



Campaigners fight to save lives and protect £0.5bn public money

- *Greater access powers demanded to cut serious gas incidents which put family safety at risk every 40 hours*
- *New data shows tenants refusing access to properties costs housing providers £500m*

September 15, 2014

A GAS safety campaign has today been launched to protect families and save nearly £0.5bn.

Campaigners are calling on the Government to beef up legal powers to allow regulated social landlords to access their properties to carry out mandatory gas safety checks.

Home Group, one of the UK's largest social housing providers is working with the Association of Gas Safety Managers (AGSM), to launch its Gas Access campaign to stop tenants playing 'Russian roulette' with their and their neighbours' lives by refusing access to gas safety engineers.

The Law rightly requires all landlords to carry out annual safety checks on any properties they own which have gas supplies.

But, while Local Authorities can get same-day court orders to force entry to properties where tenants refuse access to gas engineers, it can take up to four months for social housing providers to gain access.

Home Group, which manages 55,000 homes across 200 local authorities in the UK, is working with CORGI Technical Services, the UK's most trusted gas safety provider, and the AGSM, whose members service 2m social homes, to call for a change in the law to give regulated landlords the same timely access as their local authority counterparts.

New data released today shows that the delays caused by 14,500 tenants who refuse access to properties costs housing providers £493,690,890 over a 10-year period.

Mark Henderson, chief executive at Home Group, has issued a stark warning: "Current legislation is dangerous and expensive. This has to change now. It is far too difficult for registered and responsible social landlords to gain access to their properties to allow qualified inspectors the time to make appropriate health checks and the requisite servicing of boilers.

"Without being allowed to make those checks, lives are being put at risk - not just the lives of the people in these properties, but the lives of their neighbours too. All we ask is that social landlords be given the same timely access as our colleagues at Local Authorities."

Home Group, the only housing association to be created by Act of Parliament, is regulated by the Government's Homes and Communities Agency. The Gas Access campaign has set up a petition and a dedicated campaign website to generate UK-wide support to encourage the Government to adapt existing legislation to allow quicker access to properties.

Specifically, it calls for an amendment to the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations 1998 to insert specific rights of entry that would be granted by the Courts if all reasonable access attempts had been made. (see [here](#) for the full wording of the proposed change in regulations)

Claire Heyes, Chief Executive of the AGSM said: "Now is the time for action. Working collaboratively across the industry, we are demanding change for all the right reasons – safety, strong governance and responsibility in the spending of public money. Home Group has taken a firm stance on this and together we are putting 'rights of access' under the political spotlight and calling for change. Over two million housing association homes are impacted by the current burdensome system – the cost of this is staggering.

“The existing framework does not deliver value for money and safety is being compromised. We will be putting forward a range of measures to bring gas safety management issues up to date so that they are fit for purpose.”

To support the campaign and find out how you can help make the change, visit www.gasaccesscampaign.org

ENDS

For further information contact Emily Cook on 0191 290 7924 or email gasaccesscampaign@homegroup.org.uk

About Home Group Limited:

- Home Group is one of the UK’s largest providers of high quality housing and supported housing services and products.
- Home Group is a social enterprise and an exempt charity (charitable registered society no. 22981R) with a turnover of £327m.
- Our mission is *“to help our customers and clients to open doors to new opportunities and healthy lives.”*
- We provide general needs housing and supported housing services targeted towards helping some of society’s most vulnerable people take control of their own lives. We:
 - house more than 120,000 people a year in 55,000 homes across 200 local authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales.
 - work with almost 30,000 vulnerable people through 500+ supported housing, justice and health services each year.
- Care and Support services focus on housing related support, criminal justice and health services.

CORGI Technical Services Ltd

CORGI Technical Services Ltd has over forty years of technical expertise in all aspects of gas safety. With comprehensive site audits, training for employees, a new VRQ gas safety qualification, legal advice and expert witness testimony, CORGI Technical works with local authorities, housing associations, private landlords, contractors, energy suppliers and the travel industry to support them with their gas safety obligations, compliance and continued improvement. www.corgitechnical.com

The Association of Gas Safety Managers

The Association of Gas Safety Managers (AGSM) is for managers in Social Housing and Facilities Management organisations who are responsible for all aspects of gas safety. The Association was been set up by CORGI in response to a demand from gas managers for a professional Association which can address industry issues with key stakeholders and create one voice from the sector to key government departments. It also provides members with support, networking opportunities, training and many other benefits. All members are undertaking or have completed CORGI's Level 4 VRQs in Gas Safety Management or have an equivalent level of qualification or experience and collectively look after the gas safety management of nearly two million homes across the country.

www.agsm.uk.com

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