

# VACANCY / VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

(6)

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Vacancies & 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 vacancy/void management policy are:
  - To minimise the time taken to fill vacancies and complete void property repairs and improvements, as they arise;
  - To minimise the time taken to re-let properties
  - To maximise rental income;
  - To ensure properties are repaired to our corporate standard and the standard is reviewed at least every 5 years;
  - To publicise on our website/handbook, the lettable standard being offered to new residents;
  - To reduce the impact of empty properties on the community.

## 2 PERFORMANCE TARGETS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 Our performance in delivering the policy will be subject to regular monthly performance monitoring and scrutiny by our Board.
- 2.2 We have a number of key performance indicators. We will benchmark performance against regulatory requirements and other Housing Associations. The indicators are:
  - The average time taken to present properties for re-let;
  - The level of rent loss from vacant & void properties during the void works period, identifying loss by CHAS failings and waiting times for DCC candidates;
  - The percentage of offers for re-housing that are refused;
  - The percentage of new residents satisfied with their new home;
- 2.3 Performance against the targets will be monitored by the Administrator and reviewed by the Administrator in consultation with the Facilities Manager. Performance will be reported to the Board on a monthly basis and to any sub-committee requesting involvement.

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## 3 IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 The Facilities Manager will take responsibility for the management of vacant / empty homes while lettings are carried out by the Administrator.
- 3.2 All properties will be brought to the minimum lettable standard. 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 vacant and void properties and regular monitoring of existing vacancies / voids;
  - Pre-inspection of properties where the current resident provides notice of termination;
  - Where practicable, carry out repairs during the relevant notice period;
  - Complete any necessary repair works quickly and efficiently
  - Identify quickly if void properties should be offered for letting 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;
  - Where practicable, undertake non-urgent repairs after the new resident 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 resident whether they will be left in situ and gifted to them or removed;
  - Producing an energy performance certificate and gas and electrical safety certificates for each void property prior to let
  - Measuring resident satisfaction with their new home and the allocations process via the 'New Residents Survey'.
- 3.5 We will carry out improvement works to void properties that have not already had them if the work is due.

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- 3.6 We will work with the Local Authority to offer properties with adaptations to suitable housing applicants.
- 3.7 We have in place housing management procedures to deal with other types of vacancies / 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;
  - 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 and officers will decide on the most appropriate kind of security for each void property.
- 3.9 Properties that are empty will be regularly checked to make sure they remain secure and still in a lettable condition.
- 3.10 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 Facilities Manager will be responsible for managing the performance of all external contractors engaged in working to repair vacant / empty properties.
- 4.2 The Facilities Manager will be responsible for ensuring that all property void times are kept to a minimum via ownership of the process from resident exit to new resident.
- 4.3 We will ensure that the Facilities Manager is clearly responsible for vacancy / void management processes and is trained to deliver the procedures.

## 5 NEW RESIDENTS SURVEY

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- 5.1 To be carried out within 1 month of letting being authorised, as resident feedback is necessary to ensure best practice is being adhered too and that we deliver continuous improvement.
- 5.2 The survey will focus on health and safety issues, exiting in an emergency, use of equipment in the apartment? Payment of electricity and gas bills as appropriate. Offers of assistance from social welfare / internal with budgeting problems. Where shortfalls are identified in the survey they will be brought to the Board's attention.
- 5.3 Survey will be carried out by the Tenant Liaison Officer.