



North Devon Homes

Solid Fuel and Oil Installation Policy

Contents		Page
1	Purpose	1
2	Principles	1
3	Review	2
4	Responsibilities	2
5	Scope	2
6	Policy Statement:	
	6.1 Solid fuel installations	3
	6.2 Oil installations	5
	6.3 Safety management	5
	6.4 Resident management	6
7	Consultation	7
8	Equality Impact Assessment	8

1. Purpose

This policy document covers the provision of cyclical servicing, safety checks and related responsive maintenance to all rental properties owned (or managed under agreement) by North Devon Homes (NDH) where a solid fuel or oil-fired domestic installation is present.

In addition to the legislative and legal requirements affecting solid fuel and oil installations, NDH believes that the quality of its maintenance services are key to ensuring the satisfaction and peace of mind of our customers as well as the prolonged life of its heating and hot water installations.

Set out within this Policy are NDH's overriding goals and objectives in respect of solid fuel and oil installations. Further detailed procedural information on solid fuel and oil servicing, the approach to selection of contractors, monitoring and management regimes are contained in other policy and procedure documents.

In line with this policy NDH will:

- meet the minimum legislative and legal requirements set out by statute, Health and Safety Executive guidance, etc.
- provide a customer focused approach, aimed at meeting the diverse needs of those affected by solid fuel and oil installations
- maintain NDH's assets in order to minimise the future maintenance cost and maximise life expectancy.

2. Principles

The following principles will apply to this policy:

- It will be open, fair and transparent
- It will reflect the current standards of operation and will be reviewed whenever industry standards, legislation or guidelines change
- It will promote consistency in the approach to the management of solid fuel and oil safety
- It will be positively promoted with regard to informing the company's, staff, customers and board members views and behaviour
- It will be realistic, achievable and provide value for money

- It will be periodically reviewed as set out in section 5
- It will support corporate objectives and service standards.

3. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or immediately following any relevant change to government policy, regulation or legislation. This will ensure that it continues to operate within best practice, achieve measurable results, and achieve continuous improvement.

The Head of Asset Management will be responsible for ensuring that policy reviews are undertaken, that appropriate consultation takes place and that revisions are reported to the Board for its approval.

4. Responsibilities

NDH's Board of Management is responsible for approving this policy and has delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhoods and the Head of Asset Management for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented.

Detailed procedures will be developed and maintained by the Head of Asset Management in line with this policy to provide further guidance during delivery of the policy.

The Head of Asset Management is responsible for ensuring that staff training is provided and that staff understand the wider issues surrounding this policy, its applications and the procedure.

5. Scope

The following areas are covered by this policy:

- Solid fuel installations
- Oil installations
- Safety management
- Performance management
- Resident participation

6. Policy Statement

6.1 Solid fuel installations

Only a small proportion of NDH's stock has solid fuel central heating appliances.

NDH will not fit closed coal or wood burner type appliances due to the very high risk posed by carbon monoxide (CO) should the appliance be used incorrectly by the customer. Where there is an existing installation it will be maintained and serviced annually by a HETAS certified contractor to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the unit is in good working order. In addition a carbon monoxide detector will be fitted in any room with an appliance burning combustible material. At the time of renewal an alternative system will be fitted. Any replacement will be informed by considering both what is available at the time, customer consultation and compliance with associated NDH policies.

Where NDH has installed biomass boilers, we are looking to remove these over the next few years due to the high level of breakdowns that have been experienced and the lack of customer satisfaction with the systems installed. These will be replaced with a suitable alternative. If a customer wishes to retain their biomass system they will be allowed to do so until it becomes uneconomical to repair.

NDH is looking at measures to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and an aspect of this will be removing secondary forms of heating such as open fires, where an efficient central heating system is installed. NDH will look to remove open fires when a property becomes void and the fireplace will be blocked and suitably vented.

NDH will generally refuse permission requests from customers to install a solid fuel appliance or open fire, however will consider each individual request. The reasons for refusal for solid fuel appliances are set out below:

- they are an inefficient means of heating a property in terms of the energy performance of a dwelling

- they carry a high risk in terms of chimney fires and CO poisoning, particularly if the user does not use the right fuel or operate the appliance safely.
- They are not easy to use systems in terms of having to clean and reset solid fuel on a daily basis and so may not be suitable for all of our customers
- Wood and coal fires also give off tiny particles which can be detrimental to people with lung / breathing conditions

The only time solid fuel appliance installation requests will be considered is when a property is of solid wall construction in an off gas area and where the SAP rating for the property is below band E.

If it is found that a customer has installed an appliance without permission, the customer will be expected to remove the appliance within a given timescale. Should this timescale not be met then NDH will decommission and recharge the cost of the work to the customer.

Any open fires installed as a focal point and/or secondary form of heating will be serviced and swept annually by NDH. Alternatively a customer can chose to service and maintain the fire / flue but must send a copy of any servicing records through to NDH. This service must be completed by a HETAS registered engineer/chimney sweep.

Open fires that can be evidenced as being present in homes when the customers took on the tenancy will remain until one of the following occurs:

- A significant repair is required to the appliance or flue (ie double the cost of an average repair would currently set the limit at £270)
- A new/ replacement heating system is installed
- Customers fail to allow access for the annual servicing and sweep
- There are concerns from a health and safety aspect eg fire being used in an unsafe manner or customer has hoarding issues.

NDH will not carry out extensive and expensive repairs to chimneys where this is not the main source of heating. Chimneys will be sealed and correctly ventilated. Any repairs or alterations

that are undertaken to our properties will be planned in a way that does not compromise the safety of any appliance or flue that is present at the property.

6.2 Oil installations

NDH will not install oil installations as these systems can be expensive to use and oil prices are subject to dramatic price fluctuations which can put customers at risk of fuel poverty. Where oil heating is currently installed NDH will service the appliance on an annual basis using an OFTEC registered engineer. Oil appliances will be maintained until such time that the boiler or tanks becomes beyond economical repair or where there are risks of environmental damage through possible oil spills. All properties with an oil appliance will have a CO alarm installed and this will be maintained and serviced annually.

When replacing oil installations an alternative heating system will be installed in compliance with NDH Policies which exists at the point of renewal.

6.3 Safety management

NDH will respond to breakdowns and repairs required to solid fuel or oil appliances and installations that the Company owns and is responsible for the maintenance of.

In addition to responding to these breakdowns and repairs, the Company will arrange for a safety check of all solid fuel central heating and oil installations and equipment present in NDH owned or managed property.

The Company will also service all heating and hot water appliances which it owns, and will provide advice to customers over the continued use of their own appliances (cookers, gas fires etc).

There is no legislative requirement placed on servicing solid fuel or oil installations but due to the small number of such installations, the Company will seek to carry out the safety check and service of these properties annually unless a more frequent visit is noted by the servicing engineer.

At a change of tenancy, and for every new tenancy (including mutual exchange and decants) the Company will undertake a safety check irrespective of the date of the last inspection, and will provide advice to the new customer over the use of the installation.

Because of the safety concerns of open flue appliances, NDH will supply and maintain a CO alarm to each property which has solid fuel or open flue appliances. These will be checked annually as part of the smoke alarm servicing programme.

As with all cyclical service visits, an appointment will be offered by the works contractor, giving at least one week's notice of the intended visit. NDH will attempt to gain appointed access up to three times, any subsequent visits will be recharged to the customer. Should access not be provided by the customer, then NDH will take legal action to obtain access to the property to carry out the check and service.

All reactive repairs to solid fuel and oil installations will be undertaken by approved HETAS or OFTEC contractors. Works will be prioritised in accordance with the Response Maintenance Policy.

6.4 Performance management

NDH will maintain a comprehensive asset database of all Solid Fuel and oil installations and appliances owned by the Company. This asset list will be provided to those who undertake the servicing and safety check, to be updated whenever a new solid fuel or oil appliance is installed, renewed or removed.

NDH will ensure that at all times 100% of the solid fuel and oil installations within its properties are covered by a Safety Certificate. Regular monitoring of the Company's asset register and contractors' service schedules will be undertaken to ensure that this target is met at all times.

We will also monitor any new installations through the stock condition surveys programme, where surveyors will feed back to us and record on the Keystone any new solid fuel installations identified.

7. Consultation

As part of the review of this policy, the Company will seek the views of its Customers and those affected, and consult with a Customer group to evolve and improve upon the delivery of this part of the Company's services.

Further information is available from the Customer Involvement Strategy.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

8.1 Who has been consulted in developing the Policy?

Date	Consultation methodology	Challenge / impact / result

8.2 Identify potential impact on each of the protected characteristics by considering the following questions (the list is not exhaustive but an indication of the sort of questions assessors should think about):

Strand	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Comments / evidence
Race	x			
Disability	x			
Gender	x			
Gender Reassignment	x			
Sexual orientation	x			
Religion or belief	x			
Age	x			
Rural issues	x			
Social Inclusion issues	x			
Pregnancy and maternity	x			
Marriage and civil partnership	x			

8.3 Does the Policy promote equality of opportunity?

The policy deals with equipment and safety and is, therefore, blind in terms of equality of opportunity.

If “adverse impact” identified in table (4) above is it? N/A

8.4 Full EIA (or if you decide full EIA is not necessary but some changes should be considered)

8.5 If actions/suggestions for improvement have been suggested, what should the positive outcome be for NDH customers and stakeholders?

N/A.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently to all customers of North Devon Homes and in compliance with the Single Equality Act 2010 which recognises the “protected characteristics” as gender, transgender, race, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, sexuality, age, religion and belief.

To this end an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy.

This document or parts of it, will be produced on request in other languages or formats such as large print to ensure that everyone is able to access the policy.

Language Line provides all corporate translation services and they may be contacted on 0800 169 2879

NDH is committed to the principles of fairness and respect and therefore seeks to embed statutory guidance and policy relating to Equality and Diversity in to all activities.

Next review date:	Responsible Officer
Every three years September 2024	Head of Asset Management
	Related Documents