

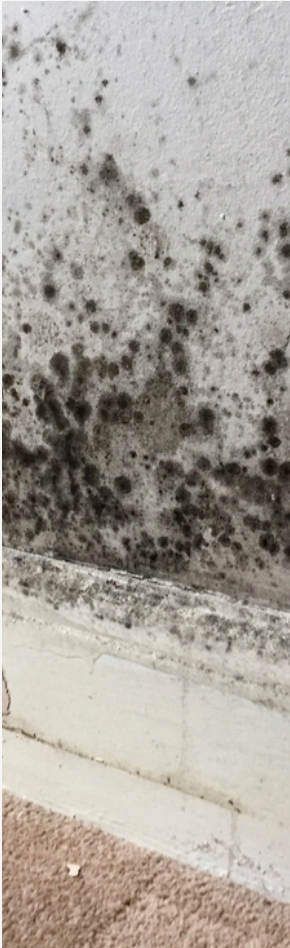
*A landlord's guide to*  
**RESPONDING TO AND  
ADDRESSING MOULD REPORTS.**



A free guide for Cardiff landlords  
including information you can  
share with your occupants.

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# First, what type of mould are we referring to?



We mean mould caused by condensation. After it starts off as tiny water droplets, condensation turns to dark-coloured spores (commonly called “mould”). These droplets are created when excess moisture in the air comes into contact with a cold surface, e.g. windows, walls (especially exterior walls) and inside furniture.

Condensation is commonly caused by low internal room temperatures and a lack of adequate ventilation. The problem can be made worse when heating is not being used to warm the property, or when there are high moisture levels in the air, for example during showering or if you dry damp clothes on radiators.



## **It's not to be confused with damp.**

Damp is something completely different as it's caused by a structural issue with the property, e.g. a leak coming in from the roof due to a broken tile or a part of the external rendering is missing and letting rainwater in. You'll see a visible tide mark or wet patch on the wall/ceiling, which looks very different to mould. Damp is wholly a landlord's responsibility.



Charlotte Atwell  
Property Manager

## Why is the subject of mould more important topic than ever?

The tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak - who lived in social housing with his parents - has put mouldy properties in the spotlight. Awaab's parents campaigned for the introduction of a law in his memory. Known as "Awaab's Law", it has already been implemented in social housing and will extend into the private rental sector in the near future.

## How will Awaab's Law impact landlords in the private rented sector?

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act essentially introduces a stipulation to social housing tenancy agreements that requires landlords to adhere to new requirements. These requirements will be detailed in forthcoming secondary legislation, but among these proposals are strict timelines for the inspection and repair of damp and mould issues.

## Should landlords have an eye on any other legislation covering mould?

Yes. Welsh Government introduced The Renting Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) (Wales) Regulations in late 2022, known as FFHH for short. According to these regulations, a property is deemed unfit for human habitation if it poses a current or likely risk related to any of 29 specified 'matters and circumstances', with "exposure to house dust mites, damp, mould, or fungal growths" listed as the first concern.

Even with the introduction of the above FFHH regulations, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) remains applicable in Wales. Established under the Housing Act 2004 as a risk-based framework for local authorities to evaluate housing conditions and enforce minimum standards, housing officers use this system when inspecting properties in response to complaints from occupiers. Hazards identified during inspections are categorised into four areas, one of which is 'Physiological Requirements', which encompasses addressing issues such as damp and mould.

Additionally, properties rented as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are governed by The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Wales) Regulations. Under these regulations, managers are obligated to maintain the property in good repair, ensuring that the décor, ventilation systems and overall structure are adequately preserved.

## Whose responsibility is the prevention of mould during a tenancy?

It's a joint responsibility between landlord and tenant. The landlord needs to provide the tenant with the necessary 'tools' and maintain them. It's then for the tenant to use these 'tools' and live in such a way that does not create the conditions for condensation to turn into mould.

The 'tools' a landlord should look to provide where possible are:

- a fully-working heating system with adequately placed and sized radiators.
- extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms.
- vents in the windows.
- a washing line.
- a tumble dryer.
- information on how mould is created, how to prevent it and how to treat it.

## If mould is present when a tenancy starts, whose responsibility is it to deal with it?

It's the landlord's responsibility, as the new tenant can reasonably expect to move into a mould-free home. If the contract permits it, the landlord may choose to claim the cost of cleaning the mould and repainting the area (if required) from the previous tenant's deposit.

# How is mould created and prevented?



CREATION: NOT USING THE HEATING ENOUGH.

## PREVENTION:

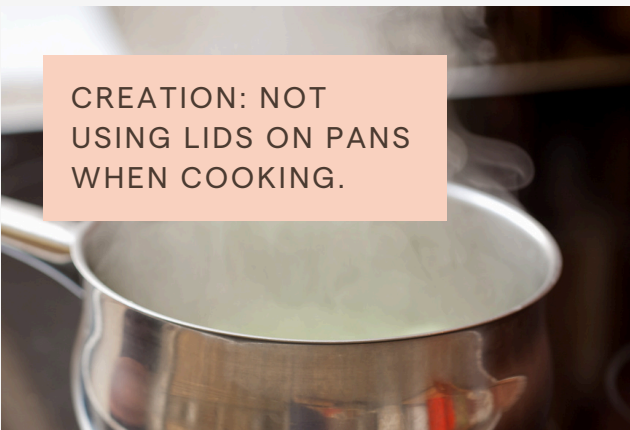
Set the boiler timer or thermostat level so that the heating comes on regularly to warm the surfaces in the house, even when away for periods of time. If the radiator isn't hot to touch in all areas, it may need bleeding.



CREATION: DRYING CLOTHES INDOORS

## PREVENTION:

Dry them outside whenever and wherever possible, either via a washing line or a clothes horse. If there is absolutely no alternative to drying clothes indoors, place them placed on heated radiators with the windows open, so as to some of the moisture to escape.



CREATION: NOT USING LIDS ON PANS WHEN COOKING.

## PREVENTION:

A lid means the moisture that would otherwise be released into the air from boiling liquids is contained to the pans itself, reducing condensation.

CREATION: LACK OF MECHANICAL EXTRACTION IN BATHROOMS AND KITCHENS.



PREVENTION:

Most bathrooms and kitchens are fitted with extractor fans (or similar) that take moisture away. If these have been turned off at the power switch (perhaps through fear of increased electricity bills), tenants are fighting condensation with one arm tied behind their back. They use a very small amount of electricity, so should be used. They typically only turn on when the bathroom light is on, and when manually turned on if in a kitchen.

CREATION: NOT OPENING WINDOWS WHEN SHOWERING AND COOKING.



PREVENTION:

Extractor fans are useful, but they're not a full cure. There's no substitute for natural ventilation, so opening a window when showering or cooking should always be done.

CREATION: STORING DAMP CLOTHES OR SHOES IN DRAWERS AND WARDROBES.



PREVENTION:

If you store your damp shoes or coats in the wardrobe, they'll release moisture as they dry, which needs to go somewhere. If it can't, it'll stay inside the wardrobe and turn to mould.



CREATION:  
NOT  
OPENING  
VENTS IN  
WINDOWS.

#### PREVENTION:

Some tenants don't realise that their windows have a thin vent that can be opened and closed. Again, it's not a cure - and it will create a slight draught - but opening these vents will help.



CREATION:  
FAILING TO WIPE  
DOWN DAMP OR  
WET SURFACES.

#### PREVENTION:

Even with extractor fans on, windows ajar, lids on pans and vents open, some condensation will still form. It can be very visible on windows, but less visible on walls. Splashed water from showering or washing hands in the sink will sit on seals unless dried. A heated home will help dry these, but getting a cloth and 'manually' drying the surface is highly advisable. If it isn't dried, it will inevitably turn to mould. We've all seen black seals around sinks and showers.



CREATION: PLACING FURNITURE TOO TIGHT TO A WALL.



PREVENTION:

Walls need to breathe too. When something is pushed tight up against a wall, no warm air can flow between the two, meaning the wall and the item of furniture both stay cold. This is especially true for external walls because they're colder, so try to put furniture on internal walls where possible. We've seen backs of wardrobes, chests of drawers and beds - and the wall they've been up against - all turn mouldy over the years. Always leave a gap of a few centimetres to let the air flow between.

CREATION: NOT USING THE TUMBLE DRYER PROVIDED



PREVENTION:

Running a tumble dryer may not cost as much as people think. Additionally, if a landlord has provided a tumble dryer, it's a reasonable expectation that the tenants should use it.

We urge landlords to educate occupants by sharing information about the causes of mould.

Why not share our list of reasons why condensation is created and how it can be prevented?

Additionally, it never harms to provide independent, third-party advice that corroborates the information you're providing. Cardiff Council previously produced a useful document (read online) which we circulate to our tenants too.



## How is mould treated?

To remove the mould safely and stop it coming back, first ensure the area is ventilated, then spray it with a bleach solution. There are many products available in supermarkets, such as Dettol's Mould & Mildew Remover or Astonish's Mould & Mildew Blaster.

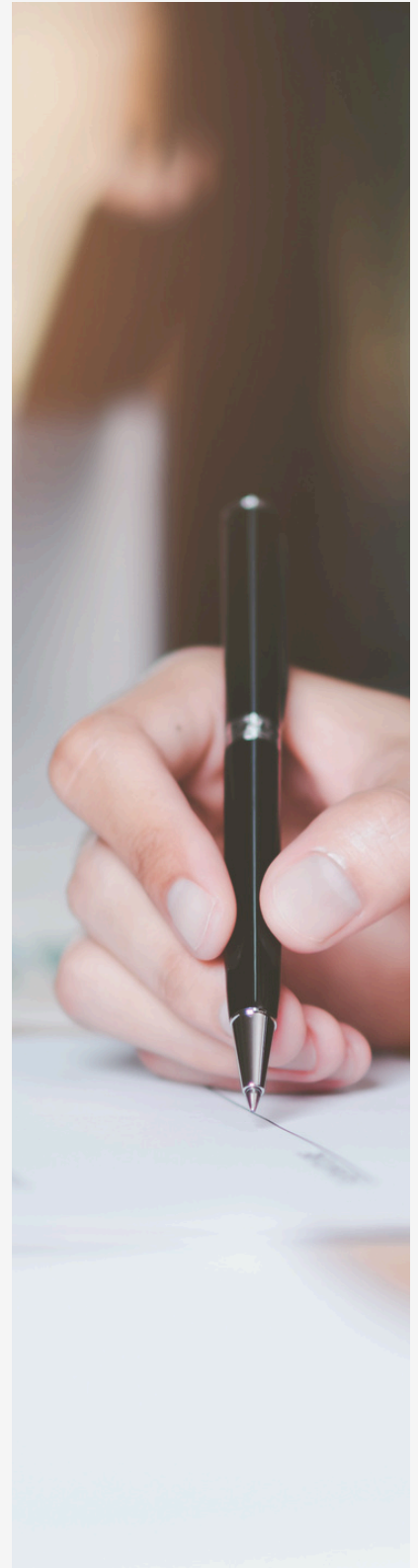
Make sure to follow the instructions on the bottle and check the one you have is suitable for the specific surface or material you're treating. Consider wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth to protect against mould spores, especially if you have allergies or respiratory concerns. If you have goggles and rubber gloves, it's a good idea to wear them as well.

Gently wipe down the area afterwards, and repeat if needed.

# Our recommendations to landlords

Build a defensible position from the outset by:

1. Providing tenants with clear guidance on the common causes of condensation, tips for prevention, and methods for treating it if it arises.
2. Equipping occupiers with the necessary 'tools' to properly ventilate and heat their homes, such as functional extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms, openable windows, trickle vents where possible, sufficiently sized and positioned radiators, tumble dryers and/or suitable washing lines for drying clothes, and double glazing.
3. Documenting living conditions through photographs and videos during inspections, which can reveal whether the provided 'tools' are being used properly or even require repair.
4. Creating a paper trail. This mean logging the likes of: reports made by tenants, your advice to them (if you've had an in-person or telephone conversation, follow it up in writing) and any work you've had contractors do (including their invoices). This paper trail, together with your inspection evidence, will be useful to refer back to if there's ever a difference of opinion.
5. Having a robust Written Statement of Occupation Contract (formerly known as a tenancy agreement).



# A robust Written Statement of Occupation Contract

The Written Statement is a landlord's first line of defence in this new regulatory environment. It should make clear what the tenant is required to do if mould forms during the tenancy, as well as their responsibility for reporting it.

We've consistently advocated against using the Welsh Government's model Written Statement, as it falls short in adequately protecting landlords. For instance, it states that no rent is payable if the property is unfit for human habitation, but fails to provide further clarification. This vagueness could encourage occupiers to stop paying rent based on their own judgment, rather than following the proper legal process. Additionally, the model doesn't require contract-holders to perform basic household duties, which were responsibilities previously covered by the well-established 'tenant-like manner'...before Welsh Government did away with the term. These shortcomings are fully addressed in the Written Statement we use.

10 reasons why we're not using Welsh Gov's model occupation contract.

Get the expert's view from Director of Operations at CPS Homes, Nikki Lewis.

[Read now](#)





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