

A Guide to Managing Problems with Condensation

Condensation can be a common problem, especially in older stone built properties. The Gannochy Trust's founder, A K Bell, recognised the importance of good ventilation in keeping our houses healthy, and he erected the plaque below in every one of the original stone built houses on the estate. These sentiments still hold true today.



What is condensation?

- Condensation is often found as misted up windows or surface moisture on walls. It is caused when warm moist air comes into contact with a cold surface.
- There is always some moisture in the air, and most of the time you cannot see it. When the air becomes colder it cannot hold the same amount of water, and small drops of water can then appear as condensation, particularly on colder surfaces.
- It does not leave a 'tidemark', and appears more frequently in places where there is little or no movement of air.

What are the effects of condensation?

- Water running down cold surfaces, i.e. windows, bathroom fittings, tiles, paintwork, etc.
- Black, brown, or green mould spots appear on walls, ceilings, skirting boards, along window sills and tile grout.
- Mould growth can appear on clothing and furnishings.

What are the common causes of condensation and mould growth?

- Everyday activities which create moisture such as drying laundry indoors and baths/showers. An average family can produce as much as 10 litres of water vapour per day.
- Not using the extractor fans where provided in kitchens or bathrooms.
- Keeping windows and window trickle vents closed so that there is no air circulation in the property.
- Not dealing with the mould as soon as it appears.
- Stacking belongings and furniture against external walls for prolonged periods with no space behind for air to circulate.

What can I do to avoid the problem?

- One of the key things you can do is to reduce the amount of moisture produced in your home, and to keep it warm and well ventilated.
- Open windows and window vents whenever you can to allow air to move around your home.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut, particularly if you are cooking, washing or bathing – otherwise water vapour will spread throughout your home leading to problems in cooler rooms.
- Always use extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom and report any faults with these as soon as possible.
- Try not to allow saucepans and kettles to boil any longer than is necessary, and always put the lid on your saucepan. Consider opening a window while cooking.
- Vent tumble driers to the outside, or use a condensing tumble drier.
- Dry clothes outdoors where possible, and if drying indoors open a window nearby to allow air to circulate, otherwise condensation will increase. Avoid drying clothes on radiators as this will reduce heat in the room and increase moisture levels.
- Wipe condensation off cold surfaces such as window sills, tiles and sanitary ware.
- Wipe down wall tiles and wet wall panelling in the bathroom after baths or showers.
- Keep your home reasonably warm in cold weather; the range of 18-21°C is recommended. You will get much less condensation if you keep all rooms in your home warm most of the time. It is better to keep an even temperature throughout the day rather than heating your home up from a cold start each time. If your heating is off for long periods the temperature drops and condensation will form as the colder air cannot hold as much water vapour.

What can I do if condensation is causing mould in my property?

- If you see moisture regularly on your walls and windows, wipe them down.
- You can remove any mould by washing down with a bleach type solution or fungicidal wash. It is best to do this as soon as the mould appears.
- Think about the way you live in your home, particularly the areas worst affected by condensation, and whether you could make any changes to reduce the amount of condensation you get. These may not need to be drastic, just bear the points above in mind.

Could there be another reason for the damp and mould?

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also arise from water penetration causes such as:

- Leaking pipes, wastes and overflows
- Rain coming through a roof where a tile or slate is missing
- Water spilling over from a blocked gully (gutter), or penetrating around window frames or damaged roof flashings.

Penetrating or rising damp often leaves a 'tidemark', and you should always call the Trust's Estates team and report any suspected defects on 01738 620653. Our staff will also be happy to help with advice on measures you could take to reduce condensation in your home.