Four Million Homes

Knowledge and action for change in social housing

Training session 06

Awaab's Law – making your home safer, faster

June 2025

These notes are part of a series of 10 training sessions

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Awaab's Law – what does it do?

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 amended Section 10A of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. This amendment implies an obligation into all social housing tenancies that the landlord will comply with all "prescribed requirements" applicable to the tenancy within a specified period of time.

The focus of the public campaign for Awaab's Law was damp and mould, however the provision will now extend to all the risks covered within the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005 (HHSRS) except for issues relating to crowding and space.

The specific timescale requirements will be set out in secondary legislation in advance of the initial start date of 27th October 2025; the information contained in the guide is based on draft guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 25th June 2025 and may be subject to amendment to reflect the finalised regulations.

Under Awaab's Law, residents will be able to take legal action through the courts for a breach of contract if their landlord fails to meet the requirements.

Timetable for introduction

From 27th October 2025 – Registered Providers will have to address damp and mould hazards that present significant harm to tenants within fixed timescales.

From 27th October 2025 – Registered Providers will have to address all emergency repairs within 24 hours.

From 2026 – the requirements of Awaab's Law will be expanded to cover excess cold and heat, falls (associated with baths, on level surfaces, on stairs and between levels), structural collapse and explosions, fire and electrical hazards and domestic and personal hygiene and food safety hazards.

From 2027 – the requirements of Awaab's Law will be extended to cover all remaining HHSRS hazards except overcrowding.

What is really changing – landlord required actions

The Pre-Action Protocol for housing condition claims currently gives landlords a total of 98 calendar days to respond to a claim letter, inspect the property, provide an inspection report, provide a decision on liability and schedule works.

Awaab's Law significantly reduces the number of calendar days that Registered Providers have to take the following actions.

Stage 1 Initial investigations of potential hazards

If a Registered Provider is made aware of a potential hazard in a resident's home, they must investigate within 14 calendar days to ascertain if there is a hazard. The point at which the Registered Provider becomes aware of a potential hazard is the point at which the legal obligations under Awaab's Law begin.

(a) **The investigation** must be carried out within 10 working days to sufficiently determine whether there is a hazard, and if so, the level of risk to a resident's health or safety. Therefore, whoever conducts the investigation will be expected to hold the right skills and experience to make this determination.

(b) **Assessing risk to residents** – if a hazard is affecting or likely to negatively affect, a resident's health or safety, it will be considered in scope of Awaab's Law.

(c) **Medical evidence** – residents are not required to produce medical evidence to their landlord that a hazard could impact on their health, or that of a household member, as a pre-requisite to the landlord undertaking an investigation.

(d) **Damp and mould** – a critical requirement is that Registered Providers do not automatically dismiss issues as being the resident's fault.

Stage 2 Written summaries of investigation findings

Within 3 working days of the conclusion of the investigation, Registered Providers must provide a written summary of findings to the resident that includes details of any hazard identified and (if applicable) next steps, including an anticipated timeline for repair and a schedule of works.

The written summary must specify, at minimum:

- how and when the investigation was conducted, and the job title of the individual who conducted the investigation;
- any further investigations that are required, and if so when they will take place;
- whether an identified hazard is likely to pose a significant risk to residents' health or safety;
- what temporary repairs are needed to make the property safe until the problem can be permanently rectified;
- what the Registered Provider will do to permanently rectify the problem and the likely timescales for this.

Stage 3 Beginning repair works

Where the investigation indicates that a reported hazard poses a significant risk to the health or safety of the resident, the Registered Provider must begin repair works within 5 working days of the written summary being issued.

The level of risk that a hazard presents should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, making ‘significant risk of harm’ a subjective term. ‘Beginning’ repair works would entail a worker being on site physically starting to repair and rectify a hazard and works must begin within an absolute limit of 12 weeks.

Stage 4 Completing repair works

Registered Providers must satisfactorily complete repair works within a reasonable time period. The resident should be informed of this time period and their needs should be considered.

Timescales for emergency repairs

From 27th October 2025, Registered Providers must action emergency repairs as soon as practicable and, in any event, within 24 hours. Hazards warranting emergency repairs are those that present a significant and imminent risk of harm.

Hazards that pose significant and imminent danger to residents will require faster action and should be treated as an emergency by the landlord; such as:

- gas leaks;
- broken boilers;
- lack of water supply;
- electrical hazards such as exposed wiring;
- significant leaks;
- broken external doors or windows that present a risk to home security;
- prevalent damp and mould that is impacting a resident’s ability to breathe.

Decanting properties cannot be made safe immediately

Where the investigation finds a hazard that poses a significant, or a significant and imminent, risk of harm or danger, and the property cannot be made safe within the specified timescales for Awaab’s Law, Registered Providers must offer to arrange for the occupant(s) to stay in suitable alternative accommodation until it is safe to return.

Damp and mould

There are 4 main causes of damp and mould:

- Immediate or sustained water ingress – can be caused by roof issues, flooding and repairing defects;
- Penetrating damp – usually caused by moisture penetrating external brickwork;
- Rising damp – usually caused by ground water and defective damp proof courses; a noticeable tide mark will be apparent;
- Condensation – usually associated with poor ventilation and overcrowding

1 Incident Related Water Ingress

Water ingress is when water makes its way into a building and is usually bad news. Incident related ingress will cause damage based upon the amount of water that is entering. So, a roof with one missing tile would cause minor damage that would build up over time and would be noticed particularly during heavy and sustained periods of rain; whereas a roof with a missing section of tiles would cause more significant damage and a roof with its entire roof removed during a heavy storm would cause substantial immediate damage.

The causes of incident related water ingress include:

- Roofs – missing or broken tiles or slates on pitched roofs but also blocked flat roof rainwater stackpipes and faulty flashing around chimneys;
- Blocked or faulty guttering;
- Walls – cracked render or damaged mortar, bridging to cavity walls or damp proof coursing and damaged or broken pipework;
- Windows – faulty flashing around frames;
- Flooding – from outside water build up or internal burst pipework;
- Faulty plumbing – from properties above or from leaks within your home.

2 Penetrating Damp

Penetrating damp can cause a variety of problems and there are a number of potential causes. To avoid penetrating damp leading to potentially costly damage and to health problems for residents, it is important to get it sorted out as soon as the problem is noticed.

Penetrating damp is when water infiltrates a buildings structure; some of the signs that your home may have penetrating damp include:

- Mould on walls and ceilings;
- Damp patches;
- A musty smell;
- Paint and/or plaster peeling and coming away;
- It being difficult to heat or keep stay warm;
- Walls feeling very cold to touch;
- Woodworm; which likes wood that has been exposed to damp;
- Dry and/or wet rot.

The causes of penetrating damp include:

- Minor leaks in pipework or plumbing around the building;

- Badly maintained, broken or full/dirty guttering;
- Damaged mortar;
- Missing or faulty damp proof coursing;
- Faulty or aged window flashing;
- Blocked air bricks;
- Missing or inadequate waterproofing in the wall cavity;
- Wall and brickwork damage caused by age or frost damage among other things.

Penetrating damp through walls is relatively common as bricks can be prone to water permeation. Driving rain can lead to water being absorbed by bricks and eventual penetration. Problems can also be caused by incorrectly installed cavity wall ties or corrosion of metal ties and building faults including serious structural issues. Remedial works such as cladding, insultation and re-rendering can also make matters worse if badly carried out.

Example external wall and brickwork damage that could cause of penetrating damp

Example damaged rainwater stack pipe that could cause of penetrating damp

3 Rising Damp

Rising damp is often cited as a problem in buildings although in truth it is a relatively rare form of damp that affects the walls of buildings. It occurs when moisture from the ground travels up through walls by capillary action. This means that ground water is being effectively sucked up through tiny tubes in bricks.

The ground water often contains salts that also travel up; these salts are deposited on the wall when the water evaporates. There are two main types of salt - sulphates which result in crusty white patches and invisible hygroscopic salts known as nitrates and chlorides. The hygroscopic salts continue to draw moisture and therefore must be treated.

Rising damp is usually first apparent by the damage it causes to the internal walls. Plaster and paint can deteriorate and wallpaper tends to loosen. A visible stain or tide mark often appears on the wall at the point where the ground water has reached. You may also see salts appearing on the internal surface. Externally, mortar may crumble and white salt stains may appear on the walls.

Most buildings have some form of barrier at low level to prevent water rising; this is called a Damp Proof Course or DPC. These are made of non-absorbent, water-resistant materials such as slate, bitumen and plastic.

A DPC can remain intact but be bridged; this is where water is able to travel past the DPC because of a construction fault such as:

- Debris in wall cavities or subfloor voids;
- Internal or external renders or plasters overlapping the DPC;
- External ground levels being above the DPC;
- Solid floors;
- Intersecting structures and abutting garden walls.

Rising damp is often confused with damp caused by condensation and this is a common cause of misdiagnosis. The *Code of Practice for the Investigation and Control of Dampness in Buildings* states*: 'One of the most reliable ways that may be used to differentiate between dampness due to condensation and due to rising damp is to compare moisture in the contents of samples of masonry, or preferably mortar, from within the depth of the wall and near the inner surface of the wall; samples from within the wall will not be damp if surface condensation is the sole cause.'*

4 Condensation

Condensation is the most common and easiest damp problem to fix and often does not need professional help. Condensation is caused when humid air meets cold surfaces like walls and windows. As the temperature falls, the amount of moisture that the air can hold falls and tiny drops of water form on the surface.

The air in your home is naturally moist, but the amount of moisture is increased by the release of water vapour from cooking, bathing, showering and even breathing. If condensation is allowed to sit on walls for long periods of time, it can penetrate the outer layers of your walls and seep into clothing and furniture where it becomes a longer-term problem, causing mould to grow.

Better ventilation helps reduce condensation problems. Options include:

- Opening windows when you are at home;
- Installing air bricks (made with small holes) into outside walls;
- Installing air vents through internal walls or sealed chimneys to allow airflow through the house;
- Fitting roof ventilation tiles and/or ventilated soffits (under the roof and guttering) to allow air through the loft;
- Adding window vents to the tops of window frames.

In addition to ventilation, removal of moisture from your home will also help. Bathrooms and kitchen are responsible for most of the moisture in your home. Extractor fans in these rooms should be fitted and in the kitchen, extraction hoods which send air outside through ducting, are generally most effective at removing steam and moisture. If these are not effective, then dehumidifiers are good for drawing moisture out of the air.

For more serious condensation problems, there are bigger systems available that can improve ventilation such as Positive Input Ventilation Systems which control and filter the air that is drawn into the building to replace the humid air that is removed by extractor fans.

Sudden changes in air temperature can exacerbate a condensation problem, as water evaporates and condenses each time your central heating switches on and off. You may find that having your heating on a constant low heat helps but this can be a costly option.

Finally, always try to limit the amount of condensation produced in your home. Try to dry clothes outside rather than on radiators on sunny days, if you don't have an extractor fan, open windows when cooking, washing up or showering and remove condensation that does appear with sponges and towels.

Example of mould related to condensation

Example of condensation on window pane

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England)

The HHSRS operates by evaluating the potential risk of harm to an actual or potential occupier from their living environment and is a means of rating the danger posed by a health and safety hazard. Under the Decent Homes Standard, a dwelling should be free from hazards that an HHSRS assessment has shown are at the most dangerous ‘category 1’ level.

The HHSRS health and safety hazards are:

1 Damp and mould growth
2 Excess cold
3 Excess heat
4 Asbestos and manufactured mineral fibres (MMF)
5 Biocides
6 Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products
7 Lead
8 Radiation
9 Uncombusted fuel gas
10 Volatile organic compounds
11 Crowding and space
12 Entry by intruders
13 Lighting
14 Noise
15 Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
16 Food safety
17 Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
18 Water supply
19 Falls associated with baths etc.
20 Falling on level surfaces etc.
21 Falling on stairs etc.
22 Falling between levels
23 Electrical hazards
24 Fire
25 Flames, hot surfaces etc.
26 Collision and entrapment
27 Explosions
28 Position and operability of amenities etc.
29 Structural collapse and falling elements