Phil Ellis
PROPERTY
DEVELOPMENT

Your house was built in the 1890's, before cavity walls were invented. Consequently your exterior walls will be cold in Winter. I don't wish to sound patronizing. I am simply pointing this out, as there are certain things you can do, to avoid a build-up of moisture/condensation on the walls.

The following is just advice. Please shout if you ever have any concerns, or simply want be to pop round to sort a problem out.

Condensation:
There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If air gets cold, it cannot hold all the moisture produced by everyday activities and some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeable on windows on a cold morning. This is condensation. It can also be seen on mirrors when you have a bath or shower, and on cold surfaces such as tiles or cold walls. Look for condensation in your home. It can appear on or near windows, in corners and, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Condensation forms on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air.

Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden window frames. Your home has loft insulation, double glazing, draught-proofed doors and a modern, condensing boiler. Even with all this, condensation will still form and left alone, black spores can appear. These can be wiped away, using an anti-bacterial spray.

Reducing condensation:
You will need to take proper steps to deal with condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple things you should do straight away. Dry your windows and windowsills every morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet.

Causes of condensation:
There are four main factors that cause condensation:
>Too much moisture produced in the home
>Lack of ventilation
>Cold surfaces
>Insufficient temperature control

All of these factors need to be considered to tackle a condensation problem. Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some. One person asleep adds half a pint of water to the air overnight and at twice that rate when active during the day.

To give you some idea as to how much extra water we produce, here are a few illustrations:
>2 people at home can produce = 3 pints
>Washing dishes = 2 pints
>A bath or shower = 2 pints
>Drying clothes indoors = 9 pints
>Cooking and use of a kettle = 6 pints

Total moisture added in one day = 26 pints

Help reduce condensation by:
>Hanging your washing outside to dry if at all possible, or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open with the extractor fan on.
>Don't be tempted to put it on radiators or in front of a radiant heater.
>Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled.
>Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.
>When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90% which leads to condensation.
>Using a dehumidifier can reduce moisture levels. If you would like one, I am more than happy to prove one for you.

Increase levels of ventilation by:
>Open windows whenever possible and ensure any vents are open to allow air to circulate. >Ventilate your kitchen when cooking, washing up or washing by hand. A window slightly open is as good as one open. Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window.
>Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night.
>Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house.
>To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, allow air to circulate round them.
>Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls, and where possible place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.
>Pull shelves away from the backs of wardrobes and cupboards.
>Never overfill wardrobes and cupboards, as it restricts air circulation.

Temperature control:
Warm air holds more moisture than cooler air which is more likely to deposit droplets of condensation round your home. Air is like a sponge; the warmer it is, the more moisture it will hold. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. That means that it is better to have a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house.

Your radiators have thermostatic valves. When a room gets up to temperature, they turn the radiator off. Turning them down to 3-4 and running your heating continuously during colder months will not increase your heating bill dramatically, but will reduce condensation and give you a nice, cosy house to come back to.

Please always ensure that your boiler is running at approx. 1.7bar pressure and that your radiator valves are working. If they're not, please let me know. **When the whole house is warmer, condensation becomes much less likely.**