



This week (September 14-20, 2015) marks Gas Safety Week, a national safety campaign to raise awareness of gas safety in the UK's 23 million gas fueled homes.

Each year, as the weather turns colder and the use of boilers and fires becomes an everyday necessity, a silent killer that has lain fairly dormant through the warmer months slowly comes back to life.

Incidents of Carbon Monoxide poisoning begin rising from September, peaking in the coldest winter months of November, December and January when heating appliances are most in use. Excess levels of Carbon Monoxide in the home render an individual rapidly unconscious, and then effectively replace oxygen throughout the body, leading to neurological damage and death.

It is vital that your gas appliances and any flues in your home are checked annually to ensure that they are not generating lethal Carbon Monoxide. This protects not only residents of the specific household, but neighbours too. The check is the responsibility of Home Group and involves no cost to tenants, but being unable to complete the checks promptly when they are due really can place lives in jeopardy.

At Home Group, improving gas access is an issue we take very seriously, but we also recognise for some people the very thought of opening their front doors to let in an engineer to check their boiler can be a daunting, even terrifying, prospect.

Kirsty is not a real person, but her story is based on true accounts by some of our customers and staff, and helps explain some of the very genuine reasons why individuals may be so reluctant to engage with us.

Kirsty's Story



“I have suffered from an unsightly and painful skin condition for years which has led me to develop severe social anxiety. This causes me to stammer badly in conversation, particularly with strangers.

“As a result I stay indoors as much as I can and only talk with people I trust - close friends and family who I know won't make fun or be shocked by my appearance, and won't get impatient when I try to speak.

“The thought of having to speak to someone new, even if it's only briefly, is terrifying. I can imagine them being shocked at my appearance or losing their temper with me because I can't explain where the boiler can be found. I've had a couple of letters and the last one even mentioned court, but I dread the thought of having to meet with someone so much that I haven't even told my family about them.”

Home Group's Contract surveyor for gas says: “Kirsty needn't be so worried about her gas check. The engineers deal with hundreds of people every week and realise that some have health issues that may make them reluctant to answer the door, or feel uneasy about talking to someone new.

“I would like to offer our reassurances to Kirsty and others in similar situations that the only thing an engineer is interested in looking closely at is the boiler.

“If it would help, why not invite your friends and family over to meet the engineer for the gas check? Then you don't have to talk to them at all if you don't want to - they're perfectly happy for others to be there, to tell them where they need to go and discuss what they find if there's anything to raise.

“A safety visit can take less than an hour, and if you can only have company at odd hours of the day just call us, or ask a member of your family or a friend to call us on your behalf, and we'll schedule it for whenever is convenient.”

At Home Group we would rather work with our tenants to gain access by mutual agreement, but we have a duty of care to all those living in our properties, and are keen to make it easier for all housing associations to access properties where there have been problems to ensure appliances are safe.

This is the core of our 'Gas Access Campaign'. You can find out more at www.gasaccesscampaign.org.uk.

If you are worried about any appliances in your property please speak to your Customer Service Partner without delay - it could save your life.