



EXETER CITY COUNCIL **GAS POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Introduction

Exeter City Council undertakes to comply with all parts of the Gas Safety Regulations (Installation and Use) 1998 and all parts of relevant Health and Safety legislation to ensure that it takes those steps necessary to ensure that all gas appliances and gas carcassing found in its property are safe to use and operate.

This policy document should be read in conjunction with the following documents –

- Operational Procedure for Gas Safety Inspections and Servicing Appliances.
- Procedure for dealing with properties, with gas, that have become vacant (void).
- Operational Procedure for reactive repairs to gas appliances in domestic properties.

Contractor selection

In addition to the general rules and guidelines in the selection and management of contractors that are currently in place at Exeter City Council it is also important to ensure that because of the enhanced risks involved with the selection of contractors who may work on gas appliances or pipe work, selection procedures are restricted to include only those companies that can demonstrate they have the relevant competencies to undertake the work.

In the selection of contractors undertaking any work due consideration must be given to Regulation 8 of the Gas Safety Regulations (Installation and Use) 1998 which states ‘No person shall do anything which would affect a gas fitting or flue or means of ventilation used in connection with the fitting; if the alteration in such a manner that the subsequent use of the fitting might constitute a danger to any person’.

Contractors need to be able to demonstrate that they are competent to carry out the job safely and without risks to health and safety. To demonstrate their competency contractors should supply the following information –

- What experience they have in the type of work.
- Supply company CORGI registration details. Supply copies of current competency on all operatives who may be undertaking gas work on Exeter City Council housing properties.
- Details of their recent health and safety record.
- Details of resources allocated to undertake the work.
- Details of on going training.
- Any details of independent assessment of their work.
- Details of supervision and management.
- Details of records produced and kept (ie CP12).
- All relevant risk assessments and method statements.
- Insurance details.

Details on CORGI registration and categories shall be held by the Gas and Heating Engineer for all operatives working on gas appliances and pipe work. This will include not only the gas servicing and maintenance contract but also any gas work on voids, mutual exchanges and planned work. No contractor will be appointed for any works that may involve works on gas appliances or pipe work without prior consultation and authorisation of the Gas and Heating Engineer.

To avoid delays when work is allocated all the operatives who work for the contractor undertaking the servicing and maintenance contract should have all the necessary categories for any job they may encounter. If an operative, in the view of the Gas and Heating Engineer does not have the required categories then the contractor must supply in writing the method of work allocation and when training is planned.

Gas Servicing

Exeter City Council will carry out a safety check and service to all the gas appliances and carcassing it is responsible for at an interval of no greater than 12 months.

It is allowed for the contractor undertaking such work to visit each property up to three months prior to the date when the next visit is due. This will allow enough time for the necessary arrangements to be made for access into the property to be granted.

Following each safety check and servicing a Landlord Gas Safety Record (CP12) will be completed. A copy of each of these records will be left with the tenant at the end of the inspection. A further copy will be submitted to the Gas and Heating Engineer at the Exeter City Council for auditing purposes.

The Landlord Gas Safety record for the central boilers at Toronto House and Grandisson Court will be laminated and placed in a position within the Common Room at these schemes.

All servicing works will normally take place within office hours, that is 8.30am until 5pm, Monday to Friday, however if requested by the tenant and on properties where access is proving difficult then arrangements can be made for either evening or Saturday morning appointments.

Rooms being used as sleeping accommodation

If on any visit it is discovered that a room is being used as sleeping accommodation and the appliance in that room does not satisfy Regulation 30 of the Gas Safety Regulations (Installation and Use) 1998 then the appliance must be immediately disconnected and removed.

If a room is temporarily being used as sleeping accommodation, for example in the case of a Lounge being used then the appliance should be immediately disconnected. Discussions should then be held with the tenant concerning the length of this arrangement. If it is to be a short term arrangement (ie less than one month), then consideration should be given to the fitting of a carbon monoxide detector in the room and weekly checks on the appliance to ensure it is operating correctly.

If the arrangement is going to be longer than this then the appliance should be removed or rendered unusable and consideration should be given to whether the accommodation is suitable for the tenant or if they would be willing to pay for an appliance that does meet Regulation 30.

Access arrangements

It is written within the tenancy agreement that all tenants should allow reasonable access for all maintenance works to be carried out.

For the first visit it is not required that the contractor makes prior arrangements with the tenant to gain access to undertake the service visit. If the tenant is not at home an Out Card will be left. The contractor will wait one calendar week for the tenant to make contact. If no contact is made the contractor will write with an appointment, should the tenant still be out a second Out Card (coloured Red) will be left. The second Out Card will state the urgency for the tenant to make contact, so as an appointment can be made for the gas installation and appliances to be checked for Gas Safety, free of charge.

The Gas Service Contractor will wait one further calendar week for the tenant to make contact. If no contact is made at the end of this period the details of the visits must be passed to the Gas and Heating Engineer. The Gas Service Contractor must still be aware of the properties that require access, should the Gas Service Contractor be required to call to an appliance breakdown the property list needs be checked.

Within 10 days of the notification by the contractor a letter will be sent by the Housing Repairs and Technical Services team requesting access. If after a further 10 days there has still been no response a second letter will be dispatched or, if necessary, hand delivered. If access is not gained after another 10 days then a personal visit will be made by the Gas and Heating Engineer who will issue a card requesting access and apply a warning notice to the door warning visitors to the property that the appliances within have not had their regular safety check.

The relevant paperwork will then be dispatched to the Council's Legal Section who will use both letters and visits to attempt to gain access. If this fails the tenant will be taken to court for a breach in tenancy agreements. In most circumstances the Council will ask the Court for an injunction compelling the tenant to allow access to the property in order for the work to be undertaken.

Additional heaters where full gas central heating fitted

Where a property has had a gas combination boiler installed to operate the heating and hot water any additional heater found at the property is not required.

Normally the additional heater will be removed at the time of the new installation, however if it has been left in the property it will be serviced in line with the normal intervals. However, once it becomes uneconomical to repair or maintain it will be removed and not replaced. Allowances will be made if the tenant requires heating because of medical circumstances.

Tenants appliances

It is recognised that all appliances should be maintained on an annual basis, including those appliances that Exeter City Council does not have any responsibility for. Tenants should be strongly recommended to ensure that their appliances are regularly maintained by a registered CORGI contractor.

Because of the need to ensure the safety of our tenants Exeter City Council will request that the contractor undertakes a visual inspection of all appliances within the property, including any that are the responsibility of the tenant, during the annual service visit. All gas fires will be disconnected with catchment spaces and flues inspected. The flue will be tested for correct operation and the gas fire refitted. The condition of the appliance should be included on the Landlords Safety Certificate and a copy left at the property. Should any tenants own appliance not meet the required standards then it will be immediately disconnected and the appropriate warning sticker applied to it.

Void properties

It is recognised that when tenants move out of their home this is the time where the potential for an incident relating to gas is at its highest. Exeter City Council will therefore take all reasonable steps to avoid any incident.

The acknowledgement letter sent to tenants when notice is received will incorporate a paragraph highlighting the potential hazards of not disconnecting gas appliances correctly. It will advise that where appliances are to be disconnected the work must be carried out by a CORGI registered contractor.

At the pre-void inspection the Housing Officer will make a note of all gas appliances at the property, record who the gas appliances belong to and if they are to remain when the tenant vacates at the end of the notice period. This information will be supplied to the Technical Officer prior to the void inspection.

When a property first becomes vacant and the keys are received by the Council then a visit will be made to cap the gas supply. This is to avoid any possibility of an uncontrolled gas leak.

Every void will have a gas safety certificate completed by the relevant contractor. One copy of this will remain at the property for the incoming tenant.

The void inspection will record details of the gas meter control valve and this information should be passed to the new tenant at the time of the accompanied let.

At the time of a void inspection all appliances at the property should be checked. If gas central heating is fitted then all other additional heating appliances should be removed. In any other circumstance if the appliance passes the relevant safety checks then the appliance will remain and the Council will accept an on going responsibility to maintain it. All gas cookers must be removed and the supply capped off.

Mutual Exchanges

As with void properties it is recognised that when tenants undertake a mutual exchange the potential for an incident relating to gas is high. Exeter City Council will therefore take all reasonable steps to avoid any incident.

The letter sent to tenants when notice of a mutual exchange is received will incorporate a paragraph highlighting the potential hazards of not disconnecting gas appliances correctly and urging that a competent CORGI registered contractor is engaged to undertake the work. Ideally a copy of the relevant paper work showing what has been done prior to the exchange should be supplied to the Council.

At the pre-vacation visit the Housing Officer will make a note of all gas appliances at the property, record who the gas appliances belongs to and if they are to remain when the tenant vacates.

Pre and post safety checks either side of the exchange date will be carried out. The paperwork will be left at the property for the new incoming tenant.

At the time of safety inspections on mutual exchanges then all appliances will be checked and the condition recorded on the relevant certificate. If an appliance does not pass the safety inspection and it belongs to the tenant then it should be disconnected and the tenant at the property should be advised. Exeter City Council will not accept any responsibility for either repairing or maintaining such appliances.

Records and the management of information

All Landlord Gas Safety Certificates will be kept for a period of two years. These records can be found in Room 2.38 at the Civic Centre. All certificates will be checked to ensure they have been completed correctly by the Gas and Heating Engineer.

The Council's housing management computer system will be used to record what appliances are installed in each property and their service dates.

Any work records that are created after gas work is done on a void property or while being undertaken as part of the planned maintenance scheme (for example under the kitchen programme) will be passed to the Gas and Heating Engineer who will check them before storing the data on the property file.

Gas escapes/emergencies

Tenants should always be encouraged to report any smell of gas direct to the National Gas Emergency Service so reducing the time in getting an engineer to site.

Should tenants report a leak to Exeter City Council they should be advised of the following –

- Turn off the gas supply at the meter.
- Do not turn electric switches on or off.

- Do not smoke.
- Do not use naked flames.
- Open doors and windows.
- Call the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

If a tenant wants Exeter City Council to report the suspected leak we will phone the above number with the following details –

- Name
- Address
- Post code
- Telephone number

If a call is received concerning a leak and the tenant contacts the supplier direct a note should be made on the housing management system. A note will also be made if reporting direct by Exeter City Council staff and details should also be made of the reference number supplied.

Quality control

All Landlords Gas Safety Certificates will be passed to the Gas and Heating Engineer to ensure they have been completed correctly.

The contractor will undertake regular quality assessments of the work undertaken. The numbers of such inspections will be agreed and regularly reviewed with the Gas and Heating Engineer to ensure that enough inspections are undertaken to correctly assess the standard of work being undertaken.

The Exeter City Council will engage at yearly intervals an outside independent company to carry out quality checks on all contractors who are involved with repairs/servicing/alterations to gas appliances or supplies. This will be done within the first year of the contract being awarded for gas servicing work and will be done annually thereafter.

Personnel

All procedures and policies relating to gas safety will be held within the Housing Manual that will be available to all staff.

All staff that visit properties will be supplied with a gas safety checklist so they are aware of the likely signs of an appliance operating incorrectly and the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Regular update training will be provided to relevant officers.

Emergency or Homeless accommodation

It is important that no customer is exposed to any danger from gas appliances or pipework even if they are put into accommodation for a short period.

Before any customer is allocated emergency or homeless accommodation in either a Bed and Breakfast or in Serviced Temporary Accommodation the Housing Needs Manager must ensure that all the correct checks have been undertaken by the landlord and that there is a current Landlords Gas Safety Certificate (CP12) in place. Exeter City Council will hold a copy of this certificate.

Properties leased by Exeter City Council (Housing)

It is acknowledged that although the Exeter City Council does not necessarily own the gas appliances or pipe work in the properties that fall within the Private Sector Leasing scheme (PSL's) it does act as landlord to the customers in this type of accommodation and therefore must comply with all parts of the Gas Safety Regulations (Installation and Use) 1998.

When properties of this type are first leased a current Landlords Safety Certificate must be in place. A record should also be made of all gas appliances within the property.

It is the responsibility of the Temporary Accommodation Manager that a check of the appliances must be made by a CORGI registered engineer at intervals of no greater than 12 months.

Each time a new tenancy starts a new Landlords Safety Certificate must be issued and a copy left at the property for the new tenant.