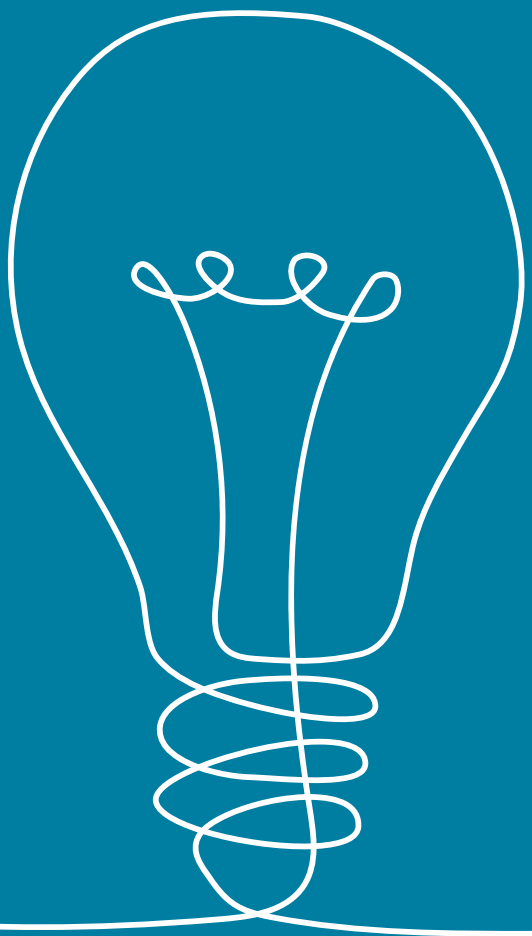
DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Housing Services

Domestic Electrical Safety Policy



Tenants Panel Approved

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Purpose

This Policy sets out specific guidelines on the electrical safety of fixed electrical installations and in-service inspection and testing of electrical equipment and details the approach and appropriate frequencies of inspection and testing to minimise the risk of fire, damage to property, injury and/or death.

By having this detailed Electrical Safety Policy, Housing Services is able to detail the approach to be adopted throughout the organisation and comply with the law, relevant regulations and adopted best practice.

Definitions

This Policy relates to Darlington Borough Council Housing Services.

Responsibilities

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that appropriate management systems are in place to ensure employees and members of the public are not put at risk from the effects of electricity.

The duties of management, staff and personnel of Housing Services will be clearly communicated and agreed by all parties, to ensure that all persons can undertake their duties as stated in this Policy. Communications and feedback detailing agreed responsibilities will be kept and monitored, and this will trigger further training or assistance as deemed necessary.

Commercial & Construction Elements

The Housing portfolio contains commercial items, which are assigned to Corporate Landlord team. These include, but are not limited to, electrical installations within the communal areas of:

- Sheltered Schemes.
- Extra Care Schemes.
- Good Neighbour Schemes, such as community centres.

This also includes carrying out Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) on equipment used within the schemes for use by visitors and tenants, such as bingo machines.

There is also an ongoing new build programme. Whilst the properties remain at construction phase, they remain under the control of the Construction Manager.

Electrical work in these areas, will be carried out under their own registration and 'Duty Holder' responsibilities alongside other commercial building maintenance, so do not fall under the Duty Holder requirements within this domestic electrical safety policy, as this will be covered under "Commercial Duty Holder" requirements.

The client "Responsible Person" elements, however, do still apply in relation to ensuring completion and compliance.

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for this Policy and ensuring compliance.

Group Director

The hierarchy of the organisation sets out that the responsibility for the 'responsible person' is carried through the Chief Executive Officer and Directors and on to other managers who have responsibilities for overall statutory compliance or general building management activities. They will also be responsible for ensuring that adequate physical and financial resources are made available, to enable the objectives of this Policy to be met. It is important that each 'responsible person' is aware of their accountability and fulfils their role in a safe and competent manner.

Assistant Director of Housing and Revenues

Electrical safety is the responsibility of the appropriate Assistant Director within areas under their management control. This will involve:

- Understanding relevant electrical legislation and guidance, including delegating appropriate responsibilities to relevant managers.
- Ensuring the allocation of resources (financial and staff) to implement the Electrical Safety Policy

Housing Buildings Manager

The Housing Buildings Manager is the person with operational oversight realigning to the management of the policy and will take the lead in managing day to day activity relating to the policy. They will also plan and allocate resources accordingly for normal management activities. The Housing Buildings Manager will be supported by various qualified staff in undertaking relevant duties but will generally be viewed as the Duty Holder (registration pending). They will ensure that the process is compliant with current legislation, arrange and manage annual reviews or special reviews following any circumstances outlined in the appropriate section below.

Housing Asset and Compliance Manager

The Housing Asset and Compliance Manager is responsible for the operational implementation, delivery of and compliance with this Policy, staff awareness, training, and communication to tenants (generally referred to as the Client 'Responsible Person'). They will also ensure arrangements for the delivery of electrical awareness training for all appropriate staff and implementing a competency matrix to ensure that only those with the appropriate level of training are asked to undertake roles where specific training is required.

Electrical Manager

The Electrical Manager is the 'technical duty holder' and is generally referred to as the contractor "qualified supervisor – responsible person" and will take day to day responsibility for:

- Implementing the requirements and actions of this policy.
- Managing operational compliance of any specialist contractors and the works undertaken.
- Validating data and records and ensuring information is updated in a timely manner to report on overall compliance.
- Planning and managing the delivery of programmes of inspections, remedial actions, and planned investment works, to ensure compliance and improve tenant safety.
- Maintaining a competency matrix to ensure that only those with the appropriate level of training are asked to undertake roles where specific training is required and ensure that training is delivered and is up to date.
- Providing information and advice on all relevant aspects of safety to be shared with tenants regarding safe use of equipment.
- Service monitoring and quality audits to ensure standards are maintained across the different geographical areas, individual operatives.
- Leading as the National Inspection Council Electrical Installation Contractor (NICEIC) Qualifying Supervisor role, such as managing risks, and liaising with suppliers and contractors and any issues that arise.
- They will be supported by various qualified staff in undertaking relevant duties but will generally be viewed as the Manager.

Employees

All employees, irrespective of their position shall:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of other persons who may be adversely affected by electrical work, including members of the public, tenants, visitors and contractors.
- Co-operate, as appropriate, with other staff and agencies to ensure compliance with this policy and all other relevant legal requirements.
- Halt work that, in their opinion, may present a serious risk to health and safety.
- Report any concerns that they may have in relation to the safety of electrical systems and installations.
- Raise any issues immediately that endanger health or safety.
- Report all accidents, incidents and near misses to the Health and Safety team as quickly as possible, to ensure that relevant action and investigation is undertaken.
- Undertake any training or qualifications relevant to their roles, or as requested by their manager.
- Only appropriately skilled and competent persons will carry out electrical inspection and testing. A person shall be deemed skilled to carry out the appropriate inspection and testing only if they have sufficient qualifications, knowledge, and experience.

Contractor's Responsibilities

- We require our contractors to abide by this policy and any relevant legislation, technical guidance and keep up to date with any amendments. They are also required to comply with the Contractor Code of Conduct and the requirements of this document when undertaking electrical installation works.
- Responsibility to complete the Electrical Installation Certificate, Electrical installation condition report, Minor electrical installation works certificate and/or any other relevant legislative certification, in accordance with BS7671 Electrical regulations.
- Installers will notify the certification bodies for registration of any new installation, or notifiable special location installation to comply with Part P of the building regulations.. They in turn will notify Building Control within 30 days as appropriate. A specific Code of Conduct, Ethical Standard and range of sustainability and social value initiatives will be developed and included in the relevant contract documentation.
- Comply with the Housing Services Access Procedure.

- Except for undertaking unforeseen emergency repairs whilst carrying out the Inspection and Testing regime, no repairs or rectification works will be started without first obtaining the correct authority from an appointed member of Housing Services, namely the Electrical Manager.
- Test equipment will comply with the requirements of BS 7671 and IET Guidance Note 3 – Inspection and Testing, including all amendments.
- Comply with specific requirements for in-service inspection and testing of electrical equipment. Documentation will be provided in the form of a PAT certificate in accordance with IET code of practice.. In addition to the employees' section, which identifies departures from the requirements of BS 7671 and provides an overall assessment of the suitability of the installation for continued use, all Portable Electrical Appliances will be tested at regular intervals by a portable appliance tester.
- We will ensure that all our homes and communal installations are tested in accordance with the Institute of Engineering Technology (IET) Regulation statutory timescales. We will test and issue report prior to the re- letting of our properties.

The frequency of inspection and testing will be determined taking into account:

- The type of installation and adequacy of earthing and bonding.
- Suitability of the switchgear and control gear.
- Serviceability of accessories and fittings.
- Type of systems and their condition.
- Extent of any wear and tear, damage, or other deterioration of other parts of the installation and level of misuse (such as vandalism).
- Presence of adequate identification and notices.
- Any change in use of the premises which have led to, or might lead to, deficiencies in the installation.
- EICR observations and recommendations.
- Reveal if any of the electrical circuits or equipment are overloaded.
- Find any potential electrical shock risks and fire hazards in the electrical installation.
- Identify any defective DIY electrical work.
- Tests are also carried out on the electrical installation to check that it is safe.

The assessment section(s) of the report will describe the overall condition as either 'satisfactory', in which case no immediate remedial work is required, or 'unsatisfactory', where remedial work is required to make the installation safe.

Observations and recommendations will include results of the inspection and testing. They will be based on the requirements of the issue of BS 7671 current at the time of the inspection, and not on the requirements of an earlier standard when the installation was constructed. Observation(s) will be provided in an accurate and easily understandable manner.

The summary of the inspection report will give a clear indication of the condition of the electrical installation, considering relevant circumstances. After necessary remedial work has been completed, an appropriate certificate will be issued to confirm that the remedial work has been carried out, in accordance with BS 7671.

New installations will be provided with an Electrical Installation Certificate, complete with a Schedule of Inspections and schedule of circuit details and test results. The documents will be suitably completed in compliance with BS 7671.

We will ensure that any electrical test considers relevant items, including:

- Adequacy of earthing and bonding.
- Suitability of the switchgear and control gear, for example, old fuse boxes with double-pole fusing and/or wooden enclosures, which are likely to need replacing.
- Serviceability of accessories and light fittings, for example, older round-pin sockets, sockets mounted on skirting boards, round pattern lighting switches and braided flexible cords connecting ceiling roses to lamp holders, which may require replacement due to unsuitability or deterioration.
- Types of wiring systems and their condition, for example, cables coated in vulcanised rubber insulation (phased out in the 1960s), which may be in poor condition and need replacing.

- Extent of any wear and tear, damage, or other deterioration of other parts of the installation.
- Presence of adequate identification and notices.
- Changes in use of the premises, which have led to, or might lead to, deficiencies in the installation.

Any relevant observation recorded by the electrician in the 'observations and recommendations' section of the report will be accompanied by a recommendation code to indicate the action needed. Further detail on the codes is given below.

- Code C1 – Danger Present (immediate threat to safety, rectified or made safe the same day).
- Code C2 – Potentially Dangerous (urgent remedial action required). Should be taken within 30 days.
- Code C3 – Improvement Recommended. Time is not limited, but should be considered for future e.g during planned works.
- Code FI - For further investigation, the issue should be investigated as soon as possible.

Where a real and immediate danger is observed that puts the safety of those using the installation at risk, Code C1 (requires immediate attention) will be given. We will act without delay (usually by phone) to remedy the observed deficiency in the installation. Where the engineer does not receive confirmation immediately to undertake work, they will perform other appropriate action (such as switching off and isolating/disconnecting the affected parts of the installation) to mitigate the danger. The electrician will not wait for the full report to be issued before giving this advice.

Where a Code C1 is given, we will be advised immediately, in writing, that urgent work is necessary to remedy the deficiency. This action is necessary to satisfy the duties imposed on the electrician and others by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.

A Code C2 is an observed deficiency considered to be dangerous at the time of inspection (EICR unsatisfactory/fail), where it would become a real and immediate danger if a fault or other foreseeable event was to occur in the installation or connected equipment. We will be advised that, whilst the safety of those using the installation may not be at immediate risk, remedial action should be taken urgently to improve the safety of the installation.

A Code C3 is used to indicate that, whilst an observed deficiency is not considered to be a source of immediate or potential danger, improvement would contribute to an enhancement of the safety of the electrical installation.

The Tenant's Responsibilities

Under the terms of their Tenancy Agreement, tenants are required to allow access to their property for maintenance and/or safety checks to be carried out. To undertake fixed installation inspection and testing, tenants will be required to grant permission for an electrician to temporarily isolate the electrical supply to the property.

Accordingly, tenants are required to:

- Identify any requirement to save IT software and action this before the start of any electrical operation/isolation.
- Make their own contingency arrangement for the absence of electrical supplies, for example, to fridges/freezers and check for reconnection once the engineer has completed their work.
- Ensure appropriate access and relocation/ removal of any obstacles has been done prior to arrival of the engineer.
- Notify us of any repairs required/fault issues in a timely manner.
- Ensure loft spaces are kept empty.

We are not responsible for the safety of tenants' cookers, or fixed or portable electrical appliances, not provided by Housing Services; or installations which have been installed without our prior approval. Where these installations are found to be defective on first inspection, we will explain and terminate the supply and make recommendations for the required rectification works. It will usually be the case that unauthorised installations will be removed, and the tenant recharged for the costs, and this will be explained at the time. Tenants are responsible for any repairs relating to damage they have caused with faulty self-installed appliances and wiring.

Tenants are responsible for portable appliances in their properties that they own. Outgoing tenants should not gift any appliances to the next tenants. Any tenant owned electrical equipment left in a home

will be removed and disposed of and a charge made to the outgoing tenant.

Where tenants want to carry out property alterations and improvements, which include additions/ alterations to the electrics, they are required to seek authorisation prior to any works being undertaken.

If works are approved, it will be done so on the basis that tenants are informed and are then held responsible for ensuring appropriate safety checks are carried out and all relevant certificates are passed to Housing Services, following the works/ installation, as set out in the Tenancy Agreement.

Where works are approved and completed to agreed standards, we will carry out all future safety checks. Any defective or unauthorised works needing rectification may incur a recharge. If any installation has been undertaken without our permission, and is found to be defective, the supply may be terminated.

Legal Framework / Relevant Legislation

We are committed to ensuring the safety of tenants and other stakeholders, with regards to electrical installations in domestic properties and buildings owned by the organisation, unless otherwise stated in formal agreements such as leases etc. The following legislation will be complied with, which extend to but is not limited by:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 2004
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992 (as amended)
- The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Building Regulations
- Right to Repair Scheme (introduced 1994)
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- Requirements for Electrical Installation IET Wiring Regulations 18th Edition BS7671 (including all amendments) (Non-statutory)
- IET Guidance Note 3 – Inspection and Testing (Non-statutory)
- The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994

We will require our staff and contractors to abide by all relevant legislation and technical guidance and keep up to date with any amendments.

Key Principles

General

Tenants in properties, where Electrical Inspection and Testing is to be carried out will be informed in writing that the electrical installation will require isolation (switching off) and that we are unable to accept responsibility for any loss or damage resulting from this.

We will maintain an asbestos register (covering individual properties and communal areas), which will be provided to contractors.

For new electrical work, where works are notifiable, we will comply with The Building Regulations 2010

(as amended), including Approved Document P - Electrical Safety - Dwellings. This requires electrical installations in dwellings to be designed and installed, so they afford protection against mechanical and thermal damage and do not present electric shock and fire hazards to people.

Fixed Electrical Installations

An electrical installation is made up of all the fixed electrical equipment that is supplied through the electricity meter. It includes the cables that are usually hidden in the fabric of the building (walls and ceilings), accessories (sockets, switches, and light fittings), and the consumer unit (fuse box) that contains all the fuses, circuit-breakers and residual current devices (RCDs).

We will ensure that our electrical installations have:

- Sufficient socket outlets for the number of portable appliances likely to be used, to minimise use of multi-socket adapters and extension leads.
- Covers/barriers in place to prevent contact with live parts.
- RCD protection, where appropriate.
- Satisfactory earthing arrangements.
- Satisfactory bonding for incoming services, for example, gas and water.
- Sufficient circuits to avoid danger and minimise inconvenience in the event of a fault.
- Cables that are correctly selected in relation to their associated fuse or circuit breaker.
- Appropriate fire detection systems (smoke and or heat detection), preferably mains supply.

Frequency of Inspection and Testing

Over time, and with the wear and tear of regular use, the installation will start to deteriorate. Connections can work loose (a potential fire hazard), equipment can be damaged, and building and maintenance work can have an impact on the wiring. The frequency of periodic electrical inspection and testing will be determined considering:

- The type of installation.
- Its use, the extent of wear and tear, and operation and/or level of misuse (such as vandalism)
- the frequency and quality of maintenance.
- The damage and/or deterioration found at the time of the inspection.

IET Guidance Note 3: Inspection and Testing indicates a suggested frequency of 5 years for an EICR for domestic properties in social housing properties. These frequencies will be decreased if the history indicates signs of progressive deterioration.

Our housing stock is subject to a inspection and testing at the following frequencies:

- Based on best safeguarding approach we have made a business decision to undertake inspection and testing on all property types every 5 years.
- At change of occupancy, such as a void or mutual exchange, an inspection and test will be carried out.

Access for Safety Checks and Repairs

We will make every effort to arrange a convenient time and date with the tenant for access to complete the works. Appointments will be made, and written notice provided in accordance with our Access to Homes service standard. In cases where access is denied after re-arranged appointments and following written notifications of potential legal action, we will seek an injunction to gain access. This will be in line with our Tenancy Management Policy.

It is a condition of the Tenancy Agreement that tenants must provide access for landlord safety checks. Specific details are set out in the Tenancy Agreement.

Where we need to seek legal intervention to gain access to properties, our preferred first option is the use of court injunctions.

We recognise that in certain cases there may be underlying issues that contribute to access problems, which may relate to a support need, language, or specific tenancy management problem. In these circumstances, we will try to overcome or resolve the cause of the problem and be sensitive to the issue before pursuing legal action.

The Access to Homes service standard allows opportunity to consider these issues at each relevant stage of the legal process.

Leaseholders and Shared Owners

Typically, these groups do not fall directly under the responsibility of Housing Services for domestic electrical safety inspections, as the responsibility for these remain with the leaseholder/shared owner. The importance of this will be communicated regularly.

Temporary Accommodation

These properties receive the necessary condition report testing, maintenance, and repairs, as appropriate, and in accordance with other domestic housing properties.

Lettings and Mutual Exchanges

- Before a tenant is given the keys, the electrical installation will be inspected and tested, and a valid certificate issued to the incoming tenant, as part of the sign-up process following a mutual exchange. No property will be let without a satisfactory electrical certificate being available.
- In the case of a mutual exchange, however, time constraints (and power supply issues) may lead to a test having to be carried out as an urgent repair.
- All properties will meet the Housing Services letting standard, prior to let.

Training and Information

We will undertake appropriate and regular electrical safety awareness training for all relevant staff. Suitably qualified or 'competent' staff will manage the electrical works undertaken by Housing Services, in accordance with relevant legislative requirements.

Auditing and Review

Quality of work may be assessed in all, or a combination of, the following ways:

- Assessment of a percentage of works by a suitably experienced and qualified officer. Which may be increased where unsatisfactory results are found.
- Assessment by a nominated consultant and/or technology.
- Self-assessment and quality assurance by the contractor.
- Tenant feedback and satisfaction survey.

Internal auditing arrangements will be required of the contractors, which include the contractor's qualified engineer reviewing all Electrical documentation and checking all procedures have been followed. Third party auditing will also be carried out by the Client Responsible Person.

Policy Statement

We will ensure that the electrical safety of fixed electrical installations and portable appliances (where applicable) are inspected at appropriate frequencies and maintained to minimise the risk of fire, electrocution, damage to property, injury and/or death.

We recognise the legal obligations in relation to electrical safety and the Electrical Safety Policy demonstrates how we will comply in accordance with current legislation and approved codes of practice.

We will ensure that a compliant and uniform approach is adopted, and the service delivered meets statutory requirements, and is consistent with good practice.

This Policy applies to all Housing properties. The main hazards of electrical systems are:

- Faults which could cause fires.
- Fire or explosion, where electricity could be the source of the ignition.
- All installed electrical equipment and materials are of the correct type and comply with applicable British Standards.
- All parts of the fixed electrical installation are correctly selected and erected.
- No part of the fixed electrical installation is visibly damaged or otherwise defective.
- Recording all electrical checks, inspections and tests including test results, keeping them throughout the working life of an electrical installation.
- In conducting our business, we will meet our health and safety obligations to our staff, tenants, contractors and visitors.

Related Policies and Procedures

This Policy should be read in conjunction with our Health and Safety Policy, which will cover the process for recording, reporting, investigating and analysing of accidents, incidents and cases of ill health in relation to electrical safety.

Other related documents include:

- Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Housing Management Policy 2022-2026
- Repairs handbook
- Housing Services Damp Mould and Condensation Policy
- Leaseholders Booklet
- Fire Safety Policy for Sheltered and Extra Care Accommodation
- Housing Services Tenancy agreement
- Housing Services Void Lettable Standards
- Housing Comments, compliments and complaints procedure
- Customer Engagement Strategy
- Fire and Fire Door Safety
- Housing Services Climate Strategy 2024-2029
- Housing Services Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029
- Housing Service Standards:
  - Housing Services Information Standards 2024
  - Housing Services Safety & Quality Service Standards 2024
  - Housing Services Your Neighbourhood & Community Service Standards 2024
  - Housing Services Rent Account Service Standards 2024
  - Housing Services Tenant Involvement Service Standards 2024
- Housing Services Access to Homes Standard 2024
- Carbon Monoxide Alarm Procedure

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