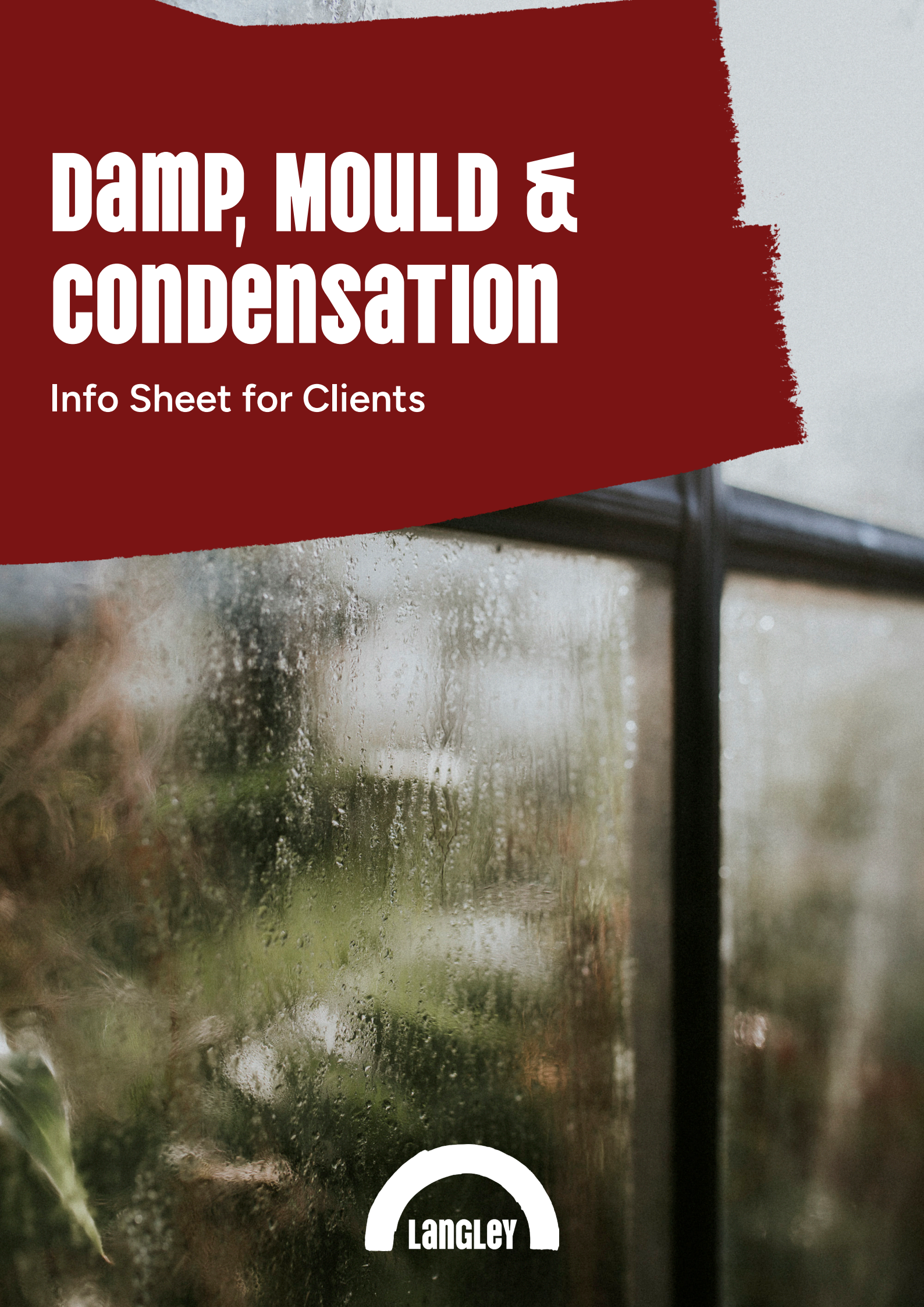
Damp, Mould & Condensation

Info Sheet for Clients



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Four main types of dampness

There are four main types of dampness that can affect your home

Rising damp

This is caused by rising water from the ground. It will normally rise no more than 600mm (2 feet) from the ground level.

It is usually recognised as showing a 'tide mark' low down on walls. You may even see white fluffy areas which are ground salts.

If this is your issue, please report it to us and an inspection will be raised to identify an appropriate course of action.

(NB – Black mould will rarely be seen where there is rising damp. This is because ground salts carried in the rising damp prevent mould growth.)

Penetrating damp

This type of damp is found on external walls, chimney breasts and on ceilings too, if there is a defect with the roof. This type of damp is usually due to a defect outside i.e., there is a blocked or broken drain, pointing on brickwork, cracked render, a breached damp proof course, leaking gutters or pipes and issues with overflows.

Penetrating damp is normally defined as a damp patch and usually wet to the touch.

If you think you have penetrating damp, please report it to us and we will arrange for an inspector to visit your property.

(NB - These areas rarely contain black mould, due to the amount of wetness and salts being contained.)

Black mould

High levels of moisture in one room (such as the kitchen or bathroom) can result in condensation occurring in other parts of the house, especially in cold rooms.

Black mould is frequently seen in this type of dampness.

Mould spores are naked to the eye. They are always present in the atmosphere, outdoors and indoors. They only become visible when they land on a suitable surface and multiply.

Dampness due to defective plumbing

Leaks from defective water or waste pipes, especially in kitchens and bathrooms, can cause areas of damp.

The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and will remain that way regardless of the weather conditions.

Please contact us if you are experiencing these issues and we will arrange for an inspection to be carried out.

(NB - Black mould with rarely occur from this type of dampness due to it being too wet and the chemicals that can be found in waste water).

Condensation

This is the most common cause of dampness by far, being experienced by tenants and results in a large number of enquiries to the council. Condensation is caused when water vapour or moisture is created in your home and comes into contact with colder surfaces i.e., windows, walls, glazed tiles etc. Water droplets, if left, will soak into paintwork, go stale and create the ideal condition for black mould spores to form.

Condensation usually occurs during colder months and is mainly found in corners on walls and ceilings or areas where there is little air circulation. For example, in built in cupboards, behind wardrobes and beds or on boxed or bagged items especially if they are against external walls.

What does mould need to survive? Just four things...

1. Food – wallpaper, emulsion paints
2. Moisture – obtained by condensation water droplets
3. A suitable temperature – supplied by the householder
4. Oxygen – found in your home

Condensation...what is it?

Condensation is the most common cause of dampness in buildings. It forms when warm moist air meets cold surfaces.

As the weather turns colder, condensation can form more easily.

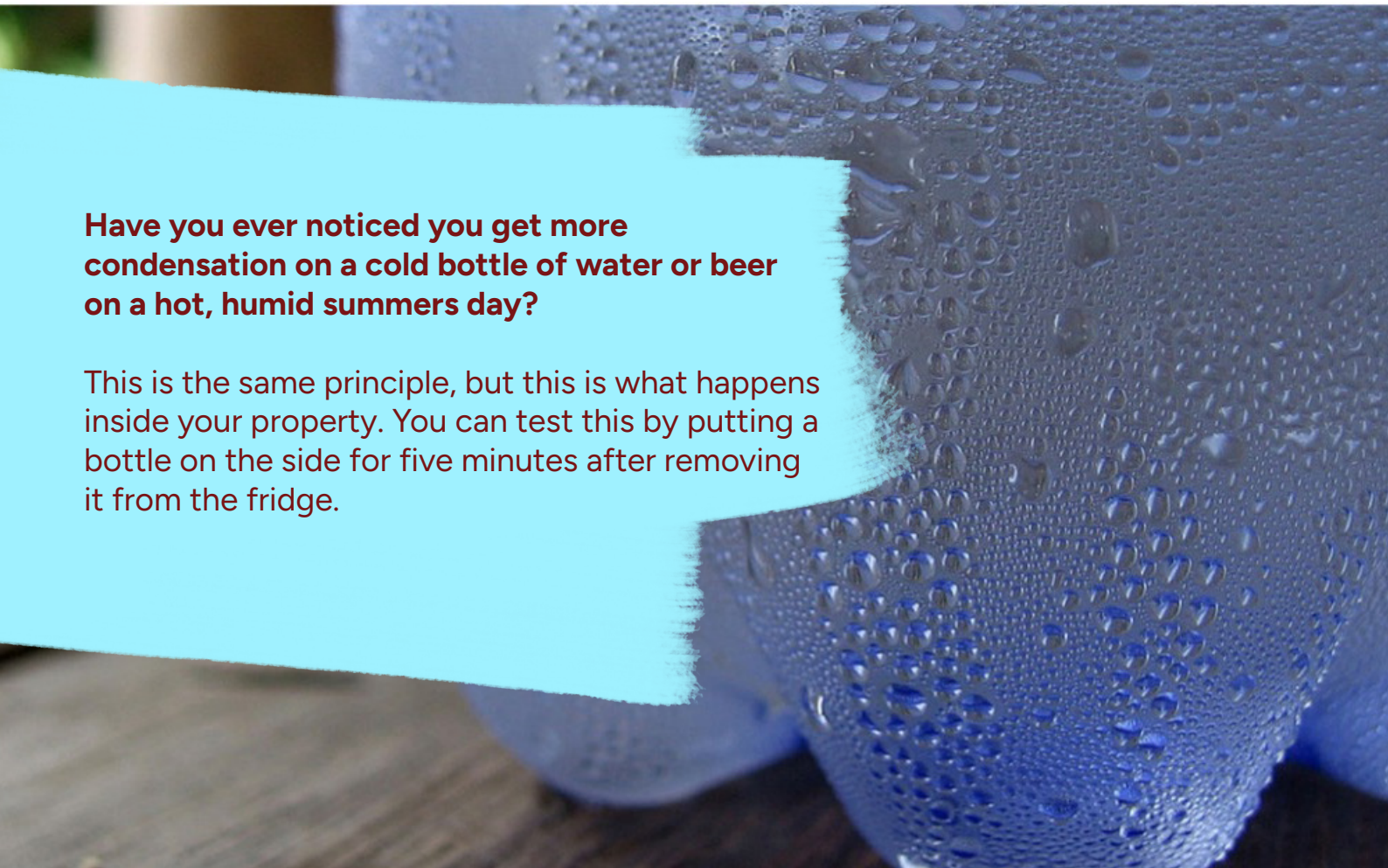
October to March is referred to as 'condensation season', due to the significant rise in related issues. Over the warmer months, these issues drastically reduce.

There is always some moisture in the air, even though it cannot be seen, it is there. Have you noticed when cooking toast, bacon or onions, it doesn't take long before the smells to go right through the house. What you are smelling is tiny droplets of moisture carrying the flavours around your property.

Condensation is mainly seen on windows, more noticeably in the bedroom when you wake up on cold mornings, on external walls and/ or places of restricted air movement such as in corners of rooms.

Also, behind items of furniture which are placed against walls and in wardrobes. The presence of condensation is often first seen in the development of mould on walls and ceilings. Are your windows surrounds showing mould, like the image below? If areas of your property look like this, it would be an almost certain fact that it is NOT a defect in the property itself, but more of a condensation issue.

Problems that can be caused by excessive condensation



Have you ever noticed you get more condensation on a cold bottle of water or beer on a hot, humid summers day?

This is the same principle, but this is what happens inside your property. You can test this by putting a bottle on the side for five minutes after removing it from the fridge.

Dampness caused by too much condensation can lead to mould growing on window frames, walls, ceilings, furniture and even tenants' clothes. It may also lead to the build-up of dust mites which may affect your health.

First steps to combat condensation

- Open curtains and wipe dry windows and windowsills every morning. This also includes any surfaces in the bathroom or kitchen that may have become wet.
- Wring the cloth or sponge in the sink rather than drying it on a radiator, otherwise you will restart the cycle with the water vapour going straight back into the air.

First steps against mould growth.

Treat the mould in the property with a good quality mould remover and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

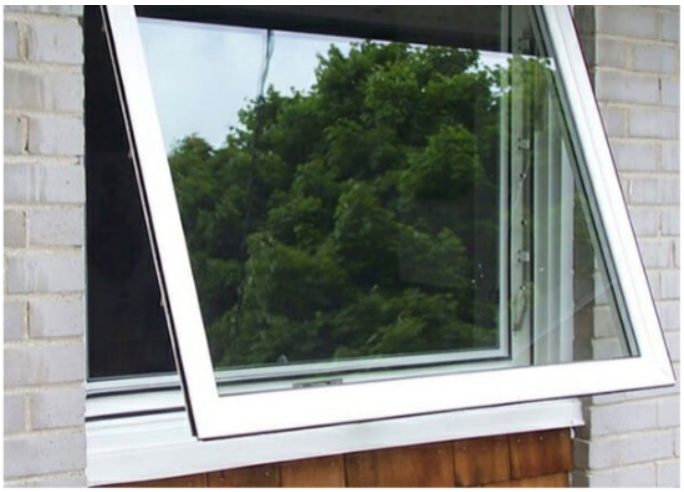
The three main factors that cause condensation in a property are:

- Lack of heat
- Lack of ventilation
- Excess Moisture

Lack of Heat

Using your heating for just a couple of hours in the morning and evening is likely to cause a build-up of condensation due to temperature difference and is also not best practice.

Does your home go cold after an hour or so after the heating is turned off? This is due to not warming the fabric of the building enough. Keeping the heating on a lower heat setting all day in cold weather (i.e.16 degrees) will help to control condensation. It will also be more economical than running the heating on full blast for short periods. If you cannot heat all rooms then leave doors open to allow heat to enter them and to allow air to circulate.



Lack of Ventilation

Ventilation dramatically helps to reduce condensation by removing moist, stale air from your home and replacing it with drier fresher air from outside.

Cross ventilating your home, by opening a small window upstairs and one downstairs on opposite sides of the property, will allow for drier, fresh air to circulate throughout the whole house. Cross ventilating should be carried out daily for approximately 30 mins.

(NB - Make sure that accessible windows will not cause a problem with security and remember to close them when you go out.)

Ventilate your kitchen when washing up and cooking. Using the extractor fan (if you have one) or opening a window, will make a huge difference.

Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for a minimum of 15 minutes after use, either by extractor fan or opening a small window. Extractors are cheap to run and very effective in combating condensation.

Curtains throughout the property (this includes blinds) should be open during daytime to allow air to the windows and frames.

Excess Moisture

The illustration below is based on 2 people sharing a property. Imagine the increase if there are 6 people in the property breathing, bathing, drying clothes, washing, and cooking.

Activity	Extra Moisture
Two people at home for 16 hours	1.5 Litres
Taking a bath or shower	1.0 Litres
Drying clothes indoors	4.0 Litres
Cooking and using a kettle	3.0 Litres
Washing up	1.0 Litres
So, everyday activities add	11.0 Litres

- Hang washing outside to dry if possible or hang it in the bathroom with the window open or extractor fan on, keeping the door shut.
- DO NOT be tempted to use radiators for drying clothes on or in front of. A layer of clothes draped over a radiator will greatly reduce the radiators efficiency in heating up a room.
- Always cook with pan lids on and adjust the heat once the water is boiling. This will also help to reduce energy consumption.
- Only boil the water required when using a kettle. This will also help to reduce energy consumption.

If you have trickle vents on windows, keep them open day and night (especially in bedrooms). Trickle vents are small plastic openers usually at the top of the window frames like the picture on the right.

- When filling the bath, it is far safer to run the cold water first and then add hot water. It also reduces steam by a staggering 90%.
- Keep bathroom and kitchen doors closed when in use.
- ALWAYS LEAVE EXTRACTOR FANS SWITCHED ON AT THE ISOLATOR SWITCH.
- DO NOT overfill wardrobes and cupboards as this will lead to mould due to a lack of air circulation.

DO YOU HAVE PETS?

Did you know pets also contribute to high moisture levels?

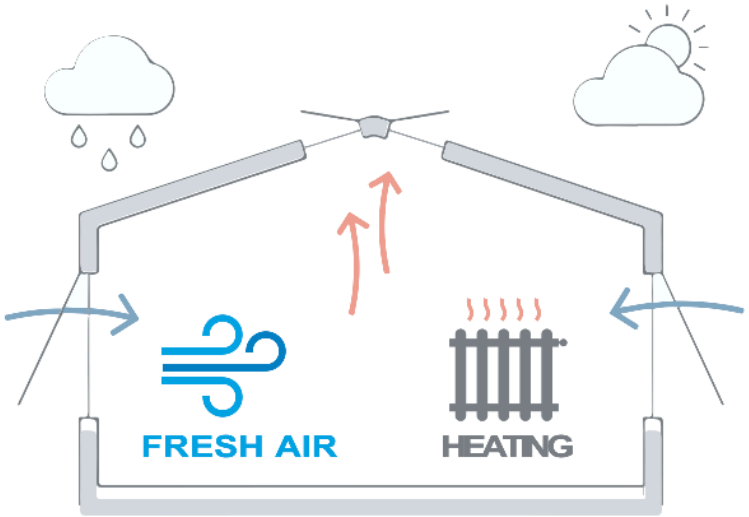
Fish tanks, if not covered over properly, will give off large amounts of moisture. When you top up your fish tank, do you wonder where the water has gone?

IF YOU ARE GETTING THIS ON YOUR WINDOWS, THEN YOU ARE SUFFERING WITH HIGH LEVELS OF MOISTURE.

If you have followed the guidance and advice outlined in this leaflet, and you're still experiencing problems please contact your housing officer and we will arrange for an inspection of your property.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are not sure what is causing the damp and mould in your home, please contact your housing office to arrange an inspection.

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