**How To Deal with Condensation (Fact Sheet)**

Autumn and winter is when Landlords and Letting Agents start receiving telephone calls from tenants complaining about damp and mould problems in their properties.

Please note; when temperatures drop in an occupied property, the air can no longer hold onto all the moisture that has been generated; it will migrate to the coldest parts of the house and condense onto the windows and walls.

The humidity level in the property is at 80% or above for 6 hours or longer over a prolonged period of time, then mould can occur leading to the dispersion of mould spores and various other mould problems that are known triggers of asthma, dust allergies and hay fever. High internal relative humidity in a property is the result of poor ventilation.

On average we create at least 4 pints of moisture per day just by breathing, cooking, bathing, washing and drying clothes.

We must remember that as Landlords we have a responsibility under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to assess hazards and risks within our rental properties.  Local authorities are under a duty to take action against category 1 hazards. Hazards in Group A, are classed category 1 which include Damp and Mould Growth hence why we need to take seriously any complaints we receive from our tenants.

**What constitutes Condensation ?**

Condensation is the appearance of water on cold surfaces. It occurs where moist air comes into contact with air, or a surface, which is at a lower temperature.

Water produced from condensation is generally noticeable where it forms on non-absorbent surfaces (i.e. windows or tiles) but it can form on any surface and it may not be noticed until mould growth or rotting of material occurs.

**So how do you spot condensation?**

* Streaming windows and walls
* Damp areas can appear on walls, especially behind furniture and in corners
* Wallpaper and or paint starts to peel
* Mould growth, usually black mould, starts to appear on window frames (usually at the corners), walls and ceilings
* Soft furnishings and fabrics become prone to mould and mildew
* There is a constant musty damp smell in the property

**How to reduce condensation**

* Try to keep the inside temperature reasonably constant for as much of the time as possible
* Avoid drying clothes indoors.  If you have no choice place the clothes rack in a well ventilated room keeping the door shut
* Do not dry clothes over radiators
* Ensure that any tumble drier is property vented or the condensate reservoir regularly emptied
* Do not use additional heating with paraffin or bottled gas type heating
* Keep furniture away from walls
* Do not disconnect any extraction fans or devices.

**What is Positive Input Ventilation ?**

By gently introducing fresh filtered air into the home at a continuous low rate, the relative humidity levels are reduced as the moisture-laden air is diluted, displaced and replaced.  Condensation cannot form and mould spores dry out to a powder which can be cleaned off. The visible condensation problems are gone for good and improving the indoor air quality reduces the invisible problems caused when relative humidity levels rise.

**How to improve heat loss**

You will commonly find condensation forms on cold surfaces, walls and ceilings. These surfaces can be made improved by insulation and draught-proofing, this will make the surfaces warmer and in turn this will. Keep the whole house warmer and reduce heating costs. This will substantially reduce and or eliminate condensation.

* Insulate your loft and ensure the thickness of loft insulation is ideally at least 12 inches. Ensure that you do not block the openings on the eaves or any roof tile ventilation.
* Draught proof windows and doors.
* Note; where a gas burning appliance or solid fuel is installed. These appliances need a constant source of fresh air to ensure proper and safe combustion. You MUST not close or seal off any ventilation, seek advice from a qualified gas safe engineer regarding ventilation in these areas.
* Generally the utility company’s gas and electricity Supply Company will provide free help and advice and some utility companies and local councils have grants available too. Well worth finding out what grants are available to you or your tenants.