Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Department of Health & Social Care

UK Health Security Agency

Guidance

Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home

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Applies to England

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Key messages

Health risks

Damp and mould primarily affect the airways and lungs, but they can also affect the eyes and skin. The respiratory effects of damp and mould can cause serious illness and, in the most severe cases, death (see 'Health effects of damp and mould'). The tragic death of Awaab Ishak was the result of a severe respiratory condition due to prolonged exposure to mould in a home with inadequate ventilation.

The presence of damp and mould can also affect tenants' mental health. This could be due to worries about the health impacts of damp and mould, unpleasant living conditions, and destruction of property and belongings, among other concerns.

Everyone is vulnerable to the health impacts of damp and mould, but people with certain health conditions, children and older adults are at greater risk of more severe health impacts (see 'People at increased risk from damp and mould').

Regulation on damp and mould in social and private rented properties

Private and social landlords must adhere to a number of regulations related to damp and mould (see 'Legal standards on damp and mould in rented homes'). A lack of compliance can place a landlord at risk of prosecution or financial penalties. The legislation and standards are sometimes different for social and private rented landlords, but include:

- Housing Act 2004 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/part/1)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/part/III)
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/34/section/1)
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/70/section/9A)
- Decent Homes Standard (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance)
- Minimum Level of Energy Efficiency standard (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-energy-efficiency-standard-landlord-guidance)

Works to the heating and ventilation systems and replacement of windows are all controlled work. When undertaking controlled work, landlords must

comply with the Building Regulations 2010 (https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval).

Responding to reports of damp and mould

When responding to reports of damp and mould landlords should:

- respond sensitively and assess the issue with urgency to identify the severity of the damp and mould and potential risks to tenants
- always tackle the underlying issue promptly, and act with urgency when concerns have been raised about tenant health. Landlords should not delay action to await medical evidence or opinion - medical evidence is not a requirement for action
- ensure tenants are informed about the steps that will be taken to remove mould and address any underlying issues and the timeframes for the work
- prior to the removal of the mould, photograph and document the location of the mould, to help identify the source
- remove the mould, to address the health risk to tenants, using a qualified professional when appropriate
- identify and tackle the underlying causes of damp and mould, including building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation and condensation. Simply removing surface mould will not prevent the damp and mould from reappearing
- inspect the home at least 6 weeks after remedial work has been carried out, to ensure that the issue has been fixed and damp and mould have not reappeared. If damp and mould have reappeared, further investigation and intervention should be pursued

See ‘Identifying and addressing damp and mould in your property’.

Taking a proactive approach to reduce the risk of damp and mould

Landlords - irrespective of whether they own one or multiple homes - should adopt a proactive approach to the identification and tackling of damp and mould. This should include:

- having clear processes in place to document, manage and act on reports of damp and mould and to identify common issues and trends in their housing stock
- understanding the condition of their homes and using this to adopt a preventative approach to dealing with damp and mould, making the

necessary interventions to ventilation, energy efficiency and building deficiencies before damp and mould occur
- understanding that some homes are more difficult to heat, either due to their energy efficiency or cost of living pressures, and that this can make damp and mould more likely to occur. Landlords should consider what support they can provide or signpost tenants to
- supporting tenants to understand what they can do to reduce damp and mould, where applicable and appropriate. This must never be a substitute for addressing the underlying causes of damp and mould
- building relationships with health and social care and other frontline professionals supporting tenants to ensure that every opportunity to identify tenants living in homes with damp and mould is utilised, 'making every contact count'
- ensuring staff and any external contractors are aware of the significant health risks associated with damp and mould, the need to address the underlying causes of the issue and not just remove visible mould, are aware of any processes associated with reporting and addressing damp and mould, and understand the importance of being sensitive to tenants' circumstances and vulnerabilities
- building relationships with tenants, ensuring that tenants feel encouraged to report damp and mould

See 'Reducing the risk of damp and mould developing'.

Who the guidance is for

This guidance is primarily aimed at social and private rented housing providers in England and, where applicable, their workforce.

This guidance applies to all types of accommodation providers, including:

- social landlords registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)
- private landlords and managing agents
- temporary accommodation providers
- providers of asylum support accommodation
- providers of accommodation for ex-offenders
- tied accommodation

Owner occupiers and tenants may also find this guidance helpful.

This guidance uses the term 'landlords' as a catch-all for all types of housing provider, irrespective of the number of properties for which they are

responsible. The term encompasses housing providers and their wider workforce, where applicable.

The guidance includes information on working across organisational boundaries, so other professional who may have concerns for tenants' wellbeing or an interest in understanding the health risks of damp and mould and how to address them may also find this guidance helpful. This includes, for example:

- primary and secondary healthcare professionals
- environmental health practitioners
- social care and voluntary sector professionals supporting tenants
- contractors going into tenants' homes

Introduction

Everyone has the right to a warm, secure and decent home and to be treated with dignity and fairness. Yet many people in England are living in a home with damp and mould, which may put their health at risk. Estimates of the number of homes in England with damp and mould range from 4% to 27% of homes, or 962,000 to 6.5 million households.[footnote 1] [footnote 2] The reported figure varies due to differences in how damp and mould is measured and how it is reported. People living in private or social rented housing are more likely to live in a home with damp and mould than are owner occupiers.[footnote 1] [footnote 2]

In December 2020, 2-year-old Awaab Ishak died from a severe respiratory infection caused by prolonged exposure to damp and mould in his home. This guidance has been produced in response to concerns raised by the Coroner (https://www.judiciary.uk/prevention-of-future-death-reports/awaab-ishak-prevention-of-future-deaths-report/) following an inquest into Awaab's death. In particular, it addresses the concern that 'there was no evidence that up-to-date relevant health information pertaining to the risks of damp and mould was easily accessible to the housing sector'.

This guidance highlights the serious risks that damp and mould can pose to tenants' health, the imperative to respond quickly, and the practical steps that should be taken both to address damp and mould and prevent them.

More specifically, the guidance:

- provides an overview of the potential physical and mental health effects of living in a home with damp and mould
- summarises the groups that are particularly vulnerable to more severe health impacts

- sets out relevant regulation and the legal responsibilities of landlords in relation to damp and mould in homes in England
- makes recommendations as to what landlords should consider when responding to reports of damp and mould
- makes recommendations as to what landlords can do to reduce the likelihood of damp and mould developing in homes

The use of this guidance will help to improve standards in rented homes and prevent harm to tenants. This guidance was developed by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) within the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). It was developed with an advisory group of experts in housing, health and damp and mould, along with engagement with a wider group of experts and representative organisations. For further details see Annex A: how the guidance was developed.

This guidance is part of a suite of work government is undertaking to secure better standards in rented accommodation. As forthcoming legislation and standards are introduced, this guidance will be updated.

Health effects of damp and mould

Damp and mould within the home can produce allergens, irritants, mould spores and other toxins that are harmful to health.[footnote 3] Even if visible mould is not present, dampness alone can increase the risk of health problems. Excessive moisture can promote the growth of microorganisms such as mould and other fungi, certain species of house dust mites, bacteria or viruses.[footnote 4] The more serious the damp and mould problem and the longer it is left untreated, the worse the health impacts and risks are likely to be.

Most people come into contact with the substances produced by damp and mould by breathing them in. This means they predominantly affect the airways and lungs.[footnote 5] [footnote 6] [footnote 7] [footnote 8] [footnote 9] [footnote 10] [footnote 11] [footnote 12]

Damp and mould can cause disease and ill health in anyone, but people with underlying health conditions, weakened immune systems, and some other groups of people are at greater risk of ill-health from damp and mould (see ‘People at increased risk from damp and mould’).

During the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak, the Coroner concluded that Awaab’s death was a result of a severe respiratory condition due to prolonged exposure to mould (https://www.judiciary.uk/prevention-of-future-death-reports/awaab-ishak-prevention-of-future-deaths-report/). Awaab’s death highlights just how crucial

it is for landlords to understand the health risks of damp and mould and respond with urgency when cases are reported.

Landlords should advise any tenant who is concerned about the symptoms they are experiencing to consult a healthcare professional. Landlords should not delay action to await medical evidence or opinion - medical evidence is not a requirement for action, and damp and mould should always be addressed promptly to protect tenant health.

Respiratory effects

Damp and mould predominantly affect the airways and lungs. The respiratory effects of damp and mould can cause serious illness and, in the most severe cases, death. The respiratory effects include:

- general symptoms such as cough, wheeze and shortness of breath [footnote 13]
- increased risk of airway infections, including aspergillosis (an infection of the airways with the fungus Aspergillus) [footnote 8] [footnote 14]
- development or worsening of allergic airway diseases such as rhinitis (a condition causing nasal congestion, runny nose, sneezing and itching), asthma and other conditions that involve inflammation of the airways (including bronchitis, hypersensitivity pneumonitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2531043721000969)) [footnote 14] [footnote 15]

In 2019, the presence of damp and/or mould in English residences was estimated to be associated with approximately 5,000 cases of asthma and approximately 8,500 lower respiratory infections among children and adults. In addition, damp and mould were estimated to contribute to 1 to 2% of new cases of allergic rhinitis in that year.[footnote 15] Alternative data sources, primarily from self-reporting [footnote 2] [footnote 16], suggest that the percentage of dwellings affected by damp and/or mould may be even higher than the estimates used for this study, in which case the total number of cases could be 3 to 8 times greater.

Other physical health effects

Some people who are exposed to damp and mould might experience adverse health outcomes that are not linked to their airways or lungs. These include:

- irritation of the eye potentially leading to allergic conjunctivitis[footnote 14]
- eczema, and other patches of itchy skin or skin rashes[footnote 14] [footnote 17]
- other fungal infections (including, but not exclusively those of the skin), especially in people with weakened immune systems [footnote 14] [footnote 18]

Mental health effects

Some people who are exposed to damp and mould might experience poor mental health as a result of living in a home with damp and mould.[footnote 14] [footnote 19] [footnote 20] [footnote 21] This could be due to:

- unpleasant living conditions
- destruction of property and belongings
- anxiety related to physical health impacts and/or looking after a relative suffering from damp and mould-related illnesses
- frustration with poor advice and/or being blamed for damp and mould
- social isolation as a result of not wanting visitors in the home
- delays in response or repairs following reporting of damp and mould and/or poor quality of repairs

People at increased risk from damp and mould

Certain individuals may be at increased risk of the health impacts of damp and mould exposure. This could be due to health-related or age-related vulnerabilities, or because they are less able to report and act on guidance related to damp and mould, or simply because they are more likely to live in a home with damp and mould.

People most at risk of health issues from damp and mould

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

- people with a pre-existing health condition (for example allergies, asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, other lung diseases and cardiovascular disease) who are at risk of their condition worsening and have a higher risk of developing fungal infections and/or additional allergies [footnote 6] [footnote 19] [footnote 14]
- people of all ages who have a weakened immune system, such as people who have cancer or are undergoing chemotherapy, people who have had a transplant, or other people who are taking medications that suppress their immune system [footnote 22]
- people living with a mental health condition [footnote 23] [footnote 24]
- pregnant women, their unborn babies and women who have recently given birth, who may have weakened immune systems [footnote 6]
- children and young people whose organs are still developing and are therefore more likely to suffer from physical conditions such as respiratory problems [footnote 6] [footnote 19] [footnote 25]
- children and young people who are at risk of worsening mental health [footnote 19] [footnote 26] [footnote 27] [footnote 28]
- older people [footnote 19] [footnote 29]
- people who are bedbound, 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

People 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.

Groups who are most likely to live in homes with damp and mould

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

- people with a long-term illness [footnote 30]
- people who struggle to heat their homes and/or are experiencing fuel poverty [footnote 2] [footnote 30] [footnote 31]
- people on low incomes [footnote 19] [footnote 30] [footnote 32]
- people with disabilities [footnote 30] [footnote 33] [footnote 34]
- people from ethnic minority backgrounds [footnote 19] [footnote 34] [footnote 35]
- people living in temporary accommodation [footnote 36] [footnote 37]

Housing conditions that increase tenants' risk of living in a home with damp and mould

In England, 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.[footnote 6] [footnote 19] [footnote 38] [footnote 39] 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 housing stock for damp and mould issues, particularly when homes meet any of these criteria.

People who are most likely to face barriers to reporting damp and mould

Tenants may face barriers which may mean they struggle to report damp and mould to their landlord. This may be due to knowledge, language, literacy or communication barriers, personal circumstances, a lack of awareness of legal standards and housing rights in England, or fear of eviction or discrimination, among other things.[footnote 34] [footnote 40] [footnote 41] [footnote 42] [footnote 43] [footnote 44] [footnote 27]

Landlords should consider how they might best support these tenants, by building trust and working with other professionals who may be able to provide additional support (see below 'Responding with urgency and sensitivity and taking tenants' needs into consideration' in the section 'Identifying and addressing damp and mould in your property' and 'Building relationships with other professionals' in 'Reducing the risk of damp and mould developing'.

Types of tenants who might face barriers to reporting include:

- people from ethnic minority backgrounds
- people who have moved to the UK within the past 10 years, including people seeking refuge and foreign students
- people moving in and out of homelessness and/or in insecure tenures

- people with a learning disability and/or a neurodiverse condition such as autism
- people living with a mental health condition
- people who are dependent on alcohol and/or drugs
- people in receipt of welfare benefits
- people who live in houses in multiple occupation (HMO)
- people living in the private rented sector who have a fear of eviction
- people without a diagnosed mental health condition or registered disability but with either temporary or on-going support needs

Legal standards on damp and mould in rented homes

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 prosecution.

Legal standards for housing providers

There are 5 main legal standards that relate to damp and mould in rented homes.

All homes must be free from hazards at the most dangerous 'category 1' level

The Housing Act 2004 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/part/1) states that properties must be free from hazards at the most dangerous 'category 1' level, as assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-guidance-for-landlords-and-property-related-professionals), a risk-based evaluation tool. This includes mould and all types of dampness. See below 'Understanding damp and mould'.

Generally, a 'category 1' hazard means that an occupier of or visitor to the property may require some form of medical attention over the course of a year. Local councils also have a power to take action when they identify hazards at the 'category 2' level.

All homes must not contain conditions that are prejudicial to health

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/part/III) gives tenants and local councils powers to take legal action where homes contain a 'statutory nuisance', which includes where they are in such a state as to be prejudicial to health.

To be a statutory nuisance, the damp and mould must be harmful to the health of the tenant or a nuisance.

Homes must be fit to live in

New provisions in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/70/section/9A) added by the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/34/section/1) require that properties are free of hazards, including damp and mould, which are so serious that the dwelling is not reasonably suitable for occupation in that condition. The current occupier may be taken into consideration when determining whether the property is suitable.

A home that is fit for human habitation is safe and healthy, which would mean free from damp and mould that could cause significant harm.

Tenants may wish to take action if their property is unfit for human habitation or the landlord has failed to keep it in repair, under defined circumstances, under Section 9A and Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. While there is currently no legal requirement to undertake remedial work within a specific period of time, landlords should nonetheless respond to complaints about repairs promptly.

Social housing specifically must meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance)

To meet the Decent Homes Standard (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance), social housing must be free from dangerous 'category 1' hazards. But the DHS also states that social housing must be in a reasonable state of repair and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. Either disrepair or inadequate thermal comfort, or both, may result in damp and mould. Where the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) determines a provider has breached standards, it has a range of legal powers it can use, including enforcement powers.

We will legislate to introduce a Decent Homes Standard in the private rented sector at the earliest opportunity.

Privately rented homes must meet minimum energy efficiency standards (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/non-domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-

energy-efficiency-standard-landlord-guidance)

The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/962/part/3/made) require that privately rented homes must meet the Minimum Level of Energy Efficiency standard (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-energy-efficiency-standard-landlord-guidance) of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band E (unless exempt). The regulations do not make reference to damp and mould, but an energy efficient property is less likely to be affected by condensation, one cause of damp and mould, provided it is adequately ventilated.[footnote 2] [footnote 50] The government has committed to consult on the energy efficiency of social housing.

Complying with the standards

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.

Landlords have a right to enter their properties, with reasonable notice, but only in specific circumstances which may include:

- to inspect the conditions of the premises
- to perform repairs
- access to provide services

If a tenant reports damp and mould, landlords should establish the source of the damp, whether there is any defect to the property that is causing it, and then carry out the appropriate remedial work. While there is currently no specific timeframe within which remedial work to address damp and mould must be undertaken, landlords should always respond promptly and address this issue as a matter of urgency when there is significant damp and mould and/or when there is a significant concern for tenant health. See ‘Identifying and addressing damp and mould in your property’ and ‘Reducing the risk of damp and mould developing’ for further guidance.

If all possible remedial action has been taken, landlords may be able to appeal or defend formal action taken under the legislation set out above, even if damp and mould persists.

> Note: works to the heating and ventilation systems and replacement of windows are all controlled work. When undertaking controlled work, there is a legal duty to comply with the Building Regulations. If the work requires

> approval but landlords would rather not apply themselves, they can hire a tradesperson (https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval/use-a-competent-person-scheme) registered with a competent person scheme instead. Landlords or agents undertaking any work to remedy damp and mould should check the guidance on Building Regulations Approval (https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval). Landlords or agents may also wish to speak to their local council (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council) building control department.

Enforcing the standards

Local councils enforce standards in the private rented sector and social housing owned by housing associations and other private registered providers. They have a duty to take enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004 if they identify category 1 damp and mould hazards and have the power to take action for category 2 hazards. They can also take action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 if they identify damp and mould that is a statutory nuisance. Within many local councils, Environmental Health Practitioners will play an important role in the identification of hazards and supporting enforcement of standards.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) enforces the Decent Homes Standard in the social rented sector (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing). In addition, the Housing Ombudsman can investigate and determine individual complaints (https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/) from residents against their landlord which cannot be resolved locally.

Tenants can take their own action under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. Guidance for tenants (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018) on the amendments to the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) 2018 Act made to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 explains their rights and how to represent themselves. Local councils and other agencies may also help tenants through the process.

Tenants can also take action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents) if they consider that a ‘statutory nuisance’ that is prejudicial to health is present.

Legal aid is available for tenants who are eligible.

See below for the specific regulation, how it is enforced and links to any relevant guidance.

Housing Act 2004

What's in the law?
Local councils must take action if properties are not free from hazards at the most dangerous 'category 1' level, as assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Who enforces it?
Local councils enforce (except in council-owned social housing).

Who does it apply to?
Applies to private and social rented sectors.

How is it enforced? (There can be more than one enforcement route.)
It can be enforced by:

- a legal improvement notice requiring works in a certain time period
- a legal order prohibiting the use of part or all of a property
- the council doing works themselves and charging the landlord

What's the penalty?
Prosecution and potentially unlimited fine set by the Magistrates' Court. A financial penalty of up to £30,000 set by the local council.

Guidance
HHSRS guidance (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-hhsrs-guidance)

Standards under review
The government's review of the HHSRS has now concluded and a summary of the findings and next steps will be published in due course.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

What's in the law?
Statutory nuisances that are prejudicial to health must be remedied.

Who enforces it?
Local councils enforce.

Who does it apply to?

Applies to private and social rented sectors.

How is it enforced? (There can be more than one enforcement route.)
A legal notice requiring the nuisance is abated.

What's the penalty?
Prosecution and potentially unlimited fine set by the Magistrates' Court.

Guidance
Statutory nuisance guidance: how councils deal with complaints (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-nuisances-how-councils-deal-with-complaints)

Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

What's in the law?
Homes must be fit for human habitation.

Who enforces it?
Tenants take court action

Who does it apply to?
Applies to private and social rented sectors.

How is it enforced? (There can be more than one enforcement route.)
Tenants take their landlords to court.

What's the penalty?
The court can order that works are carried out and that redress is paid to tenants.

Guidance
Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 guidance (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018)

Decent Homes Standard

What's in the law?
Social housing must be decent.

Who enforces it?
RSH enforces.

Who does it apply to?
Only applies to social rented sector (currently).

How is it enforced? (There can be more than one enforcement route.)
The RSH requires all registered providers of social housing to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Where the RSH determines a provider has breached standards, it has a range of legal powers it can use, including enforcement powers.

What's the penalty?
Where the regulator determines there has been a breach of standards it has a range of enforcement powers at its disposal.

Guidance
Decent Homes Standard guidance (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance)

Guidance on the RSH's approach to intervention, enforcement and use of powers (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-regulators-approach-to-intervention-enforcement-and-use-of-powers)

Standards under review
The government's review of the Decent Homes Standard is currently in progress; this is intended to be followed by a consultation on a revised Decent Homes Standard.

Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

What's in the law?

Privately rented housing must meet a minimum energy efficiency standard of EPC E.

Who enforces it?

Local councils enforce.

Who does it apply to?

Only applies to private rented sector (currently).

How is it enforced? (There can be more than one enforcement route.)

Local councils can serve landlords with a compliance notice. If a breach is confirmed, the landlord may receive a financial penalty.

What's the penalty?

A financial penalty of up to £5,000 set by the local council.

Guidance

Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards guidance (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-energy-efficiency-standard-landlord-guidance)

Standards under review

The government has committed to consult on the energy efficiency of social housing. The government consulted in 2020 on increasing private rented sector minimum energy efficiency standards and will publish a summary of responses to the consultation by the end of this year.

Identifying and addressing damp and mould in your property

This guidance provides an overview of what landlords should consider when addressing reports of damp and mould. This section provides some examples of best practice which will help reduce the health risks to the tenants and potential damage to the property, as well as supporting landlords to demonstrate to the relevant regulators that they are seeking to meet their legal duties.

Understanding damp and mould

Damp is the build up of moisture in a property. It affects building materials (such as walls, floors, ceilings, foundations) and/or home furnishings and belongings (such as carpets, curtains, wallpaper, furniture and clothing). In addition to causing damage, damp can also lead to the growth of mould and other microorganisms. Damp can occur in homes for a variety of reasons. Irrespective of the type of damp (condensation, penetrating, rising or traumatic), landlords are legally responsible for addressing damp and mould (see 'Legal standards on damp and mould in rented homes') and should work with qualified professionals (see 'Working with professionals who can identify and tackle a damp and mould problem' in the section 'Identifying and addressing damp and mould in your property').

Condensation damp

Condensation damp happens when moisture generated inside the home cools and condenses onto colder parts of the buildings (for example window frames, corners and low points on walls behind sofas or wardrobes). This is the most common form of damp.

Penetrating damp

Penetrating damp is water that gets into the building from outside due to defects in the walls, roofs, windows or floors.

Rising damp

Rising damp is moisture from the ground that rises up through parts of the buildings in contact with the ground (walls and floors); it is usually found in older properties and is often misdiagnosed. It can be identified through visual inspection; however chemical testing is the most appropriate way of confirming it. Often it is due to defective damp proof courses and membranes.

Traumatic damp

Traumatic damp can be caused by leaking water from waste and heating pipes, overflowing baths or sinks, burst pipes or defective water storage vessels inside the building. Traumatic damp can also originate from outside the property, for example from another building or from environmental flooding.

Mould

Mould is a type of fungus which grows in moist environments. Mould can cause adverse health effects as well as damage to buildings.

Responding with urgency and sensitivity, and taking tenants' needs into consideration

If there is observable evidence of dampness in a building, such as visible mould, mould odour or water damage, including condensation, this is sufficient to indicate the need to remedy the issue to protect the health of tenants and prevent proliferation of the issue.[footnote 45] [footnote 46]

When a tenant or another professional notifies a landlord that there is damp and mould in a property, it is crucial that the landlord takes the concern seriously, assesses the issue with urgency to identify its severity, and ensures that they always identify and tackle the underlying causes promptly, and with urgency when concerns have been raised about tenant health. Tenants should be informed about what is being done to resolve the issue and what the likely timescales for the work will be.

Any tenant who is concerned about any symptoms they are experiencing should be advised to consult a healthcare professional. Landlords should not delay action to await medical evidence or opinion - medical evidence is not a requirement for action, and damp and mould should always be addressed promptly to protect tenant health.

Some tenants may be at a greater risk from the health harms of damp and mould (see 'People at increased risk from damp and mould'). Where landlords have been made aware of these vulnerabilities, and especially if they are aware that the damp and mould is having an effect on health, landlords must ensure occupants are not left living with the damp and mould. When a concern has been raised about tenant health (either by the tenant or a third party), landlords should consider whether tenants can be offered suitable alternative accommodation, subject to the tenant's agreement, while the damp and mould is rectified. This will not be the safest or most appropriate response in all cases.

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.

When responding to tenants, landlords should take tenants' personal circumstances and vulnerabilities into consideration. It is possible that tenants might be in receipt of support from other professionals. Landlords in the social rented sector in particular, might therefore consider how, in working with these professionals and with tenant consent, they might be able to better support tenants (see 'Building relationships with tenants' in the section 'Reducing the risk of damp and mould developing').

Landlords should try to understand any barriers related to language, culture, disability, and/or neurodiversity that tenants may face. Landlords may wish to

consider using Relay UK (https://www.relayuk.bt.com/contact-us.html), a free national telephone service and app from BT and the Royal National Institute for Deaf People, for tenants who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some guidance on effective communication with tenants is included in Annex B: resources and training for landlords and housing professionals.

Identifying the root causes of damp and mould

To address the underlying causes of damp and mould, and to prevent them from returning, landlords should identify and address all sources of water damage and condensation from both inside and outside the home. There may be multiple causes, for example traumatic or penetrating dampness may exacerbate condensation dampness. Simply removing surface mould will not prevent the damp and mould from reappearing. Landlords should consult specialist contractors in conjunction with the tenants who have the experience of living in the home.

Landlords should make arrangements for an inspection of the home to assess the presence of damp and mould, their severity, location, underlying causes and potential health risks. This is preferred over an assessment based on photos, as the full extent of damp and mould cannot always be identified this way. In many cases, it will be possible to visibly assess mould growth, mould odour, moisture or water damage but chemical testing may also be required. Assessment of damp and mould should be carried out by appropriately qualified contractors (see below 'Working with professionals who can identify and tackle a damp and mould problem'). Landlords might also wish to ask their local council (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council) to inspect the property under the HHSRS. The HHSRS applies to residential properties (also see 'Legal standards on damp and mould in rented homes').

The smell of mould without visible evidence of mould may indicate that there is mould behind a surface, such as on the back of wallpaper, panelling, ceiling tiles, the underside of carpets, behind pipes, furniture or inside heating and ventilation units. Caution should be exercised when disturbing potential sites of mould growth. For example, removal of carpets or wallpaper can lead to a significant release of mould spores. Landlords should ensure that appropriate protective equipment is worn and seek advice from a trained professional if they have concerns.

In more complex cases, landlords may also consider other forms of physical testing, such as thermography, environmental monitoring and microbial sampling.[footnote 45] [footnote 47] Landlords should seek guidance from a qualified professional on the best approach to take.

A number of internal and external checks can be made to identify the sources of damp and mould. Landlords should not assume they will be able to diagnose

the problem themselves in all instances and should seek guidance from an appropriately qualified professional to avoid misdiagnosis of the cause or causes.

Internal and external checks

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

Addressing damp and mould

This section outlines a number of different interventions to address damp and mould. It is important in planning and implementing interventions to bear in mind that damp and mould may not be the result of just one cause.

Removing mould

Once damp and mould have been identified, it is essential that the mould is removed promptly, reducing health risks for tenants. Before doing so, it is advisable for tenants or the landlord to photograph the area affected by mould and (if possible) draw around it to preserve a record, which may be helpful to identify the source of mould and plan remedial action. If an assessment of the

source can be established quickly by an appropriately qualified professional, such identification could be done before mould removal, but under no circumstances should mould be left for long periods. The priority should always be to protect tenant health.

Mould can be removed from hard surfaces with an appropriate cleaning product and should be left to dry completely. Mould and mildew products should be used in preference to bleach, for health and safety reasons. Absorbent materials such as carpets, soft furnishings and ceiling tiles may have to be thrown away if they become mouldy, as it may be difficult or impossible to remove the mould completely.[footnote 48] While most tenants could reasonably be expected to remove condensation and very small amounts of mould using an appropriate mould and mildew cleaner, larger areas of mould should only be addressed by qualified professionals. When identifying an experienced contractor, landlords should check training, qualifications and references.

Regardless of the extent of mould, the person removing the mould should wear protective equipment, such as a mask, gloves and goggles, in order to avoid contact with mould spores or cleaning products. For further guidance on protective equipment see A brief guide to mold, moisture and your home (https://www.epa.gov/mold/brief-guide-mold-moisture-and-your-home). Doors should be shut to help prevent mould spores from being spread to other areas of the house, but windows should be left open during and after the clean up activity. Protective equipment and clothing should be washed or carefully disposed of afterwards to prevent contamination. Any materials removed should be bagged and disposed of safely. The cloth or sponge used to remove the mould should also be washed or disposed of. Product guidance should be followed during application to protect those undertaking the work and the tenants living in the home.

Tenant management of condensation and small amounts of mould should not be a substitute for assessing and addressing the underlying issue, which should always be the priority.

Landlords should work with tenants to understand how best to address the issue collaboratively and prevent future recurrence. Landlords should note that some tenants may struggle to live independently and therefore may also struggle to support a cleaning regime after mould has been identified. Building relationships with other professionals supporting tenants may therefore be helpful.

For landlords in the social rented sector, in very severe cases, it might be deemed reasonable to move the tenants to alternative suitable, safe accommodation until the hazard is addressed; this will not be the safest or most appropriate response in all cases.

Addressing building deficiencies

Moisture can enter the house from leaks and other building deficiencies. Repairing the source of water intrusion, such as fixing leaking pipes, blocked gutters, defective roofs, faulty damp proof courses, flood damage and other structural deficiencies can therefore be effective in removing the source of moisture and reducing risk of damp and mould, and also in avoiding more expensive repairs later (such as rot treatment). Water-damaged or damp materials are prone to the development of mould. If they cannot be cleaned or completely dried, they should be removed. If they are removed, it is important to dry the surrounding area to remove residual moisture.

For landlords in the social rented sector, where repairs cannot easily be carried out with occupants in situ, it might be deemed reasonable to move the tenants to alternative suitable, safe accommodation until the work is addressed; this will not be the safest or most appropriate response in all cases.

When the source of damp is coming from another property, landlords should work with the freeholder or owner of the neighbouring property.[footnote 6] Landlords may be able to identify the owner using the Land Registry (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/land-registry). Landlords can also speak to their local council (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council), who can take action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents), if one property is causing nuisance to another. In all instances, landlords should seek the guidance of specialist contractors and involve building control where required.

Addressing condensation

Condensation is one of the most common causes of damp and mould in homes.[footnote 19] Moisture from normal occupant activities, such as showering, drying laundry and cooking, builds up in the air around a home if it cannot be removed.[footnote 49] Over time, condensation can lead to damp and mould growth.

There are a number of means to address condensation:

- addressing building deficiencies (as above)
- improving ventilation
- improving energy efficiency and addressing inadequate heating systems
- working with tenants to make small, reasonable adjustments to their behaviour, if appropriate, to reduce their damp and mould risk

The exact approach will depend on the specific conditions of the dwelling.

Improving ventilation

If a dwelling is inadequately ventilated, moisture in the air cannot escape the building and is therefore more likely to cause condensation. It is particularly

important that rooms that inevitably involve a lot of moisture production, such as kitchens and bathrooms, have adequate ventilation.

Ventilation systems, such as extractor fans and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) systems should be regularly inspected and maintained by qualified professionals, who will be able to advise on a suitable schedule of maintenance.

Ventilation checklist

Do kitchens have ventilation systems (for example, extractor fans, cooker hoods) that are fully operational and sufficiently powered to remove moisture from cooking?

If not, look to service, repair, replace or install an appropriate system if ventilation is inadequate. Landlords may wish to consider humidity-controlled fans, which automatically activate when humidity reaches a certain point. Another option is ensuring the extractor fan is connected to the light within the room and has an ‘over-run’, which means the fan continues for a period of time after the light is switched off. Installing ventilation is classified as controlled building work and should be undertaken by someone competent to do so (see ‘Legal standards for housing providers’ and ‘Working with professionals who can identify and tackle a damp and mould problem’).

Where possible, kitchens should have an extractor fan linked to the outside or to a central unit. To be most effective, they should be installed close to the hob. In addition to a kitchen extractor fan, it is advisable to provide an overhead cooker hood. Where gas-fuelled cooking is used, it is particularly important to ventilate to remove the products of burning gas.

Do bathrooms have ventilation systems (for example extractor fans) that are fully operational and sufficiently powered to remove moisture from showering and bathing?

If not, look to service, repair, replace or install an appropriate system if ventilation alone is not adequate. Landlords may wish to consider humidity-controlled fans, which automatically activate when humidity reaches a certain point. Another option is ensuring the extractor fan is connected to the light within the room and has an ‘overrun’, which means that the fan continues for a period of time after the light is switched off. Installing ventilation is classified as controlled building work and should be undertaken by someone competent to do so (see ‘Legal standards for housing providers’ and ‘Working with professionals who can identify and tackle a damp and mould problem’).

Do tenants know how to use ventilation systems and are they making use of them?

If not, ensure tenants are provided with guidance on how to use the ventilation system in the property and try to understand why they might not be using them. Tenants may have concerns about running costs. If so, landlords should consider signposting tenants to sources of advice and support (Annex C: energy support for households).

Can windows be opened and are tenants making use of them?

If not, look at what can be done to ensure windows can be opened and are used. Where feasible, consider encouraging tenants to keep windows in 'vent position', that is partially open but locked, taking particular care not to compromise the security of the property.

Landlords may wish to encourage tenants to ventilate when cooking and after bathing. For example, opening the window wide and closing once there has been sufficient air change within the room. As part of this, it is important to understand any barriers that tenants might face, such as worries about safety, noise or losing internal heat.

When tenants have concerns about the heating, landlords should consider signposting tenants to sources of advice and support (Annex C: energy support for households).

Do windows have trickle vents and are these kept open and free from blockages?

If not, address blockages, consider changing the windows, and/or talk to the tenants to explain the function of the vents. Installing windows is classified as controlled building work and should be undertaken by someone competent to do so (see 'Legal standards for housing providers' and 'Working with professionals who can identify and tackle a damp and mould problem'). Under building regulations, all replacement windows are required to have trickle vents. Trickle vents should be controllable by the tenant, rather than permanently open, as this may encourage tenants to block them.

Do tenants understand what they can do to improve ventilation and moisture control?

If not, talk to them about the importance of leaving a gap between furniture and external walls, using extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms, closing internal doors when they cook or shower, covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outdoors (if possible) and opening windows periodically. Landlords should signpost tenants to 'Annex E: tenant guidance on damp and mould' for more detailed guidance but be sympathetic to tenants' circumstances, including concerns about energy costs to run heating and ventilation systems.

Do tenants have access to secure spaces to dry laundry outdoors?

If not, consider whether this is possible. Ideally, covered spaces should be provided. Tenants may be reluctant to use shared spaces in case items are lost or stolen, so landlords should consider how to make them secure, if possible.

Are roof and under floor spaces properly ventilated to ensure timber remains dry?

If not, consider whether this is possible. Landlords may wish to consider air bricks, which are a cost-effective and easy means of addressing inadequate under-floor ventilation. Existing air bricks should be kept clear and free of debris and obstruction.

Improving energy efficiency and inadequate heating

Homes that are insufficiently insulated and heated are more prone to the build-up of moisture and condensation on the inside of external walls and windows. [footnote 2] [footnote 50] Increases in the cost of living may make it more difficult for tenants to heat their homes. Investment in energy efficiency measures (such as improvements to heating systems, loft and wall insulation and glazing) can be an effective means of increasing indoor temperature but must be undertaken with consideration for any necessary additional ventilation. Also see ‘Taking a strategic approach to energy efficiency measures’ for how landlords can consider doing this proactively and for multiple homes.

Heating systems should be regularly inspected and maintained by qualified professionals, who will be able to advise on a suitable schedule of maintenance.

Heating checklist

Is the home energy efficient?

Energy efficient homes are easier for tenants to heat and therefore typically less prone to developing damp and mould, provided that ventilation is adequate. Try to identify what can be done to improve the property’s energy efficiency. Improving loft insulation to a minimum of 270mm is a particularly effective means of keeping homes warmer.

Also consider replacing single glazed windows with double glazing, addressing draughts, improving external and internal wall insulation, insulating hot water tanks and pipes, providing thermostatic radiator valves so tenants can control room temperature, and ensuring tenants have carpets and curtains in order to retain heat.

Landlords may wish to consider whether there are any particular cold spots in the property which need addressing. This can occur when there are gaps in insulation, so care should be taken to avoid this. Landlords may also wish to upgrade heating systems to more energy efficient systems but addressing the components of the building specified above should be considered first as these measures will help homes to lose less heat.

For a number of national and regional funding schemes that may be available to help carry out improvement work see Annex D: energy efficiency funding.

It is important to note that some energy efficiency interventions may reduce overall ventilation rates. It is therefore essential to consider - with appropriate professional advice - whether current ventilation is adequate or needs improving in conjunction with any improvements to energy efficiency. [footnote 6] If ventilation is not addressed, this can increase the risk of damp and mould, poor indoor air quality and overheating in warmer weather, all of which have significant health consequences.[footnote 51]

Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2035 provides a specification and best practice guidance for domestic retrofit projects, adopting a whole house approach, which minimises the risks of unintended consequences, such as damp, mould and condensation.

Landlords carrying out retrofit works which are part of a government energy efficiency scheme must be compliant with PAS 2035. Installers must also be TrustMark registered and, where appropriate, PAS 2030 certified. This ensures they have been thoroughly vetted for technical competence, customer service and good trading practices. TrustMark is a government endorsed quality mark for home improvement. TrustMark also offer a comprehensive route to remediation for consumers in case they are not happy with the installation.

Is the heating system (including radiators) working effectively, sufficiently powered for the property and are tenants able to control it?

If not, look to repair, replace or install an appropriate energy-efficient system, and consider whether the placement and heat output of radiators needs addressing. Free online radiator room size calculators can help with this. Where possible, locate radiators on external walls and under windows, as this is optimal for heat distribution.

Heating systems should always be regularly checked and maintained by qualified professionals.

It is important that tenants are able to control their own heating and switch it on at appropriate times of the day depending on how the property is occupied. This is important in both one household dwellings and in shared

accommodation. Landlords may want to install thermostatic radiator valves, so tenants are able to do this. People who are out of the house during the day will need different heating needs to those who are at home all day due to illness or being out of work.

Has the tenant been given clear, written instructions on how to use the heating system most effectively?

Landlords should ensure that tenants have been provided with the necessary guidance on how to use their heating system (heating systems and any heaters). For tenants whose first language is not English and/or tenants with additional language or communication needs, consider whether they may need extra support to understand the guidance. For support with language and communication needs, see Annex B: resources and training for landlords and housing professionals.

Are the occupants struggling to heat their home?

Cost of living pressures may mean that tenants struggle to adequately heat their homes or heat them irregularly. This can lead to increased condensation and damp. Try to understand tenants' circumstances and consider signposting them to support with their energy costs or consider if there is any additional support that could be provided (see Annex C: energy support for households).

Working with tenants

We are absolutely clear that it is totally unreasonable to blame damp and mould in the home on 'lifestyle choices'. It is unavoidable that everyday tasks, such as cooking, bathing, washing and drying laundry will contribute to the production of indoor moisture. With this in mind, the fundamental cause of damp and mould will be due to building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation, inadequate heating and/or poor energy efficiency, not tenants' normal domestic activities (see above 'Understanding damp and mould' under the section 'Identifying and addressing damp and mould in your property').

However, it may be beneficial to work with tenants to help them make small, reasonable adjustments to their behaviour, if appropriate, to reduce their damp and mould risk. It is essential that working with tenants must sit alongside - and not be a substitute for - tackling the root causes of the issue (building deficiencies, inadequate ventilation or low indoor air temperature). Tenants cannot be expected to reduce moisture levels if their home does not enable them to do so.

Landlords should therefore seek to:

- approach a damp and mould problem with empathy

- ensure that they understand the underlying causes of damp and mould. It may not be necessary for tenants to make any modifications to their behaviour because they are already doing what can reasonably be expected of them
- work with tenants to help them understand what small changes they can make, if relevant, to reduce their damp and mould risk. With this in mind, landlords may wish to look at, or signpost tenants to, independent advice and guidance - see Annex E: tenant guidance on damp and mould. These resources provide practical suggestions such as cooking with pan lids on, and keeping internal doors shut when cooking and bathing
- build a holistic understanding of the issue. For example, tenants may need additional support with heating their homes (see Annex C: energy support for households), or high humidity levels may be a consequence of overcrowding - for example, tenants living in HMOs or small temporary accommodation
- build relationships with other professionals who might support tenants' other needs (see below 'Collaborative working with other professionals'). This is particularly true for tenants who might struggle to support remediation activities, including those who may already be in receipt of support from other professionals. Where possible, explore alternative solutions to help tenants

Tenants have a right to the quiet enjoyment of their homes. If a landlord requires access to a home, they should seek to provide a full explanation of why they require access and the benefits for tenants in allowing this. If a landlord is still refused access to inspect or carry out remedial work tenants may be liable for costs, and potentially subject to legal action, should the property deteriorate due to lack of access. Landlords can speak to their local councils to facilitate access to the property.

Following up to ensure the issue has been addressed

To ensure that treatment has been effective, and damp and mould has not reappeared, any improvement work should be accompanied by a follow up visit to the property. Landlords should allow at least 6 weeks after the initial treatment to revisit the dwelling.[footnote 52] Any issues reported by tenants in the meantime should be acted upon promptly. If damp and mould have reappeared, further investigation and intervention should be pursued.

Working with professionals who can identify and tackle a damp and mould problem

It is important that qualified professionals are consulted appropriately when landlords seek to address a damp and mould issue.

Types of professional advice

Landlords may wish to instruct or seek the guidance of the following professionals to identify a damp and mould issue and advise on appropriate remediation:

- building surveyors and architects - responsible for assessing the quality of buildings and advising on ways to improve them
- damp surveyors - can assess if there are any damp issues present in the property. Damp surveyors might have the following certifications:
  - CSRT - Certificated Surveyor in Remedial Treatment
  - CSSW - Certified Surveyor in Structural Waterproofing
  - CSCS - Construction Skills Certification Scheme
  - CRDS - Certificate in Remedial Damp Surveying
  - CSDTB/CSDB (Chartered Surveyor in Timber and Dampness in Buildings)
- TrustMark registered installers (https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners/find-a-tradesperson) - TrustMark is a government endorsed quality mark for home improvement. The register can be used to find installers who can carry out retrofit work compliant with the PAS 2035 standards
- professional bodies - hold registers of individual members whose membership is contingent on an assessment and competence criteria. This includes those who meet the national professional requirements to be registered with the Engineering Council
- trade membership bodies - may signpost landlords to their members. Most trade bodies require members to meet minimum standards to retain membership
- ventilation and building services specialists - can advise on ventilation, condensation control, indoor air quality and energy efficiency in the property
- environmental health professionals within local councils - can help identify if there is a risk of harm due to hazards in a landlords home

How professionals can support landlords in addressing an issue

These professionals can assist landlords in the process of remediating a damp and mould issue (as outlined in 'Identifying and addressing damp and mould in your property'), particularly by:

- identifying causes of damp and mould - a damp surveyor should be able to carry out a damp survey, identify the root cause of the issue, identify which type of damp it is and advise appropriate remediation accordingly
- safely removing larger damp and mould occurrences - while smaller instances of damp and mould may be removed by a tenant or landlord, for safety reasons larger areas of mould will require professional removal. Depending on the level of mould present, landlords may wish to instruct specialist hygiene and/or cleaning services for remediation. Landlords should seek guidance on the most appropriate approach
- advising on how to improve ventilation and condensation control within a property, to support in addressing an existing issue and/or prevent future issues from occurring
- identifying and/or addressing building deficiencies causing damp and mould

There are some activities landlords can do themselves to address building deficiencies, including some home improvements that promote energy efficiency. Find out more about improving energy efficiency. (https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency) Some activities, such as replacement of windows and work to the heating and ventilation systems are subject to building regulations and will require professional intervention as they are classified as controlled work.

These activities must either be carried out by someone belonging to a competent person's scheme or be subject to building control. Compliance with Building Regulations is a legal requirement. Landlords who fail to do so may face enforcement action or financial penalties.

Landlords or agents undertaking any work to remedy damp and mould should check the guidance on Building Regulations Approval (https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval). Landlords or agents may also wish to speak to their local council (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council) building control department and consult the Manual to the Building Regulations (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-to-the-building-regulations).

Reducing the risk of damp and mould developing

This section of the guidance sets out a series of practical steps which may help landlords address the risk of damp and mould proactively. The guidance in this section will help reduce the risk of damp and mould developing in dwellings and enable rapid identification and action when cases of damp and mould do occur, reducing health risks to tenants and damage to property.

The applicability of information in this section may vary depending on whether the landlord has private or social rented housing, and the number of homes landlords are responsible for, so should be adapted to the context of landlords' own operations.

Clear processes to report and monitor damp and mould

All landlords should have clear processes for tenants and other professionals to report damp and mould.

Guidance for housing providers

It is recommended that housing providers and landlords with a large number of properties should have automated processes in place to manage reports of damp and mould.

Key considerations include:

- having clear processes for tenants to report damp and mould, which are easy for tenants to understand and use, with provision for individuals who may face barriers to reporting damp and mould. See above ‘Responding with urgency and sensitivity and taking tenants’ needs into consideration’
- having clear processes for other professionals (both internal staff and external contractors) to report concerns regarding damp and mould in a tenant’s property. In particular, we recommend that there is a single point of contact for professionals to notify landlords of concerns they have for tenants’ health so that this information can be acted upon urgently. Landlords should not delay action to await medical evidence or opinion - medical evidence is not a requirement for action, and damp and mould should always be addressed promptly to protect tenant health
- having a system which enables landlords to maintain up-to-date records on housing conditions and reports of damp and mould, including those made through informal channels, and any resulting investigatory or remediation action
- having a system which makes it clear what will happen as a result of a damp and mould report, for example, when tenants may expect to be contacted following a report, an explanation that a home inspection may be required, and details of how to complain if something goes wrong
- having a policy on how data from damp and mould reports is collected, stored and shared within the landlord organisation and with other professionals, if applicable
- setting timescales to assess damp and mould and carry out remedial work, and reviewing these periodically
- having a system that includes a means to follow up and check that treatment has been effective, and that damp and mould have not reappeared
- having a system that triggers a review of the property and further remedial work, if the follow up found that treatment was unsuccessful, and damp and mould reappeared
- having a system which includes checks in between tenancies. This should include checking ventilation and heating systems are working effectively, and that signs of damp and mould are not apparent (see above ‘Internal and external checks’ in ‘Identifying the root causes of damp and mould’)
- all processes should be reviewed periodically, and events and problems learned from
- all staff and external contractors should be aware of any relevant damp and mould policies and procedures
- any tenant-facing policies and processes should be accessible, have clear messaging, avoid attributing blame to tenants and encourage landlords and

tenants to work together to improve the condition of the home. Landlords should make guidance available in different languages and different formats to accommodate other needs where possible (see above ‘Responding with urgency and sensitivity, and taking tenants’ needs into consideration’)

- landlords may wish to consult with tenants and with maintenance and other housing professionals when developing and/or reviewing relevant strategies, policies and processes, and establishing what an effective system for dealing with damp and mould looks like

Guidance for individual landlords with a small number of properties

As an alternative to having a formal system to report damp and mould, 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 and should deal with reports in a prompt and positive manner (see ‘Responding with urgency and sensitivity and taking tenant’s needs into consideration’) 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.

Property condition monitoring

The responsibility to identify damp and mould sits with both tenant and landlord. While tenants are expected to report damp and mould in their homes, landlords should also proactively collect information on the condition of their housing stock.

Guidance for housing providers

Landlords should periodically check properties for damp and mould, and for any risk factors such as inadequate ventilation and condensation (see above ‘Identifying the root causes of damp and mould’).

Landlords should also adopt a ‘making every contact count’ approach to identifying damp and mould. Any scheduled visits to tenants’ homes should be utilised to check for damp and mould and talk to tenants about any specific concerns they may have. Homes should also be checked for damp and mould (and related risk factors) in between tenancies and the cause of any damp and mould addressed before a home is re-let. Information on both property condition and tenant concerns should be recorded and kept up-to-date.

Good data management is a crucial part of an effective response to reports of damp and mould, understanding damp and mould prevalence, identifying at risk

properties, and prioritising work. Landlords should collect and store information on damp and mould in their housing stock, including tenant reports about damp and mould and any repair or remediation work undertaken. Having an understanding of historic reports and repairs is particularly helpful where damp and mould is persistent or complex. Landlords should also record information on tenant satisfaction in relation to how damp and mould was addressed, and any complaints made.

Data that is gathered on stock condition can be used to predict which properties are most likely to have issues with damp and mould. This may be a helpful means of identifying which properties to prioritise with preventative measures, such as mechanical ventilation systems, improvements to the property's energy efficiency or smart sensors. Smart sensors may be a useful aid to monitor temperature, humidity and indoor air quality and to identify at-risk properties. Smart sensors should not be misused as tools to blame tenants. They should augment, rather than replace, the use of other procedures, for example, to highlight homes that may benefit from more detailed investigation. If sensors are installed, this should only be done with the consent and understanding of tenants.

Once a new report of damp or mould is made, a good data management system should flag the need to check any neighbouring properties or properties with similar characteristics (for example, a similar property type, building age, location, energy efficiency rating). Preventative measures and increased monitoring of these properties can then be put in place.

Information on prevalence of damp and mould, response times, recurrence of damp and mould, and tenant satisfaction and complaints with the response should be used as tools to periodically review performance, improve practice and learn how to better address damp and mould, whether this is changes to policies, procedures or additional staff training.

Landlords should report data on damp and mould (related to all of the above) to their Board, where applicable, as part of normal monitoring, governance, and risk processes.

Guidance for individual landlords with a small number of properties

For individual landlords, a comprehensive data management system may not be necessary. However, it is advisable for landlords or their managing agents to keep their own records of the condition of their homes and the date these were last routinely checked. If a report of damp or mould is made, it is advisable to check any neighbouring properties or properties with similar characteristics (for example, similar property type, building age, location, energy efficiency) owned by the landlord. Preventative measures and/or increased monitoring of these properties can then be put in place.

Adopting a strategic approach to energy efficiency improvements

Increases in the cost of living may make it more difficult for tenants to heat their homes, increasing the risk of damp and mould developing in properties. Investment in energy efficiency measures (such as improvements to loft and wall insulation, glazing and heating systems) can be an effective means of increasing indoor temperature (see above 'Improving energy efficiency and inadequate heating'). A number of funding streams for improvement work are set out in Annex D: energy efficiency funding. It is advisable to prioritise the least energy efficient homes and homes with tenants who are struggling to adequately heat them.

Landlords should consider opportunities to implement energy efficiency improvement measures during routine maintenance and other improvement work, to minimise disruption and reduce costs. In all instances, landlords should work with appropriately qualified professionals.

When modifying dwellings to improve energy efficiency, it is essential to understand how the new measures may affect the performance of the dwelling as a whole.[footnote 6] [footnote 53] For example, improving the airtightness of a property may make it warmer, but may also necessitate improvements to ventilation systems to avoid any unintended consequences such as poor indoor air quality, overheating or increasing humidity leading to condensation. With this in mind, it is important to build in checks to ensure that the work has been implemented successfully, without any unintended consequences, and is fully compliant with building regulations. Some issues, such as overheating in warmer weather, should be assessed at the appropriate time of year. Overheating homes can cause heat-related illness and even death. To minimise unintended consequences, it is recommended that landlords utilise PAS 2035 and a PAS 2030 certified and TrustMark registered installer. PAS 2035 is a specification and best practice guidance for domestic retrofit projects, adopting a whole house approach.

Training internal staff and external contractors

All housing professionals, particularly those in tenant-facing roles, should have an understanding of damp and mould issues and why it is crucial to address them. Landlords and/or their workforce (internal staff, and where possible, external contractors) should be trained to:[footnote 54]

- understand the health risks of damp and mould and the importance of acting quickly to protect tenants
- understand that some tenants might be at a greater risk of the health harms from damp and mould (see 'People at increased risk from damp and mould')

- understand the need to ‘make every contact count’ and look for signs of damp and mould when carrying out home visits and talk to tenants about any specific concerns they may have, as well as talking to them about their heating and ventilation systems and signposting them to support to heat their homes (see Annex E: tenant guidance on damp and mould, and see Annex C: energy support for households). Landlords in the social rented sector in particular, might consider coordinating planned checks with other teams where relevant to reduce the burden of checks for tenants
- take tenants’ reports seriously, give a first assessment as to the severity of damp and mould, and be able to pass it on quickly to someone trained to make a judgement on the root cause (or causes) of the issue
- understand the need to identify and address the underlying causes of damp and mould, not just remove visible mould
- be sensitive to tenants’ circumstances and ensure they are not blamed for damp and mould
- ensure that repairs are undertaken within a reasonable period of time and that tradespeople are competent to undertake the nature of the work required
- understand barriers that tenants may face in reporting damp and mould (see ‘People most likely to face barriers to reporting damp and mould’)
- understand the discrimination some tenants can face when experiencing damp and mould, such as discrimination based on race or religion when reporting problems
- be conscious that changes to tenants’ personal or financial circumstances might impact their ability to maintain their homes or heat or ventilate them adequately
- understand organisational policies, processes and data handling related to damp and mould

Staff who are responsible for repair and refurbishment contracts may wish to complete a periodic refresher on Building Regulations and the Building Safety Act. Staff involved in property surveying and repair reporting may wish to undertake some basic training on the HHSRS.

It is recommended that landlords working with external contractors share this guidance with the relevant individuals and/or build in an expectation that contractors will be knowledgeable about the above into future contracts, including key performance indicators.

Landlords managing a large number of at-risk homes may wish to consider employing a dedicated damp and mould officer.

For more information and resources, see Annex B: resources and training for landlords and housing professionals.

Collaborative working with other professionals

The causes of damp and mould are often multi-faceted. To prevent a damp and mould problem from developing, it may benefit landlords to develop working relationships with different professionals who might play a role in addressing the issue.

Landlords in the social rented sector should:

- promote stronger, multi-disciplinary working where appropriate. Frontline professionals such as social workers, occupational therapists, environmental health practitioners, social prescribers, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, fire and rescue services, housing and legal advisers can work together to identify housing-related health issues, with the consent of tenants. If a tenant has ongoing or worsening respiratory symptoms such as a cough or wheezing, health and social care professionals may wish to ask about their housing conditions [footnote 6]
- have a single point of contact for professionals to notify landlords of concerns for tenants' health related to damp and mould, so that this information can be acted on urgently. Landlords should not delay action to await medical evidence or opinion - medical evidence is not a requirement for action, and damp and mould should always be addressed promptly to protect tenant health
- make links where the information is available. Healthcare professionals and the housing sector should work together and share information to support tenants who may be at increased risk of damp and mould but struggling to report or address the issue in their homes (see 'People at increased risk from damp and mould')
- consider safeguarding needs where appropriate. Some tenants will be at increased risk of harm (see 'People at increased risk from damp and mould'). Relationships between landlords and other officials within local councils are particularly important in supporting such tenants
- signpost tenants who might be struggling to keep their properties warm to organisations that might be able to support those who are at increased risk from the health harms of damp and mould (see Annex C: energy support for households) or any support landlords themselves provide
- work with the contractors and maintenance teams that go into tenants' homes and help them to understand the health risks of damp and mould and how to identify and report damp and mould and associated risk factors, such as cold homes and condensation (see 'Identifying the root cause of damp and mould' and 'Training internal staff and external contractors'). Contractors and maintenance teams should also ensure that ventilation systems are serviced and fully operational as part of routine maintenance checks and that tenants understand the operation of the system and the importance of using it. These considerations could be built into contracts
- consider participating in, or establishing, housing networks or forums for support and sharing of best practice

Landlords in the private rented sector should:

- have a single point of contact for professionals to notify landlords of concerns for tenants' health related to damp and mould and share appropriate information
- engage with their local authority. Most local councils have a private rented housing team who can provide advice on issues with damp and mould. This team may or may not sit within environmental health services. Some local councils might also host networks or forums for support and sharing best practice. Some landlords may wish to set up such networks up privately
- consult experts who can support in assessing risk, where relevant (see above 'Working with professionals who can identify and tackle a damp and mould problem')
- signpost tenants who might be struggling to keep their properties warm to organisations that might be able to support those who are at increased risk from the health harms of damp and mould (see Annex C: energy support for households) or any support landlords themselves provide
- work with the contractors and maintenance teams that go into tenants' homes and help them to understand the health risks of damp and mould and how to identify and report damp and mould and associated risk factors, such as cold homes and condensation (see 'Identifying the root cause of damp and mould' and 'Training internal staff and external contractors'). Contractors and maintenance teams should also ensure that ventilation systems are serviced and fully operational as part of routine maintenance checks and that tenants understand the operation of the system and the importance of using it. These considerations could be built into contracts
- share this guidance with any third parties and/or letting agents a landlord works with to ensure they are aware of the health risks of damp and mould issues and the necessary steps to protect tenants and properties

Building relationships with tenants

The causes of damp and mould are often complex and a good working relationship between landlords and tenants is really important. Components of a good working relationship may include:

- building trust - tenants should feel comfortable reporting damp and mould without fear of repercussions. Certain groups may be more reluctant to report damp and mould and landlords should therefore work proactively with these groups to help them feel able to do so (see 'People at increased risk from damp and mould' and 'Responding with urgency and sensitivity and taking tenant's needs into consideration'). Some tenants experiencing housing problems may need someone to speak on their behalf, in these instances it may be appropriate to work with an advocate who is representing the tenant

(see Annex E: tenant guidance on damp and mould). Approaches that attach blame to occupants' behaviour are unjust and counterproductive. If tenants have had a bad experience of reporting issues in the past, they may not trust that any future problems they report will be dealt with effectively. Landlords should try to rebuild trust by responding promptly and empathetically to tackle the issue. Tenants who are uncomfortable reporting to their landlord may wish to contact tenant advocates or their local council (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council) for help and advice

- sharing important information with tenants, such as on the health risks of damp and mould, how to report it and how they can make small changes to their daily activities to reduce their risk of damp and mould. This should include signposting tenants to resources on damp and mould (see Annex E: tenant guidance on damp and mould), in addition to providing them with clear guidance on how to use their heating and ventilation systems
- understanding that different tenants will have different learning styles and may have different language or communication needs, so try to provide multiple means of communication (videos, leaflets, face to face, and so on) in multiple languages, wherever possible. For support with language and communication needs, see Annex B: resources and training for landlords and housing professionals
- considering barriers tenants might face to acting on guidance - see 'People most likely to face barriers to reporting damp and mould'. Here, landlords might consider alternative methods of communication or - for landlords in the social rented sector in particular - enlisting support from other professionals who might already be supporting the tenant (see 'Building relationships with other professionals')

Annex A: how the guidance was developed

A range of experts in damp and mould and related areas were engaged with and contributed to this guidance. This included academics, building engineers, environmental health professionals, public health professionals, respiratory consultants, and representatives of private and social housing providers and tenants, among others. The government's expert committee, the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) (https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/committee-on-the-medical-effects-of-air-pollutants-comeap), were also consulted. Recognising that there are many existing guidance documents on the health effects of damp and mould and how to address damp and mould in homes, the starting point for developing this document was a rapid review of existing guidance. This document consolidates the existing guidance in a form that is accessible to the housing sector.

The guidance was developed with an expert advisory group, with individuals from the following organisations:

- Dr Marcella Ucci, University College London (UCL)
- Dr Hector Altamirano-Medina, UCL Institute for Environmental Design and Engineering
- Dr Hywel Davies, Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
- Professor Tim Sharpe, University of Strathclyde
- Dr Jennifer Townshend, Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Ian Sanders, Hull City Council and Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Board
- Annie Owens, National Housing Federation
- Sarah Davis, Chartered Institute of Housing
- Laura Wharton, Wigan Council
- Gavin Dick, National Residential Landlords Association
- Chloe Fletcher, National Federation of Arms Length Management Organisations
- Paul Price, Association of Retained Council Housing
- Caritas Charles, Tenant Participation Advisory Service
- Dr Henry Dawson, Cardiff Metropolitan University
- Deborah Garvie, Shelter
- Sally Morshead, Shelter
- Dr Jill Stewart, University of Greenwich

Over 200 stakeholders from a wide range of professions were also engaged between March and June 2023.

A number of engagement sessions were held during this period. The groups engaged during these sessions included, but were not limited to:

- landlords and groups working on the regulation, maintenance and provision of housing (including housing regulators, building engineers and other contractors involved in remedial and/or preventative work)
- professionals working in local authority public health and health protection teams, the NHS including integrated care systems and primary and secondary care, environmental health professionals (including environmental health officers) and other health and social care professionals working with individuals who may be at risk from living in a home with damp and mould
- groups representing tenants, including those who represent vulnerable groups, such as:
  - children and young people
  - people experiencing mental ill health
  - older people
  - people with long-term conditions
  - marginalised groups

- people living in temporary accommodation
- people living in care homes

Annex B: resources and training for landlords and housing professionals

Some of the following resources are available only to certain professional groups or members:

- Damp and mould: getting it right (https://www.cih.org/recordings/damp-and-mould-getting-it-right), recording 7 June 2022, Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) webinar
- How to handle complaints effectively (https://www.cih.org/publications/how-to-handle-complaints-effectively), August 2021, CIH
- Professional standards framework (https://www.cih.org/professional-standards), CIH
- It's not okay: a guide to tackling stigma in social housing) (https://www.cih.org/publications/its-not-okay-a-guide-to-tackling-stigma-in-social-housing), CIH and See the Person (now Stop Social Housing Stigma)
- CIH articles and further resources on damp and mould (https://www.cih.org/search?q=damp+and+mould&p=1)
- Spotlight on damp and mould: it's not lifestyle (PDF, 1MB) (https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Spotlight-report-Damp-and-mould-final.pdf), October 2021, Housing Ombudsman Service
- Responding to the Regulator in respect of damp and mould - 5 key actions for legal compliance (https://www.cih.org/blogs-and-articles/responding-to-the-regulator-in-respect-of-damp-and-mould-five-key-actions-for-legal-compliance), December 2022, CIH
- Guide to managing condensation mould in tenants' homes (https://www.echelonip.co.uk/launch-of-guide-to-condensation-mould/), AMIP
- Relay UK (https://www.relayuk.bt.com/contact-us.html) - support for tenants who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Stuck in silence: the hidden costs of poor communication in the housing sector (https://www.housingsector.co.uk/blog/stuck-in-silence-the-hidden-costs-of-poor-communication-in-the-housing-sector), Housing Sector - this blog includes a section on cultural and language barriers
- Adverse Weather and Health Plan (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adverse-weather-and-health-plan) - the plan aims to protect individuals and communities from the health effects of adverse weather and to build community resilience. The plan and associated cold weather (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/cold-weather-plan-for-england) and heat advice (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hot-weather-

and-health-guidance-and-advice) and resources may be beneficial to landlords to help them understand the health risks to their tenants and support them

- National Energy Action (NEA) course outlines (https://www.nea.org.uk/training/course-outlines/)
- Multi-lingual advice leaflets (https://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/resources/) - NEA has developed a series of multi-lingual information leaflets aimed at frontline workers to help provide energy advice. These are suitable to distribute to tenants. As well as printable leaflets, all pages on their website can be easily translated into over 100 other languages using ReciteMe (https://reciteme.com/). ReciteMe will also read pages aloud in over 60 different languages and you can adjust fonts and colours to help with dyslexia or neurodiversity

Annex C: energy support for households

> Some government schemes that provide energy support for households are under review. See the scheme home page for more information.

This section provides links to financial support for tenants and support to improve the energy efficiency of tenants' homes, making them easier to heat. If any funding is associated with modifications to the home, for example insulation, a new boiler, and so on, tenants must always get the approval of their landlord to carry out the work and work with them. Schemes mentioned in this annex may also be applicable to owner occupiers.

Warm Home Discount Scheme (https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme): a one-off discount on electricity bills. The scheme will reopen for October 2024.

Winter Fuel Payment (https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment): people born before 26 September 1956 may get between £100 and £300 to help pay their heating bills. Running for winter 2024. This is in addition to any other cost of living payments.

Cold Weather Payment (https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment): support for individuals receiving certain benefits or Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI). A payment will be received if the average temperature in the household's area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below over 7 consecutive days. Households will receive a payment of £25 for each 7 day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

Citizens Advice (https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/get-help-with-the-cost-of-living/): this organisation can help households with income maximisation,

applying for energy grants, and help people to understand their energy bills or manage finances or fuel debt. This page provides an overview.

Age UK Warm Home Programme (https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/programmes/safe-and-warm/): the programme helps in 3 key ways:

- benefit entitlement checks
- home energy checks
- providing advice

Mencap: (https://www.mencap.org.uk/food-home-energy-and-fuel-benefits) guidance for people with a learning disability and their families and carers on how to get help with food, energy and fuel costs.

NEA - the UK's leading fuel poverty charity (https://www.nea.org.uk/): provides direct support to people, including income maximisation advice and advocating on issues including improving energy efficiency of homes. Gives advice on warm and safe homes, and advice for those struggling to pay their bills.

Help with energy bills (Shelter England) (https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/benefits/help_with_gas_and_electric_bills): this article outlines the various sources of financial support available and who can access these funds.

Money Helper (https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/save-money-on-your-gas-and-bills): provides advice on how to save on gas and electricity and what help is available to households who are concerned about paying their bills or missing a payment.

Energy Company obligation (https://www.gov.uk/energy-company-obligation): help from energy suppliers with installing energy-saving improvements to homes. Insulation grants are available for occupiers of privately and socially rented properties (https://www.gov.uk/energy-company-obligation) which landlords can also help tenants apply for (https://freeinsulationscheme.org.uk/insulation-grants-for-landlords/). This may help with the cost of insulation work, for example to your loft or cavity walls and replacing or repairing your boiler - or other upgrades to your heating.

Find energy grants for your home (Help to Heat) (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/find-energy-grants-for-you-home-help-to-heat)

Find your local council (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council): councils run local funding schemes if tenants are struggling to ask for help. Schemes in place often include 'welfare assistance' and 'Household Support Funds'.

NEA's multi-lingual advice leaflets (https://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/resources/)

If landlords become aware of tenants who may be in financial difficulty and struggling with energy bills, advice is available from specialist providers such as Shelter (https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/money_problems_and_energy_costs/where_to_get_help_with_debts), Citizens Advice (https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/) and MoneyHelper (https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en).

If tenants are eligible for Legal Aid, they can also contact Civil Legal Advice (https://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice) for free and confidential advice. Tenants might also qualify for Universal Credit (https://www.gov.uk/how-to-claim-universal-credit), which can include help with housing costs. Some tenants might also be available for government Cost of Living Payments (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment).

Annex D: energy efficiency funding

> Some government schemes that provide energy efficiency funding are under review. See the scheme home page for more information.

There are a number of schemes available to support housing providers in making modifications to improve the energy efficiency of their dwellings. This includes:

- Boiler Upgrade Scheme (https://www.gov.uk/apply-boiler-upgrade-scheme) - grants for private landlords to install low carbon heating systems such as heat pumps
- Energy Company Obligation (https://www.gov.uk/energy-company-obligation) (ECO) - help from energy suppliers to make energy-saving improvements to people's homes if they are living in social housing. Landlords would need to work with their tenants to qualify for this. See insulation grants for landlords (https://freeinsulationscheme.org.uk/insulation-grants-for-landlords/)
- Great British Insulation Scheme (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/more-help-to-improve-the-energy-efficiency-of-your-home-through-the-great-british-insulation-scheme) (formerly known as ECO+) - a new government scheme to help people insulate their homes, make them more energy efficient and save money on their energy bills. The scheme officially launched in summer 2023 and will run until March 2026. This scheme applies to both private rented and social housing
- Green Deal (https://www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures) - help with making energy-saving improvements to people's homes and support finding the best way to pay for them
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-housing-decarbonisation-fund-

wave-2) - the fund aims to deliver warm, energy-efficient homes, reduce carbon emissions and fuel bills, tackle fuel poverty and support green jobs

- Home upgrade grant (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-upgrade-grant-phase-2) - support is provided through local councils to deliver energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating to low-income households living in the worst performing, off gas grid homes in England. Social housing eligibility is limited but social housing providers can support local councils in the preparation of applications and delivery of projects
- VAT relief for decarbonisation works (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-vat-treatment-of-the-installation-of-energy-saving-materials-in-in-great-britain) - VAT on energy saving materials will be reduced from 5% to 0% from April 2022 to April 2027. This also permanently brings wind and water turbines back into scope of the relief in Great Britain
- Empty property grants (regional funding) - local councils may also offer some financial support for making energy improvements to empty properties to help bring them back into use. This will depend on what schemes are available locally. Find your local council (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council)

Schemes mentioned in this annex may also be applicable to owner occupiers.

Annex E: tenant guidance on damp and mould

The following resources indicate how tenants can approach damp and mould in their rented properties.

How to rent (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent): guide for tenants in the private rented sector to help them understand their rights and the process of renting.

Guide for tenants: Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018/guide-for-tenants-homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018): guide for tenants in the social and private rented sectors on their rights under the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act.

Damp and mould: what tenants need to know - Shelter (https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/housing_conditions/responsibility_for_repairs/damp_and_mould_problems): includes information for tenants on damp and mould, covering answers to common questions. This covers the health impacts and causes of damp and mould as well as how to address issues.

Damp and mould in private rented homes - Shelter (https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/repairs/damp_and_mould_in_rented_homes): advice and resources for private tenants who have identified damp and mould in their home, including advice on raising issues with landlords.

Shelter provides housing advice for tenants on housing issues and legal aid and free legal advice (https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/eviction/legal_aid_and_free_legal_advice) for tenants who qualify for advice and representation to address serious housing problems.

Damp repairs in rented housing (https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/repairs-in-rented-housing/repairs-common-problems/repairs-damp/): advice for tenants on different types of damp, who's responsible for addressing them and how, as well as routes to escalate concerns if the landlord doesn't take action.

Dealing with damp and condensation, NEA leaflet (https://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/resources/dealing-with-damp-and-condensation-national-energy-action-leaflet/)

Indoor air pollution (Asthma+Lung UK) (https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/indoor-air-pollution): resources for people living with a lung condition, including information on the types of air pollution they might have in their home and how to manage allergies caused by indoor pollution at home.

Moisture in homes (UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings (UKCMB)) (https://ukcmb.org/): resource outlining causes of moisture build up in homes and how to manage this. This resource has been developed for homeowners. However, information on how moisture builds up and day-to-day methods for managing this may still be valuable to tenants.

Video on how to reduce damp and mould aimed at homeowners but may still be of interest to individuals who are renting:

Watch the video on Moisture guidance for existing homeowners (https://www.youtube.com/@ukcmb-6547)

Advocacy in mental health (https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/advocacy/working-with-an-advocate/#HousingProblems): resource from Mind explaining what advocacy is and how it can help tenants who require it. This resource includes advice on the type of advocacy that could be sought for tenants who require it to address housing problems.

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