

# Policy Guidance Note 20

## Replacement of Lead Pipes

Responsible Officer	Service Manager – Housing and Property						
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**Amendment and Authorisation Record  
PGN20 – Replacement of Lead Pipes**

Date	Author	Paragraph ref:	Nature of change	Authorised by
06/04/06		N/a	First dated revision	-
02/02/09	MH	N/a	Change to Responsible Officer Job Title	AJ
02/02/09	MH	N/a	Update required following job title change from senior Housing Officer – Asset Management to Senior Housing Officer – Housing Technical	CM

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Lead can be found in all parts of our environment from a variety of sources including vehicle exhausts, old paintwork etc. As a result it may be present in air, soil or water.
- 1.2 A build up of lead in the body will be harmful with infants and children at greater risk. Health problems might include poor mental development and it may be a factor in behavioural problems.
- 1.3 Therefore, it is important and sensible to avoid excessive exposure to lead from any source.
- 1.4 The use of lead pipes was phased out during the 1960's and officially became illegal in 1969. Modern service pipes are made of blue plastic.
- 1.5 Copper and plastic pipes are now used extensively for pipe work within a dwelling.
- 1.6 SIC has undertaken several refurbishment and copper pipe work replacement works over many years. As a consequence there is no known lead pipe work that the SIC housing service might be responsible for. However, staff should always be vigilant and aware that lead pipe may be hidden or not known to us, so presenting a risk.

## 2.0 Guidance

- 2.1 If there is a higher than a background level of lead in drinking water it is likely to be caused by the service pipe serving the property. Generally, these are the responsibility of Scottish Water. However, there may be sections of lead pipe remaining in the ground for which the Council is responsible.
- 2.2 Many older properties, particularly terraced, or flatted blocks are served by a common supply pipe. This pipe provides water to a number of houses from one single connection to the water main.
- 2.3 These supply pipes before 1969 were usually made of lead or iron and are often too small for the water needs of modern kitchens and bathrooms. If a property is still on this type of system it may be evidenced by low water pressure or a drop in pressure when a neighbour uses their water.
- 2.4 There may also be lead pipe work within a house or a lead lined storage tank even if the internal plumbing has been changed at some point.

- 2.5 The Council is responsible for all pipe work within a Council house and up to the boundary of a property. Beyond that Scottish water will be responsible for replacement of any lead pipe work.
- 2.6 A briefing note from Scottish Water can be considered using the link below:  
[http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/SWE\\_PGP\\_HOUSEHOLD/SWE\\_PGE\\_HOUSEHOLD/SWE\\_HH\\_WQ/FACT%207%20LEAD%20EXPLAINED.PDF](http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/SWE_PGP_HOUSEHOLD/SWE_PGE_HOUSEHOLD/SWE_HH_WQ/FACT%207%20LEAD%20EXPLAINED.PDF)
- 2.7 If there is any doubt or suspicion of lead in the water, housing staff can contact Scottish Water on 0845 601 8855 to arrange a sample test. Alternatively, the Council's own Environmental Services can be contacted for advice.
- 2.8 If any member of SIC staff becomes aware of or suspects that lead piping is still in place, the information must be passed to the Senior Housing Officer (SHO) Housing Technical with a request for the lead pipe work to be identified and replaced as a matter of priority.
- 2.9 On receipt of such a request the SHO Housing Technical is to programme the property into the pipe work replacement programme as a priority.
- 2.10 Where small lengths of lead pipe work are discovered as part of routine inspections the Technical Officer for the area should seek to replace the lead item as a responsive repair with a routine priority.
- 2.11 If lead pipe work is suspected or found there will inevitably be a time lag between ordering / programming the works and completion of the replacement works. During this transitional period the tenant is to be given the following practical advice to reduce the risk from lead in the water:
  - 2.11.1 Always take your drinking and cooking water directly from a mains fed tap. This is normally the kitchen sink;
  - 2.11.2 Never use water from a hot tap for drinking or cooking. Warm water increases the amount of lead that is absorbed from plumbing;
  - 2.11.3 Run the mains tap first thing in the morning to flush out any water that has been lying overnight before using any water for drinking or cooking;
  - 2.11.4 Flushing of water as in 2.11.3 should also be done if the water has not been used all day (e.g. when out at work) and always before making up bottle feeds for infants;