



PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY HOMES SOLID FUEL POLICY

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Lead Directorate:	Homes and Neighbourhoods
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1. Purpose

This policy sets out our approach to solid fuel appliances installed in Plymouth Community Homes' (PCH) rented and leasehold housing stock.

2. Definition

A solid fuel appliance refers to any appliance used to cook, heat or provide hot water to a property that burns a solid material as fuel. This includes open fires.

The policy applies to tenants living in a PCH property and leaseholders living in or leasing a PCH property.

3. Principles

PCH is committed to best practice in management of our solid fuel appliances. Our policy will:

- Set out how PCH manages the level of risk in our properties to keep our residents safe.
- Reflect the current standards of operation and be reviewed as necessary when industry standards, legislation or guidance change.
- Promote consistency in our approach to dealing with solid fuel appliances with regard to servicing and maintenance.
- Be realistic, achievable and provide value for money.
- Be open, fair and transparent.
- Support our corporate objectives and service standards.

4. Aim and objectives

PCH aims to phase out solid fuel appliances. In the meantime, where PCH is aware that a functioning solid fuel appliance is in place, we aim to ensure that it is maintained and serviced regularly, in accordance with the relevant Health and Safety legislation and in accordance with the Heating Equipment Testing and Approval System (HETAS) recommendations and industry standards.

In providing a service in relation to solid fuel appliances, PCH is committed to:

- Meeting the high standards expected by and agreed with our tenants and leaseholders.
- Meeting the requirements of good asset management by ensuring that the appliances are maintained to a good standard and are therefore safeguarding the future of the property.
- Providing value for money.
- Protecting the environment in line with our sustainability strategy by avoiding carbon intensive fuels such as coal and unsustainably sourced timber and reducing the use of inefficient appliances.

In properties where PCH is responsible for the solid fuel appliance (occupied and void properties), PCH will:

- Carry out cyclical checks on all functioning solid fuel appliances. (This applies to properties where we are aware that there is a solid fuel appliance. There may be instances where a tenant is in breach of their tenancy agreement by having installed an appliance without PCH's knowledge or permission. Our response when such cases are identified is set out in section 5).
- Remove or decommission all redundant solid fuel appliances.
- Offer high efficiency gas central heating in replacement for solid fuel back boilers.
- Offer an electric fire in replacement for solid fuel fires.
- Ensure tenants and leaseholders are provided with information about the reason that the appliance is being decommissioned. PCH will offer support to tenants moving from one system to another.
- Remove or decommission and make safe any solid fuel appliance within a void property and ensure another suitable system is in place prior to the property being occupied. This system may be of a temporary nature depending on gas supply to the property.
- Repair functioning solid fuel appliances only where the cost is less than £400. In cases where the repair exceeds this sum and/or the system/appliance is deemed unsafe to use it will be condemned and made safe and an alternative heating option offered.
- Recommend changes to a heat source in consultation with the tenant.
- Not permit tenants or leaseholders to install their own solid fuel appliance.
- Set a high standard of workmanship and customer care for our staff and contractors.
- Offer advice and signposting for tenants in fuel poverty.

- Monitor repeated repairs on solid fuel appliances and carry out an assessment to ensure that required future repairs provide value for money.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 PCH has the following responsibilities:

- PCH must ensure that all existing solid fuel appliances that fall within our responsibility are kept in good working order and are safe to use. We are responsible for carrying out regular checks on the appliances and heating systems and ensuring that remedial work is carried out within an appropriate time scale.

5.2 Tenants have the following responsibilities:

- Tenants are responsible for the property they occupy. This includes operating any existing solid fuel appliance safely and in the correct manner. Safe use of the appliance includes burning only approved materials that are not harmful to the environment; keeping ventilation clear and unobstructed and using a suitable fire guard. Tenants are also responsible for ensuring that PCH is informed of defects to the property and is given reasonable access in order to carry out any relevant works involved in the maintenance and safety checks of the appliance and chimney.
- Tenants are required to seek permission prior to making changes to their properties. Requests to install or reinstate solid fuel appliances will not be approved. Any solid fuel appliance installed by a tenant where permission has not been obtained or refused will result in the appliance being removed at the tenant's expense, including making good costs, or an injunction being sought requiring the tenant to arrange removal and make good at their own expense.

5.3 Leaseholders have the following responsibilities:

- Leaseholders of PCH are responsible for the property they own. This includes ensuring that any solid fuel appliance is used safely and correctly. Safe use includes burning only approved materials that are not harmful to the environment; keeping ventilation clear and unobstructed and using a suitable fire guard. Leaseholders are also responsible for ensuring that all appliances are maintained or decommissioned in the correct manner by a competent HETAS approved contractor and in accordance with industry standards. Leaseholders are responsible for ensuring that any defects are remedied immediately and that safety checks of the appliance and chimney are carried out correctly and at regular intervals.
- Leaseholders are required to seek written permission prior to making changes to their properties. Requests to install or reinstate solid fuel appliances will not be approved.

6. Supporting procedures and training

Detailed procedures will be developed and audited by the Quality Assurance team to ensure all staff work to promote a consistent approach to delivering customers with an effective, efficient and high standard of repair to their homes.

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

7. Data protection

In applying this policy, all members of staff must comply with PCH's Data Protection Policy and ensure that personal information supplied by customers is protected at all times.

8. Equality and diversity

PCH will apply this policy consistently and fairly, and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

PCH will make this policy available in other languages and formats on request. We will carry out an equality impact assessment on this policy, in line with our corporate procedure.

9. Monitoring and review

We will monitor this policy to ensure it meets good practice and current legislation and will review it in accordance with our review timetable for all policies.