



**North Devon Homes**

**Solid Fuel and Oil Installation Policy**

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## 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 is 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 three 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 application 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.

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 or when heating upgrades or energy improvements take place, 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 existing 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 choose 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
- 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 e.g. 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 service all heating and hot water appliances which it owns and will provide advice to customers over the continued use of their own appliances.

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 any new solid fuel installations identified on Keystone.

### **7. CONSULTATION**

As part of the review of this policy, the Company will seek the views of its Customers and those affected and consult 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

### Section 1: Contact details

Please complete your details and contact information in the spaces provided:

EIA Author:	Claire Fallow
Job title:	Head of Asset Management
Department:	Asset Management
Submission date:	03/09/2024

### Section 2: About the policy

Please describe what you are impact assessing and who it applies to:

Title:	Solid Fuel and Oil Policy		
Aims / description / purpose:	The policy that sets out our approach to the small number of solid fuel and oil heating systems within our stock		
People it applies to:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contractors

### Section 3: Gathering data and evidence

Have you identified relevant evidence (qualitative and quantitative) to establish whether this policy could potentially affect some equality groups more than others?

Have you analysed equality data for each of the groups identified in Section 2?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Have you identified / researched anecdotal or alternative evidence?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Have you attached the evidence to this impact assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Section 4: Assessing the impact

Based on your evidence, which equality groups might this policy affect more or less than others (if any)?

Age	x	Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	x	Caring responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fuel and food poverty	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young People who may be vulnerable	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drug and alcohol dependency	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion and belief (including no belief)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Homelessness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender / sex equality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Isolation	<input type="checkbox"/>

Using examples from the evidence you have collected, please describe the impact (positive, negative or neutral) on the equality groups you have identified above and highlight any different needs required for this protected characteristic.

**Note:** if you are reviewing a policy / guidance please reflect on the scope, language used and its application - does it fully promote equality and inclusion?

### Section 5: Addressing any impact: action planning

Please describe any actions or mitigation required as a result of this assessment – include the timescale for each and who is responsible:

Action / Mitigation	Timescale	Responsibility
Consideration will be given to a customer's vulnerability or circumstances when considering heating systems that are not automated and require manual input eg solid fuel. This may lead us to upgrade a heating system sooner than required.	Ongoing	Planned Improvement Manager

### Section 6: Involvement and Consultation

What involvement / consultation activity has been undertaken or is planned in relation to this policy?

Involvement / consultation activity	Results / Feedback


**Section 7: Approval and Publishing**

Signature of EIA author:

Date:

<b>Next review date:</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
Every three years August 2027	Head of Asset Management
<b>Author</b>	<b>Related Documents</b>
Head of Asset Management	