

HALTON HOUSING TRUST

GAS SAFETY POLICY **(including Solid Fuel Installations)**

Date due for Review: March 2008

Introduction

The vast majority of homes owned by Halton Housing Trust ('the Trust') have some form of gas installation fitted in them. The Trust therefore acknowledges that it must have a comprehensive policy to deal with gas safety in order to ensure the health and safety of all of its customers.

The Trust is aware that its main obligation in this area will be to comply with its duties under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 ('the Regulations'). These apply where gas appliances and flues are provided for customers in any of its properties.

The Regulations deal with the installation, maintenance and use of gas systems and appliances in domestic – and most commercial – premises. They arose out of the need to reduce the incidence of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from badly-installed and/or poorly maintained gas appliances and flues.

The Trust expects to receive cooperation from all of its customers in allowing access to the suitably qualified contractors it employs to carry out all necessary gas installation, maintenance and servicing work. In practice, this does not always happen. This policy has been developed in part to deal with cases where customers have not provided access and the Trust is in danger of failing to meet its obligations under the Regulations. In particular, the need to carry out an annual gas safety check at each of its properties where gas installations have been fitted.

However, the Trust takes the view that gas safety and the maintenance of heating systems and appliances generally is a broader issue than this.

To reflect all the issues involved, this policy and an associated procedure guide have been developed to deal with:

- the procedures to be followed where 'no access' has been available at Trust properties for the annual gas servicing and safety check programme
- gas safety issues arising from the reactive (day to day) repairs system and modernisation/major repair works

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- other gas-related health and safety issues, e.g. arising out customer's requests to install their own gas appliances or heating installations
- the maintenance of solid fuel installations. This has been included for completeness in recognition of the fact that the Trust still has a relatively small number of properties with this type of installation

The Trust's policy and associated procedure guide have been developed taking into account the following guidance:

- Health and Safety Executive's Approved Code of Practice and Guidance L56 for gas appliances
- Audit Commission's Gas Safety Guidance Note for Landlords
- National Association of Chimney Sweeps' (NACS) Code of Practice

Policy Statement

Gas Installations

The Trust acknowledges that it had a duty to ensure that any gas appliance and flue which serves a gas appliance is maintained in a safe and serviceable condition. This maintenance duty is wholly separate from the obligation to undertake an annual gas safety check.

Accordingly, the Trust will not assume that an annual service inspection will meet the safety check requirement or vice versa. In order to meet its responsibility to maintain gas appliances as well as check them for safety, the Trust will undertake servicing of all gas appliances that belong to it or have been adopted by it. This will be carried out at the same time as it undertakes the statutory gas safety check.

In order to comply with the Regulations, the Trust will ensure that:

- all gas appliances and flues are maintained in a safe condition
- an annual safety check is carried out to each gas appliance and flue
- all installation, maintenance and safety checks are carried out by CORGI-registered gas engineers
- a record of each safety check is kept for at least two years
- a copy of the latest safety check (CP12) certificate is either issued to the existing customer within 28 days of the check being completed, or to any new customer before they move in
- a copy of a gas repair record (CP6) is issued to the existing customer for any response repairs carried out to gas installations in their homes.

The Trust will ensure that all reasonable steps are taken by its appointed gas maintenance contractor(s) and its own officers to ensure that access is made available to any individual property in order to carry out the annual safety check.

Legal action by the Trust to gain access into any customer's property will only be considered as a last resort and after all reasonable steps have been taken. The Trust will follow a strict

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timetable for gaining access to a property as outlined in the Gas Servicing and Safety Check programme.

The ultimate aim of the Trust will always be that none of its properties that fall under the remit of the Gas Regulations should at any time be without a current gas safety certificate (CP12). Consequently in accordance with the legislation all reasonable steps shall be taken by the Trust to ensure it has discharged this duty.

Solid Fuel Installations

The Trust accepts that it has responsibility to regularly sweep and service the flues of any of its properties that still has a solid fuel installation.

The Trust will ensure that any work undertaken will be carried out by suitably qualified contractor(s), and will comply with the National Association of Chimney Sweeps' (NACS) Code of Practice.

The Trust will require any specialist contractor appointed to carry out this type of work to issue a NACS certificate following any successful sweep. A copy of this certificate will be left with the existing customer and another provided to the Trust for its own records.

The Trust will keep such copies for a minimum of 2 years, to keep consistency with its gas safety certificate records system.

The long term aim of the Trust will be to replace such installations with more efficient and economical systems in consultation with the customer or when such a property becomes vacant.

Implementation

A separate procedure guide has been developed to complement this policy which covers all the 4 areas described earlier.

In view of the importance which the Trust places on its Gas Servicing and Safety Check programme, an associated flowchart process map accompanies this part of the policy which sets out the strict timetable that must be adhered to in dealing with any 'no access' cases arising out of this programme. As well as this, a Gas Safety Reference table has also been produced which clearly sets out the responsibilities of various officers as they relate to the gas safety process.

Gas Servicing and Safety Check Programme

In order to ensure an annual gas safety check is carried out at each of its properties where a gas appliance has been provided for its customers, the Trust will run a 10 month servicing programme via its appointed gas maintenance contractor. This will mean, for example, that where a property has had a gas safety check carried out in April of one year, it will be carried

at the same property in the February of the following year. The same regime will be adopted wherever a customer has fitted a gas appliance with the permission of the Trust.

By scheduling the service at month 10, the additional 2 month period will be used by the contractor and Trust officers to take all reasonable steps to obtain access at properties where this is a problem, before the existing gas safety certificate expires at the end of its 12 month time limit.

The servicing programme will be implemented by the gas contractor on a predominantly geographical basis as long as the Trust feels that this is the most efficient and effective way of carrying this out. However, in carrying out the programme on this basis, there may be occasions when properties have been recently serviced then quickly become due for another service solely because of their geographical location and will still have in excess of three months left to run on their current CP12. In this situation, the contractor will be expected to make the normal number of visits to carry out the service, in order to bring it back in line with the rest of the properties in that area. However, if there is no access after the usual visit cycle, the property will be reported to the Gas Safety Officer (GSO) in the normal way, but it will not be put through the normal 'No Access' procedure. Action will be deferred on the property until there are 2 months left until the CP12 expires. At this point, the GSO will pass the property back to the contractor with an instruction for the normal visit cycle to be carried out at the property. If there is no access at the property after the third visit, the contractor will notify the GSO in the normal way and the property will then be dealt with under the 'no access' procedure.

Full details of the steps to be taken by the Trust and its appointed gas maintenance contractor before legal action to gain access is considered are contained in the procedure guide.

Records

The Trust will keep records of each safety check for a period of 2 years from the date of the safety check. These records will contain specific information as set out in the Regulations.:

- The Trust will ensure that a copy of the gas a safety record is given to each existing customer within 28 days of the safety check. However it is the Trust's current practice is to hand this record to the customer at the time of the annual gas safety inspection.
- In the case of a new tenancy, the Trust will provide a copy of the gas safety record in respect of the property before the customer moves in. (Where the property is to be occupied for less than 28 days, a copy of the last gas safety record will be displayed in a prominent place, and a copy will be provided if requested.)
- In the case of Trust accommodation that has communal facilities, such as meeting rooms, communal lounges/kitchens, a copy of the last gas safety record will be displayed in a prominent place where required, and a copy will be provided if requested.

Responsibility

The Trust will retain overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Regulations.

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The Deputy Chief Executive will be responsible for the effective implementation of this policy and for ensuring that all appropriate staff are aware of and have received training in this policy and its associated procedures.

Monitoring

The Gas Safety Officer will closely monitor the gas servicing programme to try to ensure that the number of properties where no access is available for the annual gas safety check is kept to a minimum.

Regular reports will be provided on a weekly basis to relevant managers and monthly to the Senior Management Team to check progress on the programme. Quarterly reports will be provided to the Board, Operations Committee and Halton Housing Community Voice on an exception basis.

The Trust's Performance Management Framework will include specific measures relating to gas servicing performance. This will report actual numbers rather than percentages, with the only acceptable target being zero homes/ appliances without a valid gas safety certificate.

Consultation & Review

The Trust will review this policy annually to ensure that objectives and targets are being achieved in accordance with required standards, quality, effectiveness and value for money. The Trust will ensure that any review reflects good practice and complies with relevant legislation and positive practice guidance.

The Trust will consult with its own housing maintenance staff, external contractors and customers regarding the effective implementation of this policy.

Associated Documents

Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements Policy
Empty Property Management Policy
Health and Safety Policy