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Legionella Control & Water Hygiene Compliance Guide

A practical guide for property managers, managing agents and facilities teams



England, Scotland and Wales | November 2026 | Free client resource

This guide provides general information and is not a site-specific risk assessment or legal opinion.

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This guide explains the core management steps for hot and cold-water systems in residential, commercial and mixed-use buildings. It is general information, not a site-specific risk assessment or legal opinion.

1 Understand who is responsible

Identify the organisation or person with control of the premises and water systems. Responsibilities may be shared between landlords, freeholders, managing agents, employers, occupiers and contractors. In residential blocks, establish clearly whether management covers communal infrastructure only, or also water installations inside flats or tenanted units.

- Check the management agreement, leases and service contracts; document the limits of control and access.
- Appoint a competent responsible person with sufficient authority, time and resources to implement controls.
- Define who arranges inspections, flushing, sampling, remedial works, emergency responses and record keeping.
- Remember: employing a water hygiene contractor does not, by itself, discharge the dutyholder's legal duties.

2 Assess Legionella risk and keep the assessment current

A suitable and sufficient Legionella risk assessment should consider how the system is designed, used, maintained and controlled. Common factors include water temperature, stagnation, storage tanks, little-used outlets, aerosol generation and the vulnerability of people exposed.

- Identify incoming mains, cold-water storage tanks, heaters/calorifiers, distribution pipework, outlets and relevant ancillary systems.
- Include the areas actually within the assessment scope and state any exclusions or access limitations.
- Prioritise risks and assign corrective actions, owners and target dates.
- Review whenever there is reason to believe the assessment is no longer valid: for example, after material alterations, changes in use, poor monitoring results or a case of Legionnaires' disease.

There is no universal statutory requirement to repeat a Legionella risk assessment every year or every two years. Set review arrangements according to risk and changes in circumstances.

3 Put a Written Scheme of Control in place

Where the assessment identifies a foreseeable risk requiring control, document the arrangements for preventing or controlling exposure. A practical scheme should identify the responsible persons, system schematic, control measures, operating limits, checks, corrective actions and record forms.

- Make planned tasks, frequencies and responsible parties clear.
- Define escalation thresholds and what happens when control limits are not met.
- Keep an asset list and usable schematic that reflects the actual installation.
- Coordinate the in-house team, managing agent, tenants and specialist service providers.

4 Key temperature control benchmarks

For conventional hot and cold-water systems controlled by temperature, the following are widely used benchmarks from HSG274 Part 2. Special installations and healthcare environments may require different arrangements.

Check	Typical control benchmark
Stored hot water / calorifier	Store hot water at 60°C or above.
Hot-water distribution	Achieve at least 50°C at outlets within 1 minute (55°C in relevant healthcare applications).
Hot-water circulation return	Typically, at least 50°C on return; review design and local control requirements.
Cold-water distribution	Below 20°C, normally within 2 minutes at outlets.
Cold-water storage	Aim to keep, stored cold water below 20°C.

Caution: measures to minimise Legionella must be balanced with scalding risk. Thermostatic mixing valves and other safeguards may be needed for vulnerable users; assess and maintain them appropriately.

5 Example monitoring and maintenance framework

This is an illustrative starting point, not a universal schedule. The site risk assessment, system design, Written Scheme and relevant HSG274 guidance determine actual frequencies and locations.

Activity	Typical starting point / decision
Little-used outlets	Use at least weekly or manage under a documented risk-based flushing or isolation regime.
Sentinel hot/cold temperatures	Often monthly; include appropriate sentinel outlets and representative rotational checks.
Cold-water storage tank inspection	Typically, at least annually, with action on contamination or deterioration.
Calorifier / water heater checks	Check operating temperatures and relevant condition/maintenance indicators at risk-based intervals.
Showerheads, TMVs and associated fittings	Inspect, clean, descale and service according to risk, manufacturer advice and scheme.
Legionella laboratory sampling	Only where indicated by the risk assessment or evidence that controls may be ineffective; do not substitute for preventive control.

Healthcare and care settings, cooling towers, spa pools and other specialist systems require additional or different guidance. Do not apply the hot/cold-water example schedule uncritically.

6 Common defects and suitable next steps

Finding	Typical management response
Hot outlets below the target temperature	Check heater settings, circulation, balancing, mixing and usage; investigate persistent failure.
Cold water above 20°C	Review heat gain, insulation, storage conditions and turnover; investigate the cause.
Dead legs or low-use pipework	Remove unnecessary pipework where practicable; manage interim stagnation risk.
Dirty, poorly screened or deteriorated tank	Inspect condition, address ingress/defects, and assess need for cleaning or replacement.
Positive Legionella result	Interpret the result in context, review controls, assess exposure risk and determine corrective actions and any follow-up sampling.
Missing records or unclear responsibilities	Reconstruct available evidence, assign owners, close gaps and update the Written Scheme.

Actions should be prioritised using the site-specific risk assessment. A positive result does not automatically mean that one identical response is suitable in every building.

7 What records should be retained?

Useful records include the risk assessment, responsible-person appointment, Written Scheme, asset and schematic information, temperature and flushing logs, test reports, inspection certificates, disinfection reports, remedial actions and contractor attendance.

ACoP L8 paragraph 72 describes retention of current records for the time they remain current plus at least two years afterwards, and records of monitoring inspections, tests and checks for at least five years. Other duties or agreements may justify longer retention. Store records securely and ensure authorised access and handover.

8 Managing a contractor or property handover

- Obtain the current risk assessment, Written Scheme, logbook, asset register and any previous positive laboratory results.
- Confirm outstanding high-priority actions, overdue inspections and known defects.
- Agree who performs routine flushing, temperature checks and other tasks during the transition; do not allow a gap in essential controls.
- Define ownership of records, document access, reporting, incident escalation and end-of-contract transfer.
- Do not assume a maintenance contractor has responsibility for systems within individual flats without clear agreement and access.

9 Property manager’s quick self-check

- We know who controls each part of the water system and who the responsible person is.
- Our Legionella risk assessment reflects current conditions and agreed scope.

- We have a suitable Written Scheme of Control where required.
- Monitoring, flushing and inspections are scheduled and completed.
- Out-of-range results and remedial actions are tracked to closure.
- Records are retrievable and retention responsibilities are understood.
- Vacant units, low-use outlets and access restrictions are addressed.
- Contractor and managing-agent handovers preserve continuity of control.

10 How Shelter Tech can help

Shelter Tech UK Ltd provides Legionella risk assessment, water hygiene monitoring and sampling, cleaning and disinfection, water storage tank works, pump servicing and associated remedial services, subject to survey and quotation. We can help review existing arrangements, identify gaps and propose a practical programme for individual properties or multi-site portfolios.

Request a review or quotation: 01895 602477 | https://sheltertech.vercel.app/contact

Official guidance and technical references

- HSE ACoP L8 (Fourth edition, 2013): https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l8.pdf
- HSE HSG274 Part 2 (hot and cold-water systems): https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg274part2.pdf
- HSE Legionella guidance for landlords: https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/legionella-landlords-responsibilities.htm
- HSE Managing the risk: https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/what-you-must-do/manage-the-risk.htm
- HSE Record keeping: https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/what-you-must-do/keeping-records.htm
- British Standards (reference only; obtain licensed copies as applicable): BS 8580-1:2019; BS 7592:2022; BS 8554:2015; BS 8558:2015; BS 8680:2020.

Publication notes: This independently written guide summarises principles in published guidance and is not an HSE or BSI publication. Requirements and standards should be checked for current applicability. *© 2026 Shelter Tech UK Ltd.*

Technical service notes - November 2026

Water sampling & laboratory testing
Samples are collected by trained engineers in accordance with BS 7592:2022 for Legionella sampling and BS 8554:2015 for sampling and monitoring hot and cold-water systems, including microbiological and chemical water quality assessments. Independent laboratories hold UKAS accreditation for the relevant test methods. Sampling requirements and frequencies follow the site-specific risk assessment and applicable guidance.

Cleaning & Disinfection of Water Systems
Cleaning and disinfection are undertaken where justified by risk assessment, system condition, contamination or commissioning requirements, with applicable BS 8558:2015 guidance. Treatment does not replace long-term temperature control, water turnover, appropriate system design or routine maintenance.

Tank installations and modifications
Works comply with applicable Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and relevant standards. The client arranges necessary approvals and consents unless otherwise agreed in writing, subject to applicable statutory obligations. Assistance with approvals is quoted separately.

Booster pumps and pressure vessels
Inspection and maintenance follow manufacturers' recommendations and applicable safety requirements. Where PSSR 2000 applies, the dutyholder must meet the relevant statutory requirements, including a written scheme of examination where required.