

ASCP Group victory in changing regulation 36A set to deliver £29m of savings every year for social housing

Just one year since The Association of Gas Safety Managers (AGSM), part of the ASCP Group - along with campaign partners CORGI Technical Services - celebrated a landmark victory in bringing a long-awaited change to regulation 36a into force, the introduction of MOT-style gas servicing has had a significant positive impact on landlords, with one council saving over £150,000 this year alone. Under the new scheme – the result of five years’ tireless campaigning by the ASCP and its partners – LGSRs can be completed up to two months before the anniversary of the previous check, whilst retaining the existing expiry date.

Across the sector, the regulation changes can potentially save £29m annually. At an organisational level, the financial benefits are clear to see. Helping social housing providers calculate the savings they could make from adopting new ways of working, the AGSM has launched an innovative cost savings calculator (www.agsm.uk.com/gas-access), where landlords can input the number of properties they service a year. The calculator will then show the estimated potential savings their organisation can make by adopting the MOT-style approach to gas servicing checks.

The AGSM and its partners are already making strong headway in addressing the £29m costs* that housing providers face as a result of tenants delaying gas safety checks by refusing access, with the cost savings calculator equipping social housing providers with the tailored information needed to identify how their organisation can financially benefit.

Due to the difficulties in accessing properties for gas safety checks widely faced by landlords, many organisations previously employed a four or eight-week access process in an attempt to minimise the potential for repeat servicing and the associated extra costs. The change to regulation driven by the Association of Gas Safety Managers has dramatically reduced the need for these measures.

For one early adopter, Hull City Council, MOT-style gas servicing has revolutionised their approach to gas safety checks for their 22, 500 properties. Programme Manager, Jordan Barr, explained: ‘The changes to Regulation 36 and the positive impact it has made to Hull City Council can’t be overstated. As a local council it has revolutionised our approach to gas safety checks. The MOT-style gas servicing has meant that we’re saving around £150,000 each year, along with many other benefits.

‘Faced with difficulties in accessing properties, strict benchmarking and a regimented approach to gas safety checks, as an organisation we were forced to bring our servicing profile forward by several weeks. As a result, many of our properties were serviced twice in one financial year, leading to the frustrating position of incurring additional costs, all of which have been addressed.’

Another beneficiary of the AGSM driven regulation change, Wrekin Housing Trust, has secured cost savings of approximately £65,000 in the last year. Fleur Whittingham, Gas Operations Team Manager at Wrekin Housing Trust, comments: “We now only need to carry out one gas safety check, per property, per year. With a property portfolio of 13,000 properties, 11,500 of which are covered by gas regulations, the cost of doubling up on servicing was substantial, this new approach significantly reduces costs on our servicing contract, not to mention increasing productivity due to the reduced need to travel – along with lower associated costs like fuel.”

Jordan Barr, commented: ‘We’re now equipped to tackle the delays faced as a result of tenants refusing access to their properties, with the number of warrants required dropping significantly, resulting in reduced legal costs, as well as less officer time dealing with these applications.

‘Residents are now comfortable in the knowledge that their annual gas service takes place at a set date, rather than changing year on year.’

Claire Heyes, Chief Executive of the ASCP, commented: "This change to regulation we worked so hard to influence is already revolutionising the way organisations programme LGSRs. Early uptake has proven just what a strong impact it has on productivity, efficiency, and the organisations' bottom line. The ASCP Group is committed to effecting change, shaping the safety and compliance industry from the inside: we're keen that other organisations can learn from the experiences of the vanguard of early adopters. We are working hard to knowledge share through case studies and information available on our website, to provide people with the tools and confidence to benefit from this way of working."

The ASCP Group provides a wide range of professional membership services and benefits to people responsible for managing wider safety and compliance issues across the social housing and facilities management sector, with its organisation incorporating the Association of Gas Safety Managers (AGSM) and the Association of Electrical Safety Managers (AESM), in partnership with CORGI Technical Services.

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Editors' notes:

*Baseline data and votes in favour of this proposal were taken from the 2014 survey carried out by AGSM. Subsequent submissions to the HSE Board included cost modelling carried out by the AGSM which demonstrated legislation to gain access and to move to a MOT Style servicing could save housing providers a total of £290,000,000 over ten years.

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