



8

Section 8 —

Damp, mould and hazards in your home

The main points

- ✓ If you see damp or mould in your home, tell us. We will come and look at it.
- ✓ **Please do not worry about telling us.** We will not assume it has been caused by you or by the way you live in your home.
- ✓ We will always find out what is causing it, and we will put right anything that needs repairing.
- ✓ The law says we must act quickly. This section tells you what we will do and when.
- ✓ If we cannot make your home safe in time, we will arrange somewhere else for you to stay. We will pay for this.

What damp and mould are

Damp is water where it should not be. You might see a wet patch on a wall or ceiling. You might see paint or wallpaper coming away. You might smell something musty.

Mould is black, green or white patches that grow on damp walls, ceilings, windows or furniture. Mould grows where things stay wet.

Please do not worry about telling us

Some people worry they will be blamed for damp or mould. Please do not let this stop you telling us.

We will not assume that damp or mould has been caused by you or by the way you live in your home. Everyday things like cooking, washing and drying clothes are a normal part of living in a home.

We will always come and find out what is causing it. If something needs repairing, we will put it right. This is the law, and it is what we will do.

Please tell us as soon as you see damp or mould. Telling us early helps us put it right sooner.

Why damp and mould matter

Damp and mould can make you unwell. They can make breathing harder. This is worse for people who already have a chest or breathing problem, like asthma.

Damp and mould can also make you feel low, worried or upset about your home. That matters too.

If you have a health problem, please tell us when you report the damp or mould. It may mean we need to act faster.

How to tell us about damp or mould

You can tell us in any of these ways:

- 1. Tell your support worker.** Your support worker will tell us straight away. This counts the same as if you told us yourself.
- 2. Use Fixflo.** You can also tell us yourself. Fixflo is our online repairs system. You can find it at harbourlight.fixflo.com.
- 3. Telephone us.** Telephone 0151 909 5919. This number works at any time, day or night.

A relative, a friend, an advocate or your social worker can also tell us for you.

It helps if you can tell us:

- where the damp or mould is
- how long it has been there
- if anyone in the home has a health problem

If you can take a photograph, that helps too. But do not worry if you cannot.

What we will do, and when

The law sets out how quickly we must act. Here is what will happen.

If it is dangerous right now, we will come and make it safe **within 24 hours**.

If it is not dangerous right now, we will come and look at it **within 10 working days**. Working days are Monday to Friday, not including bank holidays.

After we have looked at it, we will write to you **within 3 working days**. Our letter will tell you:

- what we found
- what we are going to do about it
- when we are going to do it

If you find letters hard to read, tell us. We can explain it to you, or send it in a way that is easier for you. Your support worker can help.

If we find something that is not safe, we will start the work to make it safe **within 5 working days**.

If the work is big and will take longer, we will start it **within 12 weeks**.

If we cannot make your home safe in time

Sometimes a home cannot be made safe quickly enough.

If that happens, we will arrange somewhere suitable for you to stay until your home is safe again.

We will pay for this. You will not have to pay.

We will work with you, your support provider and your social worker to find somewhere that suits your needs and your support. This might be another Harbour Light home.

You can choose whether to accept the place we offer.

Things that can help

Some things can help reduce damp air in a home. Your support worker can help you with them. They are **not** a substitute for us fixing anything that needs repairing.

- Open a window a little when you cook or have a bath or shower, if you can.
- Use the extractor fan if your home has one.
- Open the small vents at the top of windows, if your home has them.
- Wipe water off windows and windowsills if you see it.
- Leave a small gap between furniture and outside walls, if you can.
- Dry clothes outside if you can. If you dry them indoors, open a window in that room if you can.

Please do not block, cover or switch off extractor fans or air vents. They help keep your home dry. If one is noisy or not working, tell us and we will fix it.

About heating. A warmer home is less likely to get damp. We know heating costs money. If you are worried about the cost of heating, please tell us or your support worker. Please do not go without heating to save money. If your home is hard to keep warm, tell us. It may be something we need to put right.

If you find these things hard to do, please still tell us about the damp or mould. Your support worker can help. We will always come and find out what is causing it.

Cleaning mould

Please tell us about mould, even if you clean it. We need to know it happened.

Your support worker can clean mould for you, or help you do it. Just ask them.

If you clean mould yourself:

- Follow the instructions on the product.
- **Never mix cleaning products together.** Mixing them can make dangerous fumes.
- Open a window while you clean.
- Keep the product away from your eyes and skin.

Please do not paint over mould. It does not work, because the mould comes back.

If mould keeps coming back after cleaning, tell us. That means something needs fixing.

What causes damp

There are different kinds of damp. You do not need to know which kind you have. Just tell us, and we will work it out.

What it is called	What causes it	What you might see
Condensation	Warm, damp air touching a cold wall or window	Water on windows; mould in corners or behind furniture
Rising damp	Water coming up from the ground into the wall	A wet mark low down on a wall; crumbly plaster
Penetrating damp	Water getting in from outside	A wet patch that gets worse when it rains
A leak	Water escaping from a pipe or an appliance	A wet patch near a pipe, bath, sink or washing machine

All of these are for Harbour Light to put right.

If you are not happy with what we do

If you are not happy with how we have dealt with damp or mould, please tell us.

You can make a complaint. Section 14 explains how. You can also ask the Housing Ombudsman to look at it. You do not have to wait to do this.

Getting help to understand this

If any of this is hard to understand, that is OK. Ask your support worker. You can also ask a relative, a friend or an advocate to help you.

You can ask us for this information on paper, in a bigger size, or in another format. Just ask us or ask your support worker.

For support staff

This box is for support staff, relatives, advocates and social workers.

Please report damp and mould on the tenant's behalf. Many tenants will not recognise damp or mould, will not report it, or will not be able to act on any of the advice above. A report from support staff is a valid report and starts Harbour Light's statutory timescales in the same way as a report from the tenant.

When to clean, and when to report. Mould on sealant, grout or tiles inside a bath or shower enclosure is caused by direct splashing and is a routine cleaning matter. Mould anywhere else — on a wall, ceiling, room corner, window, window reveal, behind furniture or inside a cupboard or wardrobe — indicates condensation or another underlying cause, and must be reported through Fixflo. Clean it as an interim measure after reporting, not instead of reporting. Report any mould that returns after cleaning, including inside a shower enclosure. Full guidance is in Information Sheet HSC2.1.

What to look for: black or green patches on walls, ceilings, window reveals, behind furniture or in wardrobes; a musty smell; condensation running down windows; peeling paint or wallpaper; damp or mouldy clothing, bedding or soft furnishings.

Please include vulnerability information. Tell Harbour Light about any respiratory condition, any immune condition, and anything about the tenant's presentation that makes the situation more urgent. A hazard may be treated as an emergency because of the resident's vulnerability, not only because of the severity of the hazard itself.

Please record it. Note what was seen, where, when, and what was reported to Harbour Light. Records matter if the position is later reviewed.

Tenant involvement in cleaning. Tenants are encouraged to clean, with support staff assistance, or support staff can clean for them. Whether a tenant can safely use mould cleaning products is a question for their support plan, not a blanket rule. Many tenants can. The main risk is mixing products — hypochlorite mixed with an acidic or ammonia-based cleaner produces harmful fumes. Where staff carry out the cleaning as a work task, the COSHH assessment applies in full, including gloves, eye protection and restricting access to the room during application.

More detail

This box is for tenants who want the legal detail, and for support staff, relatives, advocates and social workers. You do not need to read it to understand the section above.

Awaab's Law. Section 42 of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 inserts implied terms into social housing tenancies requiring landlords to investigate and remedy prescribed hazards within set timescales. The requirements are set out in the Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025, in force since 27 October 2025.

Phase 1 (current). Applies to significant hazards arising from damp and mould, and to all emergency hazards other than overcrowding.

Phase 2. The Government has stated its intention to extend the requirements from **30 November 2026** to further hazard categories, including excess cold, excess heat, falls, electrical hazards, fire, structural collapse and domestic hygiene and pests. The amending regulations were in draft at the time of writing. This section will be reviewed before that date.

Statutory timescales.

Requirement	Timescale
Investigate and make safe an emergency hazard	24 hours from becoming aware
Investigate a significant hazard	10 working days from becoming aware
Provide a written summary of findings to the tenant	3 working days from the investigation concluding
Begin relevant safety work	5 working days from the investigation concluding
Begin longer-term or complex works	Within 12 weeks
Provide suitable alternative accommodation	Where the home cannot be made safe within the timescales, at the landlord's expense

When the clock starts. Timescales run from the point at which Harbour Light becomes aware of the hazard. A report made by support staff, a relative, an advocate or a social worker starts the clock in the same way as a report from the tenant. Harbour Light logs all reports centrally regardless of the route by which they are received.

Vulnerability. Whether a hazard is an emergency depends on the risk to the actual occupants, not on the defect alone. Harbour Light takes individual circumstances into account, and encourages tenants, support staff and advocates to provide that information.

Accessible written summaries. The written summary required by the Regulations will be provided in a form the tenant can understand, and Harbour Light will offer to explain it in person or through support staff. This reflects Harbour Light's approach to accessible information (see Section 13).

Other duties. Awaab's Law sits alongside, and does not replace, the repairing obligation under section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and the requirement under the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 that the property is fit for human habitation throughout the tenancy.

Scope of Awaab's Law. The Government's guidance for social landlords on Awaab's Law (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) states that hazards resulting from a breach of contract by the tenant — for example, blocking ventilation fans — are outside the scope of the requirements, although the landlord remains responsible for ensuring the home is safe. The same guidance states that landlords must not assume a hazard such as damp and mould results from a tenant's lifestyle, and that everyday activities such as cooking, bathing and drying laundry are unlikely to amount to a breach. Harbour Light will always investigate a report of damp or mould.

Government guidance. The approach in this section follows the Government guidance Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home (Department of Health and Social Care, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and UK Health Security Agency, September 2023), which states that damp and mould are not the result of tenants' "lifestyle" and that it is the landlord's responsibility to identify and address the underlying causes.

Record keeping. Harbour Light records all reports, inspections, findings, communications and works relating to damp, mould and hazards, in line with the Housing Ombudsman's expectations on knowledge and information management.