



# Winter Ready

## Advice and Tips



**Platform is committed to ensuring your home is safe and well maintained.**

This handy guide shares some useful advice and tips to help keep you and your home safe, getting ready for winter and what support and help is available.

# Preparing for winter

As the temperature drops there are things you can do to prepare for the colder months.

## Pipes and Plumbing

**Cold weather can freeze pipes.** Putting the heating on, even at low temperatures and regularly running water through your taps can help prevent frozen pipes.

If you are away from home, it's a good idea to let your central heating come on for regular, short intervals. If you have a burst pipe, turn the water off and contact us.

### Do you know where your stop tap is?

A stop tap is designed to control the flow of mains cold water into your home. When you turn it in a clockwise direction the water supply will shut off.

Stop taps are usually found in kitchens, below the sink unit or in the bathroom. It's important that you know where your stop tap is in case of burst water pipes or leaks – don't leave it until you have an emergency.

Our **Maintaining the Plumbing in your Home video**, which can be found on our website, shows you how to find and use a stop tap, replace washers on a tap, unblock drains, replace a toilet seat and toilet handles and how to isolate a leak.

## Gas and Central Heating

We carry out an annual service on your boiler to ensure that it's operating efficiently and safely. Throughout the year, you may need to repressurise your boiler or alter the thermostat.

Our **Maintaining your Gas and Central Heating video** on our website shows you how to reset your boiler, bleed a radiator, what to do if you smell gas, how to repressurise your boiler and how to use your thermostat.

## Thawing a frozen condensate pipe

During very cold weather, your boiler may stop working due to a frozen condensate pipe. This is one of the most commonly reported faults during the winter period.

If your condensate pipe does freeze there are few simple steps you can take to fix it.



1. Turn off your boiler. This is for safety and to prevent any further condensation building up in the pipe.
2. Locate your condensate pipe and frozen section. This is usually a plastic pipe, located on your exterior wall.
3. To defrost the pipe, you can try the following:
  - Use a hot water bottle or towel soaked in hot water to wrap around the frozen section. Leave this in position to gradually thaw the pipe.
  - Gradually pour hot water over the pipe. The hot water will help melt the frozen section. It is important to do this safely and slowly to avoid damage to the pipe and to avoid any injury to yourself. **DO NOT** use boiling water.
4. Once you've applied heat to the frozen pipe, and water is flowing again you can then restart your boiler.

### Warning

- Do not rush thawing the pipe by using water that is too hot.
- Always make sure that you are standing at ground level when pouring water onto it – do not climb to a higher level to reach frozen pipes.
- Never disconnect the pipe.
- Always use suitable protection for your hands when handling hot water.
- Be careful where you pour the water as it may freeze and become a slip hazard.



## Electrics and lighting

A power cut can happen at any time, it may be due to weather conditions or external works outside of your home. Our **Maintaining the Electrical and Lighting in your Home video**, available on our website, advises what to do in a power cut or if your fuse board trips and when to call us, it also shows you how to replace a light bulb.

You can watch all of our handy videos and find out more on our website – [Platformhg.com/your-repair-and-maintenance-responsibilities](https://www.platformhg.com/your-repair-and-maintenance-responsibilities)

## Tips on keeping warm and saving energy around the home.

- The recommended temperature for sitting rooms and bathrooms is 18 – 21°C.
- Turning your thermostat down a single degree can save on your heating bill.
- Do not place your sofa or large furniture close to your radiators as it can stop heat reaching the room.
- If you have thermostatic radiator valves use them in the rooms that you are using and turn them down or off in rooms you are not using.
- All rooms should be heated occasionally to avoid the risk of condensation and mould growth forming.
- Curtains and blinds help keep the heat in, close them as soon as it starts to get dark.
- Using draught excluders at doors keeps the heat in the room.
- Unplug your devices – your phone, tablet or TV still use energy on standby.

## Feeling chilly?

- Put on an extra layer of clothing – an extra jumper or a pair of socks can make all the difference and save you money.
- Use a higher tog duvet on your bed to avoid using heating overnight.
- Why not try a hot water bottle? Use leftover water from the kettle when making a hot drink to fill it up.
- Get some extra blankets and keep them near to the bed to put on if you feel cold during the night.

You can find out more about saving energy around the home on our website: [Platformhg.com/energy-advice](https://www.platformhg.com/energy-advice)



# Damp and Condensation Mould

Helpful information for controlling condensation mould in your home.

## Where does mould come from?

Mould is a type of fungus and is part of our natural environment. When it lives outside it helps break down the fallen leaves in Autumn and other organic materials such as dead trees. It is invisible and it floats through the air.

It can come into your home on your clothes, bags, shoes and even on pets! It needs moisture to grow and reproduce so any excess moisture in your home (such as condensation) will make it grow.

Keeping your home free from too much condensation can be tricky as there are a lot of things to think about such as the moisture you create in cooking, washing and bathing which can produce around 24 pints of water a day!

Regularly using the heating and ventilation systems is important to reduce the effects of damp and condensation mould.



## It can also help if you:



Cover pans when you're cooking.



Wipe condensation from shower screens and bathroom walls.



Use extractor fans when showering or cooking and for a short period after, until the steam has cleared.



Dry clothes outdoors or in a properly vented dryer. If that's not possible, in a heated and ventilated room, such as the bathroom (and remember to put the extractor fan on!).



Open windows when bathing and cooking - if it's cold outside just open your window a little bit - every little helps!



Open windows regularly, it's a quick way to let the warm moist air out.



Leave a 10cm gap between furniture and external walls to keep the air flowing, remember any gap is better than none.



Close internal doors when you're cooking or showering.

## We play our part too:

As your landlord it is our responsibility to make sure your home is free from defects. If your home has damp and mould we will fix it if it is caused by:

- A problem with the structure of your home.
- Inadequate ventilation e.g. broken or missing fans, windows that can't be opened.
- Leaky internal pipes.
- Broken boilers and heating systems.
- Cracked walls or rotten window frames.
- Leaking roofs, missing roof tiles or faulty guttering.
- We will also replace damaged plaster, skirting, boards, and flooring.
- A reasonable level of loft insulation.

If you have problems being able to do any of the steps we mention, such as your extractor fan isn't working, your windows don't open, your heating isn't working or there are other issues that may prevent

you being able to help manage the risk of condensation in your home then please report them to us as soon as possible.

## Further advice and guidance

You can find out more on our website [platformhg.com/damp-and-condensation-mould](https://platformhg.com/damp-and-condensation-mould)

## How do I report my damp and condensation mould concerns?

Our online reporting form is the best way for you to report any damp and/or condensation mould concerns you may have.

### Please go to the Your Platform

Visit [your.platformhg.com](https://your.platformhg.com), our customer portal, to complete the form.

You can also call us on **0333 200 7304**.

HELP  
REDUCE MOULDY



### Help reduce Mouldy

We have recently added a **Help Reduce Mouldy video** to our website which shares helpful tips for controlling condensation and mould in your home. Visit [platformhg.com/damp-and-condensation-mould](https://platformhg.com/damp-and-condensation-mould) to take a look.

**As soon as you spot a problem with condensation, damp or mould – follow our tips and see if things improve. If a damp and mould problem doesn't go away and you're worried about it getting worse – report it to us.**





## Keeping you and your home safe

It is our number one priority to keep you and your family safe. To enable us to do this we have legal responsibilities to ensure that we carry out specific safety and compliance checks on your home and within communal spaces.

### This is work that must be carried out and may include:

- Asbestos surveys and condition inspections
- Electrical testing
- Fire safety
- Legionella risk assessment and monitoring
- Lift servicing (where applicable)
- Radon risk assessment and monitoring
- Gas, oil and solid fuel system servicing
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detector inspection and testing
- Statutory or health and safety inspections

### What can I do to help?

It's vitally important that you let us in to your home to do safety and compliance checks and any necessary essential work so that we can help to keep you, your family and neighbours safe.

You can find out more on our website [platformhg.com/keeping-you-and-your-home-safe](https://platformhg.com/keeping-you-and-your-home-safe)



Dan Worthington Property Care Gas Engineer giving top tips on how to run a heating system efficiently, the importance of gas safety and giving us access to your home for your annual gas service.

# We're here to help

If you're struggling with your finances, we're here to help.

## Talk to us

Our Successful Tenancies Team can assist with all aspects of money, budgeting, grants and benefits advice including:

- Full benefits check to see what benefits you might be entitled to and help to apply.
- Advice and guidance on Universal Credit.
- Budgeting tips to help manage your money.
- Signposting and referrals to specialist debt and energy support organisations.

You can find out more and complete our online referral form by visiting our website - [platformhg.com/money-benefits-advice-job-support](https://platformhg.com/money-benefits-advice-job-support) or by calling 0333 200 7304.



## Platform's Wellbeing Fund

Our Wellbeing Fund is open to all Platform customers who are experiencing financial hardship and need short-term support.

The Fund can help cover essential food and energy costs, especially if you are waiting for your first benefit payment.

You can also apply for help to purchase an essential household item, along with additional and special project support.

Visit our website - [platformhg.com/platform-wellbeing-fund](https://platformhg.com/platform-wellbeing-fund) to find out more and apply online or by calling 0333 200 7304.



## Are you covered?

### What would you do if you lost everything because of a fire or flood in your home?

As your landlord, it's our responsibility to insure the building in which you live. Buildings insurance does not cover your personal possessions. It's your responsibility to arrange home contents insurance to cover your belongings from accidental damage and fire, flooding and theft.

No matter how careful you are, accidents can happen and there's always a risk that your belongings, such as carpets, furniture, curtains and costly electrical items could be damaged and need replacing.

Visit our website for further advice and guidance - [Platformhg.com/home-insurance](https://Platformhg.com/home-insurance)





## Contact us

For all general enquiries, non-emergency repairs and any damp and condensation mould concerns, the quickest and easiest way to get in touch is through our digital services.

### Your Platform customer portal

If you are not already registered, simply visit: [your.platformmhg.com/register-tenancy](https://your.platformmhg.com/register-tenancy)

You will need your tenancy reference number, date of birth and email address.

### Platform website

Visit: [platformmhg.com](https://platformmhg.com)

- Speak to our Chatbot 24/7
- Live chat with our customer advisors
- Complete online enquiry forms, including non-urgent repairs, changing repairs appointments and reporting ASB.

### Facebook

Visit: [facebook.com/PlatformHousing](https://facebook.com/PlatformHousing)

If you don't do digital, you can still call us on **0333 200 7304**. Call waiting times can vary, so if your call is not an emergency you can request a call back.

## Emergency Repairs

Emergency repairs can be reported 24/7, 365 days of the year by calling: **0333 200 7304**. We aim to respond and attend to all emergency repairs within **24 hours**.

During the winter months we see an increase in emergency call outs. An emergency repair is classed as something that is a threat to life or property and includes the following:

- A complete loss of water supply;
- Major leaks which cannot be contained;
- A blocked toilet where there is only one toilet in your home;
- A complete power failure;
- An unsecured home, for example, external doors or windows broken or damage to the actual structure of the house;
- Failed smoke or CO alarms;
- A complete loss of heating from 1 November until 1 April.

