



Damp & Mould.

A LANDLORD'S GUIDEBOOK



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A note from the CEO.

Damp and mould issues have been on the rise in recent months, with a significant increase in reported cases. Plentific has observed a surge of 388% in damp and mould-related repair requests in London alone, and this continues to grow.

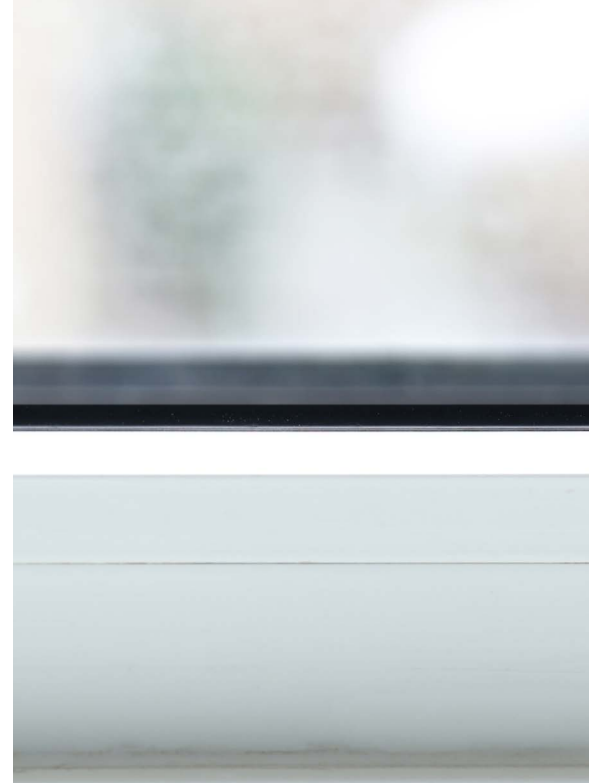
However, rather than just tackling these issues as they arise, social housing providers should work with integrated technology alongside their residents to ensure long-term solutions that prevent damp and mould from appearing in the first place.

Rising energy bills have forced many residents to reduce their energy consumption, making it difficult to keep their homes warm and ventilated, which are key factors in preventing damp and mould. With legislative reviews underway, social housing providers and residents need to work together towards a common goal and stay ahead of new policies.

This guidebook offers social housing providers an overview of the issue and practical steps to combat damp and mould effectively. By incorporating technology solutions like Plentific, landlords can provide reliable support in reducing the impact of damp and mould on residents and housing stock.

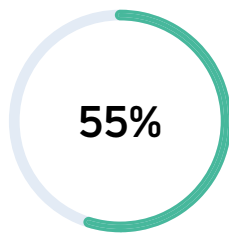
Cem Savas

CEO and Co-Founder, Plentific



The Silent Menace.

One factor determining if a property is fit for human habitation is “freedom from damp”. As per the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, should damp and/or mould be present, this can amount to a category 1 hazard requiring immediate action.



The 2021 [English Housing Survey Report](#) showed that **55% of residents reported damp, condensation and mould as the biggest issues** they face in their homes. Damp and mould's persistence has steadily dominated survey highlights over the past few years.

According to the [2020 English Housing Survey Report](#), serious condensation and mould problems were present in at least one room in 133,000 homes and 192,000 homes lacked thermal comfort. Although damp and mould issues aren't mentioned in the private rented sector (PRS) properties, the survey notes that the PRS had the highest proportion of non-decent homes, 1.1 million. In comparison, the social housing sector had the lowest proportion of non-decent homes, 504,000.

Plentific's clients understand the need to move quickly to address any issues around damp and mould. Plentific's data and specialist contractors have been utilised throughout this guide to create a current picture of the issue and effective steps to identify, prevent and treat it.

The Leading Causes of Damp and Mould.

In February 2023, findings from the [UK Regulator of Social Housing's initial report](#) into damp and mould revealed that most social landlords understand the extent of damp and mould in their residents' homes and take action to tackle it, but there is still room to improve their approach. Plentific's social housing landlord data shows the following to be the biggest causes of damp and mould:



Leaking pipes and roofs

One of the biggest call outs in cold weather pertains to condensate pipes. These pipes remove wastewater from boilers to drains outside the home and are at risk of freezing in winter. If these pipes are not properly insulated, they will freeze, resulting in homes that cannot heat effectively, and in turn a build up of damp and mould.

Similarly, The roof is a property's first line of defence against the elements. Social housing providers have the highest number of roofing callouts from November - January, as a property's structural integrity is tested by constant rain and frequent snow in these months. Improperly maintained roofing lets moisture seep into properties, resulting in damp and mould.



Moisture from condensation

Wooden frames, particularly old sash windows, are sensitive to moisture. If not properly aired in winter, the wood on these windows can soften, darken and start to split, letting draughts into a property. The condensation that builds up as a result of this directly links to damp in winter weather.

Similarly, close to 30% of the moisture in a home can come from drying laundry indoors. That's the equivalent to nine pints of water to contend with. The extra moisture in the air forms condensation that gets trapped inside a home, quickly leading to damp and mould.



Poor drainage and insulation

On occasion, housing providers can overlook the fact that gutters and drain pipes need attention after autumn. It is common for drain pipes to get clogged with falling leaves, which, if left unattended, will decompose and block pipes, causing them to overflow. This damage can flood areas outside and water can make its way into the home.

Similarly, in an uninsulated home, a quarter of the heat is lost through the roof. A lack of appropriate draught sealing on the loft hatch will not directly lead to damp, but is a strong contributor to the spread of damp via condensation.

Identifying Damp and Mould.

The tell-tale signs of damp and mould are often easy to spot. A musty smell is the first sign that a room or a home has not been properly aired.

When conducting inspections, social housing providers might observe this smell coupled with patches of discolouration on walls, damaged skirting boards and walls that are cold to the touch. While these are all immediate signs of the issue, staff conducting inspections might choose to measure the humidity of the air using a hygrometer, which can determine air humidity more precisely before any action is taken.

It is important to note that **penetrating damp** - caused by moisture coming into the house through pipes, roofing, guttering and windows - is not the only kind of damp and mould.

In older buildings and more prone to disrepair, **rising damp** can also create problems owing to worn-out damp-proof courses. This moisture, coming through groundwater, can corrode brickwork and wood in a property's exterior while creating damp patches in interiors that work their way up from the base of walls around the house.

The most common kind of damp and mould can build up under our noses, almost invisible, caused by simple everyday tasks like cooking and bathing. Black dots around window frames, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms, are a sign of **damp caused by condensation**. This damp and mould can stay hidden away, under cabinets, behind the fridge, in wall corners, behind furniture or even underneath wallpaper. It is important for social housing providers to take this **'hidden mould'** into account when planning maintenance.



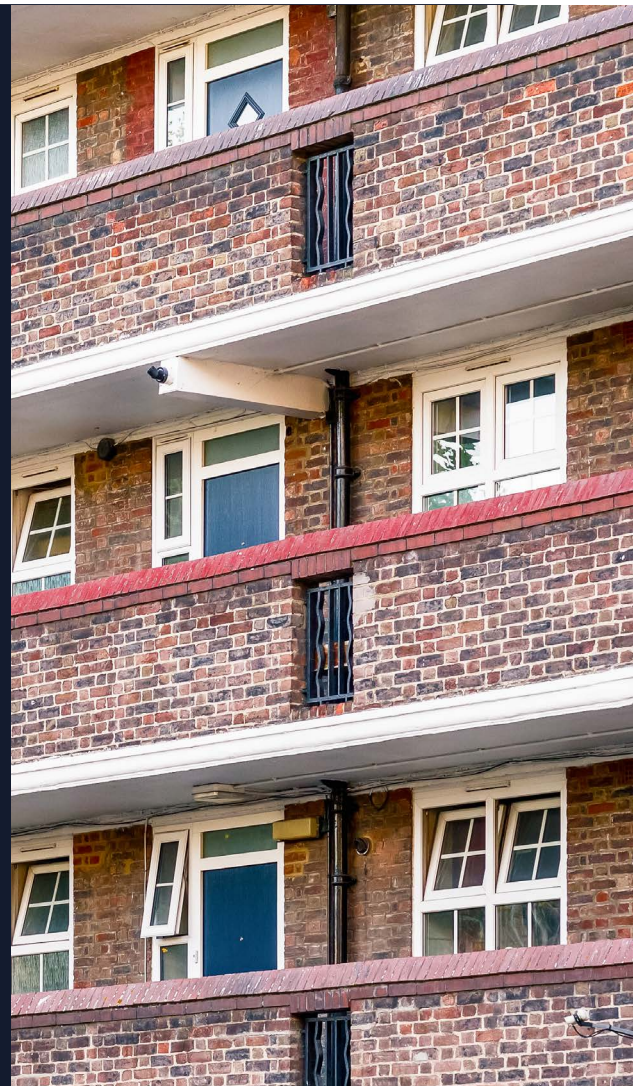
Preventing Damp and Mould.

Plentific's approach to addressing damp and mould is the same as our ethos of using technology to prevent maintenance issues from happening, rather than merely reacting to them.

At the start of any client relationship, Plentific works closely with each stakeholder in the organisation's property operations ecosystem. This helps determine issues that most impact them e.g. supply chain shortages, access to specialist contractors, budget constraints, operational inefficiencies, lack of visibility and resident communication. All of these issues can contribute to ineffective management of damp and mould.

The following recommendations for preventing damp and mould provide a cost-effective, preventative solution for social housing providers.

- 1 Regular inspections: from reactive to proactive
- 2 Two-way communication: working with residents
- 3 Build a 'best practice' checklist for draught-proofing
- 4 Encourage well-ventilated properties
- 5 Make roofing the critical defence against damp
- 6 Share simple ways to maintain condensate pipes
- 7 Regularly inspect drains as seasons change



1 Regular inspections: from reactive to proactive

The Regulator has asked social housing providers to adopt a **zero-tolerance** approach to damp and mould and proactively intervene by carrying out regular inspections.

Using a robust inspections tool can help cost-effectively and proactively address many issues, but can be especially useful when applied to damp and mould. For example, creating a standardised inspection template for damp and mould would help property managers ensure that no important questions are missed, and information and photographs are captured in a consistent way, every time.

Harnessing valuable property data on **previous repairs** reported can help providers take a risk-based approach and anticipate action before another repair is requested. This also reduces the sole reliance on residents to report damp and mould.

2 Two-way communication: working with residents

We believe effective landlord-resident communication should be at the core of any damp and mould response. This communication can be facilitated by providing residents a portal to intuitively and accurately define their issues, with added support for pictures and video. This space can also be utilised to provide guidance on how to correctly ventilate properties.

Some housing providers are taking this a step further by **empowering residents** with tools that facilitate collaboration with property managers to form a faster response to damp and mould.

Such tools can allow residents to see and modify any appointments made for inspections at their properties, alongside receiving **real-time updates** on the progress of any works being undertaken, through emails and SMS.

3 Build a 'best practice' checklist for draught-proofing

In our experience, draught proofing is inexpensive and saves money in the long term on heating bills. The easiest way to start is to install draught proofing strips around **window frames** (either foam, metal or plastic) and ensure they are the right size for each frame.

We would also advise inspecting **doors** to determine how effectively key holes, letterboxes and any gaps on the bottom/sides can be proofed.

We have observed that **chimneys** not in use can be a source of draught and can quickly be addressed by installing a cap over the chimney pot or a chimney draught excluder.

When inspecting **older properties**, it's a good practice to pay attention to floorboards, skirting boards, cracks in walls and any old extractor fans, as these will need to be sealed to create a lasting shield against draughts.

4 Encourage well-ventilated properties

Homes must be well-ventilated to remain healthy and condensation-free. It is a good practice for social housing providers to pay special attention to works involving **extractor fans** - these quickly remove unwanted moisture from kitchens and bathrooms, keeping residents' homes mould-free for longer.

New guidance states that windows installed after 15th June 2022 must comply with **trickle-vent** regulations. A trickle-vent is a background ventilator in the upper frame of a window that can ensure homes can easily replace any ventilation lost. Existing windows should be fitted with trickle vents.

Any mechanical ventilation systems fitted into homes should also have their **filters replaced** regularly. The replacement is usually done annually and can be set as a recurring task within your property operations software.

Good communication with residents about circulating fresh air around their homes is important. Drying clothes outside, or in dedicated spaces, can save the high cost of removing mould and repairing structural issues.

5 Make roofing the critical defence against damp

The roof is a property's first line of defence against the elements. A property's roof must be in good condition as rain and snow falls more frequently in the colder months.

A roofer will be able to conduct a **thorough inspection of tiles**, flashing, ridges and junctions. Any gaps can be fixed and moss or debris removed, ensuring the roof is water-tight. Lots of organisations are also using drone technology, such as Upshot, to inspect roofs for added detail and safety.

Symptoms of **penetrating damp**, such as dark patches higher up on walls, will benefit from a roof repair. However, property owners and operators should bear in mind that condensation-caused damp will not be affected by roof repairs.

6 Share simple ways to maintain condensate pipes

Condensate pipes have an important role to play in maintenance against damp and mould - even if it's indirect. **Boilers with frozen pipes**, for example, will not turn on and heat a home, increasing the chances of damp building up until a repair is organised for the boiler.

It is a good practice to insulate, and then lag these pipes (finish them with a steel or aluminium coat). This **preventative maintenance** measure can save thousands in boiler call outs during the season.

Encouraging residents to keep these pipes from freezing simply by pouring hot water on them can be a cost effective way to reduce the need for such repairs. Social housing providers should communicate this easy self-maintenance suggestion to residents to keep homes warm and **damp at bay**.

7 Regularly inspect drains as seasons change

Guttering isn't the first thought for most property owners and operators, but blocked drains are a common cause of **rising damp** and can be easily prevented.

Any faults in piping caused by drains clogging up - for example, when leaves fall in autumn - will directly affect a home by causing leaks in walls and floors. In addition to causing **wear and tear**, the extra moisture that makes its way into a home will create persistent damp and mould issues, if not addressed.

A practical, preventative **solution** is to install drain guards and auto-schedule gutter cleaning services towards the end of autumn. Auto-schedule is a powerful tool that can be implemented through the adoption of property operations technology.



Treating Damp and Mould.

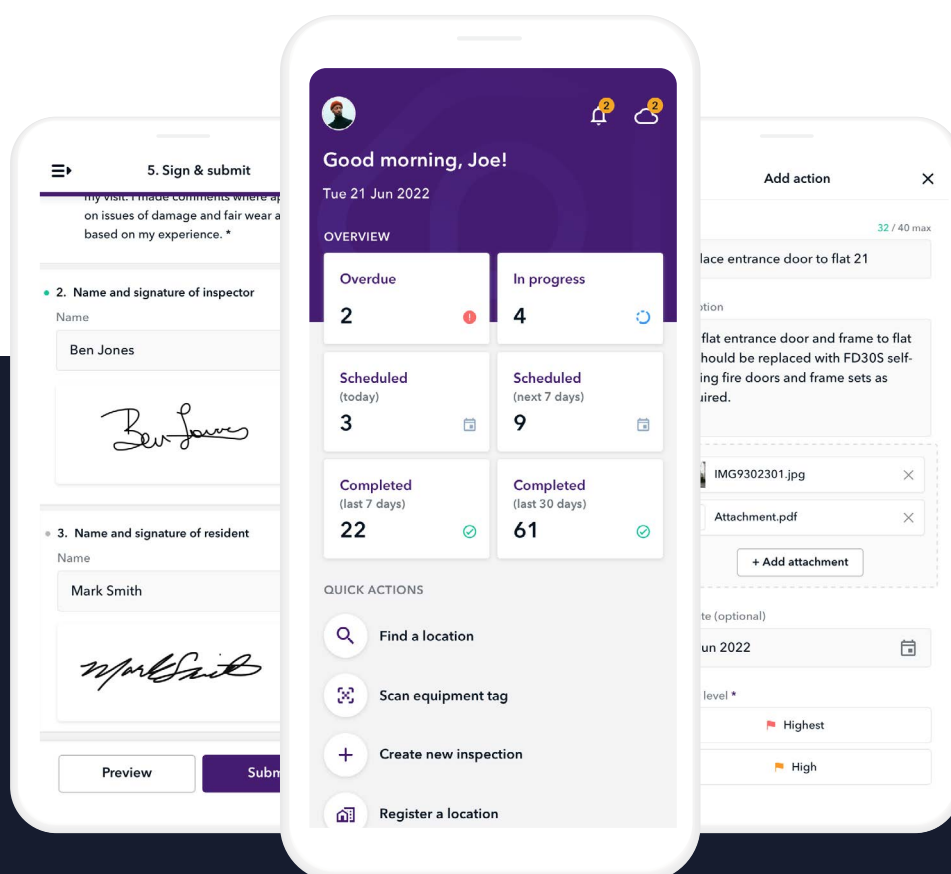
Real-time property solutions platforms, such as Plentific, provide landlords and residents with the tools to address damp and mould promptly and effectively. Technology can enable seamless communication between social housing providers, internal contractor teams, specialist contractors and residents.

The first quarter of 2023 has seen Plentific damp and mould requests rise globally by 190% since the same quarter last year. The learnings gathered from completing such a large volume of works has helped Plentific perfect a competitive damp and mould solution and support housing providers in managing the influx of requests.

The solution involves routine inspections to help treat early signs of damp and condensation. These inspections can be automated through Plentific - allowing social housing providers to address the issue quickly and prevent more complex and costly damage.

Plentific Inspections, our dedicated inspections tool, enables a client to customise a report template to capture relevant areas of damp and mould that will require early intervention and follow up work. These findings can be seamlessly pushed through to our nationwide marketplace for over 20,000 qualified contractors to complete the remedial work.

Damp and mould is complex, particularly mould. Mould requires different remedial works that often involve replacing walls, technical treatment and expert contractors to carry out the work. An integrated approach offers the best solution for social housing providers to identify and flag issues, raise works, communicate with residents, find specialist contractors and gather valuable data for completed works - all in one place.



Conclusion.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill was amended in February 2023 to require social housing managers to acquire professional qualifications to better protect residents, with a particular focus on fixing damp and mould issues. This new legislation, along with Awaab's Law, will apply strict deadlines for addressing these issues. Social housing is undergoing a cultural shift towards better protection for residents and alignment with other frontline services.

Providers must act now to acquire the skills necessary to deal with this transformation. Plentific offers a solution to help social housing providers adapt, including identifying early signs of damp and mould and communicating them to relevant stakeholders, ensuring preventative works are carried out to high standards, and providing supply chain flexibility for managing contractors.

With over a decade of experience and a wide network of specialist contractors, Plentific offers practical advice on dealing with damp and mould issues of all types.

If you would like an exploratory discussion about technology's role in supporting your organisation deal with damp and mould please get in touch with the team today.

About Plentific

Plentific is pioneering real-time property operations for real world impact. Our end-to-end solution seamlessly connects social housing providers, service providers, and residents on a single platform - making operations simpler, faster and more efficient. By working with clients to streamline operations, unlock revenue, increase tenant satisfaction and remain compliant, Plentific empowers clients with data-driven insights that drive action. Plentific is dedicated to building stronger communities where people can thrive through its growing network of 1 million+ properties and 20,000 service providers worldwide.

Learn more about how Plentific Inspections can help tackle damp and mould or check out some of our case studies.

[Plentific Inspections](#)[Case studies](#)