

Sunderland City Council

Gas Safety Policy

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Introduction

The purpose of this Policy is to inform and guide staff and tenants of the steps to be taken by Sunderland City Council to fulfil its statutory obligation under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (Amended 2018) to ensure that all Council owned gas boilers, gas installation pipework, flues, chimneys, CO detectors, Smoke Detectors and appliances are safe and in good working order.

It is the aim of the Council to carry out a safety check in all of its properties within a 12 month period from the deadline date of the current Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR). Legislation allows landlords to undertake a safety check up to two months before the expiry date.

The Council uses their 'in house' Repairs and Maintenance Team to deliver the servicing programmes and where needed this will be complimented by contractors or agency staff where demand dictates.

2. Aims and Objectives

- Sunderland City Council is committed to ensuring that it carries out its duties in respect of Gas Safety to protect its residents, visitors to its properties and its physical assets.
 - A monthly report is produced showing the performance of the organisation against this 100% target to be transparent and highlight any failures so that processes can be reviewed and if required updated.
 - To ensure all Repairs and Maintenance staff/Contractors hold the required Gas Safe Registration.
 - Will clearly detail how breakdowns, maintenance and emergency response times are dealt with.
 - Provide Repairs and Maintenance Staff/Contractors with a clear statement of the Council's procedures to meet legal and statutory obligations and their role in meeting those obligations.
 - Provide tenants with a clear statement requiring their support and access to Council properties to enable Sunderland City Council to meet their legal and statutory obligations.
 - The Sunderland City Council aims to have 100% compliance i.e., a safety check and Landlord Gas Safety Record known as an LGSR (or other certificate of safety as appropriate) for all gas appliances/installations for which it is responsible. The LGSR is valid for 12 months.
 - To ensure there is a monitoring process of certification and all reasonable steps taken to achieve the annual re-certification of all gas appliances.
 - Confirm how we will deal with issues of no access.
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- All gas work, including servicing and installation will be subject to a 5% quality audit every 3 months. To review the technical aspect of the servicing and safety check to ensure continuous improvement.
 - This policy relates to all properties within the Housing stock, communal areas, and temporary accommodation. Sunderland City Council is not responsible for the gas appliances in individual leaseholder properties.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 Sunderland City Council is a 'Duty Holder' as defined within the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.
- 3.2 **The Senior Manager of Strategic Asset Management is a Delegated Duty Holder and responsible for:**
- Effective operation of Gas Safety management for all Sunderland City Council housing stock.
 - Adequate resources are made available to ensure a structure which fully meet gas safety responsibilities.
 - Allow responsibilities for gas safety to be delegated appropriately throughout the management structure.
- The Repairs and Maintenance Manager is responsible for:**
- Ensuring that Sunderland City Council complies with regulations and that policy is up to date and reflects current legislation.
 - Ensuring that Sunderland City Council is compliant through the auditing process both internally and externally including the auditing of certification.

The Mechanical Services Officer is responsible for:

- The supervision of the Gas Team
- Ensuring the Gas Safety Procedure is maintained in line with current regulations and ensuring the procedure is adhered to.
- The circulation of weekly gas performance to designated staff.

The Housing Operations Manager is responsible for:

- Appropriate action is taken to gain access for the annual gas safety check.
- Obtain comprehensive records from the Gas Team of attempts and actions to gain access for the annual gas safety check.

4. Legal Requirements

Sunderland City Council has an 'in house' Gas Team who are registered under the Gas Safe Register.

The Gas Safe Register is the official gas registration body of gas businesses and engineers in the United Kingdom. By law, all gas businesses must be on the Gas Safe Register.

A gas engineer can only be aligned to a registered business and be issued with a licence to undertake gas work on behalf of a registered business if they hold a valid and current qualification.

Sunderland City Council also engages a fully qualified gas auditor to ensure the Council are meeting its contractual obligations and gas systems are safe.

Sunderland City Council has several legal obligations it must adhere to and although not exhaustive the Council will comply with all relevant legislation and associated regulations, including:

- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

Legislation and Regulations describe specific responsibilities in terms of gas, supply, installation, servicing, and gas safety.

Suppliers: have responsibilities to respond to and investigate gas leaks.

A gas escape or notification or reports of fumes or CO detector activation, should be reported directly to Northern Gas Networks (NGN) (0800 111 999).

Installers/maintenance: must be competent, have completed an industry recognised training course and is registered with Gas Safe. They have a duty to ensure that nothing about an appliance or its installation (and associated fittings and flues and source of ventilation) can cause danger whilst the appliance is in use.

Landlords: have a duty to ensure that gas appliances and flues provided for tenants' use in residential property are installed and maintained in a safe condition. They are required to perform an annual safety check which must be undertaken by a Gas Safe registered engineer on each appliance or flue.

Sunderland City Council is responsible for the following:

- Arranging for a gas safety check to be carried out any time from 10 - 12 months after the last check, without affecting the original check expiry date. I

If it is less than 10 or more than 12 months after the last check, the property will end up with a new deadline date, 12 months from the most recent check. The Council must ensure that all gas appliances (in the Council's ownership) flues and gas installation pipe work are maintained and in a safe condition. This also applies to the safe fitting of gas installations in new build properties as well as the replacement of installations through planned or reactive maintenance work.

- A copy of the Landlord's Gas Safety Certificate (LGSR) must be given to the tenant(s) within 28 days of the safety check.
- Ensure that all new tenants, and mutual exchange tenant transfers, are given a copy of the Landlords Gas Safety Certificate prior to occupation of the property.
- Ensure that any work carried out on Sunderland City Council's behalf is carried out by a Gas Safe Engineer

5. Gas Safety Check Procedure

Repairs and Maintenance will write to the tenant advising them of when they will be attending to carry out the annual gas safety check. This will be approximately 11 weeks before the expiry of the of the last Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR).

Sunderland City Council expects the tenant will facilitate access to the property on the due date to enable its statutory duty to be completed.

Following successful completion of the Landlord's Gas Safety Check the tenant will receive a copy of the certificate for the property **within 28 days** of the annual safety check.

6. No access

If the tenant is not home for the gas safety check appointment or the tenant refuses access, Repairs and Maintenance will send another letter advising the tenant to contact within 7 days to arrange an alternative appointment. Should the tenant not contact the Repairs and Maintenance department they will refer this back to the Housing Operations Team to gain access.

The Housing Operations Team will attempt to contact the tenant to arrange an appointment to carry out the gas service. They will use a variety of different methods, such as Out of Hours Calls, text, email, home visit etc. Sunderland City Council will offer an out of hours appointment or a weekend appointment should there be any extenuating circumstances as to why the tenant cannot facilitate the gas safety check within the Councils operating hours.

After a further 7 days have passed and no appointment has been made by the tenant, the Housing Operations Team will serve the tenant with Legal Letter. This states that the tenant is in breach of their Tenancy Agreement and must allow access to carry out the gas service, on the specific date and time (**legal appointment**).

On the day of the legal appointment the Housing Management Officer will attend the tenant's property with the Gas Servicing Operative to carry out the gas safety check. Should the tenant not be home at the time of the legal appointment the Sunderland City Council may force entry to carry out the gas service in their absence. In some circumstances Sunderland City Council will cap the gas off at the meter to ensure safety and compliance.

If the tenant is home at the time of the legal appointment and refuses access to the Housing Management Officer and Gas Servicing Operative, then a referral will be made to the Legal Department to apply for possession of the property or a Civil Injunction to order the tenant to give access to carry out the service. Alternatively, if legal proceedings for rent arrears or Anti-Social Behaviour have already commenced or there is an existing court order in place that can be enforced, a request can be made to the Legal team to vary the particulars of claim/order.

Sunderland City Council will keep accurate records of all their efforts to obtain access to carry out the annual gas safety check and all no access appointments and the dates and the times that they were passed to the Housing Operations Team. This will include records/copies of all letters, appointment cards, telephone calls etc.

If the tenant is vulnerable or has children aged under 18 years, the Housing Management Officer must refer them to Together for Children or Adult Social Care to advise that legal action has commenced. Details of this referral must be recorded. A home visit must also be made to the tenant by the Housing Management Officer to advise them that we have now applied to Court. If the tenant is not at home a card or a hand delivered letter must be left at the property advising of the Sunderland City Council's intentions.

If contact and access is gained from the tenant, or the gas safety check is successfully carried out after the court file has been passed to Legal Team, a written instruction must be provided with to legal to withdraw the application.

A letter must also be issued to the tenant advising that as the annual safety check has been completed and no further legal action will be taken in an attempt to gain access to the property.

7. Tenant Owned Appliances

Tenants may choose to improve their homes but must seek written permission from Sunderland City Council Housing Service. If permission is refused Sunderland City Council will provide the tenant with a reason. During the annual gas service tenants' own appliances will be visually checked for safety but not serviced. If the residents own an appliance and it is found to be faulty, it will be isolated by the gas operative, and the tenant notified. A record is made of this on the LGSR.

Tenants are not permitted to replace/make alternations to Sunderland City Council owned boilers. To do so would be a breach of their obligations under their Tenancy Agreement.

8. Communal

Communal boilers are serviced and maintained on an annual basis. At the same time a Landlord Gas Safety Record is completed.

9. Breakdown and Repairs

On receipt of a repair telephone being made by the tenant, Repairs and Maintenance shall:

- Ensure that all repairs are diagnosed as correctly as possible.
- Ensure that each operative is equipped with a van stock of parts to be able to deal with most eventualities/repairs on the first visit.
- The Mechanical Services Officer must make provision to ensure that any parts needed on site are delivered to be fitted at the earliest opportunity (i.e., the next working day or within 24 hours)
- Repairs and Maintenance shall ensure that if it is not possible to rectify a problem on the first visit the tenant must be advised at the time of the telephone call when it is likely that the repair will be made.

All repair calls will be categorised as follows:

- **Emergency (24 hours)** – Make safe or if possible complete the repair.
- **Urgent (5 days)** – where the repair affects the ability to live comfortably in your home.
- **General (20 working days)** – Non urgent and does not adversely affect the use of the tenant's home.

An exception to the above is the report of a **gas escape** or notification or reports of fumes or CO detector activation, which will be reported directly to Northern Gas Networks (NGN). (0800 111 999). If Repairs and Maintenance is advised of a suspected gas escape or fumes or CO detector activation, they must record this and advise the caller of appropriate safety advice before contacting Northern Gas Networks. If the notification was received by any person other than the resident, the Council must also be made aware immediately. All actions must be recorded on Technology Forge with the NGN reference number. When contacted, the caller's name, address contact telephone and mobile number should be taken to provide to NGN.

10. Temporary Heating

Electric temporary heaters must be provided whenever the tenant has a loss of heating, and a repair cannot be carried out immediately or on the same day. If temporary heating is offered and refused this must be recorded on Technology Forge. The supply of temporary heating will usually be provided between October and May inclusive, or as directed by Sunderland City Council or where vulnerable residents or special circumstances require temporary heating to be provided.

All temporary heating appliances must be approved by Sunderland City Council and be subject to regular inspection to ensure they are maintained in a safe working condition. Each appliance shall have a sticker attached stating that the appliance has been inspected by a competent person prior to being left with the resident. All appliances must be PAT tested in accordance with current regulations.

The temporary heating provided needs to be sufficient to meet the reasonable needs of the tenant as directed by Sunderland City Council. This will generally be a minimum of

two or a maximum of 4 heaters per property taking into consideration the family size or any vulnerabilities of the household.

11. Carbon Monoxide/Smoke Detectors

Sunderland City Council will install carbon monoxide detector(s) to all rooms that contain a gas appliance and any room where a flue passes through.

Sunderland City Council will also ensure that an adequate number of smoke alarms are installed in all properties.

The carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms will be tested for those properties that have a gas appliance during the landlord's gas safety check and a record of this will appear on the LGSR.

12. Emergency Procedures

This procedure describes the methods used and documentation utilised when dealing with gas related emergencies, including gas escapes, actual or suspected, emissions of fumes from gas appliances, activation of CO alarms, fires or explosions (where gas is suspected to be involved) or other similar gas related emergencies, that are reported to any Council employee. These reports should be actioned irrespective of whether the gas related emergency is on Sunderland City Council property or elsewhere.

This procedure is to be applied in the event of any smell of gas or reports of fumes being detected / reported within Sunderland City Council property.

Examples of gas related emergencies that should be reported to the Northern Gas Networks include:

- Any gas escapes / reports of gas escapes (suspected or actual).
- Suspected emissions of fumes from gas appliances.
- Fires or explosions (where gas is suspected to be involved),
- Damaged gas pipes,
- Fluctuating gas supplies.

The member of staff receiving a report DIRECTLY shall in ALL cases give the person making the report the following safety advice:

- TURN OFF the gas supply. This is the handle next to the gas meter that you turn so it is 90 degrees to the gas pipe
- TURN OFF all appliances suspected of having a gas escape / emitting fumes if safe to do so (CO may be present).
- OPEN doors and windows to ventilate the property and help disperse any gas fumes.
- DO NOT turn electrical switches / appliances on or off.
- DO NOT smoke; use naked flames, mobile phones or any other potential means of ignition.
- DO NOT use any door entry systems to allow person's access to the property, open them manually.
- LEAVE the house.

Under appropriate circumstances, as by direction from the Mechanical Services Officer or Repairs and Maintenance Manager, the information will be passed to the Northern Gas Networks on 0800 111 999.

The date and time the gas related emergency was reported to the Northern Gas Networks shall be recorded on Technology Forge.

13. Incident Reporting

There are existing reporting procedures within Repairs and Maintenance in line with Gas Safety Regulations where there are technical issues, incidents or defects found by gas engineers. Where there are incidents relating to injury or hospitalisation these will be reported in line with Sunderland City Councils Riddor reporting procedure with assistance from the Health and Safety Team. In all cases the HSE will be informed, and Sunderland City Council will cooperate with all investigations and corrective actions as necessary.

14. Void/Abandoned/Unoccupied Properties

When a property becomes void, abandoned or unoccupied, Sunderland City Council will visit the property and make safe within 48 hours. The Building Officer will ensure a key safe is fitted on the same day.

Within 48hours, Sunderland City Council will undertake all safety checks, including capping off (Discing) the gas supply, and making safe. Under no circumstances should the gas supply be live whilst the property is void.

Void, abandoned, or unoccupied properties containing gas appliances, which are not the responsibility of Sunderland City Council, will be disconnected by the Gas Team as part of the LGSR. Appliances once disconnected will be removed by the Void Team.

The tenant will be given a 'relet and gas service' appointment upon sign up. The tenant must have their gas and electric supply registered with a utility company. At this time, the Gas Operative will show the tenant how to use the thermostat, location of the Gas Emergency Control Valve and incoming Cold Water Main Stop Tap.

15. Mutual Exchanges

On notification of a mutual exchange, the Housing Management Officer will arrange an appointment with the departing resident to complete a Landlord Gas Safety check. A gas safety check will be carried out on all Sunderland City Council owned appliances with a gas meter involved in a mutual exchange.

16. Retention of Certificates

Sunderland City Council retains all records of the annual gas safety certificates for a minimum of two years from the date of the certificate to ensure hard copies can be produced when required.

As a minimum, Sunderland City Council expects the record of a gas safety check must contain:

- A description of and the location of each appliance or flue checked.
- The name, registration number and signature of the individual carrying out the check.
- the date on which the appliance or flue was checked.
- Satisfactory results of the gas tightness test
- CO detectors for each room where gas appliances or flues exist
- the address of the property at which the appliance or flue is installed.
- the name and address of the landlord
- any safety-related defect identified, and any remedial action taken.
- confirmation that the safety check has included an examination of the matters referred to in paragraphs (a) to (d) of regulation 26(9) of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998

17. Audit

Repairs and Maintenance will carry out an internal monthly audit and quarterly external audits.

Whilst undertaking a site audit visit and find an unsafe situation, they will either carry out the repair or arrange to cap/disc the gas meter issuing a warning notice which is placed on the boiler and contact NGN to attend. In both situations, they will also contact the Mechanical Services Officer and Repairs and Maintenance Manager to alert them of the problem found and advise of the actions they have taken.

Repairs and Maintenance and Housing Operations Staff will meet monthly to discuss any gas related issues in particular any relating to access for the annual gas safety check.

18. Key Performance Indicators (KPIS)

Repairs and Maintenance will provide KPIs that are presented monthly Repairs Meetings. Repairs and Maintenance will also present their KPIS to Housing Monitoring Group on a quarterly basis.

19. Review

This policy will be reviewed on a two-yearly basis unless there is a legislative change in which will prompt an immediate review.

