



Policy Outline

GAS SERVICING POLICY September 2009

OVERALL PURPOSE

West North West Homes Leeds Gas Servicing Policy outlines our approach to managing the servicing and safety checks of gas appliances and systems to all dwellings with gas managed by WNWHL on an annual basis. It provides a link to the Asset Management Strategy and sets out our commitment to high quality service delivery with an aim of achieving sustainable communities, highly satisfied customers and value for money.

INTRODUCTION

West North West Homes Leeds will ensure that:
Gas Servicing and Maintenance continues to be a high priority service. The target of 100% annual service and safety check for all homes with gas is a key priority and a Statutory Legal Obligation.

West North West Homes Leeds aims to provide a gas service and repair programme that is

- Sensitive to the needs of the individual
- Efficient
- Responsive and flexible
- Accountable
- Fair

West North West Homes Leeds will meet our legal obligations to service or test 100% of all gas appliances and flues at least once a year.

We will:

- Test any smoke or CO detection equipment where installed as part of the service.
- Maintain appliances to ensure safe efficient usage.
- Install CO detection equipment to properties with gas warm air appliances.
- Identify and replace any defective gas appliance (this includes boilers, gas fires, unit heaters, water heaters) which is deemed to be beyond economic repair. This does not include gas cookers.

- Purchase and install appliances that meet legal, efficiency and environmental standards.
- Ensure customers are made aware how to safely operate appliances.

In order for us to achieve this we will ensure that the Gas Servicing service meets the following criteria:

- We will raise awareness of the importance of Gas Servicing Checks through the WNWhL website, posters and leaflets.
- Send as Anniversary card reminding you that the annual gas service is due
- Notify you by letter, a month before, when the gas equipment and pipe-work in your home is due for an annual safety test / service;
- Provide, in a letter, an appointment date when the contractor wishes to carry out the safety test and service to your property;
- If the date or time of the appointment is not suitable, provide a free-phone telephone number (by land line to the contractor) for you to re-arrange;
- Ensure that our contractors leave a card with contact details if they are unable to gain access
- West North West Homes Leeds will ensure that high quality Customer Care is delivered at all times ensuring we are committed to all out customers with the provision of feedback and performance information regularly, supporting all other related legislation, policy and procedures.

Service Standards

1. We will ensure the safety of your property by carrying out a safety check on gas appliances and equipment every 12 months by Gas Safe registered engineers.
2. We will send you an anniversary card at least 8 weeks before the existing service expires reminding you that your annual gas service is due.
3. We will notify you by letter at least one month in advance when the gas equipment and pipe work in your home is due for annual service/test and provide you with an appointment to carry out the gas safety test. We will provide you with our contractor details if you need to rearrange this to a more convenient date and time.
4. We will attend at the agreed time and date.
5. We will complete the service and any necessary repairs and provide you with a copy of the gas safety certificate CP12 within 20 working days.
6. We will measure customer satisfaction with gas repairs and the safety service we provide.
7. We will carry out quality audits to ensure gas appliances are being tested in line with current Gas Regulations.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

We will monitor the implementation and delivery of services through this Policy through the following indicators at a monthly progress meeting:

- 100% annual service and safety test for all homes
- % of annual gas safety and service tests completed (contractor : EAGAheat)
- % of annual gas safety service test completed (contractor : West Gas)
- % of first time access by contractor
- % of second time access by contractor
- % of third time access by contractor
- Number and addresses of properties with Tenant Support involvement.
- % of properties with Tenant Support involvement.
- Number and addresses of properties with Tenant Enforcement Team involvement.
- % of properties Tenant Enforcement Team involvement.
- Number of and addresses of properties served with section 54 Notices
- % of properties served with section 54 notices
- % of Overall Satisfaction with Gas Servicing Service including Customer Satisfaction Survey by contractors
- % Satisfaction with gas servicing by diversity strands
- Number of compliments
- Number of complaints
- % of complaints responded to within 10 days
- No of cases with court hearings
- No of cases with court injunctions
- No of cases with Notice To Quit
- No. of cases with Notice To Seek Possession
- No. of recharges raised

Gas Servicing Policy

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 West North West Homes Leeds aims to deliver an effective and efficient Gas servicing service in line with the service standards agreed with our customers.

- 1.2 We aim to achieve a balance between meeting need, giving choice and equality to customers, creating and maintaining sustainable communities and Decent Homes, and achieving Value for Money within the Gas Servicing contract.
- 1.3 West North West Homes Leeds will fulfil its legal requirements in relation to Gas Servicing ensuring customers are given clear information relating to out of hours procedures and standards relating to the delivery of these.

2.0 Outline of Service

2.1 The Gas Servicing duties of West North West Homes Leeds are set out in Regulation 36 of the Gas Safety (installation and use) Regulations 1998. This Regulation places important duties on landlords of domestic properties which include:

- Carrying out an annual gas safety check at not more than 12 monthly intervals.
- Issuing a copy of the Landlords Gas Safety record to the tenant within 28 days.
- Providing regular on-going Maintenance to ensure appliances and flues are maintained in a safe condition.

2.2 The repair duties of West North West Homes Leeds are set out in Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

2.2.1 We must keep your home in good condition. In line with our Repairs Policy we will repair and maintain:

- Heating equipment and water heating equipment.
- Test smoke detectors and CO detectors where these are installed.

2.2.2. We will do repairs in a reasonable time. When you report a repair we will tell you when the work will be done by (this depends on how urgent it is).

2.2.3. We will clear up after a repair or a gas safety check and service. We will leave your decoration as close as possible to how it was before the repair was done. However if redecoration is necessary we will offer a decoration voucher to contribute towards the cost of the work.

2.2.4 Tenants have the right to have their gas appliances serviced and maintained within the timescales specified in the Gas Servicing Service Standards.

2.2.5. If you install a gas appliance (excluding gas cookers) with permission we will maintain and service them. On termination of the tenancy any gas heating appliances installed will become owned by West North West Homes Leeds

2.2.6 When carrying out gas safety checks in properties West North West Homes Leeds will shut down (cap off) any unsafe gas appliances that it has no responsibility to maintain.

2.3 Failed appointments for Gas repairs

Where a contractor's operative fails to keep an internal repair appointment without good reason, and does not inform you in advance, we will credit your rent account with £10.00. This applies to internal appointments through our main gas servicing and maintenance contractors, Heat and West Gas. Full details are available through our Compensation for Failed Appointments Policy.

- 2.3.1 If you persistently fail to keep appointments, we may seek to re-charge you under our Re-Charge Policy.

2.4 Home Visits

When visiting customer's homes, West North West Homes Leeds staff and its contractors will carry and show on request formal identification. If the person calling does not have identification, customers will be entitled to refuse access. We will also look at using passwords for customers with a disability e.g. visually impaired or where customers have been identified as vulnerable.

3.0 Specific Needs

- 3.1 WNWhL will take into account the specific needs, which may arise, of older and vulnerable people, disabled people, and Black and Minority Ethnic groups, in a manner that promotes equality and inclusiveness ensuring all customers are treated equally and fairly taking into account race, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and religious belief.
3. Where WNWhL identifies specific support needs for the tenants we will work with Tenancy Support to address these needs.
- 3.1.3 We will provide a translator/interpreter of information in other formats upon request from customers.

3.2 Customer Choice

West North West Homes Leeds is committed to offering customers choice where it reasonably can. With responsive repairs, fixtures and fittings will normally be repaired or replaced, like for like, and unlike work undertaken through improvement, major repair or modernisation programmes, there is limited scope for customers to exercise any real choice. We will however offer customers a choice where this is possible. We offer a flexible appointment system, and you can request a different contractor if there has been an issue with your contractor previously.

3.3 Repairs Completed In One Visit

West North West Homes Leeds' contractors will, wherever possible, try to ensure that gas servicing and maintenance is completed in one visit to the customer's home. If the servicing and maintenance cannot be completed in one visit, a further appointment to return and complete the work will be arranged with the customer via the contractors support team.

3.4 Keeping Our Customers Informed of Delays

If servicing and maintenance parts or materials need to be ordered, the work may not be completed within the timescale. In this case West North West Homes Leeds or its contractors will inform the customer of the likely date for completion of the work.

3.5 Redecoration

Internal decoration of homes is a tenant's responsibility. Occasionally, when carrying out gas servicing and maintenance some minor decorating will be required. West North West Homes Leeds will always try and ensure any damage is kept to an absolute minimum and if necessary will offer a decoration voucher to contribute towards the cost of the work.

3.6 Previous Tenants Fixtures and Fittings

West North West Homes Leeds may not be able to maintain gas appliances left by previous tenants and may remove them as an alternative to carrying out gas servicing and maintenance. If the previous tenant had received permission to install a gas appliance with permission we will normally try and maintain those fixtures and fittings.

3.7 Process to gain access by gas contractors

- 3.7.1 The gas contractors West Gas and EAGAheat undertake the gas service checks on the behalf of West North West Homes Leeds. They will send out a range of letters and make visits to the property to try and establish contact with the tenant. The action taken by the contractors will be as follows;
- West North West homes Leeds will provide Gas Servicing contractors with vulnerability information on customers prior to them sending any communication letters. This is so that contractors can ensure that any services are sensitive to customers' needs.
 - Contractors will send their first letter providing a suggested date with morning or afternoon slots for when the gas safety check will be carried out. The Contractor will phone ahead to confirm the appointment. If access is not gained on this date a "no access" card will be left and customers are asked to call contractors' free phone numbers to book an appointment.
 - Contractors will then send a second letter providing a fixed appointment date for a different day of the week suggesting alternative am or pm appointments for the gas safety check to be carried out. The Contractor will phone ahead to confirm the appointment.
 - If access is not gained on this date a second "no access" card will be left and customers are requested to call to book an appointment. At this stage a list of addresses where access has not been gained will be sent to the Tenancy Enforcement Team.
 - A final letter is then sent in the form of a Section 54 appointment (this letter can only be sent when it is proven that the service certificate (CP12) at the property has expired). This letter will provide a fixed appointment date for a

different day of the week from the previous two appointments and suggesting alternative am or pm slot. At this stage an updated list of addresses where access has been denied will be sent to the Tenancy Enforcement Team.

- Copies of all the appointment letters, the Section 54 letter and no access cards will then be forwarded to the Tenancy Enforcement Team to commence legal proceedings.

3.8 Process to gain access by the Tenancy Enforcement Team

3.8.1 Upon receipt of notification from the gas contractors, the Tenancy Enforcement Team will open an Enforcement Case and the following checks will be undertaken by the Enforcement Officer managing the case:

- Checks to be made on all systems i.e.: GUI/Housing Applications/Academy/Siebel etc to obtain general information such as telephone numbers etc and to also establish if the tenant has any vulnerability.
- If any vulnerability issues are identified, contact must be made with any Support Workers/agencies etc who the tenant might be engaging with.
- If vulnerability issues are identified but the customers do not have a registered support worker then a referral will be made to the Tenancy Support Team.
- We will ensure the Gas Contractor/s are aware there are vulnerability issues but do not disclose personal information as to the reason why.

3.8.2 Once initial checks have been undertaken, Tenancy Enforcement Officers will make contact the customer in the following ways :

Initial contact

This will predominantly be made by means of a telephone call; if a mobile number is available a text message will also be sent

If the customer fails to respond within 2 working days, a visit will be made to the property.

First visit

If access is gained then the gas contractor is contacted and an appointment is arranged.

If no access is gained we will leave a sticker on key hole and post card through door with the Tenancy Enforcement Officer's contact details on. Details will be input on Siebel so that any future contact from the customer will highlight the outstanding gas service.

After 7 days if there is no response then a second visit to the property is made:

If access is gained then the gas contractor is contacted and an appointment is arranged.

If no access is gained we will post a "Legal Action" letter through the door informing the customer that legal costs may be recharged and leave A4 size sticker on door. Details will be input on Siebel so that any future contact from the customer will highlight the outstanding gas service

If no response within seven days after the second visit:

The case will be referred to Leeds City Council's Legal Department for a "Letter Before Action" (LBA) to be prepared.

The Tenancy Enforcement Officer will then hand deliver the LBA. If contact is made by the customer, an appointment will be made then with the gas contractor.

If no contact is made by the customer within 7 days or where an appointment has not been kept by the customer at this stage the Tenancy Enforcement Officer will instruct Leeds City Council's Legal Services to commence legal

proceedings. Any costs incurred whilst commencing legal proceedings will be re-charged to the customer.

3.9 Closing a gas servicing Tenancy Enforcement Case after gaining access.

If the intervention by the Tenancy Enforcement Team has been successful, the case will be closed and removed from their list of outstanding S54 cases. The Orchard GUI system will hold a UDC on the customer regarding the no access issues relating to gas servicing to enable future access planning for gas servicing. **All properties which have had LBA will be fitted with Gas restrictor equipment**

3.10 Referral to Legal Services for an injunction to Gain Access

If the customer has failed to contact West North West Homes Leeds and the gas safety check hasn't been undertaken, legal action will ensue to allow the contractor access to the property. The Tenancy Enforcement Officer will prepare a case and refer it to Legal Services.

The following actions will be undertaken by the Tenancy Enforcement Officer:

- Make final contact with gas contractor prior to referral to Legal Services
- The full case file will be referred to the Tenancy Enforcement Manager to be authorised for legal action.

3.11 Court Hearing

Once a court hearing date has been obtained the Tenancy Enforcement Officer will take the following action:

- Serve the Court papers and complete a 'Certificate Of Service'

- Notify gas contractors of the hearing date
- Continue to try to establish contact with the customer up to the date of the court hearing
- Maintain contact gas contractors up until the court hearing to see if tenant has booked an appointment
- Update any contact on the case progress form and send a copy through to Legal Services prior to the court hearing date, together with a copy of the Certificate of Service.

3.12 Servicing an Injunction for gas servicing

At the court hearing, a date will be set when the customer will be ordered to allow access to the property at a given time

Prior to the access date the Tenancy Enforcement Officer will take the following action;

- Check the gas contractor has been booked
- Engage wherever possible with the customer / customer support workers

The Gas Contractor will attend the property on this date. If the contractor is successful in gaining access and carrying out the work, then the Enforcement Officer will notify Legal Services and close the case.

A recharge for legal costs may be raised at this point.

3.13 No access on Injunction

If access is not gained on the Injunction date, the Contractor will notify the Tenancy Enforcement Officer within 1 working day together with any relevant information. Action will also be undertaken to establish if the 'tenant' is still occupying the property.

The Tenancy Enforcement Officer will then refer the matter back to Legal Services with instructions to issue Committal Proceedings. At such proceedings, the customer will be ordered to attend Court and explain why he/she should not be sent to prison for failing to adhere to a Court Order. This process will only be deemed necessary to be instigated on rare occasions.

3.14 Closing a case after serving an Injunction

When a gas service is completed:

- The Tenancy Enforcement Officer will put a comment on GUI/Siebel with a note stating the gas service is completed.
- Close the Siebel enquiry

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 Consultation on the West North West Homes Leeds Gas Servicing Policy has taken place through the Gas Servicing Service Improvement Group and with customers through the Asset Management Sounding Board, contractors, and other key stakeholders.

5.0 Implementation

- 5.1 Members of West North West Homes Leeds Board, the Chief Executive, Heads of Service and the Contracts and Compliance Manager are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented.

- 5.2 It is the responsibility of all West North West Homes Leeds' employees and contractors to ensure that work is carried out in line with this policy and procedures relating to it.

- 5.3 We will introduce all the necessary information and procedures into all our training packages with staff and contractors.

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6.0 Monitoring

- 6.1 West North West Homes Leeds will monitor and manage the contractor performance and customer satisfaction levels to ensure all client groups are being considered to assist West North West Homes in the development of healthy neighbourhoods and communities.

- 6.2 We will measure our performance of the gas servicing and maintenance service through - Best value, and national and local performance indicators against our service standards.

- 6.3 We will provide clear and accurate information on the overall service and unit costs and review cost effectiveness so that both value for money and business efficiencies can be achieved.

- 6.4 Progress against all properties will be recorded on PS Team, this will include storing copies of all CP 12's, CP 1's, no access information (section 54's) and any other important documentation relating to gas service and installation, including all renewal of gas appliances.

7.0 Review

- 7.1 In preparation for delivering this policy during 2009 West North West homes Leeds has reviewed and taken into account new or emerging government legislation and government and council policies.

As a result, this policy now fully reflects, and is inclusive of the issues arising from those policies and legislation, and considers the impacts arising.

8.0 Legislation

New or emerging legislation and new policy for 2009 include:

- Regulation 36 of the Gas Safety (installation and use) Regulations 1998.
- Asset Management Strategy
- Duty of Repair – Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Asbestos Management Strategy
- Tenant Support Policy
- Vulnerability Policy and Strategy
- Customer Care Strategy
- Complaints/Compliments Policy
- Value for Money Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- Cohesion and Diversity Strategy
- Financial Strategy
- Access to Services Strategy
- Customer Involvement Strategy

