

## Lead in Drinking Water – DWQR Project Update

The Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland (DWQR) has established a project to review policy to drive achievement of a reduction of exposure to lead in drinking water. The project looks to identify enablers and strengthen or introduce mechanisms with a range of stakeholders and influencers for the removal of lead service pipes and plumbing.

### Why Lead is a problem

Lead is toxic and it accumulates within the body over a lifetime through exposure to lead sources in the environment. Sources include lead-based paint, contaminated soil, dust, petrol, drinking water, food and related products. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has allocated 50% of lead exposure as arising from drinking water. Their guidance is that lead piping be removed from the drinking water supply route.

In drinking water quality legislation, the limit for lead in drinking water has progressively reduced over the past 30 years to 10µg/l (micrograms per litre). Over the same period however, concerns have developed within Scotland's health professional community that even the 10 standard may be too high and there is an increasing view that we should strive to reduce lead levels in drinking water as far as is practicably possible.

### Progress against the specific aims of the project

In supporting progress of the project, the Minister for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform confirmed on 15 December 2015, the need to continue with the review of lead policy in Scotland. The specific aims are to:

#### **Ensure there is a clear and shared understanding of legislation as it relates to duties on drinking water suppliers**

DWQR has held discussions with stakeholders to ensure there is a clear understanding of stakeholder legislation as it affects drinking water issues and to confirm the focus of this policy area is to reduce exposure to lead from drinking water. This includes:

- Engagement with the Scotland's Housing Network as a first step to understanding the prevalence of local authority use of grants to facilitate replacement of lead pipes.

#### **Engage with health officials to identify common themes and to align drinking water quality policy with health policy**

- Work has continued between SG Health and Scottish Water to align health messages in information media and formal letters;
- Local authority websites have been reviewed with the aim of identifying potential for co-ordinated common links and search results for information.

continued....

## Work with stakeholders to identify areas where policy can be aligned to ensure the risk of exposure to lead in the environment is minimised

- Support has been assured from The Care Inspectorate for the provision of information and proactive encouragement to remove lead from the drinking water supply route to properties used for Nurseries and childcare services;
- Confirmation has been obtained that the recently awarded Scottish Government Water Management Contract to *Anglian Water Business* has facility for the surveying of incoming pipework, if required by building managers and owners, to establish the presence of lead material in the drinking water supply route.

## Investigate the various policy options available and work with our SG colleagues in determining the best way forward

- Within their response to the Directions from the Scottish Ministers on 1 October 2014, Scottish Water's business plan for 2015 – 2021 identifies replacing around 6,500 lead communication pipes to ensure compliance with Regulations and to respond to customer requests to remove lead. Their plan was approved by the Scottish Ministers on 21 April 2015;
- DWQR engaged with Scottish Water to confirm arrangements and efficacy of plumbosolvency control at larger Water Treatment Works; review measures in smaller water supply zones and review actions where lead is detected in water samples;
- Actively participating in the SG Common Housing Quality Standards review group to influence appropriate measures to drive removal of lead piping across all housing sectors. The indicative timescale for the review anticipates SG consideration of the group's recommendations towards the end 2016 with a possible public consultation in Spring 2017;
- Undertook a survey to establish the extent of financial support to private property owners for replacing lead pipes.

### Care Inspectorate (Care news - Autumn 2015)



“Owners of care services, such as nurseries, must check if lead piping exists in their property and make plans to remove any that forms part of the drinking water supply route.”

### LA Schemes of Assistance

All local authorities introduced a Scheme of Assistance in 2009/10 in response to requirements in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006. Their individual approach to where best value can be made of funds for the improvement of housing standards, across different needs, indicates a minor spend for lead replacement. 12 of the 32 local authorities actively support lead pipe replacement through their Schemes.

Key stakeholder organisations identified for communications and contributions in relation to the project include Scottish Government Health, Health Protection Scotland, CPHMs, EHOs, SG Water Industry, WICS, Scottish Water, SG Procurement, Housing, Building Standards SG Estate, Historic Environment Scotland, Citizens Advice Scotland, Care Inspectorate, COSLA.

If you require further information or wish to provide comment, please contact DWQR

Telephone: 0131 244 0190

e-mail: [regulator@dwqr.scot](mailto:regulator@dwqr.scot)

