiovascular disease, those who are at risk of their condition worsening and have a higher risk of developing fungal infections and/or additional allergies.
- Tenants of all ages who have a weakened immune system, such as those who have cancer, are undergoing chemotherapy, have had a transplant, or who take medications that suppress their immune system.
- Tenants living with a mental health condition.
- Pregnant women, their unborn babies and women who have recently given birth, who may have weakened immune systems.
- Children and young people whose organs are still developing and are therefore more likely to suffer from conditions such as respiratory problems, or who are at risk of worsening mental health.
- Older people.
- Tenants who are bed bound, housebound or have mobility problems, making it more difficult for them to get out of a home with damp and mould and into fresh air.
- Tenants who fall into more than one of these categories are likely to be particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of damp and mould. Landlords should not delay action to await medical evidence or opinion - medical evidence is not a requirement for action.

In addition to the physical health risks, the presence of damp and mould in a person's home may be causing them significant anxiety and affecting their mental health. When talking to tenants, it is therefore important that communication is clear, compassionate, and tailored to their circumstances, as much as possible.

Groups most at risk of health issues

Certain groups are more likely than others to live in homes with damp and mould. This includes people:

- With a long-term illness.
- Who struggle to heat their homes and/or are experiencing fuel poverty.
- On low incomes.
- Live with disabilities.
- From ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Living in temporary accommodation.

Housing conditions and associated risks

Housing stock varies significantly in age, design and building materials, each with different challenges in relation to damp and mould. There are a variety of housing conditions that put people at increased risk of exposure to damp and mould. They include:

- Homes where residents feel unable to open windows due to concerns about security, noise, or high outdoor air pollution.
- Homes that are poorly or inadequately insulated.
- Homes with inefficient or ineffective and expensive to run heating systems.
- Homes that are poorly ventilated.
- Homes without adequate damp proof courses.
- Homes that are poorly maintained.
- Homes that are overcrowded.

Landlords should proactively investigate their properties for damp and mould issues, particularly when homes meet any of these criteria.

Do's and don'ts - Advising tenants

When checking in a new tenant, the landlord or letting agent should issue a moving-in pack that contains useful information about the property and its facilities. The pack should ideally cover information about:

- Identifying and setting the heating controls (programmer/timer, thermostatic radiator valves, room thermostat).
- The locations and operation of the extractor fans/cooker hoods and any air vents.
- Identifying whether the windows have lockable catches and trickle vents that the tenant can use to ventilate securely.
- Meter type and location and current energy supplier.
- Contact information in the event the heating develops a fault or stops working.
- Location of outside drying area.
- A copy of the current Energy Performance Certificate.
- A copy of the annual boiler service CP12 document or electrical safety inspection certificate.

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Heating

THERMOSTAT CONTROL



Control the heating effectively using the room thermostat, heating programmer/timer and thermostatic radiator valves:



shorturl.at/hoD09 

STORAGE HEATERS



When using older storage heaters, use the input, output and boost controls as laid out in our guide:

shorturl.at/gMNT1 

REMOVE OBSTRUCTIONS

Keep the areas around and in front of radiators and heaters clear and free from obstructions like furniture.



Ventilation

DRYING

If drying clothes indoors, open the windows but close the door to that room and use a drying rack or clothes horse.



FURNITURE

- Keep furniture at least 100mm/4 inches away from walls to allow air to circulate.
- Do not overfill wardrobes and keep them aired.

BATHROOM & KITCHEN

- Use extractor fans in bathrooms, shower rooms and kitchens, alternatively open a window.



- Keep the bathroom door closed when showering or bathing.

WINDOWS



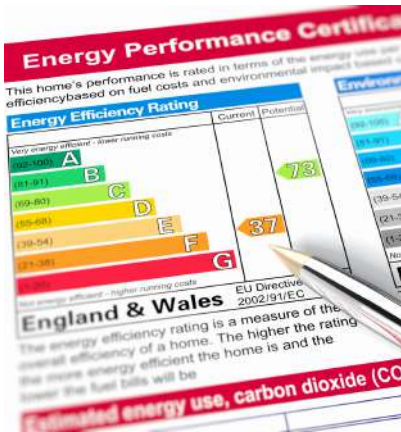
- Open a window to allow moist air out & fresh air in.
- Keep trickle vents open on windows if needed.
- Keep fixed vents open and unblocked (in walls and in the underfloor).



Insulation

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

- You may be able to check your property's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), to find out what insulation the property has: www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate
- Check the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) or look for any holes on the walls outside that may have been filled in, to help identify if your walls are insulated (The EPC is not always correct!).



RADIATORS

Put reflective foil behind radiators to reflect heat back into the room.



WINDOWS



Draught proof wooden doors and windows if you have them.

LOFT INSULATION



- Check the loft, if you have one, to ensure it has 300mm/12 inches of insulation (anything over 150mm/6 inches is doing most of the job).
- Ensure good ventilation is maintained in the roof space (lap vents, tile vents, soffit vents).

Good Housekeeping



TUMBLE DRYERS

If a tumble drier is installed, make sure that it is vented to outside, unless it is a condenser drier.

BLEACH

- Never advise your tenants to use a bleach containing mould cleaner.
- Avoid vacuuming or brushing off mould when dry as this can cause the spores to become airborne, which can then be inhaled and cause respiratory problems.



DEHUMIDIFIER



You may need to periodically use a dehumidifier if the moisture levels are really high.

What else creates moisture and can lead to condensation?

AIR HUMIDIFIER

This adds moisture to the air.



BOTTLE GAS MOBILE ROOM HEATERS

The burning of the gas, creates as much moisture as the amount of gas burnt.



FISH TANKS WITH NO LIDS

The water in the tank will evaporate more quickly and add moisture to the air if it has no lid.



BATHS & SHOWERS

Steam from baths and showers adds to moisture levels!



SOAKING CROCKERY

Leaving pans and washing up soaking in the sink, adds evaporating water in to the air.



KETTLES

Leaving a kettle boiling away creates lots of steam!



Preventative works and maintenance

- Inspect your pointing or render periodically, to make sure water does not ingress into the building fabric.
- Identify and replace any spalled bricks.



- Ensure all drains and soak-aways are clear and working effectively.
- Keep guttering clear of moss, leaves and plants!



- Check and remediate any cracks in window sealant/putty.
- Ensure windows have trickle vents.
- Replace broken rubber window seals.
- Ensure windows can be locked open, so tenants can more securely ventilate the property.



- Ensure annual boiler service is completed.
- Ensure there is a tumble drier or a suitable outside drying area for clothes.
- Make sure fixed heating emitters or draft heat supplies all rooms adequately, so target minimum temperatures can be achieved and exceeded.
- Have electric heating checked periodically and ensure your electrical certificates are in date.

- Consider pea shingle channels/French drains around all exterior walls to allow rainwater to dissipate and not soak walls.
- Do not overlay new material on existing paths and driveways, that will raise the ground level closer to the damp proof course level.



- Inspect the loft and ensure there are felt-lap, ridge or tile/mushroom vents installed if there are signs of heavy condensation in winter.
- Inspect the roof periodically, especially flat roofs to ensure they are not compromised to prevent potential property damage from water ingress.
- Also check any lead flashing around chimneys, parapets or elsewhere.

- Make sure the loft is adequately insulated and the insulation is pulled up to the outside wall plate to prevent a cold spot on the ceilings below.
- Make sure there is a 100mm gap between the slope of the roof and where the insulation finishes to allow soffit ventilation to work effectively.



- Do not add too many additional underfloor vents, as this can be counter-productive.
- Ensure underfloor vents are kept clear and ideally, sleeved.
- Take professional advice from more than one damp treatment company if this work is being considered.
- Replace any plaster damaged by water leaks once the leak is fixed. Otherwise it will always look damp in colder weather due to the hygroscopic salts in the plaster absorbing moisture.

Check List and action plan

As a first step, landlords of all types of tenure must ensure that their homes have all the measures in place to ensure that damp and mould have been minimised. Landlords should regularly inspect their properties, remedy deficiencies promptly and ensure that they have a regular programme of maintenance and management.

External checks:

- Damaged or blocked pipes, gutters or downpipes
- Broken seals around windows or ill-fitting windows that do not close fully
- Visible structural or facade defects, such as cracks in render or the foundation, missing or broken roof finishes
- Bridged (compromised) damp proof course

Internal checks:

- Peeling wallpaper
- Visible damp or staining
- Visible condensation
- Defective plaster
- Consistently high relative humidity, as assessed using a moisture meter or environmental monitors
- Low levels of loft or wall insulation



- Low internal wall temperature
- Damaged, blocked, absent or switched off mechanical ventilation (for example, extractors in kitchens and bathrooms)
- Ineffective or broken heating systems
- Make sure loft insulation is pulled right up to the outside wall plate to avoid mould forming on perimeter of ceilings.
- If damp/condensation on internal walls is severe, check cavity walls have been properly insulated. Start by checking with CIGA (Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency) that you have a valid guarantee in place, as you may have recourse to the installer, or another installer may be appointed to put right any issues. However, any guarantee will be void if any building works have taken place, for example, wall ties, damp proof course, extensions added or windows changed.

CIGA (Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency): 01525 853300 [📞](#)



Help and assistance

Landlords should as a minimum make their tenants aware of the health risks of damp and mould and the importance of tenants reporting damp and mould quickly.

Landlords (or any property management companies or letting agents that they work with) should make it clear how best to notify them. They should deal with reports in a prompt and positive manner and with urgency in cases of severe damp and mould, or when concerns have been raised for a tenant's health.


It is good practice for landlords to consider proactive maintenance rather than reacting to disrepair when it occurs, protecting their tenants' health and saving time and money.




Further Advice


Visit the BCP cost-of-living pages for advice and support on energy bills, health and wellbeing: www.bpcouncil.gov.uk/communities/cost-of-living-help 

Search **"Understanding damp and mould Gov UK"** in Google or other search engine, for the most up to date advice and information.

Shelter offer support and advice and have a great online video titled 'If you have a damp problem in your rented home, look for the cause' [england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/repairs/damp and mould in rented homes](http://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/repairs/damp_and_mould_in_rented_homes) 

Citizens Advice offer support and advice on damp and mould: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/repairs-in-rented-housing/repairs-common-problems/repairs-damp 

National Residential Landlords Association condensation resource: www.nrla.org.uk/resources/looking-after-your-property/condensation 

Property Care Association: www.property-care.org/home 

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