



**From mountain to sea**

# **Damp, Condensation & Mould (DCM)**

Version 3.2 February 2024

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## DCM 1: Damp



### What is Damp?

**Internal sources** - damp can be caused by internal sources such as leaking pipes or appliances like washing machines and from damaged seals around toilets, baths, and showers.

This form of damp is most common in bathrooms and kitchens and is unchanged by the weather.

This can result in water staining on walls and ceilings normally close to the source of the leak. You are unlikely to find significant mould growth in these areas.

**Penetrating damp** - this is caused by water seeping into the property from outside. This is usually due to the building needing a repair, such as damaged or missing guttering, dripping overflows pipes, missing tiles, or seals around doors and windows.

**Rising damp** - this is extremely rare in Aberdeenshire Council stock and normally happens if the ground level is raised above the damp-proof course in the external walls. This normally happens slowly over the years due to the build-up of material in flower



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beds, alterations to paths, decking, or laying gravel. This would allow water to penetrate through the wall and could result in significant areas of damp.

Both penetrating and rising damp are normally more noticeable after a period of rainfall and is normally found on external walls and the area will look and feel damp.

Initially, there is usually very little mould. This is because the area is too wet for mould growth. Also, as water passes through the building it picks up salts and other minerals that mould growth does not like.

However, as any damp in your home starts to dry out it can then begin to lead to an increase in condensation and mould growth. This happens as the increased moisture-laden air travels around the property and deposits condensation on surfaces. Eventually this will reduce as the building dries out. Please refer to the condensation and mould leaflets for further advice.

If your home is damp for any of the reasons described in this leaflet it can take several weeks for your home to dry out after the repair works have been completed.

## How to reduce and prevent damp?

Report defects such as missing tiles, dripping overflows, leaking gutters, and damaged seals before they become a problem. These defects may only seem small but if left over time they can cause larger problems and take a long time to put right.

### Remember:

- Missing tiles?
- Ground level too high?
- Cracking in external walls?
- Leaking pipes?
- Water from faulty appliances?

## Report repairs by contacting us on 03456 08 12 03.

Alternatively, you can report issues through the myAberdeenshire app. You can download the app for free from the:

- [Google Play Store](#)
- [Apple App store](#)
- Scan the QR code





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### **What will Aberdeenshire Council do?**

We will focus on the building fabric of your home first and be proactive, prompt, and effective at preventing, finding, and resolving any underlying causes. We will follow up and evaluate all measures carried out in the home.

Within 5 working days of you reporting your concerns, we aim to have your home inspected by either the Clerk of Work, tradesperson, or another member of staff, depending on the nature of your concern.

We will carry out repairs to the outside of your home as quickly as possible and you will be told how long this will take once we know what work is needed.

We may also have to consult with adjoining homeowners for work that they may be liable for.

If your home is not suffering from damp, then it's likely that the issue will be condensation. Please read DCM 2, Condensation.



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## DCM 2: Condensation



### What is Condensation?

Condensation is caused by moisture in the air (humidity), which is always there, even if you can't see it. The more humid the air in your home the more at risk you are of condensation forming.

*Please be aware that the more humid the air is the more energy it also takes to warm your home and the more expensive it is to heat.*

Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air so as the room temperature drops, or the air meets a cooler surface, some of the moisture is dropped onto the colder surfaces.

This is why your bathroom mirrors mist when you have a bath or shower and why most condensation is found on external walls and windows. Given the 'right' conditions, condensation can form on any surface.

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Condensation and mould account for most complaints received by Aberdeenshire Council regarding damp and mostly occur during the colder months typically between October to April.

### **Why is my home getting condensation?**

If your home is unable to deal with the moisture that is produced by just living in it, then you will get condensation. This can be due to a range of reasons; a lack of ventilation, a lack of insulation, a lack of heating and day to day activities such as breathing, cooking, bathing, and drying clothes.

Certain house types may be more at risk of condensation occurring and Aberdeenshire Council will always take a 'fabric-first' approach to investigate and resolve any underlying causes.

We will work in partnership with you and explain what we believe is happening in your home and discuss the best way forward to overcoming the issues.

We will always immediately carry out any repairs needed to your home, but we might not always be able to carry out certain upgrade works straight away.

The upgrades needed may have to be done as part of the wider Aberdeenshire Council Housing Improvement Programme. These are some of the actions, we can take to help the situation:

- Install heat, humidity, and CO2 monitors to help us understand the levels within your home throughout the day
- Provide/ check internal, external or cavity wall insulation
- Install loft insulation
- Replace kitchen and bathroom fans
- Install a whole house positive ventilation system (PIV)
- Treat, wash down, and repaint larger sections of mould-affected walls
- Install tumble drier vents
- Repair door and window seals

### **What can tenants do to help?**

Dealing with condensation is a 'team' effort and Aberdeenshire Council needs your help.



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- Open windows in kitchens and bathrooms and use your extractor fans. More ventilation is required when you are cooking and bathing. Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when you are using them and keep them closed until the room has been fully vented. This will stop the moisture reaching other rooms.
- Use a lid on pots and pans when cooking.
- When drying clothes inside, ideally dry them in the kitchen or bathroom with the extractor fan running. Have a window slightly open if drying in another room.
- Ensure your tumble drier is vented correctly.



- Keep trickle vents in your windows open and keep other vents unblocked. Using your window trickle vents gives you home better ventilation, and this will also improve the air quality in your home.
- Heat your home. Ideally, your home should be around 18 to 21 degrees Celsius but that can be expensive to achieve. However, low heat over a longer period in all rooms, including unused rooms, is better than no heat or a sudden burst of high heat.
- On a mild day open your windows for at least half an hour, this will help remove the excess moisture and improve the air quality.
- Wipe down condensation and clean small areas of mould. See DCM Leaflet 3 – Mould.
- Don't put damp clothing or footwear into cupboards.
- Free advice on how to cut heating bills and heating your home efficiently is available from Scarf on 0808 129 0888, Email [heat@scarf.org.uk](mailto:heat@scarf.org.uk) ([www.scarf.org.uk](http://www.scarf.org.uk)).

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## DCM 3: Mould



### How do I clean mould?

Condensation can cause mould that could damage clothing, furniture, and wallpaper. This mould can dry, sending spores into the air that can cause breathing problems for some people.

You can tackle small areas of mould yourself and the current guidelines are **not to** use any products containing bleach.

Using bleach or using a vacuum cleaner on mould can cause mould spores to become airborne and could cause respiratory issues in those with existing health conditions.

For safe cleaning we recommend – white vinegar.

White vinegar is a staple in many recipes - both for cooking and cleaning, and it is the ideal remedy for targeting household mould.

Thick mould strands can be destroyed with a basic 80:20 solution. Fill your container with 80 percent white vinegar and 20 percent water.

Use a clean microfiber cloth to dip into the first bucket before wiping away surface mould.



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For stubborn areas, you can make a cleaning paste using bicarbonate of Soda and a small amount of vinegar.

Mix a couple of tablespoons of bicarbonate of Soda with a few drops of vinegar in a bowl until you get a thick paste. Then, using a microfiber cloth, take a small amount of the paste and work into the affected area.

Finally, wipe the area down using some of the 80:20 vinegar and water solution to remove the paste.



### **What is the mould comes back?**

It can take time to resolve damp, condensation and mould issues but hopefully, the actions taken will see less mould returning.

If the mould growth is considerably less and, if you are able, continue with what you are doing and tackle the mould yourself by following the cleaning instructions.

It is not always possible for us to deal with all the causes at the first visit as some problems maybe masked by other issues.

If the damp, condensation, and mould issues have returned and there is no improvement or there are new areas showing in your home, a further visit will be required.



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Aberdeenshire Council aims to follow up with all tenants within 3 months of the completion of any works we have carried or from our initial visit, even if that was just to give you information and advice.





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## DCM 4: Further Tips



### What else can we do?

Aberdeenshire Council will make sure that the building fabric of your home is free from defects and that all works that can be done to help prevent and tackle damp and condensation are either carried out or, for larger works, planned in a future works, e.g., internal wall insulation.

DMC 2 – Condensation, gives some advice on how to reduce the likelihood of condensation and mould forming in your home. These further tips and suggestions also relate to how you use your home and some of them may seem small and unimportant, but they will **all** help.

### Produce less moisture and the spread of moist air:

- Reduce steam when running a bath by running cold water first and then topping up with hot.
- Wipe away any moisture appearing on walls, windows, window sills and other surfaces.

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- Do not use bottled gas or paraffin heaters in your home as these produce a lot of water vapour when the fuel is burned.
- Use lids on pans when you are cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Close kitchen and bathrooms doors when these rooms are in use, even if the extractor fans are on. Doing this will stop the moisture 'escaping' to other rooms, especially bedrooms which are more likely to get condensation.
- Do not dry clothes on radiators as this makes your boiler work harder to heat your house and cost almost as much as using a tumble dryer, whilst creating a lot of condensation.

Just by breathing, a family of four can add moisture to the air equivalent to 30 to 40 litres of water a week.

Showering, cooking, bathing, and washing can add 15 to 20 litres a week.

Drying clothes indoors can add 10 to 15 litres a week.

### **Increase ventilation:**

- Open windows slightly on opposite sides of the house at times to provide cross ventilation.
- Open the windows in the affected rooms each morning to 'air' them.
- Keep trickle vents in windows open and keep other vents unblocked.
- Open doors to wardrobes occasionally to allow air to circulate and don't overfill them.
- Allow space for air to circulate in and around your furniture, keep slightly away from walls and try to put large items against internal rather than on external walls.

### **Control temperature:**

- During cold spells, a low heat for a long period of time is better than switching your heating on high for a short period.
- When draught proofing, do not
  - block permanent vents
  - draught proof rooms where there is condensation or mould
  - draught proof kitchens or bathrooms
  - draught proof where there is a fuel burning heater or cooker





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## **Useful websites**

**Scarf**

[www.scarf.org.uk](http://www.scarf.org.uk)

**Energy Action Scotland**

[www.eas.org.uk](http://www.eas.org.uk)

**Energy Savings Trust**

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

**Asthma+Lung UK**

[www.asthmaandlung.org.uk](http://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk)

**Aberdeenshire Council promises to take quick and effective action to deal with damp, condensation, and mould (DCM) issues in our tenants' homes.**

**We know that underlying structural issues may cause DCM, so we actively work to prevent, find, and solve these causes.**

**Instead of blaming DCM on lifestyle, we work with tenants, occupants, and others to build trust, provide education, and encourage understanding of the issues.**

**After any advice has been given, or changes have been made in the home, we will follow up to ensure they have worked.**



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## **Contact us**

**If you have any concerns regarding the presence of damp, condensation and mould in your home, you can report this by visiting your local Housing office or telephone Housing Repairs:**

**03456 08 12 03**

Or Email: [dcmtteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:dcmtteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)