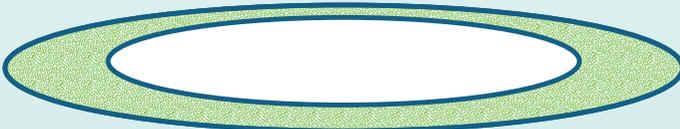
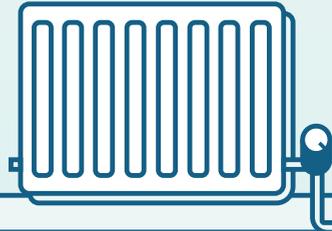
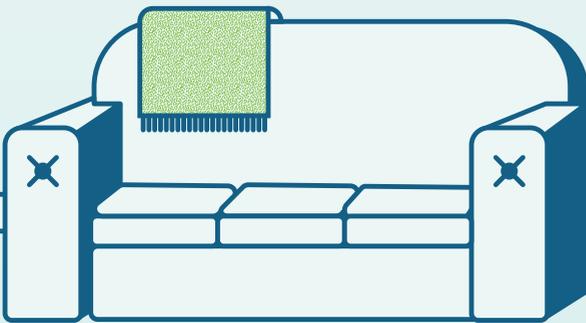


Hightown's Healthy Home Handbook

Your guide to preventing damp and mould



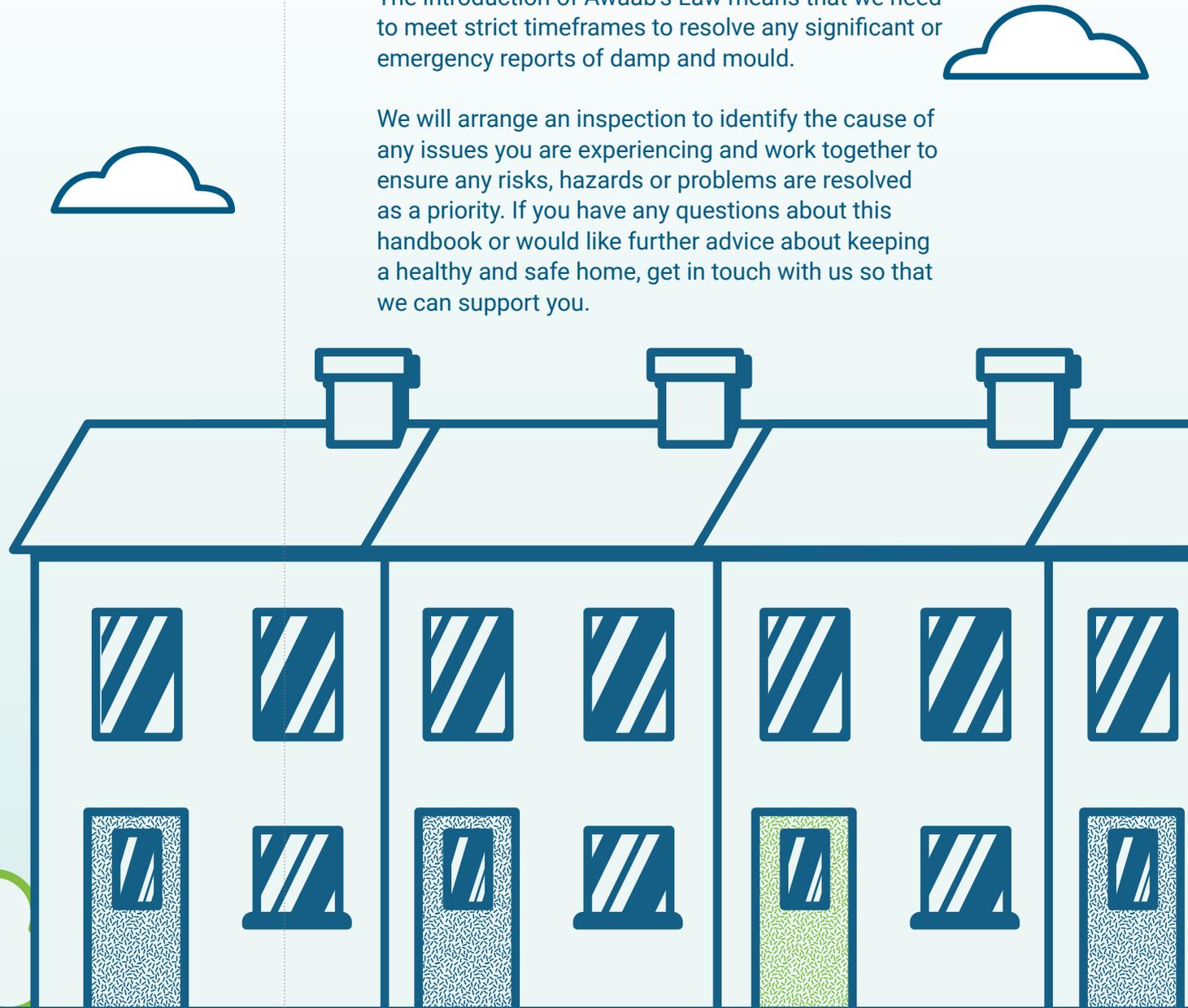
Introduction

All homes are at risk of condensation, particularly through the winter months. Excess condensation in your home can lead to problems such as mould growth, which can affect your health and the health of your home. Small amounts of condensation are not usually a problem, and there are some everyday things we can all do to help prevent it. That's why we have worked with Energy Saving Trust to create this handbook to share some practical advice to help you manage condensation and maintain a healthy home. We'll also share information on the different types of damp so that you can identify any potential concerns and how to let us know if there is a problem.

As your landlord, it's our responsibility to provide you with a safe and healthy home. If you spot any damp or mould in your home or following these tips does not help reduce excess condensation, let us know straight away.

The introduction of Awaab's Law means that we need to meet strict timeframes to resolve any significant or emergency reports of damp and mould.

We will arrange an inspection to identify the cause of any issues you are experiencing and work together to ensure any risks, hazards or problems are resolved as a priority. If you have any questions about this handbook or would like further advice about keeping a healthy and safe home, get in touch with us so that we can support you.



What is condensation?

Condensation happens when excess moisture in the air meets a cold surface and turns into water droplets. Everyday things like cooking, cleaning, showering, bathing and breathing produce excess moisture in our homes. Condensation is more likely to occur in winter; this is because surfaces like windows and walls are colder and there is more moist, warm air inside our homes.

We also tend to keep our windows and doors shut more in winter, meaning there is less ventilation to allow moist air to escape. Small amounts of condensation, like the steam from a shower condensing on a bathroom mirror, aren't usually a concern if it's kept on top of. If you spot condensation on a surface, wipe it down with a dry, clean cloth or kitchen towel.

New build homes

New homes contain a surprising amount of moisture. In fact, the materials used to build a home such as concrete, plaster, and timber can hold the equivalent of around 800 buckets of water.

That's why good ventilation and consistent heating are especially important during the first year of living in a newly built property to help your home dry safely and reduce the risk of damp and mould.

If you are concerned about excess condensation in your home, contact us on 01442 292301.

HEALTHY HOME TOP TIP

If you spot condensation on a surface, wipe it down with a dry, clean cloth or towel.



What is damp?

Condensation is a type of damp that is caused by excess moisture inside the home, but there are other types of damp too, such as rising damp, penetrating damp and damp caused by plumbing faults. It's important to know how to spot these types of damp so that you can let us know if you have a problem and we can take action.

If you think you have rising damp, penetrating damp or a plumbing fault, contact us straight away on 01442 292301 so that we can arrange an inspection and take action to fix the problem.

Rising damp

Rising damp is caused by water in the soil moving up through a wall and will only affect ground floor rooms or basements. It isn't very common and is usually prevented by a barrier called a damp-proof course. Rising damp can occur if the dampproof course in your home is either missing or damaged. Signs of rising damp include damaged skirting boards and floorboards, crumbling or saltstained plaster, and peeling paint or wallpaper. Rising damp often has the appearance of a tide mark running along the bottom of a wall.



Penetrating damp

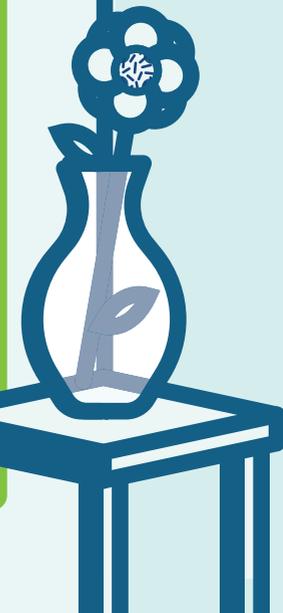
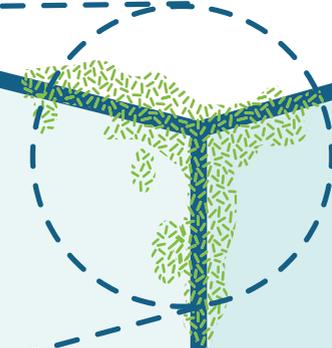
Penetrating damp is caused by water seeping through the walls from outside and is caused by structural problems such as faulty guttering or roofing. It usually shows up as a concentrated damp patch on walls, ceilings or floors with a clear edge. This type of damp often gets worse when it rains.



Plumbing fault

A plumbing fault such as a leak in a water or waste pipe can cause damp. This would usually occur in a kitchen or bathroom. The damp area would be wet to touch and would remain consistently damp regardless of the weather outside.





What is mould?

Excess condensation or structural damp issues can cause sitting water on surfaces like ceilings, walls and floors. This can lead to damage in your home, such as flaking paintwork, peeling wallpaper or black mould. Black mould can grow on any surface, but common places include windowsills, ceilings or walls. If you notice mould forming,

it's important that it's treated straight away as it can spread quickly and be harmful to your health. Using a clean cloth and a white vinegar spray is an effective way to treat and remove small areas of mould. White vinegar can be used safely on most surfaces and will penetrate porous materials to kill the mould at the roots.

If mould returns after cleaning it away and following these tips, a structural issue may be the cause. Please contact us straight away on 01442 292301 so that we can arrange an inspection and take action to fix the problem.

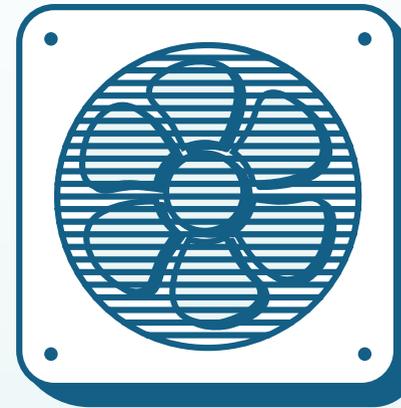
Healthy home

TOP TIPS

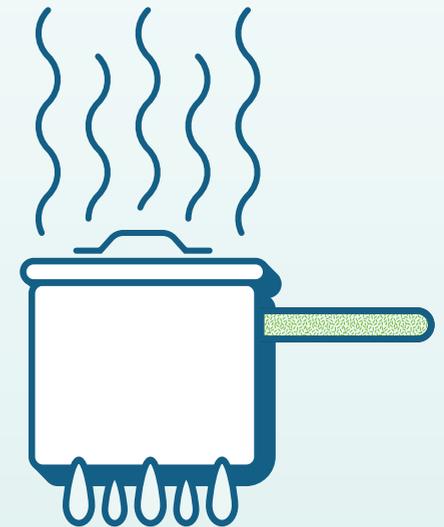
The best way to prevent condensation is to reduce the amount of moisture produced in your home and keep it as warm and ventilated as possible. Here are some top tips to help you do this.



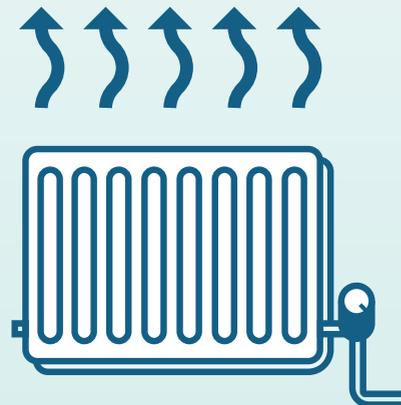
1. Opening windows when cooking, showering, bathing and drying clothes helps moist air escape.



2. Turning your extractor fan on when cooking, showering and bathing removes excess moisture from the air.



3. Putting lids on pans when cooking prevents excess moisture in the air (and helps save on your energy bill!)

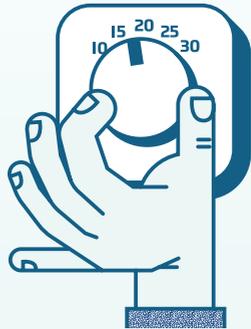


4. Keeping your home heated helps to prevent condensation from forming on surfaces. We understand that with the rise in energy prices, keeping your home heated may be more difficult. For help with your energy bills, head to page 15.

Healthy home

TOP TIPS

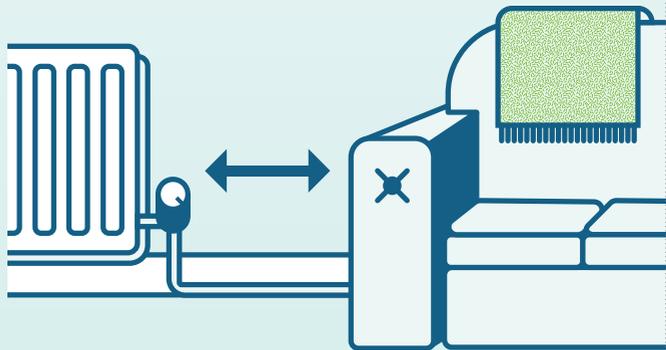
5. If you can, setting your thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature (recommended between 18 – 21°C) will help to keep you and your home healthy while keeping your energy bills down. For help with your energy bills, head to page 15.



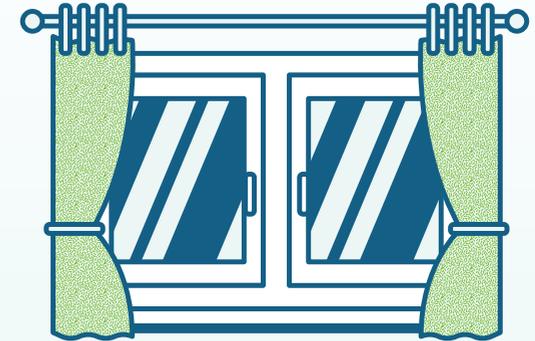
6. Drying clothes releases moisture, so if you have access to outside space, drying clothes outdoors helps to prevent excess moisture in your home. When using a drying rack indoors, opening a window slightly or turning on your extractor fan helps to remove excess moisture.



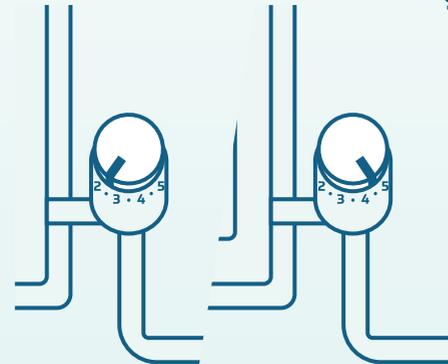
7. Moving sofas and other furniture away from radiators or heaters helps the heat to travel more effectively around the rooms in your home. Remember to leave a gap between furniture and walls to help air circulate.



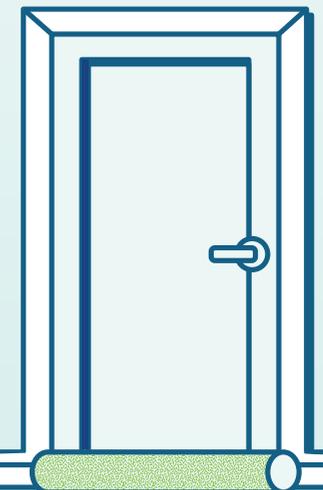
8. Curtains and rugs help to keep your home warm. Ideally, curtains should stop between the edge of the windowsill and above radiators. Opening them in the morning and closing them at dusk helps to let warmth in and keep the cold out.



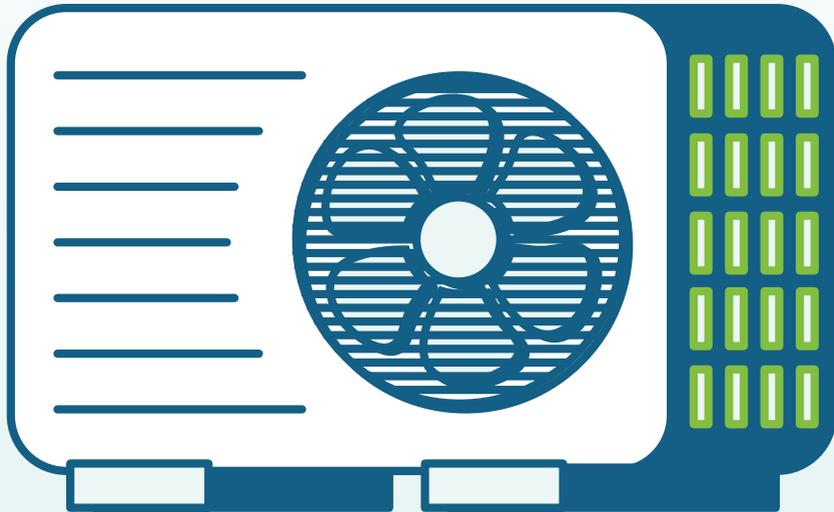
9. Radiator valves allow you to control the temperature in each room. You can twist these to a higher setting in rooms you want to be warmer and lower in rooms you don't use as often, helping you to use your energy more efficiently and cost-effectively. Typical settings are 4-5 in living areas and 2-3 in bedrooms.



10. Closing internal doors and using draught excluders reduces the amount of heat moving into colder areas of your home. This helps keep the heat in the rooms you use most often, making them feel more comfortable.



Homes with heat pumps or storage heaters



Heat pumps

If your home has a heat pump, it will usually be designed to only come on when your home gets cold. You can control how warm you'd like your home to be by using your thermostat. You don't need to worry about timing it to go off when you're out.

Contact us on 01442 292301 for advice on your controls.

Storage heaters

If your home has a storage heater, be familiar with your controls to stay warm and improve energy efficiency. 'Input' controls how much electricity is stored as heat. 'Output' controls how quickly that heat is released the following day. In colder weather, turning 'input' up will store more heat. If you're home and want more heat, you can set the 'output' higher. Turn 'output' lower while you're asleep or out of the home to keep energy bills down. Remember, you need to set the 'input' today for the heat you need tomorrow.

Contact us on 01442 292301 for advice on your controls.

Help with your energy bills

If you're struggling to pay your energy bills, speak to your energy provider to find out about any help they might be able to give.

For money advice and support, contact us on 01442 292300.

For more information and support to help with the cost of living, visit: www.hightownha.org.uk/support



Reporting damp and mould

It's important that you report damp and mould to us as soon as possible so we can work with you to resolve it at an early stage.

If you need to urgently report damp and mould in your home, please call **01442 292301**.

For non-urgent reports:

Email: healthy.homes@hightownha.org.uk

Website: www.hightownha.org.uk/healthyhomes

If you or anyone in your household has a disability or a health condition, please let us know when you submit your report.

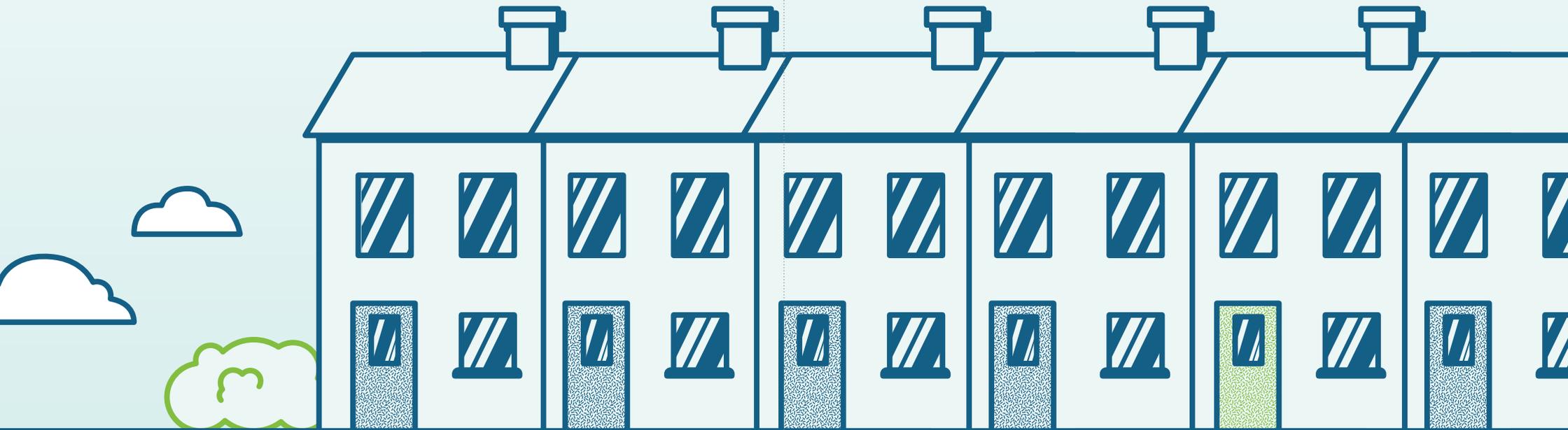


What happens after I report damp and mould?

We will contact you to ask some simple questions so we can assess how serious the issue is and if it is classified as an emergency or significant hazard.

Emergency hazards

If there is an emergency hazard in your home or the damp and mould is affecting your ability to breathe, we will either fix the issue within 24 hours or provide you with alternative accommodation within 24 hours whilst we carry out the works in your home.



Significant hazards

We will:

- Inspect the problem within 10 working days.
- Give you a written report within three days of the inspection.
- Start repairs within five working days (or up to 12 weeks if major work is needed).

Your home must be safe and healthy to live in. If repairs aren't done in time, we will offer you alternative accommodation.

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the way we have dealt with your report of damp and mould, you can make a complaint in a number of ways:

Website: www.hightownha.org.uk/complaints

Resident portal: <https://myaccount.hightownha.org.uk/>

Email: housing.services@hightownha.org.uk

Phone: 01442 292300



Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman Service offers a dispute support approach which actively supports landlords and customers to find a resolution between themselves within the landlord's procedure. You can contact the service at any time while a complaint is going through the internal process for advice and to help find a resolution.

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk



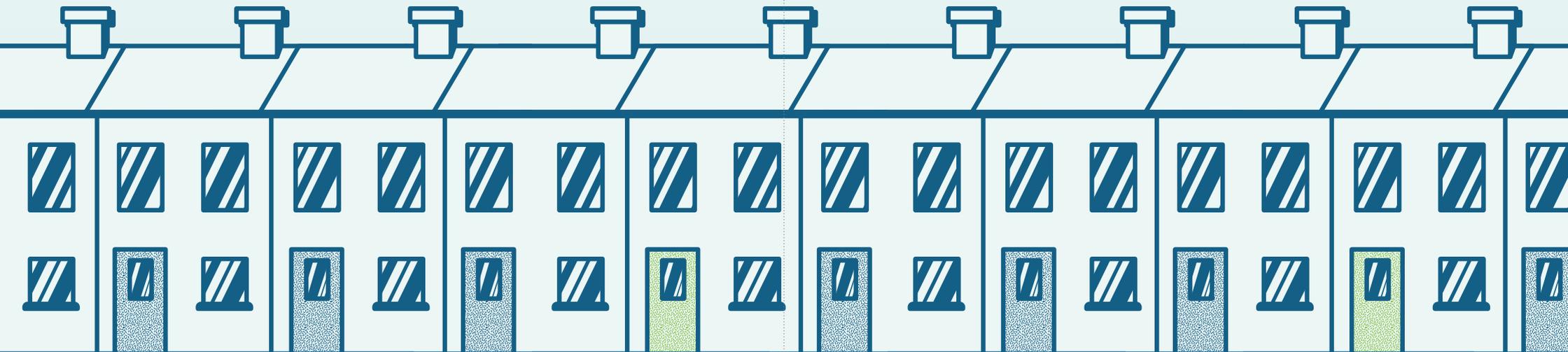
Accessibility

If you need this booklet in another language or format, please contact us:

Email: housing.services@hightownha.org.uk

Phone: 01442 292300

Write to us: **Hightown House, Maylands Avenue,
Hemel Hempstead, HP2 4XH.**



Disrepair claims

As new laws come into place, you might hear from companies encouraging you to make a housing disrepair claim. They might promise quick results, compensation, or even suggest you don't let us into your home.

It's important to know that making a claim is a legal process, and it can come with risks. Some companies charge hidden fees, lock people into contracts, or give advice that could affect your tenancy if it means refusing us access to carry out repairs.

If you're ever approached about making a claim, please talk to us first. We want to make sure you have the right information, the right support, and that your home gets the care it needs.



If you're ever approached about making a disrepair claim, please talk to us first...

Call us on: **01442 292301**

Making a housing disrepair claim is a legal process.



Hazards timeline: What you can expect from us



- ✓ **Emergency hazards**
Investigate and complete safety work within 24 hours.
- ✓ **Significant hazards**
Investigate within 10 days.
- ✓ **Customer communication**
Provide written summary within three working days of investigation concluding.
- ✓ **Safety work**
Begin within five working days of identifying a hazard. Further works must commence as soon as possible and within 12 weeks.
- ✓ **Ongoing communication**
Keep customers updated throughout the process.
- ✓ **Risk triage**
Use all available information to assess and address hazards within legal timeframes.

For more tips and advice
on how to keep your home
healthy, visit our website...



hightownha.org.uk/healthyhomes

The energy saving advice in this handbook has been supplied by Energy Saving Trust.

For more Healthy Home Top Tips to reduce condensation visit:

Website: www.hightownha.org.uk/healthyhomes

Email: healthy.homes@hightownha.org.uk

Call: **01442 292301**



**energy
saving
trust**

