

The Letting Experts Guide To...

# Property Standards

# Understanding Property Standards

Expectations around property standards have been evolving for some time, and the Renters' Rights Act formalises how issues such as property condition, damp and mould, and ongoing maintenance are assessed in the private rented sector. The focus is not just on outcomes, but on how issues are identified, investigated, and managed over time.

This does not mean that landlords are automatically at fault when problems are raised. The new framework places greater emphasis on understanding cause, taking reasonable and proportionate action, and being able to evidence decisions and responses. Responsibility is assessed through evidence, communication, and response timelines, rather than individual issues viewed in isolation.

Maintaining clear documentation, carrying out appropriate inspections, and responding constructively to issues all play an important role in reducing risk and avoiding escalation. Early intervention and realistic timescales help demonstrate good-faith management and support clear decision-making if standards are questioned.

This guide explains how property standards are assessed under the Renters' Rights Act, where landlord responsibility typically sits, and how issues such as damp, mould, and repairs are considered. Its aim is to clarify what is expected and help landlords manage their properties confidently as regulatory expectations continue to evolve.



## The Decent Homes Standard

The Decent Homes Standard has historically applied to social housing, but under the Renters' Rights Act it will be extended into the private rented sector for the first time. Its purpose is to establish a clear baseline for what is considered a safe and decent rented home.

This does not introduce a requirement for cosmetic upgrades or modernisation. The standard is focused on basic condition, safety, and usability, rather than appearance or design. At a high level, a property is expected to meet four core tests:

- Condition – the home should be in a reasonable state of repair, with key elements such as the structure, windows, doors and installations maintained so they function properly
- Thermal comfort – the property should be capable of being kept at a reasonable temperature, with appropriate heating and insulation for the type of building. This is expected to align with existing and future Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.
- Facilities – tenants should have access to usable kitchen and bathroom facilities, suitable for everyday living
- Hazards – the home should be free from serious health and safety risks identified through established housing safety standards

The Decent Homes Standard is assessed on a property-by-property basis. What is reasonable for a modern apartment may differ from what is reasonable for an older or character property. Age alone does not make a home non-compliant, and existing features are not required to be replaced if they remain in good condition and function as intended.

Assessments are typically triggered where concerns are raised, such as a tenant complaint or information already held by a local authority. Where a review takes place, councils consider evidence, property condition and, where necessary, inspection findings to determine whether the standard is met.

The government has confirmed that all rented properties will be expected to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2035, allowing landlords to plan and prioritise improvements over time rather than requiring immediate, blanket upgrades.



## Damp and Mould Responsibilities

Landlords have a duty to take reports of damp and mould seriously and to address risks where they arise. The focus is on investigating concerns, understanding what's causing them, and taking appropriate action once aware. This reflects growing awareness of the health impacts associated with prolonged exposure to damp and mould.

Damp and mould can develop for a range of reasons, including building defects, inadequate ventilation or insulation, leaks, or how a property is used day to day. Establishing whether an issue is structural, environmental, or behavioural forms part of how concerns are assessed. Landlords are not expected to prevent every instance of condensation or moisture, but they are expected to investigate reports, identify the cause, and respond appropriately based on the circumstances of the property.

The extension of Awaab's Law strengthens expectations around action where damp and mould present a risk to health. While detailed regulations and timeframes are still to be confirmed, landlords will be expected to act within reasonable and defined periods once a significant hazard has been identified.

A report or complaint does not automatically mean fault. Where concerns are reviewed, councils and other bodies typically consider the wider picture, including:

- the condition of the property
- how the landlord responded once aware
- what investigations were carried out
- what steps were taken to resolve the issue
- the quality of records and communication

Responsibility is best understood as a duty to investigate and manage issues properly, rather than an assumption of blame. Clear evidence of how concerns were handled plays an important role in how outcomes are assessed.



## Reasonable Timescales

One of the most common concerns around property standards and enforcement is the assumption that landlords will be expected to meet fixed or unrealistic repair deadlines. At this stage, the Act does not impose a single, universal timeframe for resolving every issue. Instead, what is considered reasonable depends on the specific circumstances of the property and the nature of issue being raised.

Reasonableness is typically judged by looking at factors such as the severity of the problem, whether the property remains safe to occupy, how quickly access can be obtained, and the availability of appropriate contractors. An urgent health or safety risk will naturally require faster action than a non-urgent repair, but even then, the expectation is not instant resolution at all costs.

Where immediate repairs are not possible, the focus is on whether appropriate steps are taken promptly. This may include interim measures, temporary works, or clear communication with the tenant while permanent works are arranged.

These expectations reflect existing housing enforcement principles and the approach already applied under Awaab's Law in social housing. The government has confirmed that further consultation will take place and that additional guidance and timescales for the private rented sector will be issued in due course. Any future requirements are expected to take account of the practical differences between private and social housing.



## Landlord Responsibilities

Landlords are responsible for the overall condition and safety of their property, including the structure, fabric, and essential installations. This responsibility sits alongside the expectation that properties are monitored and maintained in a way that allows issues to be identified and addressed appropriately. Regular inspections and proportionate oversight play an important role in meeting these responsibilities. They provide an opportunity to identify emerging issues, manage maintenance proactively, and maintain an accurate record of a property's condition over time.

Landlords are not responsible for controlling how a tenant uses the property day to day. Where concerns arise, responsibility is assessed by looking at whether reasonable steps were taken to investigate the issue, understand the cause, and respond appropriately, rather than by attributing fault automatically.

Clear and consistent records support this process. Inspection notes, photographs where relevant, records of reported issues, repair timelines, and correspondence with contractors or managing agents all help demonstrate how the property has been monitored and how decisions have been made.

Where a managing agent is appointed, day-to-day property management and record-keeping will typically sit with the agent, in line with the terms of the management agreement. However, landlords retain overall responsibility for compliance and may wish to review whether their current arrangements provide appropriate oversight and assurance. Where no agent is used, having clear inspection routines and documented processes in place becomes particularly important.

# Quick Answers to Common Concerns

## **Does a report of damp or mould automatically mean I'm at fault?**

No. A report alone does not determine liability. What matters is how the issue is investigated, managed, and recorded.

## **Do I need to upgrade my property immediately to meet the Decent Homes Standard?**

No. The standard focuses on safety and basic condition, not cosmetic upgrades. All rented properties are expected to meet the standard by 2035, allowing time to plan improvements.

## **Are there fixed deadlines for repairs under the Act?**

No. There are currently no universal repair deadlines for private landlords. What is considered reasonable depends on the circumstances of the issue and the property.

## **What do councils look at if concerns are raised?**

They consider evidence such as how quickly the issue was acknowledged, whether inspections took place, what action was taken, and how well this was documented.

## **Does this apply differently to older or character properties?**

Yes. Properties are assessed individually. Older features do not need to be replaced if they are safe, functional, and properly maintained.

## **How can I reduce my risk?**

Carry out regular inspections, respond promptly to concerns, keep clear records, and communicate openly with tenants.

A photograph of a vase filled with white flowers, likely baby's breath, sitting on a wooden surface. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a window or a light-colored wall. The overall tone is calm and natural.

# Next **Steps** For Landlords

Staying organised is one of the most effective ways to manage property standards under the Act. As expectations become more clearly defined, councils increasingly assess compliance through evidence, records, and how issues are handled over time.

This starts with understanding the condition of your property and keeping documentation up to date. Regular inspections, clear notes, photographs where appropriate, and records of any repairs or investigations help demonstrate how the property is monitored and maintained.

Where concerns such as damp, mould, or disrepair arise, prompt investigation and clear communication **matter**. Recording when issues were reported, what steps were taken, and how decisions were reached helps show that concerns were managed responsibly and proportionately.

With changes to the Decent Homes Standard and the extension of Awaab's Law, some landlords may also wish to review whether their current management arrangements remain suitable. For those who self-manage, this may mean reviewing processes and record-keeping. For others, professional management can provide additional oversight and reassurance as regulatory expectations continue to evolve.

If you're unsure how the standards outlined in this guide apply to your own property, your local Letting Expert can help you understand what's relevant, what's low risk, and whether any steps are worth considering now.



The **Future** of Lettings

This information is correct at the time of writing; however, as the Renters' Rights Act progresses through parliament, it remains subject to change. We recommend seeking legal advice from an authorised professional before making any decisions based on this guide.

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