



Chartered
Institute of
Housing

CIOB

Tackling damp and mould:

Professional practice, cultural change
and regulation in social housing

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Section one: Introduction

A central part of a landlord's role is to provide safe homes for residents. This should include effectively and empathetically addressing any challenges that threaten the health and wellbeing of residents.

Damp and mould are among the issues that can pose a significant health risk. Although it has been a recognised issue for a long time, the tragic loss of Awaab Ishak has highlighted the risk of untreated damp and mould to residents. This guide provides landlords with advice on understanding issues, supporting their residents, taking steps to resolve root causes and how to respond to hazardous situations.

This guide builds on earlier guidance from 2022. Since then, we have seen the [Hazards in Social Housing \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) Regulations 2025](#) come into force, and further evidence and good practice have emerged.

Awaab's Law has ensured that we can be very clear about legal timeframes and responsibilities. This guide, therefore, consolidates the knowledge we have gained since 2022 and presents the key information the sector needs to know now.

This guide has been developed jointly by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), bringing together housing management practice with technical building expertise. Sections one to eight set out the policy context, principles and culture needed to tackle damp and mould well. An overview of the diagnosis and inspection process, developed by CIOB member Professor John Edwards, is available in section nine.

At both CIH and CIOB, we are clear that as we continue to support the sector on complex issues such as hazards within residents' homes, we need to understand and develop our professional values. Therefore, this guide will also explore culture and stigma, as we know damp and mould cannot be fixed by technical approaches alone.

The guide will explore good practice, regulatory and legal responsibilities, enabling responsive and understanding cultures that help us engage with residents' experiences and removing the barriers that prevent their concerns from being taken seriously.

This guide is not intended to be a comprehensive technical manual. All work on diagnosis and inspection should be carried out by people with the appropriate competence and qualification.

Section two: What's changed since 2022 – law, regulation and professional expectations

Since 2022, one major legislative change has been the implementation of the [Hazards in Social Housing \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) Regulations 2025](#), which saw 'Awaab's Law' enacted as part of the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#). This change in regulation sets clear, strict legal timeframes for both investigating and addressing health-related hazards in residents' homes, including damp and mould in its first phase.

[Awaab's Law](#) is being introduced in phases to give landlords time to prepare. Phase one, in force from 27 October 2025, covers all emergency hazards and significant damp and mould hazards. Phase two extends the same statutory timeframe requirements to a range of Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards and comes into force on 30 November 2026. Phase three, expected in 2027, will cover all remaining HHSRS hazards except overcrowding. The government has published non-statutory [guidance](#) on phase two.

There are now enforceable duties for social housing providers, as set out in the new [guidance](#) issued in October 2025. This guidance outlines the steps providers must take to address hazards in residents' homes.

In summary, providers must:

Emergency hazards

- **Investigate and make safe:** Both the investigation and the safety work must be completed within 24 hours of the landlord becoming aware of the hazard
- **If the property cannot be made safe in time:** The landlord must offer suitable alternative accommodation until the safety work is complete
- **Provide written summary:** Within three working days of the investigation's conclusion.

Significant hazards

- **Investigate:** Within 10 working days of becoming aware of the hazard
- **Provide written summary:** Within three working days of the investigation's conclusion
- **Start safety work:** Within five working days of the investigation concluding.

The act and the guidance will address a wide range of hazards covered under the HHSRS in phases from October 2025 to 2027 onwards. However, damp and mould have been central to it, and are included in the initial phase due to the health and safety risks they can cause. Providers will need to demonstrate clear processes, staff competence and skills, and appropriate approaches to comply with the legislation and to properly support residents in addressing hazards in their homes.

The [HHSRS](#) itself has also recently been overhauled. The number of hazard categories has reduced from 29 to 21, and scoring now uses three plain-language bands, 'high', 'medium' and 'low', in place of the original ten lettered bands.

The legal threshold for action is unchanged: a category one hazard still carries a duty to act and a category two hazard still carries discretion. Both the statutory and non-statutory [HHSRS guidance](#), covering all hazards including damp and mould, is a useful reference for members working through the detail.

Damp and mould has also been given its own standalone criterion in the reformed Decent Homes Standard, confirmed by the government in January 2026. Full details are set out in the [policy statement](#) itself and in CIH's [What You Need to Know guide](#) on the new standard.

At the same time, the [Housing Ombudsman](#) continues to publish [case-based learning](#), and its more recent [2023 update](#) built on its original 2021 [spotlight report](#) on damp and mould.

From these reports and from its other findings, the Housing Ombudsman has been clear that:

- Residents must never be blamed or dismissed by suggesting impractical solutions
- Vulnerability and complex needs should be both understood and accounted for
- Governance and leadership must demonstrate accountability around damp and mould
- Processes and approaches to data, diagnostics and communication all need to continue to improve.

When examining the Housing Ombudsman's [Complaint Handling Code](#), it is also clear that it expects providers to conduct a deeper analysis of how they use data on damp and mould complaints to identify any issues, patterns, and changes. High levels of such complaints, or prolonged and unresolved issues, may well indicate wider and systemic issues that need to be addressed.

More recently, we have also seen the introduction of the [Competence and Conduct Standards](#) by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), which place new duties on providers to ensure that their workforce is qualified, competent and professional. This has a real impact on how we deal with hazards such as damp and mould, as it must be more than just a technical task; it requires professionalism and a strong, positive workplace culture.

As can be seen by the numerous updates provided in this section, there have been rapid and widespread changes in social housing regulation since the publication of our first guide. This creates a different operating environment for providers that can pose resource challenges. However, they also present an opportunity to reset expectations and outcomes around practice, improving both homes and services for all residents.

Peabody's approach (outlined in the case study on the following page) to Awaab's Law shows what this can look like when an organisation rebuilds its response around people rather than process.

Case Study: Peabody - putting people at the centre of Awaab's Law compliance

Peabody manages over 108,000 homes across London and the South East of England. When considering their overall approach to Awaab's Law, they took the opportunity to fundamentally rethink not just their processes, but who delivers them and why.

At the heart of their approach is a specialist case management team recruited entirely from customer service and caring backgrounds, with no requirement for technical qualifications. The decision was deliberate. Listening back to what residents had been telling them, the message was consistent: they didn't feel heard. So, when Peabody built the team, empathy, communication and genuine care were the only criteria that mattered. Technical knowledge, they reasoned, can be trained. The instinct to act when something doesn't feel right cannot.

Peabody's starting point was the data they already held. Reviewing complaints, Housing Ombudsman cases and tenant satisfaction feedback from 2023 onwards, the consistent message was not about technical failure but about how cases were handled. In essence, whether residents felt heard, believed and supported. The approach was developed and embedded from May 2024, before Awaab's Law came into force, driven by what residents were saying rather than what the legislation required.

The 'family test' that guides the team's work reflects this directly. Before closing a case, staff are encouraged to ask whether they would be satisfied with that response if the resident were a family member living with a condition worsened by exposure to damp and mould. That question was directly influenced by a team member whose own family had lived with damp and mould; it was meant to keep the approach simple, human, and deliberately personal.

Underpinning the team's work is a triage framework that deliberately weights vulnerability over property condition: 60% of the assessment focuses on household makeup, health conditions and wellbeing and 40% on the physical state of the property. That weighting leads to a higher overall caseload, but Peabody is clear that this is the right outcome. A low-level damp problem in a home where a resident has emphysema or where children with asthma are sleeping is not a low-priority case.

The impact is visible in resident feedback. Since the team was established, Peabody has received direct messages from residents describing how having a named case manager has transformed their experience. Cases are moving quickly, people are feeling listened to and problems are actually resolved.



Section three: Professionalism and competence

Competence, in this context, means having the knowledge, skill and judgement to diagnose a problem correctly and act on it appropriately; not simply following a process.

[Designing Buildings](#), the CIOB-supported construction industry wiki, defines competence as a measure of someone's ability to do things well, judged favourably against recognised standards, and notes that it can be demonstrated through accreditation, qualifications, or comparison with industry standards. This is reflected in CIOB's [Rules and Regulations of Professional Competence and Conduct](#), which state that members must ensure they do not undertake work for which they knowingly lack sufficient professional or technical competence.

CIH's own [Code of Conduct](#) sets a similar expectation, requiring members to maintain professional competence, ensuring they and their colleagues have the appropriate skills and knowledge to do their jobs now and in the future. The [Code of Ethics](#) adds that professionalism at CIH means more than qualifications; it involves ongoing development, the right behaviours and attitudes, and operating within an ethical framework. Read alongside the Competence and Conduct Standards, this is the foundation the rest of this section builds on.

The Housing Ombudsman is clear that responding to damp and mould primarily or initially as a lifestyle problem is unacceptable; it will not resolve the problem. Taking this approach creates a negative impression among tenants, who may feel blamed and stigmatised. They may then be less inclined to report further instances of the problem, creating more areas of 'silence' and enabling the long-term deterioration of the property.

Damp and mould issues are best resolved by harnessing the expertise of asset/repairs and housing managers, together with tenants who have experience living in the home, to co-design the right solutions. This requires a more holistic, person-centred approach to every case of damp and mould, with the landlord ensuring that its internal communication and referral processes work effectively to bring teams around the person, rather than the tenant being passed between staff or having to report the same issue repeatedly.

The Housing Ombudsman [highlighted](#) CIH's professional standards framework, reinforcing the importance of all housing staff taking the initiative to ensure that damp and mould cases are identified and resolved. Landlords should ensure they support staff in doing this through training and effective internal procedures.

Problems associated with damp, mould and condensation remain widespread across the social housing sector, despite significant time, effort and financial resources invested in attempts to address them. This continued prevalence demonstrates that the issue is not solely one of carrying out remedial works, but of ensuring correct analysis, robust diagnosis and appropriate professional competence. Within a regulatory environment shaped by Awaab's Law-style compliance frameworks, failures in this regard can have serious consequences for occupant health and wellbeing, legal compliance, and organisational governance.

In practice, this means thinking about training as two distinct tiers. All staff who may enter residents' homes or respond to repair requests, not just technical specialists, should receive general awareness training to help them recognise damp and mould and understand their organisation's process for responding to it. CIH's Introduction to Dampness, Condensation and Mould [course](#) is designed for exactly this audience. Staff who go on to investigate and diagnose reported cases need something more specific: training grounded in building pathology rather than damp-proofing remediation. The distinction matters because the two roles require different things; one is about recognising a problem and knowing what to do next, the other is about diagnosing it correctly.

Awaab's Law places clear emphasis on timely investigation, accurate identification of hazards, effective remediation and accountability. To meet these requirements, inspections and investigations must follow a structured, evidence-based process and be undertaken by individuals with the competence necessary to interpret findings correctly and determine appropriate action. Process alone is insufficient without the expertise to apply it appropriately.

Historically, much training relating to damp and moisture problems has been rooted in damp-proofing remediation, often promoting predetermined treatments rather than an understanding of moisture behaviour within buildings. This approach has contributed to misdiagnosis, inappropriate interventions, repeated remedial works and prolonged exposure of residents to unhealthy conditions. Under Awaab's Law and associated regulatory requirements, such outcomes are no longer acceptable, as landlords must be able to demonstrate that decisions are evidence-led, proportionate and focused on eliminating risk to occupants.

Competence must therefore be grounded in building pathology, incorporating building forensics, building diagnostics and building physics. Practitioners must be capable of assessing dwellings as complex and interrelated systems, understanding how construction type, age, materials, exposure, retrofit measures, ventilation strategies, heating patterns and occupancy interact to influence moisture risk. This is particularly critical in social housing, where homes are often diverse and where retrofitted dwellings may be at increased risk of condensation and mould if changes to thermal performance and airtightness are not fully understood.

In the context of Awaab's Law, competence must also include a clear understanding of the legal and regulatory duties placed on landlords. This includes obligations to identify hazards promptly, assess risks to health, prioritise vulnerable occupants and implement effective remedial measures within prescribed timescales. Practitioners must be able to distinguish between symptoms and underlying causes, record findings clearly, justify recommendations and support defensible decision-making capable of withstanding regulatory and legal scrutiny.

In recognition of the need for this level of competence, in 2025 the Awarding Body for the Built Environment (ABBE) developed an Ofqual-regulated qualification, titled [Level 3 Award in Damp, Mould and Condensation in Buildings](#). It focused specifically on damp, mould and condensation in buildings.

This qualification, which has particular reference to [British Standard 5250:2021: Management of Moisture in Buildings](#), adopts a building pathology-led approach. It addresses issues particularly relevant to social housing, including retrofit, traditional and mixed-age homes are, and the legal and governance considerations that underpin Awaab's Law compliance. It represents the type of competency framework required to support the approach set out in this guidance and to deliver consistent, reliable outcomes that protect residents, housing and organisations alike.

Case study: Amplius - skills and professionalism

Amplius has focused on ensuring colleagues across the organisation have the skills and professionalism needed to deliver an effective, person-centred response to damp and mould.

A proactive approach is taken across the business to ensure damp and mould issues are never simply accepted. They work hard to support customers while resolving issues as quickly and efficiently as possible.

All customer-facing colleagues have had damp and mould training so they can give initial advice and guidance to customers. In one of their regions where in-house repairs are conducted, they refer cases on to their specialist damp and mould operatives, who focus entirely on damp and mould over the winter months.

There are also further operatives trained to respond to damp and mould if the specialist operatives don't have the capacity to conduct the initial response.

Amplius also makes use of smart technology to monitor homes with persistent damp and mould issues.

The organisation completes a full diagnosis of properties with damp and mould issues to identify and tackle the root cause of the problem.

They also reach out to customers at three separate points after the initial response to check whether any damp or mould has reappeared. Following this, action is taken if needed.

Assurance checks are conducted at 90 days, one year and two years to ensure that the issue is fully resolved and doesn't flare up again.

Colleagues aren't pushed to complete visits quickly and are instead encouraged to take the time needed to assess the issue and, more broadly, to fully understand their customers.

Colleagues and contractors are also trained in safeguarding and can refer people to additional support available from Amplius' specialist safeguarding team if it is required. This speaks to the organisational culture cultivated within Amplius.

As an organisation, they work to ensure that each colleague recognises the difference they can make to customers' lives and understands that they have a responsibility to act where properties are not up to expected standards.



Section four: Good practice principles – what works in tackling damp and mould

Across the UK, housing providers have been working to improve their methods for identifying, investigating, and resolving damp and mould issues. This section draws on evidence and learning to help pull together common characteristics of good practice approaches.

Good practice could include:

- **Treating reports seriously and acting quickly:** Ensuring an effective and empathetic response to residents' concerns is key. Processes that enable action within the 24-hour timeframe when there is a risk to health and safety, and that keep residents informed at each step, are crucial.
- **Not blaming residents or using language that implies fault:** Language matters. Framing damp and mould as a 'lifestyle issue' can undermine resident trust, but it also ignores underlying concerns. Focus on a holistic approach towards the property, possible causes and positive lines of action.
- **Having clear and accessible reporting pathways:** Ensuring and being clear that all residents understand how and where to report issues and be clear about what happens when they do. Offer residents a choice of different communication channels and support where necessary.
- **Training staff and contractors to recognise and report issues:** Everyone who enters a home on behalf of a provider should be able to recognise potential signs of damp and mould and report them for further action. Training and development should include guidance on identifying and understanding the impact on residents' health and wellbeing.
- **Embedding a zero-tolerance approach across all services:** Damp and mould are not issues limited to asset management. Everyone right across the organisation has a role to play, and shared responsibility will contribute to a stronger overall practice.
- **Better understanding of vulnerability and tailoring support accordingly:** Some residents will likely be at a greater risk from damp and mould; especially those with respiratory conditions, children under five, and people with disabilities or weakened immune systems. Use insight and communication to support proactive approaches that help identify and support vulnerable households.
- **Using data to identify trends and drive improvement:** Track where damp and mould issues occur, assess the effectiveness and sustainability of any responses and share the learnings. This approach can help identify patterns and lead to more proactive responses.
- **Being open and transparent about your learning:** Where there are challenges or failings, be honest and take ownership – be clear about what is being done and involve residents in that problem-solving process. Avoid defensiveness.
- **Working in partnership with residents:** Involve residents in shaping your service response, developing resident-facing information, and embedding their feedback. Building and clearly demonstrating this involvement will help establish trust, as residents feel heard and can see tangible change happening.
- **Connecting damp and mould to the wider goals of quality and decency:** Tackling damp and mould is a vital part of any approach to improving standards of quality, decency, and safety. Linking approaches that address safety, warmth, and decency enables more effective and sustainable asset management.

These examples are not specific to every case of damp and mould, as a personalised approach to understanding each household's situation is central. However, these principles can help build effective processes, enabling staff to support residents based on understanding, respect, and action.

Accent Housing and contractor Ian Williams put several of these principles into practice by building checks for damp and mould into every routine repair visit.

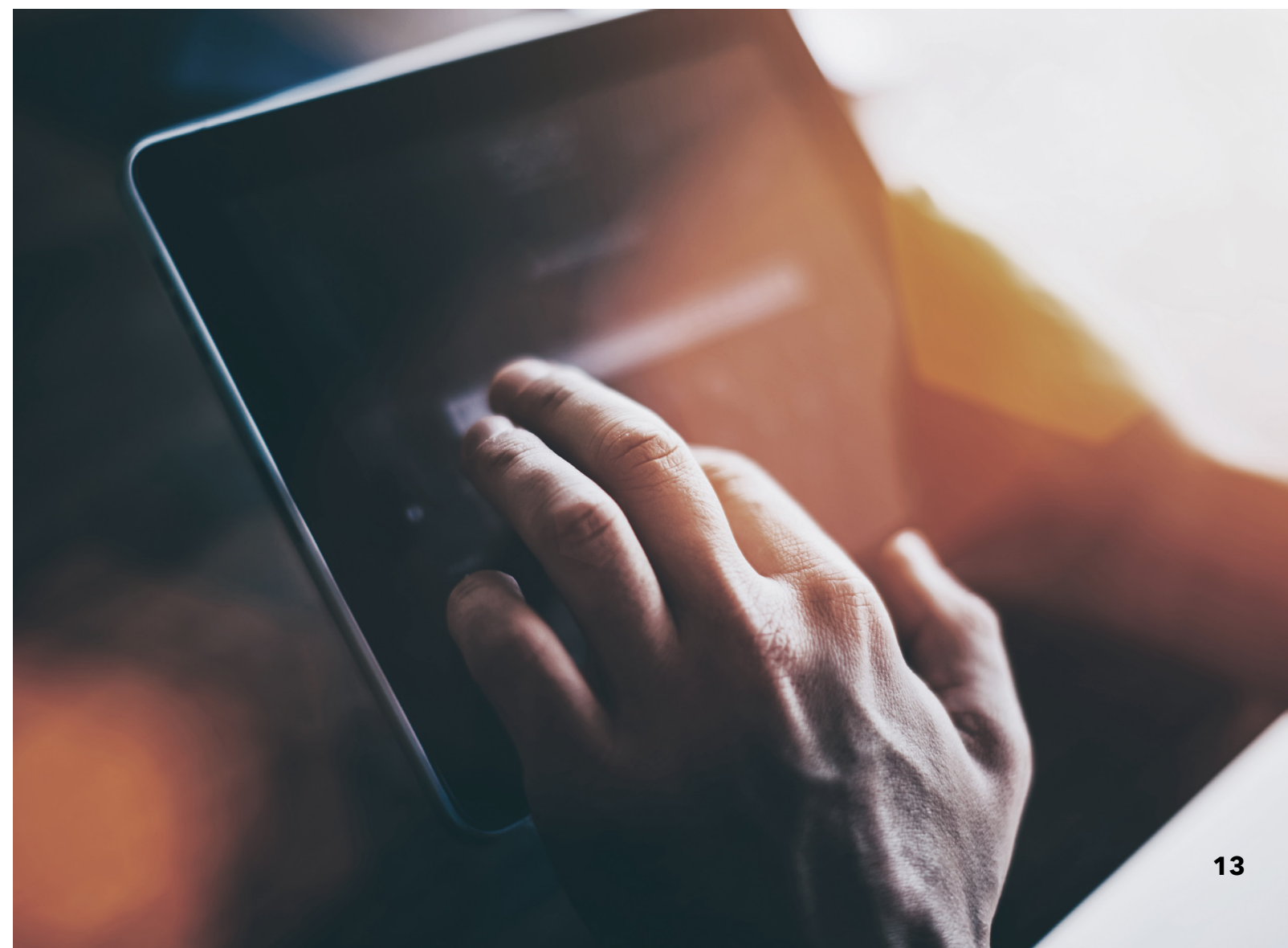
Case study: Accent and Ian Williams - early identification of cases

One of the persistent challenges in tackling damp and mould is that problems in occupied homes often go undetected until they have already become serious. Accent Housing and their repairs contractor, Ian Williams, developed a proactive approach that addresses this directly by embedding damp, mould, and condensation checks into every responsive repair visit across 19,000 homes in Yorkshire, the Humber, and the North West, East and South of England.

Operatives complete a structured set of questions via smartphone before they can close any job, covering the presence of mould, the condition and operation of the extractor fan, condensation on windows, trickle vents, and any other observations. Emergency damp and mould kits are carried as standard van stock, enabling first-visit treatment where appropriate. All findings are reported directly to Accent, giving a running picture of stock condition that goes well beyond what residents report.

Since the pilot launched in 2024, over 60,000 smartphone surveys have been completed across more than 14,500 properties. Of those, 729 had damp or mould present, and nearly 300 had no functioning bathroom extractor fan - issues that would otherwise have gone undetected until a formal complaint was raised.

The approach was designed to be replicable, with survey questions that any provider and contractor can adapt for their own smartphone workflows.



Evidence: What tenants tell us: The Social Housing Quality Fund

Between 2023 and 2025, Social Housing Quality Fund programmes in both Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, totalling £15 million in initial allocation, rising to £21.5 million with co-funding in Greater Manchester, generated substantial evidence about the lived experience of damp and mould in social housing. This includes what effective intervention actually requires.

In Greater Manchester, the University of Salford evaluated the programme across 16,177 properties and 17 housing providers, covering over 22,000 measures including ventilation systems, mould eradication, smart sensors and new windows and doors. Sixty-three per cent of tenant survey respondents said damp and mould had affected their health. After the works, 60% reported their health had improved, and 62% of those who used an asthma inhaler said they were using it less often. These are significant outcomes, but they also reflect the scale of harm that had been allowed to accumulate. One of the groups most likely to report positive change were those who had been living with the problem for four or more years.

The West Midlands evaluation, conducted by the Centre for the New Midlands, found similar patterns. Forty per cent of respondents had been living with damp and mould for more than four years before the programme began, 51% reported physical health impacts and 76% said their quality of life had been negatively affected. While satisfaction with the physical repairs was generally positive, dissatisfaction with landlords' communication and engagement was a consistent theme in both areas.

Both evaluations also highlighted the limits of targeted funding. Meaningful as the interventions were, they pointed clearly to the gap between what time-limited programmes can achieve and the sustained investment the scale of the problem requires. The evidence points clearly in one direction: tackling damp and mould well requires sustained investment, early intervention, and communication that treats residents as partners throughout, not as recipients of a process they do not understand.



Section five: Diagnosis, inspection and identifying the root cause

The diagnosis of damp and mould must enable the proper identification and treatment of root causes, particularly those that may be structural, systemic, or both. This does not mean that factors within the household are irrelevant, but that the inquiry should be guided by the acceptance that damp and mould may be caused or worsened by issues with the property's structure or condition. This then helps the sector shift away from processes that place blame for damp and mould on residents and towards more empathetic approaches that work with and for residents. It requires skilled staff who know what to look for and are empowered to act on their findings.

Organisations that do this well are likely to:

- Have clear protocols for investigating damp and mould, linked to their approach to category one hazards
- Use evidence-driven approaches to identify causes, incorporating data, technical approaches and resident feedback
- Ensure that all identified and reported information is properly recorded, using both photographic evidence and case notes
- Equip staff with the skills and resources to identify issues with the correct access to surveyors or the technical lead to support
- Work with contractors to enable early identification and resolution, which helps reduce prolonged or repeated visits whenever possible
- Consider more holistic approaches, such as whole-home inspections, especially in more complex situations, to allow for a more detailed understanding of both the property and the household.

An overview of what this looks like in practice, developed with CIOB and its members, is set out at the end of this guide for context. This guide is not a technical manual, and only people with the appropriate competence and qualifications should carry out a diagnosis.

An international example shows what this can look like when diagnosis is treated as a system-level commitment rather than a case-by-case judgement.

Case study: Den Haag - building independent expertise into the process

Since 2017, the city of Den Haag (The Hague) has operated one of the most distinctive approaches to damp and mould resolution in Europe. Where a tenant and their housing corporation cannot agree on the cause or responsibility for moisture and mould problems in a rental home, either party can refer the case to an independent moisture and mould expert, the Vocht- en Schimmelexpert Den Haag.

The initiative is a joint commitment between the Municipality of Den Haag, the GGD Haaglanden (the regional public health service), and the major housing corporations operating across the city. The independent investigations are carried out by Cauberg Huygen, an engineering firm with over 45 years of experience in moisture research. They have also developed the national guidance on tackling moisture problems in homes for Aedes, the Dutch housing association federation.

The process is structured and clear. Tenants are first expected to formally notify their landlord and allow a reasonable timeframe, typically two to four weeks, for the landlord to inspect and address the structural cause. If the landlord fails to act or disputes the cause, either party may request an independent expert investigation. The housing association must confirm they are willing for the property to be inspected before the expert can proceed. Cauberg Huygen investigates the root cause, whether that be condensation, penetrating damp, poor ventilation or faulty insulation, and issues a binding report shared with both the tenant and the landlord.

Where tenants have also reported their concerns directly to GGD Haaglanden, the GGD can provide parallel advice on managing health risks in the home while the process is underway.

The model will not translate directly to the English context, where no equivalent independent arbitration mechanism currently exists. But it offers a compelling illustration of what a genuinely system-level commitment to resolving damp and mould disputes looks like. One where the burden of proof does not rest solely with the resident, and where diagnosis is trusted because it is independent.



Section six: Repairs, remediation and long-term solutions

Whilst it is important that emergency and shorter-term responses can address immediate risks and provide temporary relief, these alone cannot always provide longer-term solutions. More holistic 'whole home' approaches can enable providers not just to address symptoms but also to identify and treat the underlying issues that can allow damp to take hold.

This means:

- Ensuring the repairs are sustainable by addressing root causes as well as symptoms such as visible mould
- Taking appropriate steps so that follow-on work happens as quickly as possible through coordinated internal processes
- Follow-up communication to understand if the issue has been successfully addressed and return quickly if further issues arise
- Using data to develop a thorough understanding of stock that can help highlight properties that may present more risk and inform planned works.

Some solutions will require capital funding or programme-level action. Where poor insulation, single glazing, inadequate heating, or design flaws are driving recurring damp and mould, these issues must be escalated and addressed through longer-term programmes.

At the same time, we need to ensure that colleagues are supported in raising these cases and that the system doesn't pressure them to 'make do' with temporary fixes.

Supporting residents through the process is not an add-on; it is part of the response. In practice, that might mean redecorating after works are completed, helping to remove or replace contaminated belongings, or arranging temporary accommodation where the home cannot be lived in safely during remediation. These are not exceptional measures. For households who have been living with damp and mould for months or years, this is the minimum that should be done.

Alongside the practical, there is the emotional. Fear, disruption, and the grinding experience of reporting something repeatedly without it being fixed all take a toll. Acknowledging that openly in every contact matters more than many organisations realise.

Getting the repair right the first time remains one of the sector's most persistent challenges. The evidence from Housing Ombudsman casework is consistent: recurrence is rarely due to landlords failing to act, but because they've acted too narrowly. Surface treatment without addressing the underlying moisture source or ventilation failure does little more than reset the clock. In some cases, particularly where sealing has been applied without adequate drying, it can make things structurally worse. A robust approach means linking diagnosis directly to remediation, bringing in specialist input where needed, and not closing a case until there is genuine confidence the root cause has been resolved.

Siloed working is one of the most common obstacles here. Repairs teams acting without asset management context, or housing officers unaware of a property's repair history, make it harder to spot patterns and easier to miss systemic issues. Where capital investment is needed, for persistent cold homes, failed insulation, or ventilation systems installed but never maintained, that case needs to reach the people who can act on it. Colleagues should feel supported to escalate rather than pressured to patch.

Monitoring matters, but not only through technology. Environmental sensors, humidity monitoring and stock condition data all have a role to play, particularly in higher-risk homes. But the most useful early warning system is often already there. [The Greater Manchester Social Housing Quality Fund tenant research](#), published by the University of Salford in 2024, found that residents consistently identified problems before they appeared in repair logs, and were not always believed when they did (Sherriff et al. 2024). That gap between what residents know and what organisations act on is where risk accumulates. Closing it requires systems that listen as well as measure.

We've also seen that prevention works best when repair teams are empowered to act on what they see. Training, trust and cross-team coordination make a difference. If a contractor detects water ingress during a boiler repair, they need a clear route to escalate the issue without waiting for a second complaint.

In the best examples we've seen, contractors and housing officers are trained to spot early signs and encouraged to report them, even if not directly linked to their original task. Prevention is not simply about eliminating all moisture in homes; it also requires creating housing systems that prevent treatable problems from becoming dangerous. That takes a whole home approach, a clear escalation route, and a culture that prioritises doing the job properly rather than ticking the box. The Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter shows what this looks like when expectations are reinforced at a system level, not just within individual organisations.



Case study: The Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter - raising the bar across all tenures

Tackling damp and mould effectively requires more than individual landlords doing the right thing; it also requires the systems around them to set and reinforce higher expectations. The Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter, launched by Andy Burnham and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), is the first voluntary landlord accreditation scheme in the UK open to all residential landlords, whether private or social, large or small.

The charter sets membership criteria across seven themes of good renting, including a dedicated standard that requires landlords to have an effective approach to property inspection and to ensure that a qualified or competent person carries out repairs.

Members are also required to bring homes up to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C within achievable timescales; a criterion that directly addresses the cold, energy-inefficient homes in which damp and mould are most likely to take hold.

To support landlords in reaching EPC C within achievable timescales, the Good Landlord Charter has partnered with Warm Homes: Local Grant. Only landlords registered as supporters can access retrofit funding for their properties. This is to ensure that funding is given to responsible landlords who are committed to going beyond their legal minimum requirements.

The charter's approach is deliberately ambitious. It is designed not to replicate legal minimums but to set a voluntary standard above them, helping tenants identify landlords committed to going further. Governed by an independent board with tenant, landlord and expert representation, delivered by the Implementation Unit from The Dispute Service, on behalf of GMCA, it now covers half of all rented homes across Greater Manchester's ten boroughs.

The charter demonstrates what a place-based, cross-tenure approach to housing quality can look like, and how linking energy efficiency, decency and resident safety into a single framework can support more joined-up action on damp and mould at scale.

Section seven: Supporting residents – empathy, engagement and empowerment

Damp and mould are more than technical problems; they are deeply personal issues that affect health, safety and the sense of home. When tenants report these problems, they are asking to be heard, believed and helped, not simply for a fix. That makes the way we respond just as important as the work itself.

We have seen from the Housing Ombudsman's reports, recent maladministration findings, and research such as the [West Midlands](#) and [Greater Manchester](#) Social Homes Quality Fund (SHQF) evaluations that residents too often feel disbelieved, blamed, or ignored. For many residents, this is more than poor service. It is a breach of trust. In some cases, it causes or exacerbates trauma, especially where vulnerable households are affected or the home is unsafe for a long time.

The starting point is listening. Genuinely listening, in a way that signals to the resident that what they are saying you is being taken seriously. That means setting aside assumptions, using language that does not imply fault and keeping people informed throughout rather than leaving them to chase. It means offering explanations and options, rather than making decisions based on a process the resident cannot see into.

Some residents face significantly greater risks from damp and mould, including those with respiratory conditions, young children, older adults, people with disabilities or compromised immune systems. The challenge is that vulnerability is not always visible or recorded in an accessible way. Assumptions about who is at risk and who is not are where gaps open up. Asking directly, listening carefully, and building what you learn into the response plan is the more reliable route.

We've seen some landlords introduce enhanced support pathways for vulnerable households, including:

- Early triage systems to flag potential health risks or support needs
- Links with social prescribing, local health services or welfare support teams
- Practical help, including replacement of damaged belongings, temporary accommodation, or priority repairs.

Some providers are also using trauma-informed approaches when communication training staff so they can recognise signs of distress, de-escalate difficult conversations, and respond with empathy rather than defensiveness. When residents feel judged or unheard, trust breaks down, issues escalate, and complaints recur, often in ways that could have been prevented through understanding and consistency. [Trauma-informed practice](#), grounded in safety, empathy, reliability, and empowerment, offers a practical path forward and aligns directly with the expectations of the Competence and Conduct Standards. [The Housing Ombudsman's casework](#) and [CIH Northern Ireland's guide](#) both reinforce the importance of tenants feeling they are being treated as human beings, not as problems.

Empowerment goes beyond responding well to individual complaints; it means creating genuine space for residents to shape how the service works. Organisations that do this well tend to involve tenants in reviewing complaint patterns, co-producing information materials, and contributing to the design of campaigns and communications. Some run insight interviews or walkabouts specifically to gather residents' views on problem hotspots before they escalate. These are not token gestures; they generate insight that internal data rarely captures.

We know from the [Better Social Housing Review](#) and CIH's work with the Rethinking Repairs and Maintenance (RERAM) project that relationships matter. Where there is trust, problems are identified more quickly and resolved more efficiently. Where there is stigma, fear or a history of poor responses, people stop reporting and the risk worsens. That is why supporting residents goes beyond repairs or policies; it is also about understanding their needs and concerns. It is about building a service that feels safe to approach, fair in its decisions, and committed to making things better.

Berneslai Homes' STAR campaign shows what this can look like when an organisation rethinks how it reaches residents altogether.

Case study: Berneslai Homes - taking awareness to where tenants are

When Berneslai Homes reflected on their first attempt at damp and mould awareness training, they made a deliberate decision to start again. They felt that during its initial run it was too formal, there was too much emphasis on accreditation and it was taken up by just 21 tenants across an 18,000 home stock. The result was their STAR campaign: Spot the signs, Try our tips, Act fast, Report it.

Rather than asking tenants to come to them, Berneslai took a short, engaging ten-minute video out into the community through local community centres, the Community Shop network, and the Salvation Army, supported by leaflet drops, SMS, and social media. Every tenant who watched received a free damp and mould pack containing a damp trap, a hygrometer, a cloth, and a STAR booklet. The hook was practical; the message was clear and non-blaming.

The results were striking. Berneslai set a target of reaching 100 tenants in six months. They reached 145 in three, including 51 that were under 55 at the time, a group typically hard to engage with through formal channels. Every tenant who watched reported that their knowledge had increased, and each said they had used the tips at home.

The approach also shifted something internally. As the team reflected, sometimes going back to basics, doorstep conversations, community presence, and simple tools work better than formal training.



Section eight: Embedding learning and continuous improvement

Tackling damp and mould effectively is not a one-off project or a single training session; it requires a long-term commitment to getting better. That means learning from what goes wrong, listening to what residents tell us, and building those insights into how we deliver services, manage assets, and support people.

The ombudsman has made it clear that learning from complaints is an essential aspect of effective governance. Under the statutory Complaint Handling Code, organisations must now conduct regular thematic reviews of issues such as damp and mould. This includes reviewing upheld complaints, identifying patterns across estates or property types and inquiring about what could have been done differently to prevent the issue from arising. However, to have an impact, that insight needs to be acted upon, rather than simply reported.

Some of the best practices we've seen include:

- Monthly learning forums where staff from different teams share lessons from recent cases
- Quarterly service reviews focused on damp and mould complaints, linked to asset data and repair trends
- Reporting to boards and scrutiny panels on the effectiveness of the organisational response, looking beyond compliance alone.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) also have a role here. Although they won't tell you everything, low satisfaction with repairs, complaint handling or being listened to should prompt a deeper enquiry. Combine that with your own internal data from repair systems, asset databases, environmental health referrals or call logs, and you begin to build a much clearer picture of where the problems lie.

Tracking the impact of changes matters too. New processes, campaigns or training programmes all need to be tested against real outcomes, not just logged as completed. Are complaints reducing? Are repairs being resolved more durably? Is resident trust improving? These are not one-off audit questions; they are the kind of ongoing enquiries that distinguishes organisations authentically committed to improvement from those managing appearances.

Staff development runs through all of this. Damp and mould are not a specialism to be quarantined in one team; everyone, from board level to contact centre, needs enough knowledge to play their part. For some, that means awareness training and understanding of legal timeframes. For others, it means greater technical skills around diagnosis and root cause.

Across the board, there is growing recognition that skills in empathy, trauma-informed communication and vulnerable resident support are just as important as technical knowledge, and in some cases more so.

This is also where partnerships matter. Local authorities, health teams, social care services, and environmental health officers often possess valuable knowledge and insights that can enhance our understanding and approach to tackling damp and mould. Engaging with those partners, whether formally or informally, helps identify issues early, support tenants more effectively and make informed decisions with a fuller understanding of the risks.

Walsall Housing Group's Assisting Children to Excel (A.C.E) programme shows what this partnership-based approach can achieve in practice.

Case Study: whg - when housing and health work together

Walsall Housing Group (whg) manages around 22,000 homes across Walsall, an area where the relationship between housing conditions and health outcomes is well evidenced; and where whg has chosen to act on both. Their ACE (Assisting Children to Excel) programme starts from a simple but powerful premise: that poor health and poor housing are not separate problems, and that a housing organisation sitting at the centre of a community is uniquely placed to act on both.

The programme targets children with asthma living in whg homes, particularly those in homes with reported damp and mould. Referrals come from healthcare professionals, whg community teams, and the local Acute Respiratory Infection hub. From there, trained community champions, over 60% of whom are whg residents themselves, work alongside families to support engagement with asthma care pathways, address damp and mould through prioritised repairs, and provide practical support including fuel vouchers, self-management packs and help with inhaler technique.

The model is built on genuine partnership: whg works alongside the NHS Black Country Children and Young People's Asthma Transformation Team, Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, and the George Collier Memorial Fund. Clinicians routinely ask presenting patients whether they are whg residents, triggering housing follow-up as a matter of course. So far, the programme has benefitted 348 children from families in Walsall, completed 184 asthma assessments with 100% receiving personalised self-management support, and prioritised 100% of identified homes for repairs and wider support. The approach has since expanded into a new Black Country Health and Housing Partnership, replicating the model across the wider region.

whg are now working with the Healthy Homes Hub to expand the approach nationwide, through the creation of Asthma Friendly Homes and Community Champions playbooks – providing clear, practical blueprints for housing providers and NHS practitioners across the country to identify, intervene and reduce childhood asthma linked to housing conditions. The playbooks have already been tested through a pilot in Tower Hamlets in 2026. The project is supported by Amazon Web Services (AWS), Fusion 21 and National Energy Action.

This project is part of whg's Social Justice Strategy, through which they're working with partners to tackle inequality by improving residents' homes, health and opportunities.



Section nine: Practical approach to understanding damp and mould

This section sets out what a thorough diagnosis of damp, mould and condensation is likely to involve, developed by Professor John Edwards and put forward as a key part of this report by CIOB.

It's included to help housing professionals understand what good practice looks like and what to expect from a proper inspection; it isn't a substitute for training or qualification. Diagnosis should always be carried out by people with the right competence, as set out in the professionalism and competence section.

Introduction

Dealing competently with damp, mould and condensation in dwellings requires a baseline level of understanding, particularly with regard to the health, safety and wellbeing of building occupants. Poorly managed moisture can have significant implications for indoor air quality, comfort and physical and mental health, making informed assessment and intervention essential.

This level of understanding should entail a sound, practical knowledge of how moisture behaves in buildings and how related problems are identified, assessed, and resolved. It includes familiarity with relevant standards and guidance, an appreciation of how construction methods and the use of different material types vary across buildings of different ages, and an understanding of the theory behind different forms of moisture, their causes, and appropriate remedies. It recognises the influence of a building's location, setting and susceptibility to moisture risk, as well as the effects that alterations, maintenance practices, and retrofit measures can have on moisture performance.

It also encompasses knowledge of the systematic inspection and analysis needed to diagnose moisture problems accurately. This includes the sensitivities of traditional buildings, which make up around a third of UK homes stock and are often misunderstood, leading to inappropriate treatment.

This level of understanding connects common building defects to moisture-related issues and extends to knowing the essential elements of clear, responsible reporting and the specification of effective remedial works that protect both the building fabric and the wellbeing of its occupants.

Competent inspection and diagnosis of damp, mould and condensation must focus on protecting occupant health and wellbeing, as well as the building fabric. Poorly understood moisture problems can lead to recurring defects, wasted resources and prolonged exposure to unhealthy indoor conditions.

In simple terms:

- **Damp** is a condition where moisture levels within a material exceed expected or acceptable thresholds for that material and situation creating a risk of deterioration and/or a lack of performance (for example, decay, loss of strength or corrosion)
- **Condensation** occurs when moisture from indoor air deposits on cooler surfaces, typically where the surface temperature is at or below the dew point temperature (i.e. the temperature at which condensation will occur). This leads to 100% relative humidity (RH)
- **Mould** is biological growth that occurs where surfaces experience persistent high levels of RH. The RH need not be at 100%; at 90%, mould can germinate (within 24 to 48 hours) and at 70%, it can colonise (in one to 12 days). Such high levels of RH are due to low surface temperatures, and persistence is due to a lack of ventilation, often supported by available nutrients. These are often household dust or organic finishes such as paints, wallpapers, adhesives and timber-based products.

In summary, moisture-related problems commonly arise from one or more of the following (often in combination):

- Moisture levels exceeding moisture thresholds for a given material type, increasing the risk of damage
- Moisture penetrating through walls (wind-driven rain, defects, porous fabric and defective detailing)
- Moisture rising through walls and floors (ground moisture pathways and bridging)
- Leaks through roofs (coverings, flashings, gutters, valleys and parapets)
- Leaks from pipes, drainage, tanks, services and the like (including intermittent leaks and concealed failures)
- Low surface temperatures leading to high surface RH% (at 100% condensation)
- Persistently high surface RH% increases the risk of mould
- Insufficient heating leading to generally lower internal temperatures, with low surface temperatures leading to high RH% on surfaces
- Insufficient ventilation increases the persistence of high RH%.

Principles of inspection

Any site inspection must follow a robust, consistent and logical process, and those undertaking it must be competent enough to:

- Understand the construction type, age, materials and form of the building
- Recognise common moisture mechanisms associated with construction types
- Identify typical weak points and locations where moisture problems are most likely
- Use reported symptoms to assist the investigation, without assuming the reported issue is the sole or primary cause.

In many cases, there will be no clear reported problem. The building must then be inspected on the basis that moisture problems may be present due to roof defects, rainwater goods failures, penetrating damp, plumbing leaks, rising moisture pathways, ventilation inadequacy or combinations of defects and environmental conditions.

Inspectors must know where to look and must understand the likely knock-on effects of initial defects. For example, a roof leak may result in wet insulation, concealed timber decay, corrosion of fixings, electrical risk or secondary mould growth. A holistic, whole-building approach is therefore required to achieve reliable outcomes.

Inspections should:

- Be undertaken by competent persons
- Be carried out in a consistent and logical manner, using correct equipment appropriately
- Focus on causes, not merely symptoms
- Consider building use, occupancy patterns, and the internal and external environment
- Assess interactions of materials, components and systems
- Recognise that building use and occupant behaviour may contribute to risk, and that this contribution must be assessed proportionately and evidenced.

What determines inspection quality

A reliable outcome depends on:

- The type of survey - ranging from purely visual inspection to a full building pathological investigation (building pathology is defined in more detail below)
- The competence of the surveyor - including appropriate qualifications gained through the application of building pathology rather than remedial damp proofing work, including both old and modern buildings
- The equipment used - which may range from basic moisture meters to surveying equipment that can test the strength of materials, analyse the source of moisture and record true moisture levels and environmental conditions.

Compromise in any one of these areas can impact the overall diagnosis, which could lead to recommendations that will not resolve the problem, as the problem and its causes may not be understood.

Overall approach: building pathology

The overall approach should be a building pathological one. Below is a definition of building pathology as seen in ['Designing Buildings Wiki'](#):

"Building pathology is a holistic approach to studying and understanding buildings, and in particular, building defects and associated remedial action."

According to them, "in a medical context, pathology is the study of diseases in order to determine their causes and prescribe treatment. Similarly, building pathology involves the methodical study of buildings, their components, and environment, to address failures."

It is therefore a structured method for understanding problems, including those that have yet to manifest as observable defects, their causes, and appropriate remedial actions, recognising that one defect can trigger further defects. This requires thoroughness and a comprehensive understanding of construction, risks, and building performance, particularly where moisture is concerned.

Context, change and unintended consequences

There will always be a need for a step-by-step approach that follows the overall process by which a building is inspected for moisture issues, with analysis taking place at each stage. This requires an understanding of the construction type, the building's age, and the materials used. Acknowledging these components is the starting point for developing a comprehensive understanding of the building and any moisture-related issues.

This process also involves examining the building's form and plan layout and identifying any features that may influence moisture behaviour. In addition, the overall condition of the building must be considered in all respects, alongside an understanding of how the building is used and any changes of use that have occurred during its lifetime, together with the implications of those changes.

As set out above, it is also necessary to understand the compatibility of the materials from which the building has been constructed, the environment surrounding the building, and any changes that have been made to that environment. These factors can have a significant influence on how moisture is managed within the building fabric.

The inspection must also include an analysis and understanding of changes that have been made both internally and externally. Taken together, these considerations provide a general framework for identifying the types of issues that must be analysed and understood, and for recognising the possible implications arising from moisture within the building.

This can be described in general terms below, which highlights a view on the type of issues that must be analysed and understood and also includes an understanding of the possible implications:

- Materials used in replacement internal plaster, external render, repointing joints and the like
- Raising of external ground levels
- Demolition of the surrounding buildings
- Rebuilding and extensions to adjoining buildings
- Changing types of ground floors
- Installation of retrofitted damp-proof courses and membranes
- Retrofitted insulation
- Replacement windows and doors
- New ventilation regimes
- Converting large open spaces to smaller ones
- Creating an open plan.

Inspection process (10 stages)

The inspection process should ideally be considered as 10 stages, with analysis continuing throughout.

1 Stage one - Desktop analysis

Gather as much information as possible about the building and its context before attending the site. This includes age, form, construction, exposures (with reference to exposure zone maps), known alterations/retrofit, previous repairs, planning/listing status where applicable, and any existing reports. The purpose is to enable a more informed and time-effective site inspection and reduce the risk of overlooking key issues.

2 Stage two - Discussion with occupant

Begin on-site with an informed discussion to establish the occupant's experience of the home and any moisture problems, including where and when issues occur, seasonal patterns, and any previous work. This acts as a check against desktop findings and is essential for understanding building use, number of occupants, heating patterns, ventilation practices, moisture-producing activities and any relevant health impacts. If urgent risks are identified (for example, active leaks, electrical concerns and severe mould), urgent action should be arranged.

3 Stage three - External inspection

Commence by assessing the location, geography and exposure. The building inspection needs to typically commence at the top with the roof and rainwater goods, walls, openings and interfaces, ground levels, drainage and defects likely to enable moisture entry or prevent drying. This stage builds on desktop analysis and should also consider nearby features affecting moisture (shelter, vegetation, hard landscaping and adjacent structures).

4 Stage four - Internal inspection

Inspect each internal space systematically, normally starting at the top of the building. Record building fabric condition, signs of moisture, and any patterns that help distinguish between leaks, penetration, rising moisture pathways and condensation-related mechanisms. Stages five to nine are undertaken within each space as relevant.

5 Stage five - Observe cleanliness and clutter

Assess factors that can increase the risk of mould. Dust and dirt can provide nutrients for mould growth, while clutter can restrict air movement and impede heat distribution, increasing the likelihood of high surface RH% and resultant moisture problems described earlier.

6 Stage six - Observe visual damp, mould and condensation

Carry out a detailed visual assessment of the condition of fabric, finishes and timber elements. Also, record visible mould, staining, salts, peeling finishes, decay, corrosion, and patterns consistent with condensation (for example, at thermal bridges and corners) or leaks (for example, localised patches and track marks) and other moisture issues.

7 Stage seven - Use a hygrometer and thermal imaging camera

Measure internal temperature and humidity to establish environmental conditions and risk indicators (including high RH%). Use thermal imaging to identify cold surfaces, thermal bridges, missing insulation, and heat distribution patterns, supporting the analysis of condensation risk and ventilation/heating adequacy.

8 Stage eight - Use electrical moisture meters (with caution)

Use electrical meters carefully and interpret results correctly. Recognise limitations (noting that the two pin moisture resistance meter is ideal for timber but not for anything else; the use of capacitance or microwave meters are ideal for masonry walls and solid floors but only for guidance). Where necessary, use a carbide meter or gravimetric method to establish more reliable moisture content in materials other than timber.

9 Stage nine - Assess ventilation

Inspect ventilation inlets and outlets and determine whether systems are present, functioning and adequate for the space. Mechanical extract should be tested (for example, using a vane anemometer with hood) and checked for usability, maintenance condition and effectiveness. Consider whether ventilation pathways are blocked or absent and whether air movement is restricted by layout or alterations.

10 Stage ten - Final analysis and reporting

Bring the inspection to a conclusion by establishing the most likely causes, contributory factors, and appropriate remedial strategy. Reporting should clearly distinguish evidence, interpretation and recommendations. In some cases, additional investigation may be required (for example, opening up, targeted testing, or monitoring environmental conditions) where the risk or uncertainty warrants it.

Equipment (typical)

Those inspecting dwellings for moisture issues should be equipped with appropriate tools, which may include:

- Hygrometer
- Electric capacitance meter
- Electric moisture resistance meter
- Carbide meter (or deploy the gravimetric method)
- Thermal imaging camera
- Endoscope
- Pole camera or drone (where safe and appropriate)
- Lifting irons
- Screwdriver
- Wood chisel and hammer
- Drill
- Measuring tape
- Vane anemometer with hood.

Section ten: Summary – key principles and practical steps

The way we tackle damp and mould is a litmus test for the kind of housing system we want to build. One where people are safe, listened to and treated with respect. This guide is about setting the standard for that through professionalism, empathy and action.

We've covered the changes to the law, the role of regulation and what professional responsibility looks like now. We've also explored the principles, practices and behaviours that need to become the norm, from the first report of an issue to the final follow-up call after a repair.

There is no single checklist that can solve this. However, the best practices we've observed across housing providers, local authorities, research partners, residents and frontline teams share some common features.

Here's what that looks like in practice:

- **Start with the person, not the process.** Every case of damp and mould affects someone's health, comfort and dignity. Speak respectfully, listen properly and show you take it seriously.
- **Act fast, follow through.** Whether it's an emergency or not, timeframes matter - legally, practically and emotionally. Don't leave people chasing you.
- **Diagnose it properly the first time.** Train staff, equip them well, and back them when they identify structural or systemic causes. One fix that works is better than three that don't.
- **Record and report.** Evidence matters, so take notes and photos and send follow-ups. Don't rely on memory or assumptions. Good data helps you respond better next time.
- **Involve residents and avoid blame.** Trust is built when tenants feel they are part of the solution, not part of the problem. Language, tone, and attitude count.
- **Join up across the organisation.** Damp and mould aren't just a repair issue. Make it everybody's business, from lettings and surveys to complaints and comms.
- **Learn and adapt.** Use complaints, feedback and service data to understand what's going wrong and where. Make improvements part of your routine, not just a response to scrutiny.
- **Recognise vulnerability.** Some residents face higher risks and fewer resources to respond to these threats. Be proactive in identifying and supporting those households so that they do not have to wait for a crisis to occur.
- **Raise the bar, don't just meet the minimum.** Awaab's Law sets legal expectations. However, good practice means doing more than the minimum when people's health and wellbeing are at stake.

Damp and mould are symptoms of wider problems in housing, including disrepair, inequality, stigma and systems under pressure. Tackling them well, with professionalism and genuine care for residents, is both a legal requirement and a measure of what kind of sector we want to be.

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