

Damp house?

There's been a lot in the news lately about damp in houses. This article gives some basic information. But if you've got specific problems or questions, go to www.adviceguide.org.uk which is the Citizens Advice information website. You can also contact us in one of the ways set out on our Contacts page.

Do you own your house?

If you own or are buying your house and you have damp problems, think about what might be causing the damp. Do you run lots of baths and showers or a tumbler drier? Do you open windows to let the steam out, or do you use an extractor fan? Some houses have ventilator grilles to let out steam. These days, with double glazing and painted walls, the chances for moisture to be absorbed are much less than they used to be. Open gas fires will dry the atmosphere, too. So we can all suffer from our modern, convenient lifestyle!

If your walls are damp at the bottom, you may have rising damp. Get your builder to have a look at your outside walls in this case. Old houses may not have damp-proofed walls which stop rising damp. Your builder will tell you, if you're not sure. Other possibilities include a need to have some repointing done. Again, check with your builder.

Are you a tenant?

It doesn't make any difference if you are renting from a private landlord, a Housing Association or the City of York Council. Landlords have responsibilities regarding the accommodation they rent out, and tenants can expect their landlord to carry out their responsibilities.

Briefly, a landlord is responsible for the structure of the building: roof, walls, ceilings, floors and stairs. Windows and doors are the landlord's responsibility from the security point of view. The main law setting out the landlord's responsibilities is the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1986, section 11. The landlord is also responsible for water supply, gas and electricity safety and sewerage.

So, if you have a problem with damp, the same principles apply as if you were a home owner. Do you run lots of baths and showers or a tumbler drier? Do you open windows to let the steam out, or do you use an extractor fan? If you can't open the windows, and there's no other form of ventilation, then the landlord will have to arrange for it. If you can open the windows, but don't, then that isn't the landlord's responsibility. At the end of your tenancy, if there's mould on the walls because of the damp, but you could have done something about it, then the landlord might charge you for cleaning the mould off.

If your home is damp and you think it's because of a problem with the walls or the foundations, ask the landlord to get a builder to have a look at the walls from the outside.

Are you using a letting agent?

If you have a letting agent, you may not be in touch with the landlord at all. This can sometimes make it take more time to get repairs done. The letting agent gets a letting fee

from the landlord and is, in a sense, employed by the landlord. But the responsibility for a property still rests with the landlord and the Landlord and Tenant Act still applies.

Get in touch with us at the Bureau if you need more information. Our Contacts page explains how to get in touch with us.

One last point.

If your landlord is slow to get work done, don't stop paying the rent as this will give the landlord cause to begin the process of getting you evicted.