



EXETER HOMES TRUST BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2021

AN INSIGHT INTO THE PROBLEMS OF CONDENSATION

'Buildings don't breathe, people do.'

It is said that humans emit just under a litre of water vapour a day. This, coupled with all the processes of modern life that involve water being used in the home, means that as the Winter draws on and cooler temperatures arrive, condensation in buildings, particularly older ones, can become an increasingly evident.

The issues arise when warm, moist air hits a cold surface, perhaps a cold window or cold wall. Kitchens, bathrooms and north facing walls are often at risk. Many buildings in the almshouse system are much older, sometimes hundreds of years older than their new counterparts and don't have cavities or, for that matter, insulation, and the battle against condensation is often hard fought.

Raising the temperature of the surface of the inside face of the walls may help, so simply leave the heating on longer. Cracking open a window when washing up or showering can work wonders too but remember to close the window again when you are finished to keep the heat in. Extractor fans should be used in line with why they are installed. So often we will find them switched off "to save electricity". Make sure your tumble dryers are well vented to the outside and that drip tanks on condensing dryers are emptied regularly.

Wet washing left to dry indoors is totally counterproductive and should not be encouraged. Dehumidifiers are worth a try for a temporary or urgent problem but here you are tackling symptoms rather than causes.

Almshouse beneficiaries should be aware that keeping a building warm and dry is still the best remedy in preventing condensation

Fire Safety Inspections

As part of Exeter Homes Trust's ongoing safety maintenance, we have invited Devon and Somerset Fire and rescue to carry out inspections of all properties belonging to the Trust. Appointments will be made ahead of time, to allow the inspectors access. These are a best practice requirement and form part of the conditions of your letter of appointment.

Welfare checks

In these difficult and challenging times isolation can be distressing. As part of the Trust's ongoing support and the conditions of your licence, welfare checks will be carried out over the coming weeks. This will give us to meet and discuss an opportunity to discuss any concerns or ongoing issues that you may have, observing social distancing.

Telephone calls to Contractors

In this current climate, all reports of faults or problems are dealt with according to their urgency. Once allocated the contractor will then deal with them as necessary.

We are receiving ever increasing calls from our contractors to report that residents are chasing them up directly. This is not acceptable and causes confusion and Exeter Homes Trust is of the opinion that if a resident makes contact with a contractor direct then they, the resident, will be responsible for the bill. All enquiries must come through the office on 01392 421162, and except in dire emergency should be reported within office hours.



Age UK in collaboration with Almshouse Charities

Age UK is the country's leading charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life. The age UK network includes about 130 local Age UK partner Charities in England. Like Almshouse Charities, local Age UK's are independent: they vary in services they offer and their resources. Information from Age UK can be found by calling 01392 202092 or emailing info@ageukexeter.org.uk

Advantages of links and collaboration with local Age UK's

A study commissioned and funded by Age UK with support from the Almshouse Association found many potential advantages for Almshouse Residents, their local communities, and the charities, including:

- Almshouse residents accessing PAID FOR or FREE Age UK services (e.g Cleaning and shopping) helping to maintain independence.
- Age UK's supporting Almshouse residents with money management and bills (including utilities) and providing benefits advice.

Parking

Exeter Homes Trust has parking available at 2 of its sites, Livery Dole and Culverland Road. This is accessed on a first come first served basis and no spaces are allocated to any one person. Residents are advised that there is also on road parking available throughout the city and parking permits are available through Exeter City Council.

Feeding wildlife

We would ask all residents to refrain from feeding the local wildlife except in the case of the birds when fed from a squirrel proof feeder. Excess food stuffs is encouraging seagulls and squirrels to congregate and in some cases nest in the roof spaces. This is not only a nuisance but causes damage to the integrity of the buildings. Signage has already gone up at Atwill Palmer and we would ask that residents in other locations follow suite. We ask that all of our residents are mindful of this situation.

COVID-19 Third Phase

During these unprecedented times and through the third phase of this universal curfew with COVID-19, Exeter Homes Trust has maintained a high standard of care to all its residents. All jobs reported have been dealt with in a timely manner and in accordance with their level of urgency. We would like to remind everyone that although the office is manned daily, we do not provide an Emergency Service. Out of hours calls will only be dealt with if they concern a risk to life or property, including gas or water leaks or power failures. Anything else will be dealt with during office hours and as mentioned, according to its level of urgency.

Exeter Homes Trust does not have a team of contractors on call 24/7 but relies on a panel of local contractors from in and around the Exeter area, all of whom run their own businesses, and are aware of the limits placed on visiting customers at this time. Please bear this in mind.

TV Licensing

Exeter Homes Trust has tendered the cost of a concessionary TV Licence at £7.50, per annum, for each of the 143 No. Almshouses, pursuant to Accommodation for Residential Care (ARC).

As you will be aware the rules/regulations/guidance applied to TV licensing changed on 1st August 2020.

Exeter Homes Trust's declaration to TV Licensing: "The majority of our residents are retired and/or aged 60 or over and not working in paid employment for more than 15 hours a week or disabled inasmuch their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired, or they have a mental disorder, or they are physically and substantially disabled by illness, or by any impairment present from birth or otherwise." We have yet to hear from TV licensing with their response.

The annual **TV licence** fee is to increase by £1.50, from £157.50 to £159, from 1 April 2021. It is the final - and lowest - annual increase under a deal between the BBC and the government that has seen the fee rise in line with inflation every year since 2017.