

Private Landlords Newsletter

WELCOME to the fourth edition of the Private Landlords Newsletter.

Damp and Mould

Damp and Mould is the most common hazard found in properties under the Housing Act 2004 Housing Health and Safety Rating System, along with Excess Cold. In November 2022, a Coroner found that two-year-old Awaab Ishak died as the result of a severe respiratory infection caused by prolonged exposure to mould at his home in Rochdale in 2020. Untreated damp and mould can pose a serious health risk. People living in homes with damp and mould are more likely to have respiratory problems, respiratory infections, allergies, or asthma. Damp and mould can also affect the immune system and have a negative impact on people's mental health. Nearly three quarters (71.9%) of England's 8.3m rented homes were built before 1981 and are not designed for the way we live in 2023. The cost-of-living crisis also means that many people are struggling with difficult choices between heating and eating. If you come across a tenant who you think needs some assistance, please refer them onto our cost of living website:

[Cost of living - Lancaster City Council](#)

However, it is now more important than ever to ensure your rented accommodation is as energy efficient as it can be. Please see our website for more information surrounding energy efficiency:

[Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards \(MEES\) - Lancaster City Council.](#)

Landlords must adopt a proactive robust approach when investigating tenant complaints about damp and mould. Blaming the tenant's lifestyle will no longer be accepted without extensive prior investigation. Lancaster City Council Housing Standards has seen an exponential growth in reported complaints of damp and mould and is taking a serious approach to each one. This could potentially see an increase in the issuing of Improvement notices under the Housing Act 2004 and fines issued up to £30,000.

Cosy Homes Lancashire are offering various grants in order for you to make your properties as energy efficient as possible. Please contact the CHIL team at www.chil.uk.com to discuss what funding could be available.



Landlord's Responsibilities

When receiving a complaint from a tenant about damp and mould, it is important you acknowledge the complaint in writing and inform your tenants what you plan to do about the problem. We advise you visit the property to see the problem for yourself before making a judgement about the cause.

If you identify any mould, even if it's because of something the tenant has done or failed to do, **you are responsible for removing mould and fixing the underlying problem**. You must ensure the mould is removed as soon as possible, as it can be harmful to tenants, especially those diagnosed with any kind of lung-related condition (e.g. asthma or even the flu).

As a landlord, it is important you eliminate any causes related to the structure of the property **before** considering lifestyle factors:

- Thermal insulation – good thermal insulation is important to keep the property warm. Check your EPC for advice on where you can improve the thermal insulation. Look for signs of cold bridging – where insulation may be missing or have settled then typically mould associated with condensation will appear in the coldest parts.
- Water ingress - check there are no leaking pipes, missing roof tiles etc and there is no rising dampness.
- Windows and ventilation – check the windows are in good condition (e.g. double glazing seals not blown) and there are no draughts or excess ventilation. Again, your EPC can give tips for improvements.
- Heating system – make sure your tenants understand the instructions and the heating system is regularly serviced.
- Install Positive Input Ventilation (PIV). This is the most effective method of curing and preventing condensation dampness. PIV systems are popular condensation solutions for existing properties as it is an easy and simple solution to install. A loft mounted PIV draws fresh air and heat that exists in lofts, filters it and pushes it into the dwelling via a ceiling mounted diffuser simultaneously circulating existing heated air that has risen to ceiling height. All stale air in the property is forced out through natural forms of ventilation such as doors and windows or a condensation control fan.
- Treat mould infected areas. To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety Executive 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

Work with the tenants to help them understand how to control excess condensation in the property. Dismissing the problem as condensation caused by tenants will likely lead to the problem getting worse and further repair costs when the tenants move out. More advice to tenants can be found on our website:

[Repairs and maintenance services explained - Lancaster City Council](#)

If you identify any repairs or improvements, then inform the tenants about the time frame for repairs and keep them updated throughout.

For any further advice or guidance on the contents of this newsletter, contact Lancaster City Council Housing Standards at publicprotection@lancaster.gov.uk

