



## **Void Management Policy**

Effective Date: March 2021



**Date Approved:** 25 March 2021

**Approved by:** IHA Board

**Policy Owner:** John Watson

**Lead Officer:** Heather Anderson

**Applicable to:** IHA Staff, customers, contractors

**In consultation with:** Asset Services, contractors, customers.

**Associated Documents:** Repairs and Maintenance Policy  
Asset Management Strategy

## **Policy Statement**

This policy reflects the Association's Corporate Plan 2020/23 which is to 'improve the quality of service delivered to our customers' and provide quality and sustainable homes.

## **Policy Aims**

The Association is committed to the effective management of empty homes to maximize use of available housing stock and rental income, and to the creation of sustainable tenancies and neighbourhoods. Through our void management process we will aim to:

- Minimise the period that properties are vacant through performance management and efficient repair and re-letting procedures.
- Review all housing applications on a regular basis to ensure that information is kept up to date and applicants who no longer require housing are removed from the waiting list.
- Pre-allocate new build properties and re-lets (where the tenant has given Notice) as far as possible.
- Publish and regularly review our 'Safe, Clean and Clear' letting standard in consultation with customers.
- Ensure all properties meet the 'Safe, Clean and Clear' standard at point of let.
- Carry out all health and safety checks quickly and efficiently and to a high standard.
- Take every effort to allocate vacant adapted properties to applicants who have a need for this type of accommodation.
- React promptly, effectively and legally when properties have been abandoned.
- Implement an 'options appraisal' process where vacant properties require extensive repair work and there is no or little demand for the property.
- Ensure the security and safety of empty properties using cost effective methods appropriate to the level of assessed risk.

## **Policy Scope**

This policy sets out how the Association will ensure the efficient management and letting of vacant properties which is a key function of the Association, both in terms of the efficient use of resources and ensuring they cause no security or nuisance problems for neighbours.

Quick turnover, i.e. the interval between the departure of one tenant and the arrival of the next, is highly desirable, but this must be balanced by the need to meet customer aspirations, let properties to an acceptable and safe standard, and the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods.

## **Legal and Regulatory Context**

The Association will adhere to the following legislation and regulations when managing void properties:

- The Gas Safety Regulations 1998 which places a legal requirement on landlords to maintain gas installations within a properties in a safe condition (excludes installations or gas appliances fitted by the tenant).
- EU Directive 2002/91/EC (EPBD) which requires that an assessment of energy

performance is carried out and Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are issued to all new lettings.

- The Consumer Protection Act 1987 affects all persons who let property in the course of their business as it defines them as 'suppliers' i.e. supplying goods to tenants.
- British Standard 7671:2008 – Requirements for Electrical Installations which place an obligation on the Association to ensure all electrical circuits within the property are in a safe full operational condition.
- The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994: the General Product Safety Regulations 2005: the Plugs and Sockets etc. (Safety) Regulations 1994 which impose a duty on landlords to ensure that all electrical equipment supplied by them is safe for use by tenants.

The Association will also meet the requirements of:

- The Scottish Housing Regulator's Performance Standards
- Scottish Housing Quality Standards.
- Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2008

## **Our Void Standard**

All vacant properties will meet our 'Safe, Clean and Clear' standard. This means that our properties will be in following condition at point of let:

- Compliant with the Tolerable Standard, as defined by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- Clean kitchen and bathroom fittings.
- Operational windows and doors.
- Appropriate and up to date safety certification for gas and electrical installations.
- Fully operational water system including taps and stop cock valves.
- Safe to use doors, stair treads, floorboards, banisters and ancillary joinery fittings.
- Substantially intact plasterwork to walls and ceilings.
- Reasonable decorative order.
- Fit for purpose rainwater goods.
- Clear and safe to use access to the property.
- Removal of all internal and external belongings left by the former tenant.

Tenants who have carried out qualifying improvements will be eligible to claim compensation at the end of their tenancy in accordance with the Compensation for Improvement Scheme introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

## **Void Repair Timescales**

To ensure rent loss during any void period is minimized, the Association has in place agreed timescales for void repairs completions with contractors. These timescales in working days are defined as follows:

- One day void: Immediate re-let, 'Safe, Clean and Clear' only.
- Three day void: 'Safe, Clean and Clear and Enhancement works.
- Five day void; Extent of work cannot be undertaken within three days.
- Ten day void: Extent of work cannot be undertaken in 5 days.

## **Performance Reporting**

Effective void management is key to minimizing rent loss, maximizing income to the Association and achieving positive outcomes for tenants.

Key performance indicators relating to void management will be recorded and monitored on a monthly basis. KPIs will change over time but will include some or all of the following:

- % of stock void and available for letting.
- Average re-let time in days.
- Void rent loss
- % of voids completed with target timescales.
- Tenant satisfaction with quality of the property at point of let.

In addition to key performance monitoring, regular contract monitoring meetings are held with all our external contractors to discuss performance against contractual obligations and quality of services.

## **Implementation**

The void management process runs parallel to the process of allocating our properties to minimise the void period. Key parts of the process are as follows:

- Tenants will be advised of their obligations in terms of giving Notice to terminate a tenancy at the pre allocation and let day interviews.
- Tenants will be held to 28 days' notice unless an earlier mutually agreeable date can be found. Tenants may be charged additional rent if the keys are handed in late and the termination date will be amended accordingly.
- When a tenant gives notice to terminate a pre-termination inspection will be arranged and works ordered.
- Any work that can be carried out whilst the outgoing tenant is still in occupation, or after the new tenant has moved in will be identified and arranged.
- Identified staff will be given specific responsibility to ensure the effective processing of void properties and will receive appropriate training.

## **Equalities**

This void management policy will be applied to all vacant properties and new and outgoing tenants irrespective of: race, gender, sexuality, age, culture, income, disability or belief. To ensure accessibility, services will, therefore, be tailored to meet customers' individual needs and information will be available in a wide variety of formats.

Contractors are required to demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality and diversity by ensuring they have equality and diversity policies in place and are able to deliver services in ways that are appropriate to their requirements.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains reflective of relevant legislation, guidance and good practice.