

# Damp and mould Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## Causes of damp and mould

### What is damp and mould?

Damp is the build-up of moisture in a property. It affects building materials, such as walls, floors, ceilings and can affect home furnishings and belongings - such as carpets, curtains, wallpaper, furniture, and clothing. When damp is present in a building it can also lead to the growth of mould and other microorganisms.

Moisture can be caused by property condition, leaks, or many other factors. There are many types of damp that can be diagnosed including; rising, penetrating, condensation and traumatic.

### Is damp and mould dangerous?

Left untreated damp and mould can produce allergens, irritants, and spores which are harm to a person's health. Damp and mould can cause ill health in anyone, but people with underlying health conditions and weakened immune systems can be at greater risk of poor health.

Gov.uk prepared a guidance document on the health risks [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-of-damp-and-mould-in-the-home)

## Finding damp and mould in a property

### What should you do if you find damp and mould in your home?

If you notice damp or mould in your home, you should report it to your landlord straight away. Promptly reporting the issue will enable the landlord to investigate the cause of the damp and mould and hopefully treat the cause of the issue.

Your landlord should arrange to visit the property to investigate. If you feel unwell and have noticed damp and mould in your home, you should seek advice from your healthcare provider straight away.

Some household mould can be managed by wiping the surface and ensuring suitable ventilation to a room where there is moisture present.

Shelter have produced guidance on [Damp and mould: what tenants need to know | Shelterd](https://www.shelter.org.uk/your-home/your-property/damp-and-mould)

### **I can smell damp but cannot see any mould. What should I do?**

The smell of mould without visible evidence may indicate that there is mould behind a surface, such as on the back of wallpaper, carpets, behind pipes, furniture or inside heating and ventilation units. You should exercise caution when disturbing potential sites of mould growth as removal of carpets or wallpaper can lead to a significant release of mould spores, this should be reported to your landlord to arrange for the work to be carried out by a professional.

### **What should I do if I notice damp and mould in a property?**

Prompt investigation into the cause of damp and mould is vital to avoid damage to the property or its spread through a building. A landlord should follow its own policy for responding to reports of damp and mould and arrange prompt inspections by an appropriate surveyor. A landlord should also seek to find out whether any member of the household has vulnerabilities that may put them more at risk of ill health if exposed to damp and mould.

Best practice on responding to damp and mould is available in our Spotlight report and [Centre for Learning training](#).

## **Damp and mould policies**

### **Should landlords have a dedicated damp and mould strategy and policy?**

We expect landlords to be proactive in their approach to damp and mould and have set out recommendations for landlords in the [Spotlight on damp and mould report](#).

The damp and mould policy should set out a landlord's approach to proactive and reactive investigations, planning of resources in anticipation of periods of higher demand, budget management to reduce instances of damp and mould and ensuring staff have the correct equipment to assess cases.

### **How should a landlord respond to damp and mould if it is an issue with the building?**

A landlord should be aware of potential or existing issues with their housing stock and decide whether a standalone strategy is needed to address immediate issues and then a policy to ensure it has steps in place to check its stock and address problems quickly and effectively on an ongoing basis. The spotlight report into damp and mould found that landlords missed opportunities to address issues early on

either because of a protracted diagnosis or by not extending their investigations to other properties within a block after a problem is reported.

## **Responding to complaints about damp and mould**

**If a resident submits a legal disrepair claim – should a landlord continue to carry out works if there is a real issue with damp and mould in the property?**

We would always recommend putting things right as quickly as possible and do not wait for legal proceedings to be completed.

A landlord should consider if their actions will prejudice any legal case, but as set out in our report [Follow up: Spotlight on damp and mould report](#) it is vital that a landlord does not hide behind legal proceedings or pre-action protocol.

**How should landlords answer a resident's complaint when lifestyle issues are a contributing factor to the issues they are experiencing, without mentioning lifestyle?**

It is about being clear what you will do and what your expectations of the resident are, so it is a collaboration rather than one sided blame of “lifestyle.”

Very rarely is lifestyle the only reason for damp and mould. It is important to build a plan in collaboration with the resident. If, after carrying out investigations and you are satisfied it is ‘lifestyle’ and not anything structural, the important thing is how you then approach this with the resident. Tone and empathy are key. You need to ensure there are no sense of accusations or blame, and that any suggestions you make are practical – for example, making suggestions on ventilating the property or offering advice on where a resident can access support with the cost of living and heating costs.

## **Learning resources about damp and mould**

**Does the Ombudsman provide any additional learning for landlords on damp and mould?**

The Housing Ombudsman’s Centre for Learning offers a range of training on damp and mould. You can find out more about our Centre for Learning webinars, reports, and online workshops on the [damp and mould page](#) on our website.

Member landlords can also [log in to the Landlord Learning Hub](#) to view the training we have available on responding to reports of damp and mould.