



**Ridgewater
Energy**



Dorset Healthy Homes Guide for Frontline Workers

How to help your patients achieve a warm, healthy and comfortable home

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Sources:


Age UK
 Foundations.uk
 Greener Practice
 British Medical Journal
 Institute of Health Equity.org
 Public Health England
 (Office of Health Improvement and Disparities - OHID)
 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

Introduction

Poor property conditions have a detrimental effect on both physical and mental health. This has recently been widely documented and is resulting in more regulation to make sure homes are maintained properly and are warm and safe.

By working together, we can do more to help address some of the causes of poor health that put strain on the services we provide and the health, wellbeing and quality of life of those we assist.

Around 2.4 million households in the UK are in fuel poverty and struggle to afford to properly heat their home – nearly one in ten properties. Studies show that living in a cold home increases the likelihood of respiratory infections by up to 30%, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and children and also worsens cardiovascular problems, resulting in an increase in hospital admissions.



Ridgewater Energy, who are experts in the energy efficiency sector, have worked extensively with Local Authorities, charities, social prescribers, landlords and letting agents throughout Dorset.

Not sure what is available and what someone may may qualify for, please contact us, we can help!



www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk



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This booklet aims to help those working in healthcare to identify people that may be suffering due to poor living conditions and provide information to help them to, for example:

- Improve insulation
- Improve heating
- Reduce damp and mould
- Repair damaged property structure

We hope you'll find it useful!



Want to skip
to **schemes
& funding?**

Turn to **page 18**

Impact on Health

Health effects:

Damp and mould affect the airways and lungs. The respiratory effects of damp and mould can cause serious illness and, in the most severe cases, death. The respiratory effects include:

- Coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath
- Increased risk of airway infections
- Development or worsening of allergic airway diseases such as rhinitis, asthma and other conditions that inflame the airways:
 - Bronchitis
 - Hypersensitivity pneumonitis
 - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Other physical health effects:

- Irritation of the eye leading to allergic conjunctivitis
- Eczema and other patches of itchy skin or skin rashes
- Fungal skin infections, particularly in people with weakened immune system





Mental health effects:

- Unpleasant living conditions
- Destruction of property and belongings
- Anxiety related to physical health impacts and/or looking after a relative suffering from damp and mould-related illnesses
- Frustration with poor advice and/or being blamed for damp and mould
- Social isolation as a result of not wanting visitors in the home
- Delays in response or repairs following reporting of damp and mould and/or poor quality of repairs
- The impact of cold homes on mental health is often overlooked. Living in cold, uncomfortable conditions can contribute to stress and anxiety, affecting mental wellbeing. Two-thirds of people in fuel poverty experience debilitating levels of depression or anxiety.
- Financial stressors such as being behind on mortgage payments, being heavily indebted, and experiencing fuel payment difficulties also increase the risk of experiencing mental ill health
- Individuals in cold homes report reduced quality of life due to inadequate sleep, restricted activities, and overall dissatisfaction with their living conditions.

Impacts on the NHS & Economy



Cold weather leads to a more than **10% increase in emergency hospital admissions** in the UK, adding strain to the NHS and emphasising the need to address cold homes to ease healthcare pressure.

Over **8 million adults** spent 2023/24 in cold damp homes, which contributed to worsening public health and pressures on the NHS



3.17 million – The official number of households who live in a low income household with poor energy efficiency in England in 2024

The number of households who are required to spend more than 10 per cent of their income (after housing costs) on domestic energy in 2023 was **36.4%** of households (8.91 million) – **up from 27.4%** in 2022 (6.66 million).

England saw an estimated 63,000 excess winter deaths in 2020–21. Estimates suggest **10% of excess winter deaths** are directly **attributable to fuel poverty** and **21.5%** are **attributable to cold homes**.



The economic impact of cold homes is significant, the **NHS spends an estimated £1.4 billion annually** on treating illnesses associated with living in cold or damp housing. When wider societal costs are considered, such as healthcare, that figure rises to £15.4 billion.



Impact in Dorset

South Dorset (including Weymouth) has **5,888 households in fuel poverty** - above national average. North Dorset has **4,723 households in fuel poverty** and Bournemouth East (including Boscombe) has **6,503 households in fuel poverty** – above the national average.



Over the last five years in The South West, according to the Office for National Statistics, an **average of 500 people died from cold-related illness** over the winter.



Dorset Council area has a population of 380,000 residents, **29% of whom are aged 65 and older** (compared to 19% in England and Wales). In Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council area income deprivation affecting older people has **31 LSOAs* within the most deprived 20%**.

There are a higher number of households Off gas grid; much higher than the national average with around 50% of (50.7% in West Dorset, 47.2% in North Dorset) households **unable to access gas central heating**.



Dorset has four constituency areas of high need with regards the measure of fuel poverty and multiple smaller pockets of deprivation these include Boscombe West (Bournemouth) Weymouth Town, Central Bournemouth, Westham North and Radipole.



*Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) often exhibit higher rates of poor health and lower income levels.

Vulnerable Groups

People who may be particularly vulnerable to ill health as a result of exposure to poor quality housing include:

- People with a pre-existing health condition such as:
 - Asthma
 - Allergies
 - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
 - Cardiovascular disease
 - People with weakened immune system
 - Pregnant women and their unborn babies
 - Pre-school children
 - Older people
 - People who live in poor-quality housing
 - People exposed to tobacco smoke in their homes
 - People who live in poverty.
- Approximately half of disabled people plan to not use heating, even when cold, and more than a third cutting back on food and skip meals. 28 per cent of disabled people plan to cut back on showering and bathing, and over half said increasing costs were affecting their mental health.
 - A [Public Health England report](#) found that cold homes and poor housing conditions have been linked with a range of health problems in children.
 - The [British Medical Journal](#) reports that “children growing up in cold, damp, and mouldy homes with inadequate ventilation have higher than average rates of respiratory infections and asthma, chronic ill health, and disability. They are also more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and slower physical growth and cognitive development”.
 - Dorset has a higher-than-average population of older adults, many of whom have at least one long-term condition (LTC). The likelihood of having multiple LTCs rises with age, creating challenges not only for individuals but also for their families and the care and support services available. As the older population continues to grow, so too will the number of individuals living with health issues and multiple long-term conditions, along with the related healthcare costs.



Why improve?



Improving property energy performance, helps to:

- Reduce levels of poverty
- Reduce energy bills
- Achieve affordable warmth
- Increase income to buy healthier food with
- Give people more energy to exercise
- Reduce sick days and school absences
- Reduce illnesses such as Asthma and Pneumonia
- Improve health outcomes for those with COPD & other cardiovascular diseases
- Reduce instances and severity of mental health conditions
- Warm up limbs so trips and falls are less likely
- Improve people's quality of life
- Save NHS resources and budgets!

Private Rental Sector

The private rental sector is the lowest performing sector in relation to property condition and energy efficiency. Improvements have been made to existing and new legislation to enable this to improve the standard of housing.

Housing Health & Safety Rating System

The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a risk-based tool for local authorities to identify health and safety risks in residential properties in England and Wales, introduced under the Housing Act 2004. It focuses on hazards in both private rental and social housing, aiming to protect tenants and improve living conditions by assessing installations like gas, electricity, ventilation, space, and water heating.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a799834ed915d0422069a0a/150940.pdf>

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Awaab's Law

The tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak due to mould exposure in his social housing prompted national outrage. His parents had repeatedly raised concerns, but the landlord failed to act and blamed the family. Awaab's Law, introduced in the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, mandates landlords to address health hazards within specified timeframes. The new rules will form part of a tenancy agreement, so that tenants can hold landlords to account by law if they fail to provide a decent home. For more information, please visit:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/awaabs-law-consultation-on-timescales-for-repairs-in-the-social-rented-sector/b7173b41-1d97-495d-857a-3085f95d26ff

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Damp & Condensation Resources

Ridgewater Energy have produced specific guides to help educate landlords and letting agents on the risks of damp and mould.

These are available online or to order. Some are available in large print.

www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/portfolio_category/condensation-advice

Homeowner Advice Booklet Condensation & Damp



Tenants Advice Booklet Condensation & Damp



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Literature

Ridgewater Energy have a range of electronic and printed resources to raise awareness of the funding schemes we offer. These also include advice on insulation, heating advice, damp & condensation, ventilation, landlord resources, energy saving advice and renewable energies.

Scheme leaflets

Range of scheme information, covering the key elements.

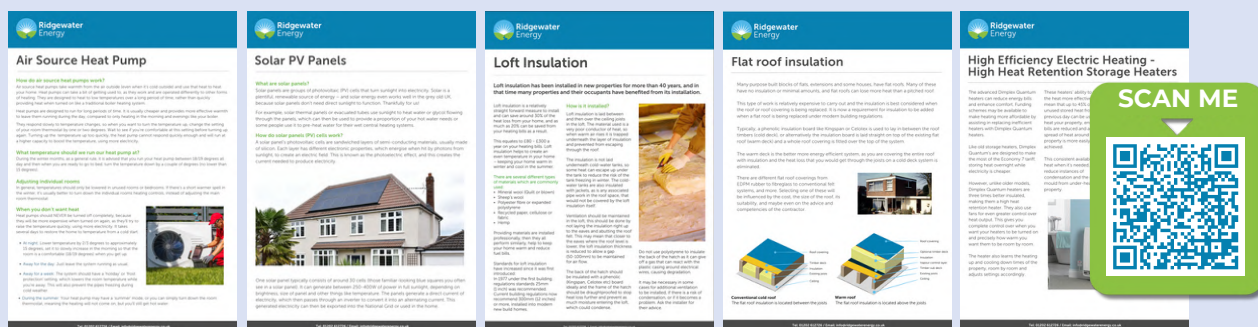
www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk



Factsheets

Offering a comprehensive overview of the measures we deliver and address any queries.

www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/portfolio_category/advice-resources



Energy & Money Saving Booklets

Kitchen, food & shopping tips, general hints & tips, budget planner, local agency contact details.

www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/portfolio_category/energy-advice



Some of these resources are available in large print.

Condensation, Damp & Mould

Homes may encounter condensation during autumn and winter when warm, moist air meets cold surfaces, resulting in water droplets, black mould, and potential health issues. This can lead to the onset or worsening of allergic airway conditions like rhinitis and asthma, as well as other airway inflammations such as bronchitis, hypersensitivity pneumonitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Rising damp

This is found exclusively on ground floor walls and is usually due to a faulty damp proof course or the property having no damp proof course at all.



Mould

Commonly grows in damp areas. It thrives near moisture and can cause health issues, especially for those sensitive to allergens. Mould spores can trigger asthma attacks, posing risks particularly to infants, children, and individuals with respiratory conditions or weakened immune systems.



Ventilation

Ventilation is crucial for combating damp and mould. Utilise background ventilation like trickle vents or mechanical options such as extractor fans, and open windows for airflow. Additionally, limit moisture-producing activities, like air drying clothes indoors, or enhance ventilation if necessary.



Healthcare professionals can consider what support they can provide and what advice they can signpost their patients to, so that they can learn how to reduce damp and mould. Ridgewater Energy offers free advice booklets to aid the management and reduction of damp & mould. Note that some of these resources are available in large print.

www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/portfolio_category/condensation-advice

BCP Council



Dorset Council



Scan the QR code with your phone, or search the short link in your web browser!



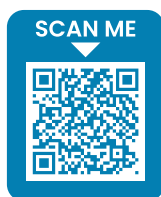
Products used to remove or prevent undesirable growths, such as mould, require approval under the Control of Pesticides Regulations (COPR) as surface biocides, and must be used in accordance with their approval conditions.

Approved products:

www.hse.gov.uk/biocides/copr/approvals.htm

Guidance:

www.hse.gov.uk/biocides/using.htm



Booklet requests can be made here:

www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/literaturerequest



To find out more, visit:

www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/portfolio_category/advice-resources



Impacting Factors

Housing stock varies significantly in age, design and building material, each with different challenges in relation to damp and mould. There are a variety of housing conditions that put people at increased risk of exposure to damp and mould:

- Homes where residents feel unable to open windows due to concerns about security, noise, or high outdoor air pollution
- Homes that are poorly or inadequately insulated
- Homes with inefficient or ineffective and expensive to run heating systems
- Homes that are poorly ventilated
- Homes without adequate damp proof courses
- Homes that are poorly maintained
- Homes that are overcrowded



Property conditions



What can you do?

Ridgewater Energy are available to attend staff meetings, offering guidance on reducing condensation, improving ventilation, utilising heating efficiently, and providing a general overview of the support services available. Contact info@ridgewaterenergy.co.uk

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Refer clients to Ridgewater Energy for expert home energy advice, guidance, free energy saving packs, keep warm packs and access to funding. www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/projects-and-services

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Sign up to Ridgewater Energy newsletter to keep up-to-date with new funding schemes and advice from the experts! <https://ridgewaterenergy.us20.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=72542b334b2b518cflc007568&id=fabc204410>

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Order free literature for your patients, such as Energy & Money Saving or Damp & Condensation guides, along with many more resources! www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/literaturerequest

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A network of warm spaces & warm welcomes are accessible to the public during the winter months, providing a place to connect with others while receiving advice and support.



www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/communities/cost-of-living-help/stay-warm-in-a-community-welcome-space



www.helpandkindness.co.uk/warm-welcomes-in-dorset

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 **Phone**
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 **Visit**
www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk

 **Email**
info@ridgewaterenergy.co.uk

Eligibility



Below is a list of some of the most common criteria.

To view specific criteria, please refer to scheme leaflets - Page 9

- **Household income less than £31,000 - £42, 000 dependant on size of household**
- **Suffering from poor health**
 - Has a cardiovascular condition
 - Has a respiratory condition
 - Has a mental health condition
 - Has a disability
 - Has an auto-immune condition
- **Age**
 - Is aged 65 or over
 - Has a child under 5 living in the property
- **In receipt of a benefit**
 - Income or Contribution-based Employment & Support Allowance.
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance / Income Support
 - Pension Guarantee / Savings Credit
 - Child Tax Credit / Working Tax Credit / Universal Credit
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Reduction (not single persons discount)
 - A Disability Benefit (Incl. Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance, DLA, PIP, Severe Disablement Allowance)
 - Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
- **Further criteria**
 - Is living with addiction
 - Has attended hospital due to a fall
 - Is a recent immigrant or asylum seeker
 - Is armed or ex-armed forces
 - Had a recent bereavement
 - Is pregnant
- **Live in a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)**

Eligibility is subject to terms and conditions and subject to change

Frequently Asked Questions

Help with gas boiler replacements?

Healthy Homes Dorset - Page 20

LEAP Local Energy Advice Partnership - Page 20

Help with broken heaters?

Healthy Homes Dorset - Page 20

Please check with us for local funding schemes that could help.

Is there any funding to replace kitchen appliances, such as fridges, fridge-freezers and washing machines?

LEAP Local Energy Advice Partnership - Page 20

Damp and mould concerns?

SGN Dorset Help for Warmth - Page 18

Worried about someone vulnerable keeping warm this winter?

SGN Dorset Help for Warmth - Page 18

Damp and mould concerns?

SGN Dorset Help for Warmth - Page 18

Loft insulation and top ups or cavity wall insulation?

Healthy Homes Dorset - Page 20

Someone needs advice about heating controls, smart meters or energy bills?

LEAP Local Energy Advice Partnership - Page 20

SGN Dorset Help for Warmth - Page 18

What is the general eligibility for funded schemes?

Page 15

Note that other local schemes may be available to assist with any of the above.



Funded Measures



- Replacement gas boilers
- Loft Insulation
- Cavity wall insulation
- Free expert in-home energy saving consultations, delivered by qualified energy advisors
 - Efficient energy use
 - Condensation prevention
 - Heating control use
 - Checking meters & bills
 - Guidance on appliance use
- Free small energy saving measures such as draught proofing, foil radiator reflectors, remote controlled sockets, chimney balloons and LED light bulbs.
- Referrals for free appliances which may include fridges, freezers, fridge-freezers and electric cookers!
- Referrals to other support agencies including Citizens Advice, the Fire Service and many others.



Schemes & funding

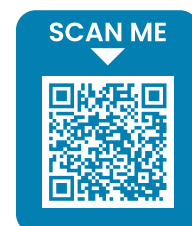
SGN Dorset Help for Warmth



SGN Dorset Help for Warmth is a partnership between Southern Gas Network and Ridgewater Energy. It supports vulnerable individuals by providing free high quality energy advice home visits by qualified advisors, focussed on reducing costs, increasing efficiency and maintaining a warmer home:

- Carbon Monoxide safety advice and free monitors
- Free expert in-home energy saving consultations, by qualified energy advisors.
- Insulation and heating assessments, including potential renewable energies
- Referrals for energy safeguarding services:
 - Citizens Advice for energy, debt, and food vouchers
 - Priority Services Register
 - 'Safe and Well' visits from Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue
 - Live Well Dorset support for diet, exercise, and lifestyle
- Assistance for customers with condensation or damp, including ventilation advice, thermal imaging and the provision of a free hygrometer.
- Referrals for the 'Locking Gas Cooker Valves Scheme'

www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/sgn-dorset-help-for-warmth



- Energy efficiency packs, which include LED lightbulbs
- Heated throw blankets
- Free gas boiler service for qualifying owner occupiers
- Free Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)
- Money-saving guides, and damp & condensation guides
- Heating control guidance

Winter Warmth Pack

Some residents may qualify for a winter warmth pack, this includes:

- Gloves and socks
- Scarf and hat
- Hand warmers
- Hot water bottle
- Thermal flask or mug
- Heated blankets
- Guidance on heating controls & smart meters.

*Image for illustration purposes only



Eligibility

You may be eligible if one or more of the below applies to your household

- Income under £36k (£42k if 2 adults and 2 children or more)
- Has a cardiovascular condition
- Has a respiratory condition
- Has a mental health condition
- Has a disability Is aged 65 or over
- Has a child under 5 living in the property
- Is pregnant Is living with an addiction
- Has attended hospital due to a fall
- Is a recent immigrant or asylum seeker
- Has had a recent bereavement



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Your gas. Our network.

LEAP Local Energy Advice Partnership



Provides residents with a free in-person advice home visit, along with the fitting of free energy saving devices and measures, to help cut residents energy bills.

www.ridgewaterenergy.co.uk/projects-and-services/leap

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Healthy Homes Dorset



Supported by BCP Council, Dorset Council & Public Health Dorset to help residents access advice, insulation funding & other energy saving improvements.

www.healthyhomedorset.org.uk

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Other Local & National Schemes



There are sometimes local funding schemes run through Local Authorities with government funding. They usually run for a period of two years and we anticipate the next available scheme to be from April 2025. These Local Authority schemes are very popular, and funding is often quickly allocated, so it is advisable to enquire early.

Schemes are likely to be able to fund a range of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures such as:

- Cavity wall and loft insulation
- External wall insulation
- Air source heat pump
- Under floor insulation
- Room-in-roof insulation
- High efficiency electric heating
- Solar PV panels

Further funding and advice available

If you don't qualify for any of the published funding schemes, Ridgewater Energy can assess and refer for additional funding schemes such as **ECO (Energy Companies Obligation)** or **GBIS (Great British Insulation Scheme)**.



Improve your patients health outcomes



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