

Housing Revenue Account Gas and Heating Policy



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Name	Gas and Heating Policy
Owner	Council of the City of Stoke-on-Trent (The Council)
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Contents

1.0	Introduction and Objectives	2
2.0	Scope	2
3.0	Roles and Responsibilities	3
4.0	Legislation, Guidance and Regulatory Standards	3
5.0	Obligations.....	4
6.0	Statement of Intent	5
7.0	Programmes.....	8
8.0	Data and Records	8
9.0	Resident Engagement	9
10.0	Competent Persons	9
11.0	Training	10
12.0	Performance Reporting	10
13.0	Quality Assurance	11
14.0	Significant Non-Compliance and Escalation.....	12
15.0	Glossary.....	12
	Appendix 1 - Additional Legislation.....	13

1.0 Introduction and Objectives

- 1.1 This policy is written and covers all assets that fall within Stoke-on-Trent City Councils (The Council) Housing Revenue Accounting (HRA). Public Buildings are covered by their own separate policy.
- 1.2 As a landlord, The Council is responsible for the maintenance and repairs to its homes, communal blocks, and other properties they own and manage, many of which will contain gas installations and appliances. The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (as amended) specifically deal with the installation, maintenance and use of gas appliances, fittings and flues in domestic properties and certain commercial premises to ensure they remain safe.
- 1.3 The Council is also responsible for maintaining other types of heating systems to ensure that all heating appliances provided for residents are safe. These include ground source heat pumps/ solid fuel/ solar thermal/ electrical heating systems.
- 1.4 These obligations are delivered through the Repairs and Maintenance Service who undertake any servicing, maintenance, and repairs as appropriate.
- 1.5 The key objective of this policy is to ensure The Council, Unitas Board, the Council's Senior Management Team (SMT), employees, partners, and residents are clear on their legal and regulatory gas/heating safety obligations. This policy provides the framework our staff and partners will operate within to meet these obligations.
- 1.6 This policy forms part of our wider organisational commitment to driving a health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors (as detailed within our Health and Safety Policy). It will be saved on our shared drive and distributed to all relevant members of staff.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy is relevant to all employees, residents, contractors, stakeholders, and other persons who may work on, occupy, visit, or use our premises, or who may be affected by our activities or services.
- 2.2 The policy should be used by all to ensure they understand the obligations placed upon The Council to maintain a safe environment for residents and employees, within the home of each resident, and within all communal areas of buildings and other properties we own and/or manage. Adherence to this policy is mandatory.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Council has overall governance responsibility for ensuring this policy is fully implemented to ensure full compliance with legislation and regulatory standards. As such, the Council will formally approve this policy and review it every two years (or sooner if there is a change in legislation or regulation).
- 3.2 For assurance that this policy is operating effectively in practice, the Council will receive regular updates on its implementation, gas/heating safety performance and non-compliance.
- 3.3 The Repairs and Maintenance OBM and the Housing Regulatory OBM will receive monthly performance reports in respect of gas and heating safety and ensure compliance is being achieved. They will also be notified of any non-compliance issue identified. SMT and Cabinet will also be updated on compliance at regular intervals.
- 3.4 The Council has overall responsibility for the management of gas and heating safety for all HRA buildings, and the Repairs and Maintenance Service has operational management and delivery responsibility for gas and heating safety.
- 3.5 The Director of Housing Management has strategic responsibility for the management of gas and heating safety, and ensuring compliance is achieved and maintained. They will oversee the implementation of this policy. The Director of Repairs and Maintenance Service has management and operational delivery responsibility and accountability.
- 3.6 The Gas Service Manager has operational responsibility for the management of gas and heating safety and will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of these programmes.
- 3.7 Housing Management teams will provide support where gaining access to properties is difficult and will assist and facilitate any legal access processes as necessary.

4.0 Legislation, Guidance and Regulatory Standards

- 4.1 **Legislation** - The principal legislation applicable to this policy is:
 - The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 as amended (hereafter referred to as the Gas Safety Regulations). We have a legal obligation under Part F, Regulation 36 of the legislation (Duties of Landlords) and we are the 'Landlord' for the purposes of the legislation.
 - Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 which came into effect from 1 October 2022.

- This policy also operates within the context of additional legislation (see Appendix 1).
- 4.2 **Approved Code of Practice (ACoP)** - The ACoP applicable to this policy is:
- ACoP L56 - 'Safety in the installation and use of gas systems and appliances' (5th edition 2018).
- 4.3 **Guidance** – The principal guidance applicable to this policy is:
- INDG285 - 'A guide to landlords' duties: Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 as amended Approved Code of Practice and guidance (3rd Edition 2018).
- 4.4 **Regulatory standards** – The Council must ensure it complies with the Regulator of Social Housing's regulatory framework and consumer standards for social housing in England; the Safety & Quality Standard is the primary one applicable to this policy. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act will change the way social housing is regulated and may result in future changes to this policy.
- 4.5 **Sanctions** – Failure to discharge responsibilities and obligations properly could lead to sanctions, including prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive (the HSE) under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; prosecution under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007; prosecution under the Gas Safety Regulations; and via a regulatory notice from the Regulator of Social Housing.

5.0 Obligations

- 5.1 The Gas Safety Regulations impose duties on landlords to protect residents in their homes. The main landlord duties are set out in Regulation 36 and require landlords to:
- Ensure gas fittings and flues are maintained in a safe condition. Gas appliances should be serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If these are not available it is recommended that they are serviced annually, unless advised otherwise by a Gas Safe registered engineer.
 - Ensure the annual safety check is carried out on each gas appliance and flue within 12 months of the previous safety check.
 - Have all installation, maintenance and safety checks carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer.
 - Keep a record of each safety check for at least two years (until at least two further gas safety checks have been carried out).
 - Issue a copy of the latest safety check record to existing residents within 28

days of the check being completed, or prior to any new resident moving in.

- Display a copy of the latest safety check record in a common area of a building where the gas appliance serves a communal heating system to multiple homes.
- Ensure that no gas fitting of a type that would contravene Regulation 30 (for example, certain gas fires and instantaneous water heaters) is fitted in any room occupied, or to be occupied, as sleeping accommodation after the Regulations came into force. This includes any room converted into such accommodation after that time.

5.2 These obligations apply to both gas heating and liquid petroleum gas heating systems.

5.3 **Other heating types** – Although there is no legal requirement to do so, The Council will carry out safety checks to properties with the other heating types set out in Section 1.2 (see Section 7 - Programmes for details).

5.4 The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which came into effect from 1 October 2022, require social landlords to:

- Install smoke alarm on every storey with living accommodation.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in any rooms used as living accommodation with a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers).
- Repair or replace faulty alarms as soon as reasonably practicable.

6.0 Statement of Intent

6.1 The Council acknowledges and accepts its responsibilities under the Gas Safety Regulations and Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 as outlined in Section 5 and all other duties set out in relevant legislation.

6.2 The Council will carry out an annual gas safety check to all properties with a gas supply, irrespective of whether the gas is connected or not.

6.3 The Council will ensure that copies of all landlord's gas safety records (LGSRs)/certificates are provided to residents or displayed in a common area within 28 days of completion.

6.4 The Council will cap off gas supplies to all properties when the property becomes void, and a new resident is not moving in immediately after. This will be completed by the end of the next working day.

6.5 The Council will cap off gas supplies to all new build properties upon receipt of keys at handover from the contractor/developer to us if the new tenancy is not commencing immediately at the point of handover.

- 6.6 The Council will ensure that gas safety checks are carried out within 24 hours of the commencement of a new tenancy (void or new build properties), mutual exchange and/or transfer, and that the resident receives a copy of the LGSR (once the tenant has an energy supplier in place and has confirmed they have moved in and are living at the property).
- 6.7 The Council will ensure a gas safety check is carried out following the installation of any new gas appliance and obtain a gas safety certificate to confirm the necessary checks have been completed. The safety check will include: a gas soundness test of the carcass; gas working pressures being taken; a visual inspection of the meter installation; and a visual inspection, including the safe working operation, on all other gas appliances and associated flues within a property.
- 6.8 The Council will carry out a five-point visual check of resident owned appliances, provided that the resident is able to provide evidence that the appliance has been installed by a Gas Safe engineer. If the resident is unable to provide this evidence, then the appliance will be capped off until such time it can be evidenced as being safe. The visual safety check (location; flueing; ventilation; signs of distress; and stable and secure) will be done on gas cookers and gas fires, where the manufacturers' instructions are available. Where appliances are found to be faulty these will be disconnected, and a warning notice issued. Temporary alternative heating and cooking appliances will be offered and provided if the tenant accepts, where gas appliances have been disconnected.
- 6.9 A safety check will be carried out on completion of any repair and/or refurbishment works to occupied or void properties where works may have affected any gas fittings, appliances, or flues.
- 6.10 The Council will install, test, and replace (as required) battery operated and/or hard-wired smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors as part of the annual gas safety check (or at void stage).
- 6.11 The Council will carry out an annual gas safety check to all properties where the gas supply has been capped at the request of the resident, to ensure the supply has not been reconnected by the resident. At the same time, we will check on the resident's wellbeing and assess whether the lack of gas heating is adversely affecting the condition of the property. In addition, we will communicate monthly with these residents to ensure the property remains capped and inform the resident of what is required to reinstate gas at the property.
- 6.12 Any open flue gas appliances found in any rooms that are being used as bedrooms or for sleeping will be removed.
- 6.13 The Council will ensure that there is a robust process in place for the management of immediately dangerous situations identified from the gas/heating safety check.

- 6.14 The Council will regularly check properties that are not currently connected to the gas mains network to ensure a gas supply has not been installed without our knowledge.
- 6.15 The Council will operate a robust process if there is difficulty gaining access to a property to carry out the gas/heating safety check or remediation works. The Council will use the legal remedies available within the terms of the tenancy agreement, lease, or license. In exceptional cases, provided the appropriate procedures have been followed and approval given by a Head of Service (or more senior role) controlled access may be undertaken. Where resident vulnerability issues are known or identified, The Council will ensure to safeguard the wellbeing of the resident.
- 6.16 The Council will operate effective contract management arrangements with the contractors responsible for delivering the service, including; ensuring contracts/service level agreements are in place, conducting client-led performance meetings, and ensuring that contractors' employee and public liability insurances are up to date on an annual basis.
- 6.17 The Council will ensure that all replacements, modifications and installations of gas appliances and heating systems within our properties will comply with all elements of Building Regulations, Part J Combustion Appliances and Fuel Storage Systems.
- 6.18 The Council will establish and maintain a risk assessment for gas safety management and operations, setting out our key gas safety risks and appropriate mitigations.
- 6.19 To comply with the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) a Construction Phase Plan will be in place in respect of all repairs to void and tenanted properties (at the start of the contract and reviewed annually thereafter), component replacement works and refurbishment projects.
- 6.20 To comply with the requirements of the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002, The Council will consider the safety of workspaces and plant/boiler rooms of residential blocks that fall within scope of the legislation.
- 6.21 The Council will ensure there is a robust process in place to investigate and manage all RIDDOR notifications submitted to the HSE in relation to gas and heating safety and will take action to address any issues identified and lessons we have learned, to prevent a similar incident occurring again.

7.0 Programmes

- 7.1 **Domestic properties** – The Council will carry out a programme of annual gas safety checks to all domestic properties it owns or manages; the check will be completed within 12 months from the date of the previous LGSR/certificate.
- 7.2 The Council will carry out a safety check of electrical heating systems every five years during the periodic electrical inspection and testing programme.
- 7.3 The Council will carry out an annual safety check to all solid fuel appliances and a chimney sweep at least twice a year when burning wood or house coal, and at least once a year when burning smokeless fuels.
- 7.4 The Council will carry out safety checks to properties with, ground source heat pumps/ solar thermal in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- 7.5 **Communal blocks and other properties** – The Council will carry out a programme of annual gas safety checks and services to all communal blocks and other properties (supported schemes/offices/shops), where there is a legal obligation to do so; these will be completed within 12 months from the date of the previous LGSR/certificate.
- 7.6 **Properties managed by others** – The Council will obtain LGSRs/gas safety certificates where our properties are managed by a third party. If the third party does not provide the LGSR/certificate, we will carry out the safety check and re-charge them for the cost of this work.
- 7.7 The Council will ensure there is a robust process in place for the management of any follow-up works required following the completion of a gas/heating safety check (where the work cannot be completed at the time of the check).
- 7.8 Any newly identified appliances will be added to the relevant servicing programme and remain on said programme until The Council instructs its removal e.g., if the tenant has not been granted permission for the installation of the appliance.

8.0 Data and Records

- 8.1 The Council will maintain a core asset register of all properties we own and/or manage, with component/attribute data against each property to show gas/heating safety check requirements.
- 8.2 The Council will operate a robust process to manage all changes to stock, including property acquisitions and disposals, to ensure that properties are not omitted from gas/heating safety programmes and the programme remains up to date.

- 8.3 The Council will hold gas/heating safety check dates and safety check records against each property we own or manage. The Council will hold the dates of the safety checks and safety check records in its management systems.
- 8.4 The Council will ensure the Gas Safe registered engineer records the details of all appliances and other equipment which is served by the gas/heating supply in every domestic property, communal block, or other property.
- 8.5 The Council will keep all completed safety check records, warning notices and remedial work records for at least two years and will have robust processes and controls in place to maintain appropriate levels of security for all its data and records.

9.0 Resident Engagement

- 9.1 The Council consider good communication essential in the effective delivery of gas and heating safety programmes, therefore we will establish a resident engagement strategy and communication programme to support residents in their understanding of gas and heating safety.
- 9.2 This will assist in maximising access to carry out gas safety checks, encourage and support residents to report any concerns about gas and heating safety, and help engage with vulnerable and hard to reach residents.
- 9.3 The Council will share information clearly and transparently and will ensure that information is available to residents via regular publications and information on our website.

10.0 Competent Persons

- 10.1 The Gas Service Manager (Repairs and Maintenance Service) will demonstrate competence through experience and hold the Level 4 VRQ in Gas Safety Management or Level 4 VRQ Diploma in Asset and Building Management (if they are not Gas Safe Registered), and full membership of the Association of Gas Safety Managers (AGSM). If they do not have these already, they will obtain them within 12 months of the approval of this policy.
- 10.2 All operatives/engineers (internal or external) will maintain Gas Safe accreditation for all areas of gas/LPG works that they undertake and will be members of the Nationally Accredited Certification Scheme for Individual Gas Fitting Operatives (ACS).
- 10.3 Only suitably competent Gas Safe accredited contractors will undertake works to gas fittings, appliances, and flues.

- 10.4 Only suitably competent Oil Firing Technical Association (OFTEC) and/or HETAS accredited contractors will undertake works to oil fired and solid fuel fittings, appliances, and flues.
- 10.5 Only individuals/organisations with a Microgeneration Certification Scheme accreditation (MCS) will undertake works on ground source heat pumps and solar thermal heating systems.
- 10.6 Only suitably competent NICEIC (or equivalent) electrical contractors and operatives will undertake servicing and repairs to electrical heating systems.
- 10.7 Only suitably competent Gas Safe registered and NICEIC (or equivalent) third party technical auditors will undertake quality assurance checks.
- 10.8 The Council will check our contractors hold the relevant qualifications and accreditations when procured, and thereafter on an annual basis; and will evidence these checks and each contractor's certification appropriately.

11.0 Training

- 11.1 The Council will deliver training on this policy and the procedures that support it, through appropriate methods including team briefings; basic gas and heating safety awareness training; and on the job training for those delivering the programme of gas and heating safety checks, planned maintenance and repair works as part of their daily job. All training undertaken by staff will be formally recorded.

12.0 Performance Reporting

- 12.1 The Council will report robust key performance indicator (KPI) measures for gas/heating safety that follow the requirements set out in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which came in to force 01 April 2023. Performance must be reported to the Regulator on an annual basis; however, internal reporting will be undertaken on a more regular basis. The Council will engage with customers and develop our approach / systems to report to them on a regular basis. The relevant TSM for Gas Safety is defined as follows:

BS01 – Gas Safety Checks: Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.

The reported percentage will include all dwellings which require gas safety checks within the block as well as those served by communal equipment. This ensures that all individual dwellings that may be at risk because of any non-compliance are identified, including those within a communal block that share a gas heating source. The completion of remedial works is not included.

12.2 The Council will also report the following:

Data – the total number of:

- Properties – split by category (domestic, communal, commercial/others);
- Properties on the gas/heating servicing programme - split by category (domestic, communal, commercial/others);
- Properties not on the gas/heating servicing programme;
- Properties with a valid and in date LGSR/certificate;
- Properties without a valid and in date LGSR/certificate;
- Properties due to be serviced within the next 30 days; and
- Overdue follow-up works/actions arising from the programme.

Narrative - an explanation of the:

- Current position;
- Corrective action required;
- Anticipated impact of corrective actions; and
- Progress with completion of follow-up works.

In addition:

- The number of RIDDOR notifications to the HSE about gas/heating safety.

12.3 The full detail of performance measures for Gas Safety will be outlined in a KPI Definition Document which includes the relevant data sources used for each calculation, the calculation methodology, any exclusions, and the accountable roles for producing and managing the KPIs.

13.0 Quality Assurance

13.1 The Council will ensure there is an annual programme of third-party quality assurance audits of gas/heating safety checks, gas appliance services and gas appliance repair works. This will be:

- 20 per cent of all new installations;
- five per cent sample of field checks;
- five per cent of all certificates.

13.2 The Repairs and Maintenance Service will undertake 100 per cent desktop audits of all LGSRs/certificates.

13.3 The Council will carry out an independent audit of gas/heating safety at least once every two years, to specifically test for compliance with legal and regulatory obligations and to identify non-compliance issues for correction.

14.0 Significant Non-Compliance and Escalation

- 14.1 Our definition of significant non-compliance is any incident which has the potential to result in a potential breach of legislation or regulatory standard, or which causes a risk to health or safety. All non-compliance issues will be reported and escalated as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after the incident was identified, or of a Council employee or agent becoming aware of it.
- 14.2 Any non-compliance issue identified at an operational level will be formally reported to the Gas Service Manager (Repairs and Maintenance Service in the first instance, who will agree an appropriate course of corrective action with the Head of Asset Management and Investment (Repairs and Maintenance Service) and report details of the same to the Repairs and Maintenance OBM and Housing Regulatory OBM.
- 14.3 In cases of serious non-compliance The Council in line with its self-referral procedure will consider whether it is necessary to disclose the issue to the Regulator of Social Housing as required by the regulatory framework, or any other relevant organisation such as the Health and Safety Executive.

15.0 Glossary

- 15.1 This glossary defines key terms used throughout this policy:
- **Gas Safe Register:** the official list of gas engineers who are qualified to work legally on gas appliances.
 - **LGSR:** Landlord's Gas Safety Record – a certificate containing the results of the annual safety check carried out on gas appliances and flues.
 - **OBM:** Operational Business Meeting are internal meetings of the senior managers from within specific services. They are chaired by the service Director.

Appendix 1 - Additional Legislation

This policy also operates within the context of the following legislation:

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- The Occupiers' Liability Act 1984
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996
- Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- Gas Safety (Management) Regulations 1996 (as amended)
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006
- Pressure Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016
- Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002
- Housing Act 2004
- Building Regulations 2010 (England and Wales)
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018