

A landlord's guide to combatting condensation and mould

A must-read for
responsible landlords

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Hello,

Welcome to our guide on combatting condensation and mould, two familiar foes in many rented (and owned) homes across South Buckinghamshire.

We've used our 100+ years of experience in lettings to provide practical advice, clear explanations and effective remedies to condensation and mould problems.

Understanding the causes, identifying problem areas and implementing effective measures are crucial steps in successfully addressing these issues.

It's also important to remember that pretty much every property in the UK, due to our climate, gets a degree of condensation and – to a varying degree – mould.

This guide is designed to be a helpful resource, providing easy-to-follow advice, from identifying high-risk areas in your rental property to adopting long-term strategies to combat condensation and prevent mould growth.

We've also created a version of this guide for tenants, as in our experience, educating tenants about the causes and issues around condensation goes a long way to solving them.

As a landlord looking to safeguard your property, this guide, like everything we strive to do as an agency, has got you covered.

Look out for our top tips on each page of this guide – a quick-fire way to stay on top of things.

Thanks for reading.

James Charlton

James Charlton MARLA
Lettings Director



*Disclaimer: The information in this guide does not constitute legal or financial advice.

What are condensation and mould?

In this section, we delve into what condensation and mould are, why they occur and how they can impact your rental property and your tenant's enjoyment of it.

Condensation is when warm, moist air meets a colder surface, turning water vapour into liquid. This often happens in homes during colder months (but can occur in summer, too) when heating systems are on and windows are closed, creating a perfect environment for condensation.

But why is condensation a concern? When excess moisture accumulates, it creates ideal conditions for mould growth. Mould, a fungus, thrives in damp, poorly ventilated areas.

It can spread quickly, causing damage to your property and, in severe cases, potentially lead to health issues, especially for those with allergies or respiratory problems.

An important point here is not to panic – mould that causes health problems is extremely rare. This is something we emphasise to tenants.

Understanding the 'dew point' is key.

It's the temperature at which air can no longer hold all its water vapour, causing it to condense into water droplets. In properties, this often occurs on cold surfaces like windows or walls. Keeping indoor humidity at a balanced level is crucial in preventing the dew point from being reached inside your property.



Recognising the first signs of condensation and mould is the first step in tackling them.

From here, we will explore how to identify high-risk areas in your property and the common causes that contribute to these issues.

Top Tip:

Install or upgrade extractor fans, especially in kitchens and bathrooms.

High-risk areas condensation and mould love...

Let's identify the common places where condensation and mould are most likely to occur in your property.

Understanding these areas can help landlords and tenants focus their prevention and treatment efforts more effectively.

1. Kitchens and bathrooms:

These areas are moisture hotspots due to cooking, boiling water and bathing. Without adequate ventilation, this moisture lingers and condenses on cooler surfaces.

2. Cupboards and wardrobes:

Tucked away and often poorly ventilated, these spaces can become mould havens, especially if they are against external walls.

3. Windows and windowsills:

Condensation frequently forms on windows, particularly during colder months, leading to mould growth on sills and frames.

4. Basements and cellars:

Often having poor ventilation and being prone to dampness, these lower levels of a property are common sites for mould.

5. Behind furniture and appliances:

Areas behind large pieces of furniture or appliances, like fridges, that are rarely moved or cleaned behind, can be hotspots for mould.

6. Ceiling corners and wall joints:

These areas can harbour condensation and mould due to less air circulation.

By identifying these high-risk areas, landlords and tenants can take targeted action to reduce the development of condensation and mould.

Regular checks and maintenance of these areas are vital in preventing mould growth and maintaining a healthy living environment.

Top Tip:

Routinely check for mould or excessive moisture signs, especially in high-risk areas.

Unveiling the causes of condensation and mould

Understanding the common causes of condensation and mould is crucial in effectively combatting them.

Here, we highlight the typical lifestyle and environmental factors contributing to these issues. We educate your / our tenants about these.

1. Overcrowding:

More people in a space means more moisture from breathing and perspiration. The average adult releases around 400g of water daily – just by breathing.

2. Tumble drying and cooking:

These activities can release significant moisture into the air without proper ventilation.



3. Lack of airflow:

Poor ventilation traps moist air inside, especially in modern, well-sealed properties.

Seasonal behaviours, like drying clothes indoors and keeping windows shut in colder months to conserve heat, exacerbate these issues.

Recognising and addressing these causes is vital in maintaining a clean, mould-free property.

Top Tip:

Keep heating systems in good working order to ensure consistent, moderate temperatures.

4. Rarely opened windows:

Fresh air helps to reduce indoor humidity levels – and closed windows prevent this exchange.



5. Drying clothes indoors:

Wet clothes significantly increase indoor humidity.

6. Cold indoor temperatures:

Warm air holds more moisture; when it cools, condensation occurs.

A step-by-step guide to mould removal

Dealing with existing mould is crucial in maintaining a comfortable, cleaner property. This section provides a safe and effective process for cleaning mould from your rental. We share this process with tenants.

1. Safety first:

To be safe, wear protective gloves and goggles if you feel the need to. Ensure the room is well-ventilated.

2. Preparation:

Remove any furniture or items near the mouldy area. Cover anything that can't be moved with plastic sheets.

3. Cleaning products:

Use a mould / mildew cleaning spray or a combination of water and mild detergent. Avoid bleach as it doesn't prevent mould from returning and can discolour surfaces. Always read the instructions.

It's important to remember that mould can be easily managed by regularly checking for early signs and tackling it promptly.

Top Tip:

Open windows for 15 minutes daily to reduce indoor moisture. And always read the instructions on cleaning products.

4. Scrubbing:

Gently scrub the affected area with a soft brush or disposable cloth. Be careful not to brush too hard, as this can release more mould spores into the air. When finished, put the disposable cloth straight into a bag, seal it and dispose of it to remove spores from inside the property.

5. Wipe down:

Wipe the area with a damp cloth to remove the mould. Ensure no residue is left behind.

6. Drying:

Dry the cleaned area thoroughly. A dehumidifier can help speed up this process.



Quick fixes to reduce condensation and mould

While long-term solutions are crucial, there are several quick fixes that landlords and tenants can implement to immediately reduce the risk of condensation and mould.

1. Use dehumidifiers:

Portable, plug-in dehumidifiers can significantly reduce moisture levels in high-risk areas like kitchens and bathrooms.



2. Wipe down windows:

Each morning, remove condensation from windows to prevent mould growth on sills.

3. Ventilate regularly:

Open windows for at least 15 minutes daily to allow fresh air to circulate.



4. Maintain warm indoor temperatures:

Consistent, moderate heating reduces the likelihood of condensation.

5. Rearrange furniture:

Leave a gap of at least two inches between furniture and external walls to improve air circulation.

6. Use extractor fans:

When cooking or showering, ensure extractor fans are on to remove excess moisture. And leave them running for 10-20 minutes after you finish.

These simple actions can significantly impact the comfort and cleanliness of the property and are a crucial first line of defence against condensation and mould.

Top Tip:

Remember, it's a tenant's responsibility to look out for signs of condensation and take steps to manage it so it doesn't lead to mould.

Thinking longer term

Investing in long-term strategies is essential for effectively reducing condensation and mould risks and creating a cleaner, more comfortable property. Here are some sustainable solutions for landlords to consider investing in.

Upgrade to humidistat-controlled extractor fans:

These advanced fans activate upon detecting high humidity, ensuring optimal ventilation in kitchens and bathrooms.

Enhance insulation:

Effective insulation in walls and lofts is vital for maintaining consistent indoor temperatures and preventing condensation on cold surfaces. Beyond mould prevention, it also improves energy efficiency and can lower heating costs.

Install trickle vents:

Trickle vents – small openings in windows or walls – allow controlled natural ventilation, essential for reducing indoor humidity, particularly in modern, well-sealed properties.

Positive input ventilation (PIV) units:

PIV systems introduce and circulate fresh, filtered air throughout the property, displacing stale, moist air. This reduces humidity and enhances air quality, especially in properties struggling with persistent condensation and mould. Be warned, though, these can be costly.

Top Tip:

Advise your tenants to avoid drying laundry indoors without proper ventilation.

Regular maintenance:

Ensuring ventilation systems and dehumidifiers are in peak condition is vital. Regularly servicing these systems, particularly humidistat fans and PIV units, is crucial for maintaining optimal humidity levels.

Implementing these strategies offers long-term benefits for a mould-free environment, contributing positively to the property's value and your tenant's comfort.

While there's an upfront investment, the benefits and savings make many of these ideas a wise, longer-term choice for landlords.



Don't panic – Here's why

As we conclude our guide, it's important to remember that condensation and mould can be concerning, but they are easily manageable with the right approach.

Here's a summary to remind and reassure you:

No need for panic:

Condensation and mould are common and usually straightforward to sort out.

Regular reviews:

Perform routine checks for early signs of mould and moisture.

Balance indoor environment:

Aim for a healthy balance of humidity, temperature and air circulation.

Ask an expert:

A good letting agent can offer you and your tenants expert advice and practical solutions.

Stay informed:

Keep up to date with home ventilation and moisture control advancements.

Regular care and prevention are the keys to combatting condensation and mould.

You're now well-equipped to handle these issues effectively with the strategies and techniques discussed in this guide and support from an experienced letting agent.

Top Tip:

Find and work with a letting agent with the experience and empathy to make tenancies run smoothly and look after your rental investment.



Proactive maintenance:

Regular maintenance of your property can prevent mould issues.

Leverage technology:

Consider smart home devices for efficient indoor environment management.

Your top tips round-up

(We've created a separate, in-depth guide for tenants)

Tips for tenants

1. Ventilate daily:

Open windows for 15 minutes daily to reduce indoor moisture.

2. Use extractor fans:

Always turn on fans when cooking or showering to remove excess moisture.

3. Dry clothes outside:

Avoid drying clothes indoors to prevent humidity build-up. This is a significant cause of condensation.

4. Wipe down surfaces:

Regularly clean windows and sills to remove condensation and prevent mould.

5. Rearrange furniture:

To improve air circulation, keep a gap between furniture and walls.

6. Invest in dehumidifiers:

Use dehumidifiers for high-moisture areas like kitchens and bathrooms.

And finally...

We hope you've found our guide to combatting condensation and mould helpful.

If you have any questions about your rental property and how we look after our landlords and tenants, please do not hesitate to contact our team here at Kingshills.



Tips for landlords

1. Regular property inspections:

Routinely check for mould or excessive moisture signs, especially in high-risk areas like behind wardrobes, in cupboards and in the corners of rooms.

2. Ensure adequate ventilation:

Install or upgrade extractor fans.

3. Maintain heating systems:

Keep heating systems in good working order to ensure consistent, moderate temperatures.

4. Enhance insulation:

Improve insulation in walls and lofts to reduce cold surfaces where condensation forms.