



## **YHN Gas Safety Policy Statement 2014**

## **1. Background**

Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) manages 28,600 tenanted properties on behalf of Newcastle City Council (NCC). Around 22,000 of these properties have gas appliances installed.

Gas is a convenient, efficient and effective fuel for hot water and heating, cooking and other uses. However, there are some health and safety issues in using gas, including risks of carbon monoxide poisoning and gas escapes. Each year around 20 people die through carbon monoxide poisoning in the United Kingdom. This policy is designed to ensure that we do all we can to avoid, minimise and manage risks to people living in the properties we manage.

This statement explains our commitment to our customers around gas safety, and what our responsibilities are. It also explains what processes we have in place and how we manage risk. The statement is supported by more detailed guidance and procedures for our staff and for our repairs contractor.

## **2. What is our policy for gas safety?**

Our gas safety policy is to:

- Ensure that gas appliances and fittings we provide are properly maintained so that they remain in a safe, effective and efficient condition
- Ensure that we meet all of our statutory and regulatory obligations around gas safety and maintenance
- Maintain the quality and good condition of gas appliances and fittings in properties we manage
- Ensure that an annual gas safety check and servicing is carried out on all gas appliances and fittings we are responsible for maintaining
- Promote the safe use of gas appliances by providing tenants with good advice and information.
- Put in place quality assurance and performance management arrangements to ensure that we are delivering excellent services to our customers
- Ensure that we recognise and meet the differing needs of a diverse range of tenants

## **3. Why do we need this policy statement?**

We need to ensure that our customers understand our commitment to gas safety in all the properties we manage. We also need to be sure that our staff and contractors are aware of our procedures and working arrangements around gas safety and the servicing and maintenance of gas appliances.

This policy statement is also intended to show that we are fully compliant with gas legislation and regulations. The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 require landlords to:

- Repair and maintain gas pipework, flues and appliances in safe condition,
- Ensure an annual gas safety check or service on each appliance, flue and pipework; and
- Keep a record of each safety check and provide tenants with a copy

As we manage properties on behalf of NCC, we are responsible for ensuring that the above requirements are met, and to have in place arrangements to ensure that this happens

#### 4. Who manages gas safety?

Gas servicing and repair and maintenance of gas appliances is undertaken by our repairs and maintenance contractor, Citybuild. Work carried out is supervised by us through our Property Maintenance Team. The information below briefly explains roles and responsibilities, and references are provided to relevant staff guidance and procedures.

- The **Repairs and Maintenance Partnering Group** oversees compliance with legislation and internal procedures. The group meets monthly to review gas servicing performance, such as performance in relation to the issue of valid Landlord Gas Safety Certificates.
- The **Head of Property Maintenance** has overall responsibility for gas servicing on behalf of YHN. This involves responsibility for ensuring that our contractor meets the requirements of the repairs and maintenance contract, overall performance monitoring and reporting, and dealing with escalated gas safety issues
- The **Property Services Manager** is responsible for the day to day performance management and delivery of gas servicing, and ensuring that we are fully compliant with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) regulations 1998. This involves liaison with the contractor, client officers, third party gas auditors and NCC's legal team.
- **Housing Management** staff are responsible for provision of a full range of housing services. In terms of gas safety and gas servicing, this includes, for example, making sure that new tenants have the necessary information about appliances and that they know how to get their supply connected, and liaising with NCC where legal action is necessary to gain access to properties for annual gas safety checks
- **Building and Commercial Enterprise** are responsible, through the terms of our repairs and maintenance contract with them, for ensuring that gas appliances are repaired and maintained, and that annual gas safety checks are carried out and gas safety certificates issued. Citybuild are responsible for making service arrangements direct with tenants and for ensuring that servicing is carried out on time and efficiently. The repairs and maintenance contract includes specific performance requirements in terms of gas servicing

- NCC Legal Services is responsible, under our instruction, for preparing warrants and sending out required letters and notification to tenants who do not allow access for annual gas servicing

## 5. How do we make sure we are doing what we need to?

To ensure that we provide excellent services and meet all our legal and regulatory requirements, we have detailed processes and training in place for staff to ensure that they know what to do and have the necessary skills. A brief summary of the procedures is provided below. Full information is provided for staff on our staff intranet

- **Gas servicing process.** We have a detailed gas servicing flow chart available for staff which covers the entire gas servicing process. This illustrates what happens from when tenants make the first contact with Citybuild to arrange a gas service, through to when the service is complete. It also shows what happens when Citybuild are unable to gain access, and what action is subsequently taken, where necessary, by YHN staff and NCC's legal services team, to ensure that a service takes place.
- **Gas Warrant process and guidance.** Every effort is made to avoid the need for legal action to gain access for annual gas servicing. We do not want to have to take legal action, as it is expensive and time consuming, both for us and for tenants. However, we have a duty to carry out annual services, and a moral obligation to protect tenants, and it is a tenancy agreement requirement that tenants allow access where necessary to carry out essential work. This process and guidance makes clear the steps we go through in the event that legal action becomes necessary.
- **Other procedures.** Other associated procedures we have in place support this policy statement. For example, we have an asbestos policy which covers arrangements in the event of asbestos being identified. We also have in place arrangements to carry out tests on all appliances after Northern Gas Networks have received reports from tenants about possible carbon monoxide issues.
- **Training.** All staff carrying out gas safety work receive full training. All operatives and other staff are Gas Safe registered. This is a legal requirement which ensures competence in the installation and servicing of appliances. Engineers are all re-assessed every five years through ACS (Accredited Certificated Services).

## 6. What is our approach to equality and diversity issues?

We are committed to ensuring that we do not discriminate against any of our customers. We have a detailed Equality Policy which explains our legal obligations in relation to protected characteristic groups, and how we want to provide excellent services to all our customers. This means that for all our policies and strategies we need to consider any specific issues that might be faced by protected groups.

In terms of gas safety and gas servicing, we are committed to ensuring that we treat everyone fairly. This means, for example, making special arrangements where necessary for tenants who are disabled or do not speak English to get access to properties for annual gas safety checks.

## **7. Responsibility for monitoring the policy**

It is the responsibility of the Property Services Manager (M&E) to ensure that the Gas Safety Check Policy Statement is adhered to and reviewed on a regular basis.

## **8. Review**

This policy statement will be reviewed in 2016, or earlier if necessary due to:

- Legislative changes
- Structural or role changes
- Operational or technical changes

## **9. Key Contacts**

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