

Exploring Damp and Mould: The Essentials



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Covered in this webinar

- ❖ Explore the legal context of habitable housing
- ❖ Learn how to identify the signs and causes of damp and mould
- ❖ Discuss practical solutions alongside retrofit risks
- ❖ Learn the importance of effective communication with occupants



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EXPLORE THE LEGAL CONTEXT OF HABITABLE HOUSING



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Awaab's Law

- ❖ Awaab's Law – officially known as the **Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025**
- ❖ Came into action on **27th October 2025** after the tragic passing of Awaab Ishak in 2020 due to a respiratory condition caused by prolonged exposure to black mould in his family's flat
- ❖ Awaab's law mandates stricter timeframes for responding to hazards. Under the new regulations, landlords must take **quick and effective** action when hazards like damp, mould, or other health risks are confirmed

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Other Key Standards and Legislation

- ❖ **Decent Homes Standard (DHS):**
 - ❖ Requires homes to be free from serious hazards, in good repair, and offer thermal comfort.
- ❖ **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985:**
 - ❖ Obligates landlords to maintain heating, water, and sanitation systems.
- ❖ **Regulator of Social Housing's Safety and Quality Standard:**
 - ❖ Requires accurate records of property condition and timely repairs.

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key housing-related frameworks and standards

Decent Homes Standard (DHS)

- ❖ **Purpose:** Sets minimum quality standards for social housing (and potentially private rented housing).
- ❖ **Criteria for a "decent" home:**
 - ❖ **Meets statutory minimum** (no Category 1 hazards per HHSRS).
 - ❖ **Reasonable state of repair** (key components like roofs, heating systems).
 - ❖ **Modern facilities** (e.g., kitchens <20 years old, bathrooms <30 years).
 - ❖ **Thermal comfort** (adequate heating and insulation).
- ❖ Currently applies to **social housing**, but under review for expansion to **private rented sector**.
- ❖ Government aims to reduce non-decent homes by 50%.

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key housing-related frameworks and standards

Landlord and Tenant Act 1985

- **Purpose:** Establishes legal rights and responsibilities for landlords and tenants in England and Wales.
- **Key Provisions:**
 - **Section 11:** Landlords must keep the structure and installations (water, gas, heating, sanitation) in good repair.
 - Tenants have the right to:
 - Quiet enjoyment of the property.
 - A property fit for human habitation.
 - Information about their landlord.
 - Includes rules on **service charges**, **rent books**, and **repair obligations**.
 - Cannot be contracted out of—landlords must comply regardless of tenancy agreement terms

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key housing-related frameworks and standards

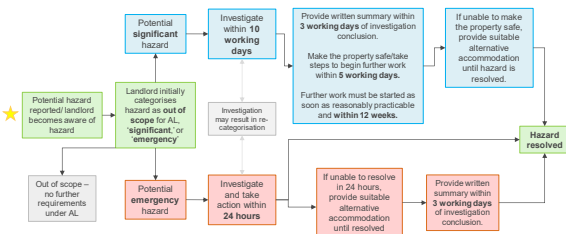
Regulator of Social Housing's Safety and Quality Standard

- **Effective from:** 1 April 2024
- **Purpose:** Sets out outcomes that registered providers must deliver for tenant safety and housing quality.
- **Key Requirements:**
 - Maintain **accurate, up-to-date records** of property condition.
 - Ensure compliance with:
 - **Health and safety laws**
 - **Decent Homes Standard**
 - Deliver **timely repairs and planned improvements**.
 - Support tenants needing **housing adaptations**.
 - Communicate clearly with tenants about maintenance and safety.

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Awaab's Law (AL) Process Flow



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LEARN HOW TO IDENTIFY THE SIGNS AND CAUSES OF DAMP AND MOULD

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What is mould?

- Mould is a form of fungus that grows in **warm, humid, and damp** conditions on **permeable surfaces**
- Some common types found in domestic properties:
 - *Stachybotrys chartarum* (black mould)
 - *Penicillium* (blue/green/yellow, can appear fuzzy)
 - *Cladosporium* (green/brown/black)
 - *Aspergillus* (green/white/gray, powdery look), etc.
- **High relative humidity** (>50%) increases the risk of mould growth



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Effects of Mould

- As well as causing risk to the structure of a building, mould exposure can cause **health issues** such as:
 - Tiredness and headaches
 - Respiratory problems
 - Runny nose, cough, sore throat
 - Lung infections
 - Asthma
 - Allergic reactions, skin/eye irritation
- It is important to note that occupants that are **vulnerable** may be more affected, this includes groups such as:
 - Children or elderly people
 - Those with existing respiratory problems, such as allergies and asthma
 - Those with a weakened immune system, such as those having chemotherapy, etc

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Common causes of Damp Mould

Causes of condensation	Causes of rising damp	Causes of penetrating damp
- Inadequate ventilation - Cold bridging - Lack of heating - Poor insulation	- Failed/no damp proof course - Bridging of cavity with debris - Inappropriate insulation material used in the cavity	- Poor property maintenance to: - Gutters - Roofing - Plumbing - Wind driven rain

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Condensation

What?	Where?	Why?
- Water condensing on cold surfaces - Mould found on walls, clothes - Peeling paint or plaster - Musty odour	- Mirrors, tiling, windows - In wet rooms such as kitchens/bathrooms - Unheated rooms - Thermal bridges - Behind furniture, e.g. wardrobes and cupboards	- Inadequate ventilation - Cold bridging - Lack of heating - Poor insulation

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Rising Damp

- Rising damp is when water is absorbed from moisture in the ground and rises up through a wall using the process of **capillary action**.
- It will usually not reach over **1.2m** before gravity pulls the moisture back down
- Common causes of rising damp:
 - ❖ **Damaged or no damp proof course (DPC)**
 - ❖ Cavity wall bridged by debris
 - ❖ Use of **unsuitable insulation materials** in cavity walls



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Penetrative Damp

- This is the name given to damp which has been caused by **rain penetrating brick work** and seeping through to the internal side of walls or roof.
- This is particularly common in **solid brick** properties, but is becoming increasingly common in cavity constructions which have had insulation retrofitted when they possibly shouldn't have.
- Causes of penetrating damp can be due to **porous walls, spalled bricks** and **building defects** such as damaged guttering and downpipes, poorly installed windows, missing roof tiles



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Leakage or Water Ingress

- This type of dampness is often directly related to **plumbing faults** or **obvious leaks**
- The faults could develop over a period of time, and the nature of the leak could get worse if not dealt with
- Leaks could come via the appliance themselves or plumbing fittings
- Alternatively, a fault occurs that would result in a sudden rush of water, e.g. a leaking or burst water pipe



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Common causes of damp

- Occupant behaviour** – the way in which occupants use and heat their homes can significantly affect moisture levels in a property.
- Contributing factors include:
 - ❖ Drying clothes indoors
 - ❖ Cooking, using kettles, etc.
 - ❖ Bathing and showering
 - ❖ Underheating the dwelling
 - ❖ Breathing and perspiration
- In reality, issues such as cost to properly heat the home etc. can impact occupant behaviour



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PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS ALONGSIDE RETROFIT RISKS



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Damp & mould management

- Investigate the cause of damp
- Increase residents' knowledge on how to best limit the spread of damp and mould, where possible:
 - Airing the home.
 - Check trickle vents are open.
 - Dry washing outside
 - air room regularly when drying clothes inside
 - Vent dryers.
 - Use bathroom and kitchen extractor fans
- Properly maintenance - Simple fixes can become expensive if left unchecked

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Issues in Practice

- Occupants may have **inadequate** or **poorly maintained** heating systems
- They may not be able to sufficiently heat their home due to **cost**
- People may not want to heat (or sufficiently heat) rooms that are **infrequently used**
- Residents may feel **unable to open windows** and ventilate due to concerns about security, noise, or high outdoor air pollution

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Prevention of damp and mould

- Retrofitting presents a vital opportunity to tackle damp and mould issues, aligning housing improvements with the aims of Awaab's Law and strengthening compliance with its standards.
- Prioritise ventilation, moisture control, and thermal upgrades
- To reduce condensation
 - Improve ventilation
 - Address cold bridging
 - Improve heating

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Solutions - Maintenance

- **Regular maintenance** of a building can prevent moisture ingress and mould growth:
 - Check that gutters and downpipes are not damaged or blocked, repair if necessary
 - Check and repair damaged pointing and render
 - Ensure that the damp-proof course (DPC) is intact and effective



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Solutions – Ventilation

- Ventilation is needed to:
 - **Control excess humidity** arising from water vapour in the air
 - Create a healthy living environment via the **dilutions and removal of airborne pollutants** including odours
- With sufficient ventilation, damp and mould is less likely to form, contributing to a safer environment for occupants



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Ventilation

- Buildings are ventilated through a combination of:
 - Infiltration** – the uncontrollable air change between the inside and outside of a property through leakage paths within the building structure
 - Purpose provided ventilation** – the controllable air exchange between the inside and outside of a property by means of a range of natural and/or mechanical ventilation
- Before around 1970, homes relied on natural infiltration for ventilation – wind-driven air entering through gaps and leaks. As insulation and **airtightness improved**, this passive method became **less effective**.

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Ventilation Systems

- There are a number of different ventilation systems you might find within a dwelling:
 - Intermittent extract fans with background ventilators (IEV)
 - Single room heat recovery ventilators (SRHRVs)
 - Passive stack ventilation (PSV)
 - Positive input ventilation (PIV)
 - Continuous mechanical extract (MEV) – centralised or decentralised
 - Continuous mechanical supply and extract ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR)
- If any of these systems are present, you should be checking that they are **well maintained** and **effective**

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Retrofit Solutions – Building Fabric

- Another way to help reduce moisture in the home is to **improve the building fabric** to minimise cold surfaces and aid in heat retention
- This could include:
 - Wall insulation – internal, external, cavity fill
 - Loft insulation at joists/rafters
 - Floor insulation – suspended/solid
 - Installing double/triple glazing with insulated frames
 - Sealing gaps around openings
 - Installing vapour control layers (VCLs)



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Retrofit Risks

- However**, with each insulation measure, **adequate ventilation** must be installed to expel stale/moist air and prevent mould growth
- This is especially important to note for **older properties**, as they were designed with 'breathable' building fabric (e.g. solid brick, timber frame, limestone) – relying on infiltration to ventilate homes
- Other risks include:
 - Thermal bridging** – if insulation is installed poorly, there may be gaps for heat to escape and condensation to form
 - Moisture trapping** – if insulation is fitted without treating existing moisture in the cavity, or damp insulation is fitted, moisture will be trapped

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LANDLORD AND TENANT RESPONSIBILITY

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Landlord's responsibility.

- Ensure the dwelling is fit for human habitation and will be kept fit for habitation during the term of lease.
- Keep in repair and proper order the installations for supply of gas, water electricity, drainage, space heating and water heating for sanitation
- Address all prescribed emergency hazards and all damp and mould hazards that present a significant risk of harm to tenants to fixed timeframes

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Tenant's responsibility.

- » To put notice of any defect they are aware of, allow the landlord reasonable access to investigate and repair.
- » Meet obligations 'expressly imposed' on them by the tenancy agreement
- » Repair/ maintain anything they are entitled to remove from the dwelling
- » Make sure home is well ventilated (to help avoid condensation and damp), carry out minor maintenance, disposing of rubbish, ensure they understand how to operate boiler and other appliance. Most tenants could be reasonably expected to remove condensation and very small amounts of mould using appropriate cleaners.

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Limitations.

Headline: "From October, social landlords to be forced to investigate and fix dangerous damp and mould in set time periods and repair all emergency hazards with 24 hours (gov.uk)"

- » It does not require the landlords to carry out works or repairs for which the tenant is liable.
- » For a hazard to be in scope of Awaab's law repair requirements, it must
 - Be part of building/land which social landlord is responsible for
 - Be in landlord's control to fix
 - Not be damage as result of breach of contract
 - Result of defect, disrepair, lack of maintenance
 - Be significant or emergency hazard

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Qualifications of a surveyor

Guidance says:

The social landlord must ensure an investigation is conducted by a person who (in the reasonable opinion of the social landlord) is competent to do so. This person should be a person with the skills and experience necessary to determine whether the social home is affected by significant or emergency hazard. A social landlord should use properly qualified specialists to investigate where relevant.

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The role of the Assessor

- » While Domestic Energy Assessors are **not qualified** to conduct formal damp and mould assessments, Awaab's Law shows that such issues must not be ignored
- » To help in creating safe living environments for residents, DEAs should **report** any damp related hazard to the **building owner** (if known) or to your **instructing client**, so further action can be taken
- » The previous slides have given you an idea of the signs to look out for



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Role of the Assessor cont.

- » As an Assessor, you might be asked about damp and mould, especially after the introduction of Awaab's Law.
- » Your responsibility is not to determine the cause of mould or offer solutions, but to **report it if you recognise it is present**.
- » If you see the signs, report it promptly to:
 - The property owner (if known), or
 - Your instructing client
- » Taking this step facilitates those responsible to take quick and effective action to make the home safer for its occupants.

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Next steps

Domestic Energy Assessors **could support compliance** with housing safety and quality regulations, especially around **energy efficiency, thermal comfort, and ventilation**.

However, to fully meet the demands of **Awaab's Law** and related standards, their role would need to be **expanded, formalised, and integrated** into a **multi-disciplinary approach**.

- » **Competency**
 - Elmhurst are developing training and assessment modules towards a competency scheme on damp and mould. This would be based around a clearly defined scope of reporting covered by insurance.

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THANK YOU- ANY QUESTIONS?

