
Water Hygiene and Legionella Policy



February 2026 | This policy relates to Elmbridge Borough Council Residential Properties



Elmbridge
Borough Council

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1. Introduction

We care about our tenants and want to ensure that everyone lives in a safe and healthy environment.

The purpose of this policy is to set out a clear and practical approach to managing our water systems to help reduce the risk of Legionella bacteria in our homes where we hold a maintenance and repairing responsibility.

This policy explains how we look after the water systems in our homes to keep you safe from **Legionella bacteria** and other water hygiene risks.

Legionella can cause a serious illness called **Legionnaires' disease**, which is a type of pneumonia. People catch it by breathing in tiny water droplets, for example from taps, showers, or water tanks that are not used often or not properly maintained.

Most of the services you receive are delivered by a Managing Agent. This is currently Pinnacle, www.pinnaclegroup.co.uk. We provide planned maintenance and improvements to your home and are your landlord.

Where a service is not provided directly by us, we remain responsible for ensuring it meets all Regulatory and legal standards, delivers the level of service that our tenants expect, and is actively monitored to maintain those standards.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All homes where we are the landlord and hold repairing or maintenance responsibility.
- All blocks with communal water systems where we are the landlord.
- Empty properties before they are re-let.

If your building is owned or managed by someone else, they are responsible for carrying out the checks and management of the water systems and making sure any

issues are dealt with.

We will remind them of their responsibilities and share any risks we find. We will also work closely with them to make sure our staff and contractors do not put anyone at risk, and we will help to ensure there is a clear water hygiene management plan for your building.

This policy also applies to staff, contractors, and Tenants. In some cases, Tenants may request or carry out their own changes to bathrooms or kitchens. Where this could affect water safety, permission must be sought in advance from us so that we can make sure the works are carried out safely.

3. Aims of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to make sure you, your family, and anyone visiting your home are protected from water-borne risks such as Legionella.

We will follow the laws and safety guidance that apply, and we will be clear about who is responsible for what so that nothing is missed.

Regular checks and monitoring will be carried out within agreed timescales to keep water systems safe and reduce the associated risks. The staff and contractors who do this work will always be trained and competent, and we will make sure you are kept informed and supported so that you can feel confident your home is safe.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

The principal legislation, regulation and guidance:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- COSHH Regulations 2004
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Housing Act 2004
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- ACOP L8: Legionnaires' disease – the control of Legionella bacteria.
- HSG274: Technical guidance for water systems.
- INDG458 - Legionnaires' disease: A guide for duty holders Leaflet
- BS8580-1:2019: Legionella risk assessments.
- **Regulator of Social Housing:** Safety and Quality Consumer Standard

Staff should always refer to **ACOP L8 and HSG274** when carrying out or commissioning work and use Water Regulations Approval Scheme (WRAS) approved products.

5. What is Legionella?

Legionella is a type of bacteria that can grow in water systems and cause a serious lung infection called Legionnaires' disease. It spreads through tiny droplets of water in the air, often from taps, showers, or water tanks that aren't used regularly or are poorly maintained.

While anyone can be affected, older people, and those with certain health conditions are more at risk.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Our responsibilities as landlord

We are the **Duty Holder** under ACOP L8. This means we are legally responsible for making sure risks from water systems are properly managed.

The Heads of Assets Maintenance and Property Services is responsible for the delivery of this policy.

The Managing Agent is responsible for the Legionella Management Plan.

Our managing agent is responsible for carrying out risk assessments, monitoring and remedial works. Any contractor must be suitably competent, qualified, trained and,

where applicable, accredited (e.g. Legionella Control Association).

Our Managing Agent arranges inspections, risk assessments and repairs, often using specialist contractors who are trained and accredited.

Staff and contractors must follow safe procedures and report any concerns immediately.

As tenants, your responsibilities are to allow us access when we need it, to report problems such as poor hot water, discoloured water or unusual smells, and to follow simple advice such keeping all taps and showers free from scale, flushing taps and showers after holidays or long absences.

7. Risk Assessments, Inspections and Monitoring

Our preferred means of controlling Legionella in all our homes is by storing hot water above 60°C and distributing it at 55°C.

When cold water storage tanks are present, inspection is extended to ensure they are fit for purpose, clean and that a cover is provided. Other control measures we use include:

- Ensuring that the release of water spray is properly controlled
- Ensuring water cannot stagnate anywhere in the system by keeping pipe lengths as short as possible and/or by removing redundant pipe work
- Keeping the system and the water in it clean through good turnover and constant use.

We will complete a programme of risk assessments and sampling on all our water installations. Inspections, cleansing and disinfection will be carried out according to risk.

Each risk assessment will contain direction as to how the risk is to be stopped, or, where this is not possible, how the risk is to be managed.

In most homes where water comes directly from the mains, the risk of Legionella is very low. This is because the water is used regularly and does not have time to stagnate. Even so, tenants can help by keeping taps and showers clean, flushing through water if the property has been unoccupied for more than a week, and reporting any concerns promptly.

The type of checks we carry out in your home depends on the level of risk. EBC Surveyor is responsible for identifying which category applies.

Risk	Definitions	Approach
Low	<p>1. General Needs homes with domestic-type water system</p> <p>2. Cold water is directly from mains supply (i.e. no cold-water storage)</p> <p>3. Hot water is fed from instantaneous or low volume heaters</p>	<p>Due to low risk, we will not carry out regular weekly, monthly, or annual checks on all installations in this risk category. Legionella Tests will be carried out to an annual sample of 5% of these properties by a specialist company. If any concerns are found, then further testing or necessary work will be conducted as required/recommended.</p>
Medium	<p>General Needs homes with vented cylinder and water storage tank</p>	<p>An annual inspection will take place to visually check the condition of the water storage tank, calorifier, and hot and cold plumbing system.</p> <p>Taps and shower heads/hoses will be inspected and de-scaled as required.</p> <p>Cold water storage tanks will be cleaned and disinfected if there is excessive sediment or there are concerns about the water quality. If it is necessary to disinfect a cold-water storage tank and associated plumbing system, microbiological samples will be taken 2 –7 days afterwards to confirm the system is clear.</p>
	<p>Empty Homes</p>	<p>Flush the system or disinfect / replace the shower heads & hoses before the new tenant moves in.</p> <p>If it is going to be empty for a long</p>

Risk	Definitions	Approach
		<p>time, particularly over the winter months, we will drain down the system completely.</p> <p>Remove any dead legs of pipework during the void process</p> <p>Remove higher risk water storage tanks where possible where not, we will ensure that any water tank is clean, has a lid and is adequately lagged.</p> <p>Set the temperature of the calorifier to ensure water is stored at 60C and distributed at 55C minimum at the furthest outlet</p> <p>Documented evidence provided that these requirements have been met.</p>
High	Homes with multiple occupants sharing stored water facilities e.g. homes with communal storage tanks.	<p>Every 2 years Risk assessments, Annual reviews, inspections, sampling and cleansing of the installation will be undertaken by a Water Safety Specialist</p> <p>Where risk assessments determine it to be appropriate, we will introduce a programme of potable tank samples, tank temperature recording, quarterly disinfection of the shower heads and hoses for shared showering facilities and weekly flushing of rarely used water outlets.</p>

All risk assessments will be undertaken by a competent person, as defined under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Where contractors carry out risk assessments, testing, works or checks on our behalf, they must be

appropriately qualified, UKAS-accredited to the ISO/IEC 17020 standard, and registered members of the Legionella Control Association

8. Thermostatic Mixer Valves (TMVs)

- TMVs are installed for vulnerable tenants to prevent scalding.
 - They are set between 38°C and 43°C.
 - They must be serviced every year.
 - Contractors must record service details and confirm settings.
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9. Timescales for Fixing Problems

Remedial works identified in risk assessments or inspections must be completed within or as denoted with in the Legionella Risk Assessment

- **Urgent** – within 1 week.
- **High risk** – within 3 months.
- **Moderate risk** – within 6 months.
- **Low risk** – within 12 months.

A Responsible Person is defined as the Housing Contracts and Compliance Manager. They must monitor and escalate any overdue actions.

10. Record Keeping

We will keep records of:

- Risk assessments.
- Monitoring and inspection data.
- Remedial works and completion dates.
- Staff and contractor training records.
- The Water Hygiene Management Plan.

Records of risk assessments, written scheme and management information must be kept for at least **2 years** and be available for audit.

Records of monitoring, inspections, tests or checks must be kept for at least **5 years**.

11. Water Hygiene Management Plan

Behind this policy sits a more detailed Water Hygiene Management Plan owned and delivered by our Managing Agent. This plan explains exactly how we will carry out the commitments in this policy, who is responsible for what, and how we will respond to any problems or incidents. This will include:

- System diagrams and asset lists.
- Responsibilities of staff, contractors and managing agents.
- Monitoring tasks and frequencies.
- What to do if results are out of range.
- Escalation routes.
- Record keeping requirements.
- Review arrangements.

Staff must always refer to this plan when managing water hygiene.

12. Repairs and Improvements

When we carry out repairs or planned improvements to your home, we always make sure that water safety is not affected. After any major works or refurbishments, we check the water system to confirm that it is still safe, and we update our risk assessments if needed.

Most day-to-day repairs are carried out by our Managing Agent, they keep us fully informed about what has been done to the property. They must keep our Asset Management and Property Services team who oversee our planned works, updated so that all changes to water systems are properly managed and recorded. This joined-up approach means nothing is overlooked and your safety is always our priority.

13. Communication

We will:

- Provide tenants with simple advice when they move in and when requested.
- Provide training and guidance for staff and contractors.

14. Monitoring and Assurance

We measure how effectively we are managing risks by reporting and monitoring the following:

- 100% of water safety checks completed.

Performance is monitored by the Housing Contracts and Compliance Manager and the Head of Housing. Performance is reported to Members every 6 months. Audits are undertaken to provide assurance, and non-compliance is escalated immediately with corrective action tracked until resolved.

15. Training and Competence

- All relevant staff and contractors must complete Legionella awareness training.
- Responsible Persons must complete specialist training.
- Training must be refreshed every 2 years or when regulations change.
- Competence will be checked as part of contract and performance management.

16. Equality and Vulnerability

Some tenants are more at risk from Legionella or scalding, including older people and those with certain health conditions. We will:

- Prioritise higher-risk buildings.
- Install TMVs where required, following a formal recommendation from a qualified professional, such as an Occupational Therapist.
- Provide information in accessible formats (easy read, large print, translations).
- Work with tenants to make sure checks and works are done in a safe and supportive way.

17. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if there are changes in law or best practice.