Control of Legionella and Water Testing Policy

SER-POL-11

Version 2.0

Date approved: 1 April 2014

Approved by: Audit and Risk Committee
1. **Introduction**

1.1 This policy explains what Legionella disease is and sets out Southway’s approach to and procedures for managing and mitigating the risks associated with Legionella and related issues.

1.2 Legionnaires’ disease is a potentially fatal pneumonia caused by legionella bacteria. It is the most well-known and serious form of a group of diseases known as legionellosis. Other similar (but usually less serious) conditions include Pontiac fever and Lochgoilhead fever.

1.3 Infection is caused by breathing in small droplets of water contaminated by the bacteria. The disease cannot be passed from one person to another.

1.4 Everyone is potentially susceptible to infection but some people are at higher risk, e.g. those over 45 years of age, smokers and heavy drinkers, those suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease, and people whose immune system is impaired.

### Legionella – Breeding Grounds

1.5 Legionella bacteria are common in natural water courses such as rivers and ponds. Since legionella are widespread in the environment, they may contaminate and grow in other water systems such as cooling towers and hot and cold water services.

1.6 They survive low temperatures and thrive at temperatures of 20-45°C if the conditions are right, e.g. if a supply of nutrients is present such as rust, sludge, scale, algae and other bacteria. They are killed by high temperatures.

### Legionella – Southway’s Legal Duties

1.7 Under general health and safety law, Southway has to consider the risks from legionella that may affect staff or members of the public and take suitable precautions.

1.8 As an employer or a person in control of the premises (e.g. a landlord), we must:

- Identify and assess sources of risk;
- Prepare a scheme (or course of action) for preventing or controlling the risk;
• Implement and manage the scheme – appointing a person to be managerially responsible, referred to as the ‘responsible person’; and
• Keep records for a minimum of five years and check that control measures have been effective.

1.9 Legionella bacteria can multiply in hot or cold water systems and storage tanks in residential properties, and then be spread, e.g. in spray from showers and taps.

1.10 Although the generally high throughput and relatively low volume of water held in smaller water systems reduces the likelihood of the bacteria reaching dangerous concentrations, we must still carry out a risk assessment to identify and assess potential sources of exposure.

1.11 We must then introduce a course of action to prevent or control any risk identified.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

The control of legionella bacteria in water systems

2.1 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the Enforcing Body, which will undertake any prosecution under the relevant legislation with regards to legionella infection.

2.2 The HSE is responsible for: ‘Legionnaires’ disease: The control of legionella bacteria in water systems, Approved Code of Practice and Guidance L8 (Second edition)’. This outlines the action Southway needs to take to ensure the risk from exposure to legionella in premises for which we are responsible is properly controlled.

2.3 As a provider of residential accommodation we have to assess the risk from exposure to legionella to our own staff, guests and customers, and any other people working in our premises, and introduce appropriate control measures.

2.4 Even if we pass on responsibility for maintaining our property through an agreement with a third party, we cannot delegate these responsibilities.

2.5 The guidance states that:

• A reasonably foreseeable risk of exposure to legionella bacteria exists in hot and cold water systems.
A suitable and sufficient assessment is required to identify and assess the risk of exposure to legionella bacteria. The assessment is carried out by or on behalf of:

(a) The employer, where the risk from their undertaking is to their employees or to others.

(b) The person who is in control of premises or systems in connection with work where the risk is present from systems in the building (e.g. where a building is let to tenants but the landlord retains responsibility for its maintenance).

Before any formal health and safety management system for water systems can be implemented, a risk assessment has to be carried out to decide the possible risk. The purpose of the assessment is to enable a decision to decide:

(a) The risk to health, i.e. whether the potential for harm to health from exposure is reasonably foreseeable unless adequate precautionary measures are taken;

(b) The necessary measures to prevent, or adequately control, the risk from exposure to legionella bacteria.

**British Standard (BS) 6700: Design, Installation, Testing and Maintenance of services supply water for domestic use within buildings and their curtilages**

2.6 The above British Standard states that:

- Maintenance procedures shall be adopted to maintain the performance of the installation at the level specified in the standard for the original design and installation.

- In other than single dwellings, the installation shall be inspected periodically. Faults noticed on inspection shall be attended to immediately. The need for formalised inspections and records depends upon the size, type and complexity of the installation but in principle every installation should be inspected at least one per year in addition to any statutory inspection.

- In other than single dwellings regular analyses of water samples at intervals not exceeding 6 months shall be carried out wherever drinking water is stored. Periodic chemical and bacteriological
analysis of water samples is a useful guide to the condition of an installation.

- In other than single dwellings checks shall be made on temperature of the water in pipes, cold water cisterns, hot water storage vessels and the discharge from taps to ensure that they are within the limits. These checks should be carried out during the most adverse conditions, such as at the end of a weekend, during hot weather, full central heating load in the case of cold weather and during high draw-off in cold weather conditions.

- Where there is a risk of legionella colonisation of water services the system shall be cleaned and disinfected:
  
  (a) If the system, or part of it, has been substantially altered or opened for maintenance purposes in a manner which may lead to contamination;

  (b) Following an outbreak or suspected outbreak of legionellosis

3. **Property Types**

3.1 The following type of properties, amongst others, have been identified as being applicable to the requirements and recommendations outlined in section 2 above:

- Sheltered Housing
- Shared Housing
- Community Buildings
- Multi Storey Blocks

3.2 Southway currently has responsibility for testing at two sheltered housing schemes, two community centres and one library building managed by the Trust

4. **Risk Management**

**Assessing the risk**

4.1 For any buildings requiring a legionella test Southway will commission a risk assessment, the consultants will consider the following:

- Are conditions right for the bacteria to multiply, e.g. is the water temperature between 20°C and 45°C?
• Are there areas where stagnant water occurs (deadlegs), e.g. pipes to a washing machine that is no longer used?

• Are there infrequently used outlets, e.g. showers, taps?

• Is there debris in the system, such as rust, sludge or scale (often a problem in old metal cisterns), that could provide food for growing legionella?

• Are there thermostatic mixing valves that set a favourable outlet temperature for legionella growth?

• Are any of your employees, residents, visitors etc vulnerable to infection, e.g. older people, those already ill?

4.2 Answering ‘yes’ to any of these questions suggests there is an increased risk of our residents / building users being exposed to legionella and falling ill.

Preventing or controlling the risk

4.3 If a risk is identified which cannot be prevented, we must introduce proper controls.

4.4 Risks from legionella in water systems can be controlled, but careful planning, a successful management policy, competent staff and attention to proper control strategies are all essential.

4.5 We will consider whether we can prevent the risk of legionella in the first place by looking at the type of water system we need.

4.6 We will prepare a written scheme which sets out how we intend to control the risk from legionella. This will describe:

• The system – an up-to-date plan or schematic diagrams are sufficient;

• Who is responsible for carrying out the assessment and managing its implementation;

• The safe and correct operation of your system;

• What control methods and other precautions we will be using; and

• What checks will be carried out on the control scheme and how often.

4.7 The key point is to design, maintain and operate our water services under conditions which prevent or control the growth and multiplication of legionella. We should:
• Ensure that the release of water spray is properly controlled;

• Avoid water temperatures and conditions that favour the growth of legionella and other micro-organisms;

• Ensure water cannot stagnate anywhere in the system by keeping pipe lengths as short as possible or by removing redundant pipework;

• Avoid materials that encourage the growth of legionella;

• Keep the system and the water in it clean; and

• Treat water to either kill legionella (and other micro-organisms) or limit their ability to grow.

Managing the risk

4.8 We will appoint a staff member as the ‘responsible person’ for managing the control measures that we have put in place, as well as an ‘authorised deputy’.

4.9 These will be competent and have sufficient knowledge and experience of our systems to enable them to effectively manage and control the scheme.

4.10 Even though we will employ contractors to carry out water treatment and other work, it is still the responsibility of the appointed person to ensure that the treatment is carried out to the required standards.

5. Risk Management Schemes

5.1 To ensure Southway complies with ACOP L8 and BS 6700, a Risk Management Scheme will be developed and implemented for each property.

5.2 Each scheme will be tailored for the individual property needs and will contain all the necessary information, controls and monitoring processes to enable Southway to fully discharge its responsibilities.

6. Dealing With an Outbreak of Legionnaires Disease

6.1 Cases of Legionellosis are reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

6.2 Each property's Legionella Risk Management Scheme has a section entitled 'Emergency Procedures'. Contained within this section are the actions that
need to be undertaken in the event of an outbreak of Legionnaires disease, including making a written record of such.

7. **Monitoring, Consultation and Review**

7.1 The Director of Regeneration and Asset Management will be responsible for implementation and revision of the policy, including ensuring that performance against the agreed policy is met.

8. **Equality & Diversity**

8.1 Southway will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and with sensitivity to the diverse needs of individuals and communities. This policy and other Southway policies and publications can be provided on request in other formats (e.g. in an alternative language, in Braille, on tape, in large print).

9. **Involving Customers**

9.1 Tenants will be encouraged to contribute to service development and to provide feedback on the performance of contractors, the materials used and the effectiveness of our policies and procedures via the Repairs Service Improvement Group, Southway Consultative Group and customer feedback questionnaires.

10. **Related Policy Documents**

- Responsive Repairs Policy
- Customer Care Policy
- Single Equalities Scheme
- Health and Safety Policy
- Legionella Risk Management Schemes
### POLICY REVIEW HISTORY

*To be completed during each review*

#### Previous versions
(version number – approved by – approval date – title if different)

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<th>Approval Date</th>
<th>Title (if different)</th>
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#### Date of last EIA:
- Sep 2011

#### Review lead by:
- Dennis Wellington

#### Main points or amendments made and reasons

- Tidied up; no material changes.

#### Next review due:
- Q1 2017/18