

**KEEP YOUR  
HOME FREE  
FROM DAMP  
AND MOULD**

**THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS  
YOUR HOME MIGHT BE SUFFERING  
FROM DAMP AND MOULD...**

**BUT IT IS SURPRISING HOW FEW  
REASONS ARE RELATED TO MAJOR  
BUILDING DEFECTS.**

This booklet will provide you with the information you require to understand and remedy the problem, and when to call the Council for help.



# THE FIRST QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT THE PROBLEM ARE:

## ■ **Does the damp (not mould) get worse after rain?**

If it does you might have an unidentified defect with the weather tightness of your home. If this is the case you should report the issue to Qualis.

## ■ **Is the damp or mould in several places throughout your home?**

If yes then this might indicate you have a condensation problem. Please review the remainder of this information sheet before reporting the issue to Qualis.

## ■ **Does the damp or mould get worse in the colder months?**

If yes then this might indicate you have a condensation problem. Please review the remainder of this information sheet before reporting the issue to Qualis.

## ■ **Are the kitchen and bathroom extract fans clean and functioning properly?**

Extract fans can be easily cleaned and checked they are working. Please review the remainder of this information booklet with particular attention to item 9.

## ■ **Do you ventilate your home by opening windows or window trickle vents?**

Passive ventilation is a particularly effective way of controlling damp and mould. Please also review the remainder of this booklet.

## ■ **Do you maintain a healthy temperature level within your home particularly in the months with colder mornings and evenings when you might be at home the most?**

Maintaining a healthy temperature within the home is crucial not only for stopping damp and mould but for the general health of the occupants. Please review the remainder of this information booklet.

## ■ **If applicable is the loft space insulated between 150mm and 250mm?**

Insulation helps to keep your home warm. If it is less than 150mm you might want to consider contacting the Council to have your loft insulation topped up.

# WHAT IS CONDENSATION?

Moisture is absorbed into the warm atmosphere of your home, and when your home cools down the moisture condenses on cool surfaces. The effects of condensation are often underestimated and can over time cause damage to our homes. The major difference between condensation and other forms of dampness is that you have the ability to reduce or solve the problem just through changing behaviour in your home.

An average family of 4 to 5 people can produce up to seventeen litres of water vapour per day. This can be from drying wet clothes on radiators, having hot baths or showers, boiling kettles, cooking and of course breathing. That is 3.5 litres per person on average.

## COMMON SIGN OF CONDENSATION

The common sign of condensation is water collecting on the inside of windows, but it can form on any surface such as walls, and it may not be noticed until damage has already been caused.

The most vulnerable areas will either be rooms where a large amount of moisture is produced, i.e. bathroom/kitchen, or on cold surfaces in other rooms where this moisture can travel to.

Moisture moves around the home through a process called diffusion. Diffusion occurs if a part of your home has a higher moisture level than another part, such as the movement of moisture from the bathroom to the bedroom after a hot shower has filled the bathroom with steam.



# THE DIFFUSION PROCESS

Diffusion happens even if there is no air movement at all. Just as heat travels from a hot space to a cold space, water vapour will travel from a space with a high moisture concentration to a space with a lower moisture concentration. Cold air almost always contains less water than hot air, so diffusion usually carries moisture from a warm place to a cold place.

In recent times condensation based damp has become a bigger problem in our homes which is largely the result of improved standards of insulation, double glazing and draught proofing in properties. Although this gives us the benefit of better heat retention, it can also lead to a reduced amount of natural air ventilation. You might choose to follow the advice in this leaflet to help ventilate your home.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

There might be an issue with the cost of living or rapidly increasing fuel costs leading to residents being unable to heat their homes to a healthy level, leading to

more cool areas where condensation can form. It is worth investigating any available Government initiatives regarding cost of living support payments or contacting energy providers for advice.

Rarely, a building defect which might have gone unnoticed for a while could let

moisture penetrate into the property such as a pipe leak or a roof leak. This moisture might then evaporate into the air and condense onto cold surfaces, however the evaporation process from these types of defects is slow and so condensation from these sources of moisture is limited. Damp





and mould from building defects are more likely to be visible in the locality of the defect so it is worth following the advice within this booklet before reporting any issue to Qualis.

If you are suffering with damp or mould in your home there are a simple measures you can take right away even if you're waiting for an inspection or a repair. Wipe down windows and window frames each morning but wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.



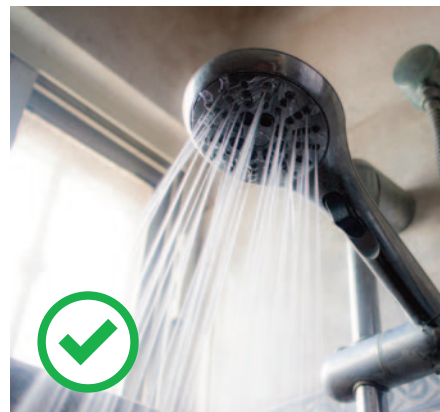
Without adequate ventilation and heating, condensation may result in unhealthy living conditions with the possibility of unsightly black mould growth, peeling decorations, damage to clothing or fabrics, rotting of materials and an unpleasant musty damp smell within a property if left unmanaged.

Wipe down the affected surfaces like walls, skirtings, windows and sills and clean with a mould cleaner as soon as mould appears. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely and ensure that the product is safe for you to use. It is better to dry-clean mildewed clothes, or shampoo mildewed carpets because disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems if mould spores become airborne. Most good home improvement stores and supermarkets supply products to remove mould.



# WHAT OTHER ACTIONS CAN I TAKE?

- 1. Pull wardrobes, beds and furniture away from walls especially outside walls, and keep tops of wardrobes clear, to allow air to circulate.** The cause of damp behind your furniture is nearly always condensation. Water builds up in the air, this moisture-rich air will get trapped behind your furniture. Airflow is not exactly great down the back of your sofa, bed or wardrobe, so the moisture builds up on cold surfaces and festers. Then it turns into damp and then mould propagates.
- 2. When cooking keep lids on saucepans, close doors and use the extractor fan. Most Council electric fans continue working automatically when their sensor detects humidity. Extractor fans are cheap to run and use less energy than a standard light bulb.** Moisture laden air can easily move around your home to other rooms and condense on the colder surfaces so keeping doors closed especially the kitchen and bathroom whilst bathing or cooking will help eradicate damp and mould. If you have damp and mould and you do not have a kitchen or bathroom extract fan, you should call Qualis to arrange an inspection and installation.
- 3. Keep bathroom doors closed when bathing and open windows slightly afterwards or leave the fan running. Most Council electric fans continue working automatically when their sensor detects humidity.**



4. **Avoid drying clothes on radiators or on airers unless ventilation is increased radically.** Ideally clothes are not dried in this way however, if you dry clothes indoors it is best done within the bathroom on an airer with the door shut and the fan left on. Most Council electric fans continue working automatically when their sensor detects humidity.

5. **What about my condensing tumble dryers?** Condenser dryers use heat to dry clothes, and this heats the surrounding air around the appliance. This warm air is likely to be moist, and if there are any cool surfaces in the room, condensation will occur. This could be anything from windowpanes to tiles or even other appliances.

Although a condenser dryer does not need a hose to remove the moist air it produces in the same way as a vented tumble dryer, there will still be a great deal of warm air circulating around the dryer. This means that whatever room your condenser dryer is situated in can become quite warm. You might also notice some condensation appearing while your dryer is running. To prevent the condensation turning into damp and causing problems, it is a good idea to position your condenser dryer in a room where the air can circulate. A well-ventilated room will minimise the amount of condensation and prevent the air from getting too warm.

6. **Open windows regularly to allow air to circulate and keep window trickle vents open for background ventilation.** Windows that are opened for up to an hour each day especially after bathing or cooking helps moist air escape.





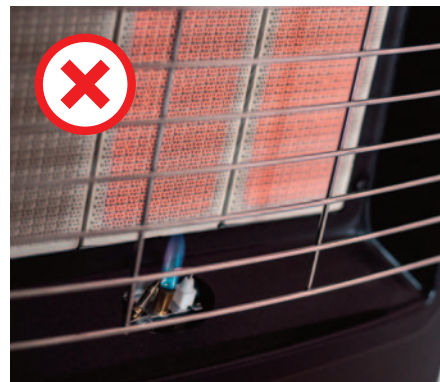
7. **Keep the property moderately heated (with ventilation).** It is important to get the right balance between heating and ventilation. The more humid the air is in your house, the more energy it takes to warm your house because it is also warming the water within the air. This means it will be more expensive to heat your home!

When you open your windows it may seem that you are losing heat and allowing cool air to enter your home. However, this actually lets moisture laden air out and dry air in. Dry air is cheaper to heat than moist air.

Keeping room temperatures above 15°C will help reduce condensation forming on external walls. A suitable level of ventilation will allow the moist air to escape without making occupants uncomfortable by causing draughts and making the room cold. It may be quite difficult to strike the right balance. It is for this reason many homes have built in ventilation measures such as trickle ventilators and extractor fans.

It makes sense that people want to save on heating costs, but one of the best mould prevention techniques is keeping your home at the right temperature and ventilated. Avoid rooms cooling completely below 15°C. It is recommended that the ideal temperature for a living room is 20°C and for the bathroom kitchen and bedrooms 21 to 23°C.

8. **Avoid the use of bottled gas heaters.** Certain other heating methods such as using bottled gas heaters present a fire hazard but also add significant amounts of water into the air, water being a by-product of burning these fuels so the use of these should be avoided.

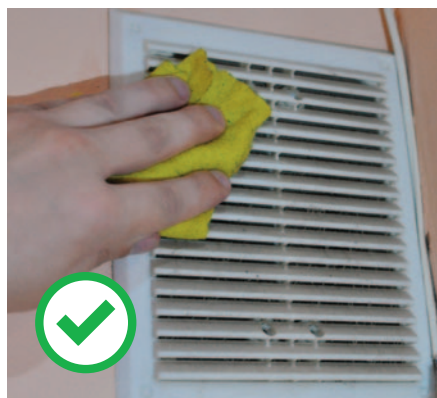


9. **Try to clean fans and check they are working correctly every 4 to 6 months.**

A fan free from fluff, dust, dirt and grease should mean it will operate efficiently extracting moist air. It is worth cleaning fans to prevent the rapid build-up of dirt.

To make sure they are operating correctly, you might try placing two sheets of toilet paper over the internal vent and the fan should be able to hold the paper in place if it is functioning properly.

10. **If you have a fish tank –** make sure it has a lid otherwise water will evaporate causing excess moisture in the air.



## WHAT ABOUT HEALTHY HUMIDITY?

A good range of indoor humidity within your home for comfort and health is between 30-60% during cooler months of the year. Mould is likely to occur if the relative humidity indoors is 70% or more for prolonged periods of time. Keeping humidity levels under 50% also helps to minimise or control dust mites. But it is also possible to live in a house that is too dry! Humidity levels below about 30% lead to dry skin and nasal passages, increasing the potential for respiratory illnesses.

It is worth buying a low-cost humidity meter from a hardware store and track how humid the air is in your house? You might be surprised at how quickly it can change, from morning to night, from room to room, and as the weather changes.

# WHEN DO I CALL QUALIS?

That depends on the type of problem you are experiencing. As with all rented housing your landlord, Epping Forest District Council, must address any structural defects or disrepair issues that may cause damp and the growth of mould. If you observe or suspect any the following defects are causing damp you must report the defect to Qualis management as soon as possible.

## **a) Plumbing for leaks**

This might be obvious leaks from water or waste pipes or a new area of damp in the location of pipes.

## **b) Guttering, rainwater down pipes and drains, cracks in pipes or blockages**

You might observe dark green moss or staining on the external walls next to these areas, rainwater running across the surface of the external walls or overflowing from gutters during rainfall. You might observe blocked rainwater drains at the bottom of rainwater down pipes.

## **c) Roof leaks**

You might observe staining on the ceilings below the loft or close to the chimney breast. You might see walls or ceilings get more damp after rainfall or you see that roof tiles or flashing around chimneys have slipped, moved or fallen away.

## **d) Damaged outside walls or eroded pointing**

You might observe gaps in the brick pointing especially above windows and doors or areas of the external walls that have cracks greater than the thickness of a pound coin.

## **e) High garden or path levels overlapping the damp proof course**

The damp proof course prevents moisture rising up into the property. It is exceedingly rare that a damp course fails however, if you have damp around the ground floor walls, it might be compromised where the ground level outside is not at least 150mm below the damp course. The damp proof course is usually identified with a black or grey line or material somewhere between the bottom external brick courses.

## WHAT IF I DO NOT SEE ANY DEFECTS?

If you observe any of the issues a) to e) above or you suspect the damp or mould is coming from a building defect or you do not have a kitchen or bathroom fan then you should call Qualis so a repair can be completed. In most other cases you should read this leaflet and consider the actions you can take. If you have followed the guidance 1 to 10 on pages 3 & 4 and after a few weeks of wiping damp from surfaces along with cleaning off any mould and you still encounter progressive damp and mould, then you might decide to still call Qualis for an inspection.

## WHAT IF QUALIS CANNOT FIND A DEFECT?

The Qualis Representative might find a defect or something that might have been missed or provide you with advice.

Qualis have a vast array of experienced staff however, if a defect cannot be diagnosed they might refer your property to a Property Operations Surveyor who will undertake a more detailed survey to diagnose why your property is suffering from damp or mould.

Once the reasons for the problem have been resolved you might need to redecorate using a decent quality fungicidal paint to help prevent future mould. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper. Wallpapering over mould will not get rid of the problem, it just hides it for a while.

## DO I CONTACT QUALIS OR EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL?

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) set up Qualis Group Ltd in 2020 to enhance Epping Forest district through regeneration, investment and asset management to support the community.

Qualis Management is the asset management part of Qualis Group. To help you speak to the right person quickly and efficiently and clarify who you need to contact, we have listed overleaf what services Qualis Management and EFDC deal with.

- ✓ General repairs – outside and inside your home and in communal areas
- ✓ Gas heating breakdowns/repairs
- ✓ Annual gas safety checks
- ✓ Electrical safety checks
- ✓ Void (empty) properties – preparing them to hand back to EFDC to rent
- ✓ Planned works programme – full replacement of kitchen and bathroom installations and electrical rewires
- ✓ Customer Feedback including compliments, complaints and customer satisfaction (see contact below)

## Contact Qualis Customer Service Centre

- ☎ 0333 230 0464
- @ repairs@qualismanagement.co.uk
- 🖱 qualismanagement.co.uk
- 💬 Available via our website above  
(Mon-Fri 10:00 – 16:30 except bank holidays)

## For Qualis Management Customer Feedback please contact:

**Call our Customer Service Centre on the number above or**

- @ feedback@qualismanagement.co.uk
- 🖱 qualismanagement.co.uk/feedback



- ✓ Major planned works programmes (incl. full window replacement, front and rear door replacement, complete roof replacement and estate regeneration)
- ✓ Properties with major structural issues
- ✓ Some larger works will be referred to EFDC where their Housing Assets team will manage
- ✓ Authorisation for alterations to your home
- ✓ Estates and Land / Ground maintenance
- ✓ Disabled adaptations to your home following Occupational Therapist (OT) referral
- ✓ Tenancy and Housing enquiries
- ✓ Rent enquiries
- ✓ Home ownership/leaseholder enquiries

**EFDC cover a wide range of services including council tax, recycling and rubbish collections, planning applications as well as many more services and these can be found on their website listed below.**

**Contact EFDC Customer Service Centre:**



01992 564000



[eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://eppingforestdc.gov.uk)