



White paper:

Damp & mould in the home

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Introduction

Damp and mould problems are common in the UK due to the country's cool and wet climate. The problem is often caused by a lack of ventilation in homes, which can lead to a buildup of moisture in the air. This moisture can then lead to the growth of mould, which can be harmful to health if left untreated.

Around 450,000 homes in the UK have problems with condensation and mould. In severe cases, damp and mould can cause significant damage to buildings and pose serious health risks to occupants.

Here are some examples of the potential consequences of severe damp and mould problems:

- **Structural damage:** Prolonged exposure to dampness can weaken the structural integrity of buildings, causing wood to rot, plaster to crumble, and metal to corrode. This can lead to costly repairs and, in extreme cases, may render a property uninhabitable.
- **Health risks:** Severe damp and mould problems can cause significant health risks to occupants, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and people with respiratory conditions. In extreme cases, exposure to toxic mould can lead to serious health problems, including neurological damage and cancer.
- **Legal implications:** Landlords and property owners have a legal responsibility to provide safe and habitable living conditions for tenants. If a property is found to have severe damp and mould problems, the landlord may be held liable for any resulting health problems or property damage.
- **Financial costs:** Severe damp and mould problems can be expensive to repair, particularly if the problem has been left untreated for an extended period. In some cases, the cost of repairs may be so high that it is more cost-effective to demolish and rebuild the affected property.

It is essential to address damp and mould problems as soon as they are detected, and to take proactive measures to prevent them from occurring in the first place. Regular maintenance and ventilation can go a long way towards preventing the buildup of moisture and mould, and early detection and intervention can help to limit the damage caused by severe damp and mould problems.

Legal requirements for damp & mould in the UK

In the UK, landlords and property owners have legal responsibilities to provide safe and habitable living conditions for tenants, including addressing issues related to damp and mould. Here are some of the key legal requirements related to damp and mould in the UK:

- **The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS):** This is a risk assessment tool used by local authorities to assess the safety and habitability of residential properties. Damp and mould are one of the hazards that are assessed under this system, and landlords may be required to take action to address these issues if they are identified as a risk.
- **The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985:** This Act sets out the obligations of landlords to maintain their properties in a good state of repair and to ensure that they are fit for habitation. This includes addressing issues related to damp and mould.
- **The Environmental Protection Act 1990:** This Act gives local authorities the power to issue notices to property owners who are causing a statutory nuisance, such as a persistent damp or mould problem, and to take legal action if the problem is not resolved.
- **The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018:** This Act requires landlords to ensure that their properties are fit for human habitation at the start of a tenancy and throughout the tenancy. This includes addressing issues related to damp and mould.

Failure to comply with these legal requirements can result in legal action being taken against landlords or property owners, including fines and court orders to address the issues. Tenants also have the right to take legal action against their landlords if they fail to address damp and mould problems in their properties.

Reasons for damp & mould

Some common causes of damp and mould in UK homes include:

- **Condensation:** This is the most common cause of damp and mould in the UK. It occurs when warm, moist air comes into contact with a cold surface, such as a window or wall. The moisture in the air then condenses onto the surface, leading to dampness and the growth of mould.

Penetrating damp: This type of damp is caused by water leaking through walls or roofs. It can be caused by a range of factors, including damaged gutters, cracked walls, or faulty roofing.

Rising damp: This type of damp occurs when moisture rises up through the walls from the ground. It is more common in older properties with no damp proof course.

Risks to humans

In December 2020, two-year-old Awaab Ishak died from a respiratory condition caused by a mould infestation in Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Authority. Exposure to damp and mould can have negative effects on your health, particularly if you are sensitive to these substances. Some of the health risks associated with damp and mould include:

- **Respiratory problems:** Breathing in damp and mould spores can irritate the lungs and cause respiratory problems such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. This is especially problematic for people with asthma, allergies, or other respiratory conditions.
- **Allergic reactions:** Some people may develop an allergic reaction to mould, which can cause symptoms such as itching, redness, and swelling of the eyes, nose, and throat.
- **Infections:** Exposure to certain types of mould can also lead to infections, particularly in people with weakened immune systems. These infections can be serious and may require medical treatment.
- **Toxicity:** Certain types of mould produce mycotoxins, which can be harmful to human health. These toxins can cause a range of symptoms, including headaches, dizziness, and fatigue.
- **Mental health:** Living in a damp or mouldy environment can also have a negative impact on your mental health. It can lead to feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression, and may even affect your cognitive function.

It is important to take steps to prevent damp and mould in your home, and to address any issues as soon as they arise. If you are experiencing health problems related to damp and mould, it is important to seek medical advice.

Risks to property

Damp and mould can cause significant structural damage to buildings, particularly if the problem is left untreated for an extended period. Here are some examples of the types of structural damage that can be caused by damp and mould:

- **Rotting wood:** Damp conditions can cause wooden structures, such as floorboards, joists, and roof timbers, to rot. This can weaken the structural integrity of the building, and in severe cases, may lead to structural collapse.
- **Crumbling plaster:** Mould growth on walls and ceilings can cause plaster to crumble and fall away. This can create unsightly patches on walls and ceilings and may also weaken the structure of the building.
- **Corrosion of metal:** Damp conditions can cause metal structures, such as pipes, fittings, and structural beams, to corrode. This can weaken the metal, leading to leaks, breakages, and in some cases, structural failure.
- **Damage to insulation:** Damp conditions can also damage insulation materials, such as fibreglass or foam, reducing their effectiveness and potentially leading to increased energy bills.
- **Damage to foundations:** In extreme cases, prolonged exposure to damp conditions can cause damage to a building's foundations, which can lead to subsidence or structural collapse.

It is important to address damp and mould problems as soon as they are detected to prevent structural damage from occurring. Regular maintenance, ventilation, and monitoring can help to prevent the build-up of moisture and mould, and early detection and intervention can help to limit the damage caused by severe damp and mould problems.

How Beanbag Care can help



Beanbag care offers a service called “Assisted Comfort” which address the above issues. Our experienced professional engineer installs a humidity sensor in the house. When the sensor detects an unsafe range of humidity, the service sends an alarm to responders and family members via a mobile app. The responders or family members then become aware of the issue and can resolve it early before it becomes a health risk to their loved ones.

The service also provides simple and easy to use one touch controls to manage the heating within the home and a mobile app to control the heating outside of the home. It also provides monitoring of carbon monoxide, and generates alerts if the levels are unsafe for the person.

References

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