

Damp, Condensation & Mould Policy

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out Gravesham Borough Council's approach to addressing the risks of damp, condensation or mould (DCM) within our properties and communal areas and how we will respond to reports of DCM from our tenants, staff, contractors, third party agencies or by any other means.

We will:

- Manage our homes and train our staff to ensure that we proactively identify and react to instances of damp, condensation or mould.
- Assess risks in our assets and the potential impact of works on our customers, especially where vulnerabilities are present. See risk assessment triage form at appendix 1.
- Respond, inspect and report on all cases of DCM brought to our attention and use intelligence to identify property types at risk.
- Treat tenants reporting DCM with empathy and respect, without any prejudice and communicate with tenants clearly and regularly regarding any actions we plan to take and any actions our tenants are advised to take.
- Ensure that investigations are conducted by competent individuals and appropriately qualified contractors of whom possess the necessary skills and experience to assess whether the home is subject to significant or emergency hazards. We will engage suitably qualified specialists for investigations when relevant.
- We will implement all reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to eradicate damp and mould, including controlling condensation.
- Ensure that customers have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive support, advice and guidance on managing and controlling DCM and reduce the risk of it re-occurring.
- Be supportive and responsive to tenant vulnerabilities to ensure all customer needs are considered, addressed and solutions are agreed with customers.
- Comply with statutory requirements and good practice relating to DCM including Awaab's law.
- Protect the fabric of the property from deterioration and damage resulting from DCM
- Work with staff and contractors, together with our tenants to deliver this policy.

Legislation and Regulation

The policy is aligned with the Consumer Standards proposed by the Regulator of Social Housing, specifically: - Safety and Quality Standard, registered providers shall: ensure that customers' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Governments Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard.

- Housing Act 2004 Part 1 – Housing Condition
- Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025 (Awaab's Law)
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) (Amendment) Regulations 1994

- Building Regulations 2010
- The Building Safety Act 2022

- Regulator of Social Housing – Safety and Quality Standard 2024
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Policy scope

This policy explains how we will respond, inspect and report on DCM, including but not limited to:

Who the policy applies to:

- Tenants who rent their home under a tenancy agreement.
- Customers in alternative tenure where Gravesham Borough Council has a repairing obligation, e.g. temporary accommodation within our stock
- All property communal areas.

How we will work with our tenants, staff and contractors to manage and eradicate DCM.

This includes:

- Proactively identifying property types at highest risk of DCM so that we can undertake proactive measures to eliminate DCM before it becomes a problem for our customers.
- Interrogating data and reports of DCM to understand trends and investigate those similar property types where no reports have been received.
- Risk assessing the vulnerabilities and needs of the household, implementing reasonable adjustments within our process to support them.
- Risk assessing the severity of the DCM along with the household vulnerabilities to identify acceptable response times.
- Identifying the types of DCM and remedies to eradicate these.
- Delivering clear lines of communication and plans to tenants to remedy any issues
- Following up completed repair works within six months completion to check there are no issues.

2. Definitions of Damp, Condensation and Mould

Rising Damp

The movement of moisture from the ground rising through the structure of the building through capillary action.

Penetrating Damp (including internal leaks)

Water penetrates the external structure of the building or internal leaks causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure.

Condensation Damp

Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets.

The conditions that may increase the risk of condensation are:

- Lack of ventilation within the property
- Inadequate heating or draught proofing
- Inadequate loft insulation.
- High humidity
- Overcrowding

Poor building design construction, cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction.

- Moisture from the construction stage in new build properties.

Mould

Is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. It is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation damp is present.

3. Definitions of Awaab's Law

Part 1, Regulation 3 of Awaab's Law sets out definitions for key terms including "significant hazard," "significant risk of harm," "emergency hazard," and "imminent and significant risk of harm."

These definitions apply not only to tenants but extend protection to all occupiers of the social home.

Emergency hazard

A hazard that poses 'an imminent and significant risk of harm' to the health or safety of an occupier in the social home.

An 'imminent and significant risk of harm' is defined as 'a risk of harm to the occupier's health or safety that a reasonable social landlord with the relevant knowledge would take steps to make safe within 24 hours.'

Significant hazard

A hazard that poses a 'significant risk of harm' to the health or safety of an occupier of the social home.

A 'significant risk of harm' is defined as 'a risk of harm to the occupier's health or safety that a reasonable lessor with the relevant knowledge would take steps to make safe as a matter of urgency.'

Action

Any follow up investigations, relevant safety work, supplementary preventative works and provision of temporary alternative accommodation in circumstances where relevant safety work cannot be completed to timeframes.

4. Scale and Scope of DCM

All homes are affected by condensation at some point; however certain activities can increase the problem and good practices can eliminate this from becoming a bigger problem.

It is also important to recognise that DCM presents different risks to different customers, with more severe cases of damp and mould especially in living areas, presenting more of a risk.

Minor instances of mould, such as around window frames and in silicone, is a lower risk than mould appearing on ceilings, walls and soft furnishings.

To respond appropriately and effectively with all reports the severity of the DCM needs to be established, as quickly as possible. This is done using the risk assessment triage form at appendix 1 which includes detailing any vulnerabilities of the occupants of the household.

5. Vulnerability Factors – Centre for Disease Control and Prevention

Those who are most vulnerable to the effects of instances of DCM are those:

- Who suffers or are susceptible to allergies.
- With immune suppression diseases – (e.g. cancer, HIV)
- With underlying lung disease
- With chronic respiratory disease – (e.g. COPD, Asbestosis)
- With asthma

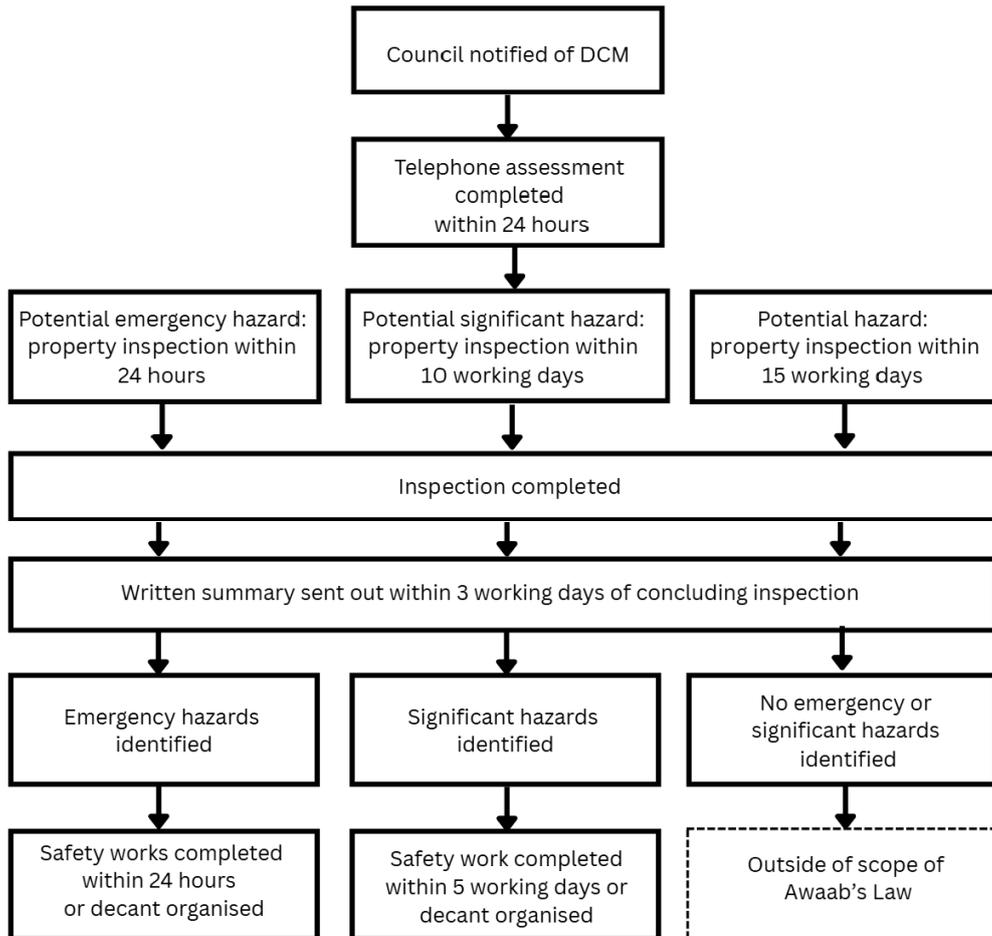
- Young children – under the age of 5
- Older people – over the age of 70
- Pregnant women

Those who may need additional help and support when experiencing DCM are those:

- Who are living with mental illness conditions, especially autism, Asperger's, dementia, psychosis.
- Older people who cannot respond to some of the recommendations.
- Those with disabilities such as sight impairments or physical disabilities that could restrict any cleaning required.

6. Summary of response

1. Council notified of DCM
2. Telephone assessment completed within 24 hours
3. Three possible pathways depending on assessment:
 - a. Potential emergency hazard: property inspection within 24 hours
 - b. Potential significant hazard: property inspection within 10 working days
 - c. Potential hazard: property inspection within 15 working days
4. Inspection completed
5. Written summary sent out within 3 working days of concluding inspection
6. Three possible inspection outcomes:
 - a. Emergency hazards identified
 - i. Safety works completed within 24 hours or decant organised
 - b. Significant hazards identified
 - i. Safety work completed within 5 working days or decant organised
 - c. No emergency or significant hazards identified
 - i. Outside of scope of Awaab's Law



7. Assessment of hazards

All reports of damp and mould will be assessed using our risk assessment triage form and categorised into response time frames within 24 hours of the DCM report being made. (Assessments are conducted during and outside of office hours).

As part of this assessment, the Council will factor in individual circumstances, including the age and physical and mental health of the household to assess the likelihood of harm materialising and the potential severity of that harm in the specific circumstances. The assessment will also consider whether any reasonable adjustments are required, for example relating to languages or support needs.

A tenant (or their household) does not necessarily have to have a specific vulnerability for a hazard to be deemed a significant hazard: some hazards can pose a danger to anyone. A tenant does not need to provide medical evidence; however, the Council will take this into account if it is provided.

If the risk assessment indicates an emergency response is required, a physical inspection will be carried out within 24 hours to establish the extent of the DCM.

Potential Emergency Hazard(s)

Extensive damp and mould in multiple living areas, highly vulnerable residents, very young or elderly with chronic health and/or vulnerability factors. Prevalent damp and/or mould that is having a material impact on a tenant's health, for example their ability to breathe.

Response: Physical inspection carried out within 24 hours of the assessment to investigate and take action to make the property safe.

Potential significant Hazard(s)

Description: multiple areas of extensive damp and/or mould growth in main living areas of bedrooms, living rooms, bathroom mould growth, and/or dampness highly visible on surfaces, levels of vulnerability present, young or elderly tenants with known vulnerabilities that exacerbate risk.

Response: Physical inspection carried out within 10 working days.

Potential hazard(s)

Description: multiple areas of damp isolated by area and location (e.g., under stair cupboard i.e., non-habitable space.) Tenant risk factors such as very young or elderly with no specific vulnerabilities may exist.

Response: Physical inspection carried out within 15 working days.

8. Investigations

Investigations will:

- be physical inspections, conducted on site, with photos taken;
- confirm whether or not there is a significant or emergency hazard;
- identify the required work to make a property safe and prevent the hazard from recurring.

While physical inspections are preferred by the Council, it may conduct remote inspections if convenient for all parties.

Emergency Hazard(s) identified

A hazard that poses 'an imminent and significant risk of harm' to the health or safety of an occupier in the social home. An 'imminent and significant risk of harm' is defined as 'a risk of harm to the occupier's health or safety that a reasonable social landlord with the relevant knowledge would take steps to make safe within 24 hours'.

Response:

- Within 24 hours, the Council will take action to make the property safe.
- Within 5 working days, the Council begin or take steps to begin any further supplementary works to prevent the hazard from reoccurring.

If the property cannot be made safe, alternative accommodation will be arranged until the required safety works are completed.

Where the property is attended to out of hours, a follow up investigation appointment may be required to identify the required work to prevent the hazard from recurring. The tenant will be contacted the **next working day**.

Significant hazard(s) identified

A hazard that poses a 'significant risk of harm' to the health or safety of an occupier of the social home. A 'significant risk of harm' is defined as 'a risk of harm to the occupier's health or safety that a reasonable lessor with the relevant knowledge would take steps to make safe as a matter of urgency'.

Response: Within 5 working days, the Council will

- complete safety works; and
- begin or take steps to begin any further supplementary works to prevent the hazard from reoccurring.

If further supplementary works are required and the Council is unable to begin them within 5 working days, the works will commence as soon as reasonably practicable and within 12 weeks of the investigating concluding.

If the property cannot be made safe, alternative accommodation will be arranged until the required safety works are completed.

Hazards identified

No emergency or significant hazards identified. Outside of scope of Awaab's Law.

Response: Repairs will be completed where practicable within 28 working days.

Other circumstances

There may be circumstances where the investigation is unable to determine the extent of, or underlying cause of, DCM. In this circumstance a further investigation such as a structural survey will be completed as soon as reasonably practicable to determine what work is required to make the property safe and prevent the hazard from reoccurring.

If a tenant later reports a material change relating to the hazard, or the Council becomes aware of a material change through other routes it will complete a further inspection within **10 working days**. (A material change could include a change to the severity of the hazard or a change to the effect it is having on the tenant's health. For example, if a tenant reports new symptoms or worsening symptoms that may be associated with the hazard, or if they report that the hazard has worsened since the time of investigating.)

9. Making the property safe

Where emergency or significant hazards are identified, the Council will conduct works to make the property safe. Safety work is likely to include undertaking a mould wash to remove the immediate hazard and completed within **24 hours** for emergencies and **5 working days** for significant hazards. After the relevant safety work is completed, the Council will ensure that the property remains in its safe current condition until relevant supplementary preventative work is completed.

10. Supplementary preventative works

If the investigation concludes repairs are required, the Council will begin relevant supplementary preventative works to prevent the hazard from recurring as far as possible within 5 working days of the investigation concluding.

Where it is not reasonably practicable to begin the relevant supplementary preventative work within 5 working days, the Council will take steps to arrange the completion of the relevant supplementary preventative works as soon as reasonably practicable and within 12 weeks. For example, by securing an appointment for further specialist investigation or securing specialist contractors for works. As soon as reasonably practicable means that action must be taken as quickly as it reasonably can be, taking into account relevant circumstances such as the availability of materials and labour.

All cases of DCM are followed up six months after completion of works to ensure issues have been fully resolved.

11. Works Assigned to Contractors

The Council acknowledges that it retains full responsibility for ensuring compliance with Awaab's Law and any other legal obligations when assigning works to contractors.

Inspections

Where surveys are assigned to a contractor, the Damo and Mould team will ensure that physical inspections are carried out within the contracted timescales.

Reports

All reports completed by contractors are to be returned by the contractor to the Damp and Mould team within 3 working days of the appointment date.

Remedials

All remedial works assigned to a contractor will be monitored by the Damp and Mould team.

12. Monitoring Our Performance

All reports of damp and mould will be logged at an individual property level, recorded on a relevant system.

The following KPIs will be reported at:

- Management Team (quarterly)
- Housing Cabinet Committee

Number of cases:

- Number of DCM cases reported during the financial year – running total
- Number of live DCM cases (as a percentage of stock)
- Number of DCM cases where safety work and supplementary works have been completed during the financial year – running total
- Number of DCM cases closed during the financial year (following six month follow-up phone call) – running total
- Number of DCM cases closed during the financial year (excluding six month follow-up phone call) – running total

Assessments:

- Proportion of DCM cases assessed within the Awaab's law timescale – 24 hours (%) Inspections
- Proportion of potential emergency hazard DCM cases inspected within the Awaab's law timescale – 24 hours (%)
- Proportion of potential significant hazard DCM cases inspected within the Awaab's law timescale – 10 working days (%)
- Proportion of potential hazard DCM cases inspected within the landlord's target timescale – 15 working days (%)

Safety works:

- Proportion of emergency hazard DCM cases made safe within the Awaab's law timescale – 24 hours (%)
- Proportion of significant hazard DCM cases made safe within the Awaab's law timescale – 5 working days (%)

Written summary

- Proportion of written summaries sent out within the Awaab's law timescale – 3 working days (%)

Repairs

- Proportion of DCM routine repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale – 28 working days (%)

- Proportion of DCM major repairs completed within the Awaab's law timescale – 12 weeks (%)

13. Communications Strategy

Written summary following investigation

Following the conclusion of an investigation, the Council will produce a written summary of its findings and issue this to the named tenant within 3 working days. Day one of the timeline is the day after the investigation concludes. Where multiple investigations are required for one issue, the Council will issue a written summary after each investigation.

The written summary will be in the name of the tenant and include the following information:

- whether or not the investigation identified a significant or emergency hazard, and what the hazard is
- if action is required: the summary will specify:
 - the action required; and
 - a target timeframe for beginning and completing that action.
- if no action is required: the written summary will specify
 - that there is no action required; and
 - the reasons why there is no action required.
- information on how to contact the Council and the Housing Ombudsman.

Awaab's law defines 'Action' as any follow up investigations, relevant safety work, supplementary preventative works and provision of temporary alternative accommodation in circumstances where relevant safety work cannot be completed to timeframes.

Written summaries will be sent to the named tenant within 3 working days in one of the following ways:

- hand delivered to the home
- sent by first class post; or
- being sent electronically.

Note that the timeframe is for the summary to be sent by the Council, rather than received by the tenant.

As part of the assessment of damp, the Council will record the diverse needs of tenants, including accessibility and/or language needs of the tenant. This information will be factored into ensuring that the summary of findings can be understood.

Keeping the tenant updated

We will maintain contact with tenants with an open case at agreed intervals. We will also work with other council departments and agencies to ensure that the tenant is kept safe and informed during any works that need to take place:

- If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property while the works are carried out, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made.
- In some cases, it may be necessary to re-house a family on a permanent basis if a medical professional advises that re-housing is the most suitable option. This will be considered in accordance with Allocations Policy.
- Where a tenant has been assessed as having vulnerability factors that could affect how they react to damp and mould the Damp and Mould team will work with the tenant to ensure that the tenant gets all the help and support required to eradicate the DCM.

14. Access Issues

Regulation 20 of Awaab's Law introduces an implied covenant within social housing tenancy agreements, requiring tenants to permit access to their homes when necessary.

Where DCM has been identified either by a tenant or by the Council or a property has been assessed as high risk through the Council's data insight, tenants will be required to allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of remedial works (in accordance with their tenancy agreement). All attempts and contact are recorded.

Where access issues arise, the Council will work together with tenants to agree on a suitable time for access to the property. Tenants are expected to actively engage with the Council to arrange a convenient appointment. The Council will clearly communicate that any delays in gaining access may lead to delays in completing the necessary safety work.

Gravesham Borough Council does consider this to be a health and safety concern for tenants and will consider alternative methods of gaining access, such as seeking an injunction.

All properties identified as hard to access or refusal of access will be managed through the Councils standard "no access" process and policy.

15. Tenant Responsibilities

It is the tenant's responsibility to immediately report any evidence of rising and penetrating damp (see definitions within this document) and faulty equipment that will affect the management of humidity and moisture in the home (faulty extractor fan, unable to open windows, heating system failure etc.).

Where specialist equipment has been installed by the Council to help control any issues with DCM, the tenants must not tamper or interfere with the equipment that will prevent it from working efficiently.

Tenants must allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of all remedial works.

Where tenants are considering making any changes within their home for example, converting rooms into one room, adding extensions, converting non-habitable buildings/spaces into habitable, they must seek advice and permission from us in accordance with their tenancy agreement to ensure that the proposed alteration would not contribute to the accumulation of DCM, as well as ensuring alterations comply with building control and planning guidelines.

16. Guidance to Tenants

We will offer the following advice and information to all tenants via our website, leaflets and social media to help them reduce the conditions that lead to condensation dampness:

- Keeping the presence of moisture to a minimum e.g., covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outside (where possible), where it is safe to do so, keeping the kitchen or bathroom door closed when cooking or bathing.
- Adequately heating rooms – The World Health Organisation recommends 18°C. Any tenant who is experiencing fuel poverty or debt related problems will be referred to our Energy Champions to help support them with these issues.
- Keeping the house well-ventilated e.g., opening windows during cooking/bathing, turning them on and ensuring that the extractor fan or ventilation system installed in their home is regularly cleaned and working, keeping trickle vents in windows open and allowing air to circulate around furniture.
- Following all advice and guidance issued by us on managing humidity and moisture in the home, which can lead to condensation. This information can also be found on the Council website.

If all reasonable efforts have been made to manage and control the presence of condensation and mould and there is still an issue, then the tenant should contact the Damp and Mould team immediately to report the problem.

The tenancy agreement, licenses and long leases recommends that the tenant arranges adequate household contents insurance for the home that they occupy.

17. Complaints

If a tenant is not satisfied by the way in which our approach to DCM has been dealt with, or in the way in which the work has been carried out, a formal complaint may be raised in line with our Complaints Policy.

The written summary will include reference to the Housing Ombudsman and how to contact them.

18. Review

The Policy will be reviewed every three years and also in response to:

- Legislative Changes
- Regulatory Changes
- Government strategy or policy changes.

Appendix 1. Risk Assessment and Triage form

Name:

Address:

Date

Section 1 – assessing medical need

Question	Answers <i>*Circle where applicable *Write where circled answers are not prompted</i>
Does anyone in the household suffer from a respiratory condition (Such as asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease COPD, cystic fibrosis, other chronic lung conditions, heart or cardiac conditions)?	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Does anyone in the household suffer from a weakened immune system (e.g., immunosuppressants or undergoing chemotherapy, had a transplant, taking medication that suppresses the immune system)	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Have there been any A&E or hospital admissions due to breathing concerns or tightness of chest – to those living in the household only (discharge paperwork to be provided if answered yes)	Yes / No / Not Applicable

Section 2 – assessing personal need

Do any children live at the property under the age of 16? (their main fixed address – not just weekends)	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Is anyone living at the property over the age of 65+?	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Is anyone living at the property who are bedbound, housebound or have mobility problems making it more difficult for them to get out of a home with damp and mould and into fresh air	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Is there anyone living at the property who are either pregnant, or have recently given birth?	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Are there any repeated instances of coughing, wheezing or	

breathing difficulties or throat infections for anyone living in the household?	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Are there any repeated instances of dry, itchy, cracked, or sore skin (outside of eczema) or recurrent irritation of the eyes for anyone living in the household?	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Is there any recurrent nasal congestion, runny noses or sneezing for anyone living in the household?	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Is there any frequent worry about damp and mould impacting anyone's mental health?	Yes / No / Not Applicable
Is there anyone living in the household that suffer from mental health condition/s?	Yes / No / Not Applicable

Section 3 – assessing housing concerns

Have you reported damp and mould to use before	Yes / No
When did you first notice the damp and mould	
What rooms do you have damp and mould in?	
Can you see mould?	Yes / No
Can you see water stains?	Yes / No
Have you noticed a leak inside the property?	Yes / No
Have you noticed water overflowing from the guttering?	Yes / No
Have you noticed leaks from any overflow pipes?	Yes / No
Are you able to open/close all windows and doors?	Yes / No
Do your windows have trickle vents, and are they open?	Yes / No
Do you get condensation on your windows?	Yes / No

Do any of your windows have condensation in between the panes of glass?	Yes / No
Does your bathroom have a working extractor fan?	Yes / No / Not Applicable (no fan)
Does your kitchen have a working extractor fan?	Yes / No / Not Applicable (no fan)
Are you able to use your heating?	Yes / No
Are all of the heating sources working and emitting enough heat?	Yes / No
Do you own a tumble dryer, and if so is it vented or does it have a hose?	Hosed / Vented / Not Applicable
Do you dry clothes indoors?	Yes / No
Is the damp/mould rising from the skirting and working up the wall?	Yes / No
Is the damp and mould at ceiling level and rising up the wall?	Yes / No
Is the damp and mould to the front of the build, the back of the build or the side of the build?	Front / Back / Side
Have you treated the mould with shop bought products?	Yes / No
Any other information to disclose?	