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Document Type	Policy- L2		

Central Heating Installations and Servicing Policy

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This policy and associated procedures have been created to ensure that:-

- Coastline Housing maintains a clear programme for the installation of replacement heating systems and the standards associated with these;
- All heating installations in Coastline Housing properties are installed and maintained to a safe standard in compliance with the current regulations and legislative requirements;
- Relevant guidance is in place to enable Coastline Housing customers understand their obligations in respect of heating installations and servicing; and
- Relevant processes and procedures are in place enable Coastline Housing to fulfil its legal obligations as a Landlord.

2.0 Background

2.1 Coastline Housing is bound by a range of obligations, legal/statutory duties and its own policies when considering the installation and maintenance of heating systems. These include:-

- Part L1 of the Building Regulations which specifies the standards required of any new heating system installation;
- Under Section 4 of the Housing Act 2004, it is a requirement that “any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor”. In respect of heating systems, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is used to assess compliance with the Act;
- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 specify landlords’ duties to make sure gas appliances (this may include boilers, fires, cookers and hobs), fittings and flues provided for tenants are safe with appropriate records maintained. Although there is no prescribed timeframe for these duties, good practice would be the demonstration of regular, annual maintenance checks and subsequent repairs. Servicing is most efficiently done at the same time as the gas annual safety check which is required at no more 12 monthly intervals. Regulation 39 states that failure to conduct a gas safety check within 12 months is a breach of the regulations unless Coastline can demonstrate that it has taken “all reasonable steps” to prevent the contravention; this is achieved through the Access Procedure

2.2 In addition to the above, there is a general duty of care and Coastline will be expected to follow manufacturer guidance on the safety checks and servicing of all other fuel type which includes oil, solid Fuel, Air Source Heat Pumps, Ground Source Heat Pumps and Solar appliances / installations.

2.3 In 2015 a landmark case (Liverpool City Council to the Lands Chamber) held that affordability was a due consideration for the selection of any new heating system although in context, the home was poorly insulated and the case hinged on the proposal to install cheaper electric panel heating instead of the preferred night storage heating.

3.0 New Installations

3.1 A programme for new heating system installations will be developed before each financial year, seeking to carry out the majority of installs before the heating season begins. The programme will aim to target 90% of the available budget, subject to survey, on a planned list with the remaining 10% being held back for unplanned replacement during the year due to failure and uneconomic repair or where an opportunity to replace a system arises during a void.

3.2 Potential replacement systems or new installations will be identified as follows:-

- The oldest, least efficient and least reliable stock will be identified for potential for replacement subject to survey. This list will be further prioritised using call out logs by Blue Flame to further highlight repeated system failures which should be prioritised for replacement. Oil boilers may also be specifically prioritised for replacement due to customer health reasons or to help address fuel poverty where the system has been capped in excess of 2 years due to lack of heating oil;
- Where there are homes highlighted for disposal, these will be subject to greater scrutiny to consider the benefits and issues in retaining the existing heating system. A further check will be made with Finance to highlight systems proposed for early replacement which have a carrying value of more than £1,000. These will be reviewed on a case by case basis;
- A methodology through a “decision tree” heating flowchart is used so there is a clear, consistent approach can be followed for all planned heating system investment;
- Supported and extra Care schemes will be assessed on ‘whole property’ basis to ensure that new heating systems are designed taking into account further improvements planned in each case. Each property will have a specific investment plan which will increase the thermal efficiency, improve insulation and ventilation, whilst also upgrading heating systems;
- District Heating systems in place of individual heating sources will be considered, especially where specific funding is available. These will each be subject to a cost benefit analysis.;
- External grant funding will be used to supplement heating installation costs wherever possible and this may then prioritise these systems on a value for money basis.

3.3 The planned programme will be published through the Coastline Customer portal which will be subject to survey.

3.4 It is accepted that it will be difficult to be precise on which systems will proceed when due to access issues, asbestos uncertainty and refusals. However, customers will be informed by the contractor around one month before the team is scheduled to attend and then programme the work in accordingly.

3.5 5% of new installations will be randomly selected for inspection by Coastline or an external engineer to monitor ongoing installation quality standards.

3.6 100% of new installations will be inspected by the installation contractor and the reports sent to the M&E Contracts manager.

4.0 Maintenance

4.1 Coastline is responsible for the maintenance and repair of flues, appliances and pipework provided for customer use.

4.2 All servicing and safety checks for heating appliances will be carried out by a suitably qualified registered engineer relevant to the heat source; this must be evidenced by the contractor on an annual basis under the 2017 HeatCare contract with Blue Flame.

4.3 The contractor will produce a schedule of planned maintenance for all appliances in advance of the financial year due. In April 2018, the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) (Amendment) Regulations came in to force through a new "regulation 36A" known as the MOT style approach. This regulation allows for more flexibility of gas servicing where the due date remains the same day and month, year on year, as long as the service is carried out within the 2-month window before the gas service date. As with the previous regime, if the gas service is carried out after the due date it will be a compliance failure. However, if a gas service is carried out before the 2-month window, the gas service due date will be reset to that new day and month. The MOT approach to gas servicing will mean that in most cases the date will remain the same each year rather than drifting forward by up to 2 months. The servicing and access arrangements will be applied across all combustible fuel heating systems.

4.4 Appointments will be made in accordance with the access procedure, including escalation to legal process in the event of non-access.

4.5 All heating appliances & hot water in void properties will be serviced (and safety checked if gas) prior to a new tenancy agreement taking effect and this is detailed further in the Void works utilities procedure.

4.6 A separate procedure is in place for Mutual Exchange properties where gas supplies will be isolated on vacation then reinstated prior to a gas safety check taking place before the new tenant takes occupation.

4.7 Where a Gas Safety Check (CP12) is carried out, this will be stored electronically for at least 2 years and a copy will be posted to the customer within 28 days. New customers will be provided with a copy of the most recent CP12 as part of their new tenancy pack before they move in.

4.8 Coastline will not maintain customer appliances, such as gas cookers, but will inspect them whilst conducting a gas safety check on Coastline installed equipment. Where these are found to be defective the appliance will be categorised and relevant action taken in accordance with the Gas Industry Unsafe Situations Procedure – IGEM/G/11; the customer will be informed of the defect and the requirement for them to carry out a repair. In the event that the customer refuses to allow the appliance to be disconnected, the contractor will inform Coastline, the Gas Supplier if LPG or the Gas Emergency Service (tel 0800 111 999) in accordance with Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations - Regulation 34 Use of Appliances

5.0 Customer Guidance

5.1 Coastline will provide guidance to all new customers on the effective operation of new heating systems including all operating controls.

5.2 Coastline will provide guidance to customers to help them understand their obligations in respect of heating installations and servicing. (*Customer Guidance – Your New Heating System*)

6.0 Access Procedure and Refusals

6.1 The tenancy agreement requires customers to allow access for any maintenance or safety check work to be carried out. Coastline will take all reasonable steps to ensure this work is carried out, following the Access Procedure, noting that where access cannot be gained in a reasonable time an injunction will be progressed.

6.2 When access is granted for the servicing and safety check but cannot be carried out due to a lack of gas or oil supply, the customer's consent will be obtained for the temporary capping of the gas or oil supply. This will prevent use of the heating system until the supply is available again in accordance with the Access Procedure

7.0 Associated Procedures and Guidance

7.1 Coastline maintains a comprehensive suite of customer guidance and associated procedures. The list below is current at the time of policy issue:-

- Customer Guidance – Your New Heating System
- Planned Heating Installation Programme
- Chimney Removal Procedure
- Asset Investment and Viability Strategy

8.0 Relevant Legislation

8.1 To ensure regulatory and legal compliance an independent technical audit by a suitably qualified company (such as CORGI) will be conducted on an annual basis. A further independent audit will be conducted by a nominated Coastline consultant to determine the effectiveness of Coastline and contractor management / controls.

8.2 The following legislation should be read in conjunction with this policy:-

- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 5th Edition published 2018
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- The Defective Premises Act 1972;
- The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985;
- The Housing Act 2004.