

HOUSING SERVICES – ADVICE FOR TENANTS

The council takes a zero tolerance to damp and mould and takes its landlord responsibilities seriously. This leaflet gives some basic information and advice to help identify and reduce condensation, damp and mould growth.

What is condensation, damp and mould?

Damp

Damp can form when moisture collects in an area and does not dry out properly. Moisture occurs in homes through day-to-day activities such as bathing, cooking, and drying clothes. Moisture can also get into homes from outside sources, such as a leak or broken and blocked guttering. When moisture cannot get out, it can lead to damp and mould. The best way to avoid damp and mould is to ventilate homes daily. This allows the air to circulate.

Condensation

Damp can also happen when there is condensation in your home. Condensation is when warm, wet air settles on a cold surface and water droplets are formed. These droplets are called condensation. Condensation mostly happens in colder months when it is both raining or dry outside. Moisture moves through a property and settles in colder rooms. Condensation should be wiped away daily. If left, it can lead to mould growth. Too much condensation in your home can cause damp and mould. To reduce the condensation in your home, you should look to reduce the amount of moisture produced.

You can do this by:

- Covering pans with lids when cooking.
- Using an extractor fan where fitted.
- Open trickle vents fitted on windows.
- Increasing the heating to raise the temperature of the air and cold surfaces.
- Asking for the loft insulation to be inspected to check it is at sufficient levels
- Ensuring there is space between walls and large pieces of furniture which allows air to circulate.
- Drying washing outside, or in the bathroom with the door closed and a window open.
- Ensuring a tumble dryer has a vent or hose to outside of the house.

- Closing kitchen and bathroom doors when the rooms are in use to prevent moisture from reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms which are cooler and more likely to suffer from condensation.
- Keeping cupboards and wardrobes well ventilated by not over filling them - this stops the air circulating.
- Ensuring any wall vents are not covered up. If so try to uncover them or contact us if unsure.

Mould

Mould is essentially a fungal growth that forms where there is moisture. It first appears as black pinpricks on walls, ceilings, and furnishings. Mould grows due to moist conditions. If condensation and damp are not dealt with quickly, it can lead to mould. Mould can spread very quickly and can become extremely hard to get rid of.

The tips listed above will reduce the amount of moisture produced in your home and lower the risk of mould.

Ventilate to remove moisture

Your home can be ventilated without being cold or making draughts. You can do this by:

Keeping a small window ajar or a trickle vent open when someone is in the room, particularly when a bathroom or kitchen is being used. You might not need to leave the windows open all day but just for a period of time. Whilst keeping your home warm in cold weather, we advise keeping low background heating on all day, even when there is no-one at home. If your home is warmer, condensation is less likely to occur as this will keep the building warm so there are fewer cold surfaces for the moist air to form condensation. Insulation and draught proofing will also help keep your home warm and reduce fuel bills.

Simple ways to save money on heating

Did you know that you could potentially significantly reduce your energy bill just by turning down the thermostat? According to experts, this could save you over £100 a year. Most households will regularly set their thermostat above 22°C, especially in the winter. When it comes to your thermostat however, the Energy Saving Trust recommends that you should set it to the “lowest comfortable temperature”.

Some people on benefits or low incomes may also qualify for help from the Warm Home Discount. This is a direct payment from their energy supplier to help with bills.

Winter Fuel Payments of between £100 and £300 are also available to pensioners as well as a cold weather payment of £25 for each seven day period of very cold weather. Contact the Energy Saving Advice Service on 0300 123 1234 for more details.

Get help from your energy supplier – Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register is a free support service that makes sure extra help is available to people in vulnerable situations.

You are eligible if:

- have reached your state pension age
- are disabled or have a long-term medical condition
- are recovering from an injury
- have a hearing or sight condition
- have a mental health condition
- are pregnant or have young children
- have extra communication needs (such as if you don't speak or read English well)
- need to use medical equipment that requires a power supply
- have poor or no sense of smell
- would struggle to answer the door or get help in an emergency.

You might still be able to register for other reasons if your situation isn't listed. For example, if you need short-term support after a stay in hospital.

How to Register:

Your energy supplier or network operator will both keep a Priority Services Register. If you think you could be eligible, contact your energy supplier or network operator.

What we're doing to tackle damp and mould in council-owned homes

There can be a number of causes for damp and mould in your home. Some don't indicate serious structural or environmental issues and are resolved quickly and easily. Other reports may require ongoing investigation that can take time.

All cases of damp and mould in council-owned properties are investigated with a view to achieving a satisfactory outcome as quickly as possible. We identify issues with mould and damp by using:

- stock condition surveys
- reports from residents
- staff and trade operative visits

Depending on the cause of the damp and mould, a range of measures will be carried out to deal with any problems.

These could include any/all of the following:

- work to the properties structure
- cleaning and treating the affected areas
- ensuring the heating system is working correctly
- ensuring the ventilation system is working correctly and possibly introducing more if required
- monitoring equipment placed in property to record internal temperatures and humidity levels
- residents offered advice and support in dealing with excessive moisture and managing condensation

Further Information

If you need any further information or would like to report repairs and damp and mould in your home, please contact 01623 463463 or email mdc@mansfield.gov.uk.