

Briefing: Why we need a register of gas boilers

CFPD, January 2024

We need better data on the UK's gas boilers to help us achieve net zero and ensure landlords are keeping their tenants safe. The Government could achieve this by requiring gas safety certificates and boiler service reports to be registered centrally, just like energy performance certificates. The current re-tendering of the Gas Safe Register provides a prime opportunity to bring this about.

Background

Homes produce a sixth of the UK's total carbon emissions,¹ the vast majority of which comes from our 23 million gas boilers.² Upgrading these boilers to lower-carbon alternatives is a priority for tackling net zero. Good data on where the most polluting boilers are will help councils and government target interventions effectively.

Gas boilers are also a safety concern. Landlords are legally required to get a gas safety certificate for gas boilers once a year. However, it's estimated that a fifth of the UK's privately rented housing could contain unsafe gas appliances.³ Without central records, there is no way to target rogue landlords.

Data on the age and state of the UK's gas boilers is clearly of great value. Gas safety certificates and boiler service reports, received by landlords and homeowners who get their boiler inspected annually, already record this on paper - but are not centralised.

The problem

Although millions of paper gas safety documents are issued each year, we cannot use them to understand our gas boilers because they are not kept on a central register.⁴ This means local authorities cannot check if a landlord has a record of negligence. And it means we have a limited picture of which houses need retrofitting, making it harder to reach net zero.

Recommendations

The Government could tackle this by requiring a central register of gas safety certificates and boiler service reports. There are precedents for this. The Energy Performance

¹ DESNZ & BEIS, '[Provisional UK greenhouse gas emissions national statistics 2022](#)' (2023).

² Committee on Climate Change, '[Annex 2. Heat in UK buildings today](#)' (2017).

³ Gas Safe Register, '[2.7 million Renters at Risk from Dangerous Gas Appliances](#)' (2016).

⁴ Gas Safe Register, '[Gas Safe Register - Privacy Policy](#)' (2022).

Certificate (EPC) register was established to support environmental missions by centralising data on properties' energy efficiency, and is now regularly used in analyses.⁵ And the new register of private landlords will check that landlords are complying with other legal duties.⁶

The re-tendering of the Gas Safe Register - the register of engineers approved to carry out gas safety checks - creates a prime opportunity for implementing this change.⁷ The Government could require the new supplier to maintain a central register of certificates, or for approved engineers to submit certificates to a government register. This would ensure that the wealth of data on the UK's boilers does not go untapped.

We recommend the Government should include in the new Gas Safe Register contract:

- A requirement for the supplier to maintain or support a central register of gas safety certificates and boiler service reports.
- This register should be:
 - Built around Unique Property Reference Numbers⁸, like the EPC register, so it can be easily joined with other property datasets
 - Freely shared with other public bodies for analysis purposes
 - Linked with the new landlord register, so that landlords who don't meet their legal requirements can be identified and targeted for enforcement.

FAQs

- **Don't EPCs solve this problem?** No - EPCs only record the general heating type of a house, not the boiler model, making it harder to target the most polluting boilers. Also, many fewer houses have EPCs than have annual boiler services.
- **Aren't there privacy concerns?** No - the government has already ruled that information on property characteristics can be shared in the public interest.⁹

About us

The Centre for Public Data is a non-partisan non-profit founded in 2020. We work to improve the quality of data published or regulated by the government. We'd be happy to discuss any of the above further - please get in touch at contact@centreforpublicdata.org.

⁵ Department for Communities and Local Government, '[Explanatory Memorandum to The Energy Performance of Buildings \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2012](#)' (2012); see [citations](#) (2023).

⁶ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, '[A fairer private rented sector](#)' (2022).

⁷ Health and Safety Executive, '[Services Concession Agreement for the operation of the Gas Safe Register in Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#)' (2023).

⁸ The unique identifier for every addressable location in the UK, fundamental to joining property data.

⁹ MHCLG, '[Energy performance of buildings data: data privacy impact assessment](#)' (2019).