

Gravesham Borough Council

Gravesham Housing- DSO Building Management

Electrical Safety Policy

June 2021

Document Control

Responsible Department	DSO Building Management
Author	Service Delivery Manager (Housing Repairs)
Consultation	Housing Management, Responsive Repairs, Asset Management

Revision History

Date	Previous Version	Description of Revision
01.03.21	N/A	Creation

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1. Introduction

Gravesham Borough Council as a landlord treats the health and safety of tenants, staff, contractors and other users of its housing stock of the utmost of importance.

In fulfilling these health and safety obligations, Gravesham Borough Council is committed to mitigating the risks posed by the use of electrical systems within the buildings it owns and controls. The risks include:

- Electrical shock
- Electrical burn
- Fires of electrical origin
- Electric arcing
- Explosion initiated or caused by electricity
- Electrical fire

The Electrical Safety Policy details how Gravesham Borough Council meets the requirements for electrical safety under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, the Housing Act 2004 and the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. In addition to this the policy provides assurance that measures are in place to ensure compliance with these regulations and to identify, manage and/or mitigate risks associated with electrical installations.

This policy is relevant to all employees, tenants, contractors and other persons who may work on, occupy, visit, or use its premises, or who may be affected by its activities or services. It should be used by all to ensure they understand the obligations placed upon the council to maintain a safe environment for tenants and employees within the home of each tenant and within all nondomestic (communal) areas of buildings.

Gravesham Borough Council will follow a systematic approach to the management of electrical work to ensure it meets the requirements set out in BS 7671 2008 Requirements for Electrical Installations, IET Wiring Regulations 18th edition including all amendments and other relevant legislation relating to electrical safety. This is to ensure the safety of tenants, employees and members of the public.

2. Obligations

Gravesham Borough Council acknowledges and accepts its responsibilities with regard to electrical safety under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, the Housing Act 2004 and the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.

The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 places duties on landlords to ensure that electrical installations in rented properties are:

- Safe when a tenancy begins
- Maintained in a safe condition throughout the tenancy

In order to be compliant under these duties electrical installations are required to be periodically inspected and tested. The intervals between inspections are not absolutely set within any regulations, however, best practice guidance from the Electrical Safety Council and from BS7671: 2008 states that electrical installations should be tested at intervals of no longer than 5 years from the previous inspection.

The key objectives of the policy are to establish:

- Regulatory and legislative compliance
- Electrical safety management principles
- Approach to compliance remedial work
- Record keeping
- Competent persons
- Training
- Audit procedure
- Non-compliance
- Electrical Safety Information

3. Regulatory & Legislative Compliance

Regulatory Standards

The application of this policy will ensure compliance with the regulatory framework and consumer standards (Home Standard) for social housing in England, which was introduced by the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) in April 2012.

Legislation

The principle legislation applicable to this policy is:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989

Code of Practice

- ET Wiring Regulations British Standard 7671: 2008 (as amended 2015)
- 'Landlords' Guide to Electrical Safety 2009

Additional Legislation

This policy also operates in the context of the following additional legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Workplace (Health Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Building Regulations for England and Wales (Part P)
- The Housing Act 2004
- The Occupiers' Liability Act 1984
- Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996

- Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2015
- RIDDOR
- The Defective Premises Act 1972
- Homes, Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018, including HHSRS

4. Electrical Safety Management Principles

Detailed below are the key policy principles relating to electrical safety:

Gravesham Borough Council will hold accurate records against each property it owns or manages identifying when the electrical installation was last inspected and tested.

Gravesham Borough Council will ensure that all domestic properties owned or managed have a valid Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) that is no older than 5 years from the date of the previous EICR. Gravesham Borough Council will deliver a comprehensive programme of testing and inspection of all domestic properties on a rolling 5-year cycle.

Gravesham Borough Council will ensure that all electrical installations shall be in a satisfactory condition following completion of an electrical installation inspection and test.

Gravesham Borough Council will ensure that electrical installation inspection and tests are carried out prior to the commencement of any new tenancies (void properties), mutual exchanges and transfers and that a satisfactory EICR is issued to the tenant prior to them moving in.

Gravesham Borough Council will ensure that only suitably competent NICEIC electrical engineers and contractors undertake electrical works.

Gravesham Borough Council will carry out electrical installation inspection and tests and issue new satisfactory EICRs when completing planned component replacement works within domestic properties. In the case of a rewire the council will receive an installation certificate and following minor works, a minor works certificate.

Gravesham Borough Council will test and replace as necessary smoke alarms, heat detectors and carbon monoxide detectors which are not covered as part of the annual gas safety check visit (i.e. the property does not have gas), as part of the 5-yearly electrical inspection and testing visit.

Gravesham Borough Council will ensure that robust processes and controls are in place to manage the completion of follow up works identified during inspection and testing of electrical installations and electrical portable appliances.

Gravesham Borough Council will ensure that robust processes and controls are in place to ensure that all electrical works are properly notified and approved under Part P of the Building Regulations for England and Wales where this is required.

Gravesham Borough Council will ensure that robust processes and controls are in place to manage works to void and occupied properties that may affect existing electrical installations.

5. Approach to compliance remedial work

Gravesham Borough Council will as a minimum make safe and/or where possible endeavour to repair all code 1 and code 2 defects identified by a periodic electrical installation inspection and test before leaving site after completing the inspection and testing works. Any further remedial works to code 1 and 2 defects will be completed within 10 working days (except where a rewire is required) and an EICR will be issued stating that the installation is in a satisfactory condition.

Gravesham Borough Council will establish and implement programmes of electrical installation upgrading works to improve electrical installations, that have been identified as not meeting current standards but are in a satisfactory condition for the purposes of an EICR, up to a standard that meets all current requirements of BS7671. Gravesham Borough Council will ensure there is a robust process in place to investigate and manage all RIDDOR notices issued with regard to electrical safety.

6. Record Keeping

Gravesham Borough Council will establish and maintain a core asset register of all properties that have an active electrical supply and electrical installations within its Asset Management System. This register will identify electrical installations within all domestic properties and electrical installations within non-domestic (communal) areas.

Gravesham Borough Council will establish and maintain accurate records of all completed Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs), Minor Electrical Works Certificates (MEW) and Building Regulation Part P notifications associated with remedial works from these reports and Electrical Installation Certificates and keep these for a period of not less than 10 years.

7. Competent Person

Only competent persons, as defined by BS 7671:2015 (Requirements for Electrical Installations) including current amendments, are authorised to carry out inspection and testing on the councils premises.

A person shall be deemed competent to carry out the appropriate inspection and testing only if they have sufficient knowledge and experience of the test equipment, the installation being tested and testing procedures.

It is the responsibility of those undertaking inspection and testing to:

- Ensure no danger occurs to any person or animals
- Ensure no damage occurs to property
- Compare the inspection and testing results with the design criteria
- Take a view on the condition of the installation and advise on remedial works
- In the event of a dangerous situation, to isolate and make an immediate recommendation to the Electrical Qualified Supervisor.

8. Training

Gravesham Borough Council will ensure that all operatives working for, or on behalf of, the council have the relevant training required for their role. This will be managed via periodic assessments of their training needs and resulting programmes of internal and external training.

All operational front-line staff will undertake electrical awareness training on an annual basis.

9. Audit Procedure

100% of desktop audits will be carried out by the Electrical Qualified Supervisor on the documentation produced by the electricians. Work in progress/ post inspections will also be carried out on 50% of the work.

10. Non-Compliance

The definition of non-compliance in relation to this policy refers to any incident which results in a potential breach of legislation or regulatory standard, or which causes or has the potential to cause a significant risk to health and safety.

Any non-compliance issues identified at an operational level will be formally reported to the Service Delivery Manager (Housing Repairs) in the first instance in order to address the non-compliance issue and agree an appropriate course of corrective action.

If cases of a serious non-compliance issue, this will be reported to the Director (Housing) and the council's Monitoring Officer who will consider whether it is necessary to disclose the non-compliance issue to the Regulator of Social Housing in the spirit of co-regulation, or any other organisation such as the HSE, as part of the Regulatory Framework.

11. Approved Testing Equipment

Test equipment shall be appropriately recalibrated and comply with the requirements of 'BS 7671: 2015 Requirements for Electrical Installations and Guidance Note 3 (Inspection and Testing)' including all amendments.

12. Tenant Responsibilities

Council tenants have a responsibility to use electrical devices/ appliances and the electrical systems supplied to properties responsibly to protect the health and safety of themselves and others.

The council does encourage tenants to maintain good electrical safety around the home by regularly checking the visual condition of devices and appliances for signs of wear and tear that could potentially be dangerous e.g. scorching, loose wires or cable grips (more detailed information is available via the Health and Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk).

Where tenants discover a problem with council owned or supplied electrical systems or equipment they should inform the council by contacting the Housing Operations Team immediately on 01474 33 77 77 . Any faults with the electrical supply will be treated as an emergency job and will respond within 24 hours (within two hours if there is a threat to health and safety) and within 28 working days for non-emergency jobs.

As part of the fixed installation inspection and testing, it is necessary to de-energise the electrical supply to the property. All tenanted properties where electrical inspection and testing is to be carried out, shall be notified in writing of a proposed appointment to complete the electrical inspection and test. This written notification shall also inform the tenant of the requirement to temporarily disconnect the power supply and the tenant shall ensure:

- Appropriate access for the technician and provide access to all electrical sockets and switches
- Ensure perishable food stuffs kept in fridges and freezers are protected during the test, to maintain food safety

As part of the tenancy agreement, tenants must not alter the electrical installations within a property unless they have permission in writing from the Housing Management Team. Any electrical work carried out by the tenant or their contractor, must be certified by a competent electrician with a copy being provided to the Housing Team. This will then be entered onto the Asset Management/ Repairs system for future reference.

13. No Access

Gravesham Borough Council will adopt a 'fair but firm' approach to gaining access to domestic properties where periodical electrical testing is required (following Electrical Safety Council Guidelines for once every 5 years for tenanted properties) in order to be compliant with this policy and safeguard the wellbeing of the tenant.

This will include:

- Writing to tenants in advance of the required access date and providing an initial appointment (which can be altered on request)
- Partnership working with external agencies and advocacy groups where tenants are known to be vulnerable for any reason
- Where possible combining appointments with other safety checks e.g. annual landlords gas safety checks, where applicable.
- Compliance Remedial Work

Where access is denied the council may consider the use of legal powers within the tenancy agreement to force access, if there appears to be a significant risk to the occupants or the property by not carrying out the electrical check. Each case will be assessed on its merits and any final decision to instigate legal action to gain access will be made by the Service Delivery Manager (Housing Repairs).

14. Information sharing

The Council will provide information to all relevant people regarding electrical safety with safety leaflets, tenant handbooks, tenant liaison and training. This will include but is not limited to:

- Staff
- Contractors
- Managers
- Residents
- Members of the public (where a need to know exists)