

Void Management Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Empty property (void) management is an important area of housing management and will be one of our highest priorities.
- 1.2 We are committed to meeting housing needs and maximising rental income by having the lowest possible number of empty properties in our stock.
- 1.3 The aims of the void management policy are:
 - To minimise the time taken to complete void property repairs and improvements;
 - To minimise the time taken to relet properties
 - To maximise rental income;
 - To ensure properties are repaired to the standard agreed with customers and the standard is reviewed at least every 3 years;
 - To publicise the lettable standard being offered to new tenants;
 - To reduce the impact of empty properties on the community;
 - To optimise the use of and return on our stock by appraisal of all voids against agreed criteria for: retention; disposal; amendment of tenure; conversion to Affordable Rent; remodelling; prospective future development.

2. Performance Targets and Reporting Requirements

- 2.1 Our performance in delivering the policy will be subject to regular performance monitoring, management and scrutiny by staff, residents, the Executive and our Board.
- 2.2 We have a number of key performance indicators. We will benchmark performance against other registered providers and aim for top quartile performance against all indicators. The indicators are:
 - The average time taken to re-let void properties for both routine and major voids;
 - The level of rent loss from void properties;
 - The percentage of offers or re-housing that are refused;

- The percentage of new tenants satisfied with their new home;
- The number of properties allocated to BME applicants;

2.3 Performance against the targets will be monitored by the Head of Housing & Customer Service and the Head of Asset Management. Performance will be reported to the Management Team on a monthly basis and to the Board on a quarterly basis.

3. Implementation

3.1 Neighbourhood staff will take overall responsibility for the key to key management of empty homes in their area.

3.2 All properties will be brought to the minimum lettable standard, (with the exception of minor works that can be completed post-occupancy). Details of this standard are available upon request and via our website.

3.3 The standard will be reviewed at least every 3 years to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

3.4 We will implement procedures which will incorporate:

- Prompt identification of void properties and regular monitoring of existing voids;
- Pre-inspection of properties where the current tenant provides notice of termination;
- Where practicable carry out repairs during the four week notice period;
- Complete any necessary repair works quickly and efficiently;
- Identification quickly if void properties should be offered on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme or where the property will be used for our own Transfer List;
- Where possible carry out the pre-allocation of properties;
- Starting new tenancies as soon as possible after the previous tenancy has ended including 'same day lets' when possible;
- Where practicable, undertake non-urgent repairs after the new tenant has moved in;
- When non-standard fixtures or fittings remain in the property, including such things as flooring, showers, garden sheds, porches etc; agreeing with the incoming tenant whether they will be left in situ and gifted to them or removed;
- Providing new tenants with decorating vouchers where appropriate;
- Producing an energy performance certificate and gas and electrical safety certificates for each void property prior to let, and an asbestos report where required;
- Measuring tenant satisfaction with their new home and the allocations process via the 'New Tenant Survey';
- Identifying patterns for the termination of tenancies by recording reasons for leaving;
- Utilisation of housing management system and a voids-tracker to track and record progress and collect data for performance management;

- Ensuring officers are fully trained on all procedures and systems;
- 3.5 We will carry out improvement works to void properties that have not already had them if the work is due and there is budget available.
- 3.6 We will work with the Local Authority to offer properties with adaptations to suitable housing applicants. Delays in matching suitable applicants, or letting a property are sometimes unavoidable in these circumstances but every endeavour will be made to minimise turnaround time.
- 3.7 We have in place housing management procedures to deal with other types of void properties including those arising due to:
- Abandoned properties;
 - Illegally occupied properties;
 - Properties in need of repair or in need of clearance;
 - Properties with family left in occupation;
 - Managed decants for major repairs;
 - Assignment of tenancies to family members.
- 3.8 The longer a property is empty, the greater the risk of vandalism. Void security will be considered on a risk assessed basis and Neighbourhood Officers will decide on the most appropriate kind of security for each void property.
- 3.9 Properties that are empty will be regularly checked by Neighbourhood Officers to make sure they remain secure and are still in a lettable condition.
- 3.10 We will ensure that any subsidiary charges against us such as Utility and Council Tax bills are kept to a minimum. This will include prompt meter reading by officers at the end of, and beginning of a tenancy.
- 3.11 Should an unusual or rising pattern of tenancy turnover occur in an area, measures will be developed to ensure community sustainability.

4. Responsibility

- 4.1 The Head of Asset Management will be responsible for managing the performance of the Asset Management Team and all external contractors engaged in working to repair empty properties.
- 4.2 The Head of Housing & Customer Services will be responsible for ensuring that all property key to key void times are kept to a minimum via overall ownership of the process from tenant exit to new tenant.
- 4.3 We will ensure that officers are given clear responsibility for the void management processes and are adequately trained to deliver the procedures.