



Understanding the Health Risks of Damp and Mould in the Home

A quick reference guide to actions that landlords must take to comply with the new government guidance on damp and mould in the home.

Background

A spate of extreme damp and mould cases have been reported in rented homes across the UK. The most tragic of these was the preventable death of Awaab Ishak, a 2-year-old boy who died in 2020. This is one of the first cases where environmental mould exposure was named as a direct cause of death. To improve the standards of damp and mould management in UK housing, the government has introduced new guidance. This sets out clear directions for managing and preventing mould in social and privately rented housing using the existing legal framework.

Who This Guidance is For

This guidance is for all housing providers in England who offer social and private rented accommodation.

- Social landlords who are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing
- Private landlords and property management agents
- Providers of temporary housing
- Providers of support housing (e.g. asylum support, tied accommodation, homes for ex-offenders)
- Owner-occupiers

Building industry professionals involved with housing management should also familiarise themselves with the guidance:

- Healthcare professionals in both primary and secondary settings
- Environmental health practitioners
- Professionals from the social care and voluntary sectors who support tenants
- Contractors who enter tenants' homes (such as surveyors)

Relevant Legislation

This new damp and mould guidance is supported by current legislation:

- Housing Act 2004 (HHSRS) and Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Decent Homes Standard (currently social housing only)
- Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards Regulations 2015 (currently for private rented property only)

Health Effects of Damp and Mould

Damp and mould produces allergens, irritants, mould spores and toxins harmful to health. Excess moisture promotes harmful microorganism growth.

Mould affects the airways and lungs, leading to symptoms like:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath

Damp and mould exposure can cause respiratory conditions:

- Airway infections
- Allergic airway diseases like asthma
- Lower respiratory infections

Damp and mould can cause or make some health issues worse, including:

- Allergic conjunctivitis
- Eczema and itchy skin rashes
- Other fungal infections
- A negative impact on mental health

In 2019 alone, there were approx. 5,000 cases of asthma and 8,500 respiratory infections associated with the presence of damp and/or mould.



[Read the Full Report Here](#)

Addressing the Health Risks of Damp and Mould in the Home

The guidance stresses that landlords must take immediate action to resolve damp issues and mould growth in rented property.

Removing Mould

- Photograph mouldy and damp areas to keep a record
- Promptly remove identified mould using biocidal treatments (like Dryzone Mould Removal and Prevention Kit)
- Wear protective gear (mask, gloves, goggles) during removal
- Properly dispose of materials and equipment
- Remove damp or contaminated materials

Repairing Faults and Ventilation

- Repair sources of moisture intrusion like leaks and structural issues
- Consider moving tenants if repairs can't be done in situ

Addressing Condensation

- Repair building fabric damage
- Improve building ventilation
- Enhance energy efficiency and heating systems
- Collaborate with and educate tenants on common condensation causes

Improving Ventilation

- Ensure adequate ventilation in moisture-prone areas (kitchens, bathrooms)
- Regularly inspect and maintain ventilation systems
- Encourage tenants to use ventilation systems effectively

Improving Energy Efficiency and Inadequate Heating

- Insufficiently insulated and heated homes are prone to excess condensation, mould and damp growth
- Invest in energy efficiency measures and heating improvements
- Regularly inspect and maintain heating systems
- Consider tenants' ability to control heating
- Provide clear instructions on heating system use
- Consider retrofit insulation (always consult PAS 2035)

Communication and Compassion is Key

- Consider tenants' communication needs (e.g. multilingual communications)
- Address any safety concerns or problems
- Be aware of fuel poverty and related help available to tenants
- Seek professional advice when needed

How to Reduce The Risk of Damp and Mould Developing

Landlords need clear processes for tenants and professionals to report damp and mould.

- Landlords should ensure tenants are aware of risks and know how to report problems
- Automated processes (like defect reporting portals) are recommended for large-scale housing providers
- Conduct regular property checks
- Collaborate with healthcare and qualified building industry professionals (like CSTDB damp surveyors) to address complex cases
- Always offer clear information to tenants at every step of solving the problem
- Train all internal staff and contractors on damp and mould
- Assess need for energy efficiency improvements during regular checks and maintenance
- Reporting data on damp and mould to relevant authorities is important for monitoring and governance

Want to upskill your team on damp and mould?

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 - Rising Damp: Causes and Treatment
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