



Void Management Policy

Policy Ref: HMP03

Prepared By	Operations Director
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Date of Next Review	November 2022
Reviewed By	PHA Board

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of Objectives

The Void Management Policy aims to ensure that the Association allocates all of our vacant (void) properties as quickly as practicable and to minimise rent loss as a result of properties being empty. Every property that we allocate should be let in accordance with our Housing Allocation Policy and should meet our Lettable Standard (see Appendix A).

Our objectives include:

- being efficient and proactive in fulfilling our legal obligations as a landlord;
- ensuring that tenants fulfil their legal obligations in relation to their tenancy agreement;
- accelerating void turnaround;
- minimising void rent loss;
- ensuring that staff are appropriately trained so that they have the appropriate skills to deal with issues that arise; and
- monitoring and reviewing void management issues and intervening as appropriate.

1.2 Compliance with Regulatory Standards

In terms of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, the Scottish Housing Regulator has identified a number of key indicators relevant to void management by which it will measure landlord performance, including the following:

- Quality of housing – tenants' homes as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.
- Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) sets the minimum energy efficiency standard for social housing in Scotland. Landlords must ensure that all social housing meets this new standard by December 2020.
- Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes – tenants and others live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.
- Value for money – tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

1.3 Expected Outcomes

Key outcomes of operating an effective Void Management Policy include:

- Ensuring that properties are well maintained, safe, secure and in line with the SHQS;
- Ensuring that properties are warm, insulated, fuel efficient and compliant with ESSH;
- Optimising customer satisfaction with service delivery; and
- Delivering value for money.

1.4 Informing and Involving Stakeholders

We will promote our Void Management Policy through our newsletter, website and tenancy handbook. Where we plan to make significant changes to the policy, we will consult tenants through short-life working groups, consultation events or our Customer Advisory Panel in line with our Customer Engagement Strategy.

1.5 Corporate Fit

1.5.1 Legislation and Best Practice

We will comply with all relevant legislation and associated regulations, including:

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, 2001, 2010 & 2014; and
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter.

Our tenancy agreement underpins the roles and responsibilities of both landlord and tenant when a property is to be vacated (e.g. giving notice, leaving the house in reasonable condition etc.) It is a condition of the Scottish Secure and Short Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreements used by the Association that all properties should be wind and watertight, safe and secure, which also applies to void properties.

Our Void Management Policy is consistent with our:

- Group Corporate Plan;
- Group Standing Orders;
- Group Financial Regulations;
- Privacy Policy;
- Repairs & Maintenance Policy
- Asset Management Strategy;
- Health & Safety Policy;
- Risk Management Strategy;
- Gas Servicing Policy;
- Asbestos Management Policy;
- Rechargeable Repairs Policy;
- Electrical Inspections Policy;
- Alterations & Improvements Policy;
- Energy Performance Certificates Policy;
- Legionella Policy;
- Pest Control & Management Policy; and
- Housing Allocation Policy.

1.5.2 Equalities

Our Void Management Policy complies with PHA's Equality Policy to ensure equality of treatment for all tenants without discrimination or prejudice.

1.5.3 Confidentiality

PHA recognises that confidentiality is important to tenants and will treat their tenancy information in confidence under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in line with PHA's Privacy Policy.

1.5.4 Business Plan and Risk Management

The PHA Business Plan reflects that void management is a key landlord responsibility. We seek to mitigate against business risk through managing our void management service in an efficient, effective and economic manner.

1.5.5 The Board

The Operations Director has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Void Management Policy. The Housing Service Manager is responsible for key aspects of allocating void tenancies and the Property Services Manager is responsible for key aspects of repairing void properties. Specific tasks within the void management process are delegated to appropriate staff.

We clearly define budgetary responsibilities and delegation of authority for void management functions within our Financial Regulations and Standing Orders Policy.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of this policy, Key Performance Indicators (see Annex 1) will be used to measure void management outcomes and a number of associated outcomes. We routinely review and analyse the outcomes and make recommendations where changes are required.

The Board will receive regular updates on the implementation of the Void Management Policy so that they can have reasonable assurance that it is operating effectively in practice.

2. Key Principles – Void Management Policy

2.1 Void Management Process

2.1.1 Although there are distinct stages in the process, they will usually operate concurrently to expedite void turnaround and minimise void rent loss. A number of staff and contractors are involved in void management process and the processes that we adopt are set out in our Void Management Procedures.

2.1.2 Key stages in the void management process include:

- pre-termination arrangements;
- end of tenancy;
- void repairs; and
- selection and allocation.

2.2 Pre-termination Arrangements

- 2.2.1** Tenants are generally required to give us 28-days notice that they are intending to end their tenancy. Our void management process commences as soon as we get notice of a vacant property and receive a written tenancy termination. At that point we will arrange to carry out a pre-termination inspection of the property.
- 2.2.2** Our pre-termination inspection allows us to inspect the condition of the property as well as provide advice to the outgoing tenant. This will include confirming when keys are to be handed in, requirements in relation to housing clearance, arrangements for meter readings, identification of any outstanding rent, rechargeable repairs, etc. We expect outgoing tenants to leave their property cleared, cleaned and in good condition and to provide us with a forwarding address so that we can follow up any queries.
- 2.2.3** There will be circumstances where we do not receive notice and where it is not possible to carry out a pre-termination visit such as where the tenant has died; where a property has been abandoned by the former tenant or where the former tenant has been evicted. In these cases our aim will be to have keys returned or have locks changed as quickly and as practically possible so that the property can be relet without undue delay.

2.3 End of Tenancy

- 2.3.1** Once a tenancy has been ended, we will:
- update our tenancy and property records;
 - arrange for the void property to be inspected and necessary repairs instructed;
 - identify and pursue any former tenant arrears, rechargeable repairs, etc; and
 - allocate the property.

2.4 Void Repairs

- 2.4.1** We inspect all of our empty properties to assess their condition, suitability for reletting and instruct any essential repairs.
- 2.4.2** All of our properties require to be wind and watertight, safe and secure, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and energy efficient by achieving the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) by 2020.
- 2.4.3** Our Lettable Standard (see Appendix A) sets out the type of repair work that will be carried out for a property to be ready for let and information on the level of decoration allowances, etc.

2.4.4 Planned programme renewals will generally be carried out when the property is occupied to coincide with the approved investment timetable in accordance with the Association's planned maintenance programme. However, in certain circumstance it may be more expedient to carry out planned programme renewals when a property is void – there is discretion to do so where it is financially viable and where this has been agreed by the Property Services Manager and Operations Director.

2.5 Selection and Installation

2.5.1 We will commence the allocation process as soon as we have formal notification of a void property. The selection of potential tenants and allocation of properties will be carried out strictly in accordance with our Housing Allocation Policy.

2.5.2 Where possible, we will pre-allocate void properties. Where we have identified an interested applicant, we will notify them by phone as soon as keys are available for viewing. In all cases, the viewing will be carried out accompanied by a member of the Housing Services Team. However, there is discretion for us to carry out viewings prior to the previous tenancy ending.

2.5.3 Where an offer of tenancy is accepted, a Tenancy Agreement will be signed. As well as the date of entry, this includes details of tenant and landlord responsibilities. We will provide tenancy advice for new tenants and seek to answer queries at the point of tenancy sign up. Every new tenant will be provided with a Tenancy Handbook and a settling in visit will be carried out, normally within 6 weeks of the tenancy start date.

3. Miscellaneous

3.1 Alternative Formats

On request, the Association will provide translations of all our documents, policies and procedures in various languages and other formats such as on a computer storage device, or in large print, Braille etc. and these can be obtained by contacting the Association's offices.

3.2 Next Review

We will review the Void Management Policy every three years or sooner if required by statutory, regulatory or best practice requirements.

PARTICK HOUSING ASSOCIATION**VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY– KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Key Performance Indicators	Target
Average time taken to relet properties	≤ 10 days
Percentage of rent loss through properties being empty	≤ 0.20%
Percentage of lettable homes that became vacant	≤ 8%
Percentage of tenancy offers refused	≤ 30%



Void Management Policy

Lettable Standard

November 2019

1. Introduction

Partick Housing Association (PHA) seeks to ensure that all empty houses that we allocate are in reasonable condition – this is called our ‘Lettable Standard’.

Once notified that an empty house is becoming available, our aim is for new tenants to be able to move quickly and enjoy living in their new home.

We seek to minimise the time that our properties are empty and we therefore ensure that moving tenants leave their homes in good condition. However empty houses – sometimes referred to as ‘voids’ – need to be inspected and potentially have a number of repairs carried out before a new tenant can move in.

As landlord, we must carry out a pre-tenancy check of each property to identify work required to meet the “Lettable Standard”. We also have a duty to repair each property from the tenancy start date and throughout the tenancy.

Our starting point is to ensure that all our houses are safe, wind and watertight. PHA will also carry out those additional works that are essential for empty houses to reach our Lettable Standard. A social rented property must meet the standard as follows:

- The property must be wind and water tight and in all other respects reasonably fit for people to live in.
- The structure and exterior (including drains, gutters and external pipes) must be in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order.
- Installations for supplying water, gas and electricity and for sanitation, space heating and heating water must be in a reasonable state of repair.
- Any fixtures, fittings and appliances that the landlord provides under the tenancy must be in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order.
- The property must have a satisfactory way of detecting fires and for giving warning of the event of a fire or suspected fire.

Details of our Lettable Standard are listed below. If you have any queries, you should contact PHA’s Property Services team.

2. General

All houses will be wind and watertight, safe and secure. Any additional works required to meet our Lettable Standard will be logged and work will be programmed accordingly.

3. Cleanliness

Any rubbish, furniture, carpets, light shades, etc. left behind by the previous tenant will be removed. Loft areas will also be cleared. Outgoing tenants will be recharged for this work where appropriate.

All cupboards, kitchen units and fitments will be cleared and washed down with disinfectant.

All skirting, door facings, doors, windowsills and frames will be washed down with disinfectant.

All sanitary ware will be washed down with disinfectant.

A 'deep clean' will be authorised if a house is in extremely poor condition – this will be instructed after the void post inspection.

'Deep Clean' specification includes:

- sweep all floors;
- wash all floors;
- wash down paintwork;
- wash down doors, cupboards, electrical outlets and fittings;
- wash all kitchen units inside and out, worktops and sink units;
- clean expel air vents;
- clean wash hand basin, de-scale bath and toilet;
- wash down shower area;
- wash windows inside; and
- disinfect all rooms.

4. Decoration & plasterwork

Obvious defects with plasterwork will be repaired.

Incoming tenants are expected to carry out all decoration work themselves. However in exceptional circumstances where the current decoration is deemed to be below acceptable standard, the award of decoration vouchers may be offered. The value of each voucher will be in line with our Customer Allowances Policy and may vary depending upon the room size. PHA staff will assess the award of any decoration vouchers at the void post inspection stage.

5. Safe and secure

5.1 Electrical

An electrical safety check will be carried out so that all switches, sockets and light fittings will be safe and fully operational, and all electric heating will be safe, functioning and meet the relevant legislation.

Cleaned and serviced mains operated smoke detectors will be checked so that they are operational and compliant with relevant legislation.

Energy efficient light bulbs will be supplied and fitted to every light pendant as appropriate – after a void property has been let, the replacement of light bulbs will be the tenant's responsibility.

All electrics will be checked and certified. The certified electrical safety check should be passed to the Property Services team upon completion of the void process and logged appropriately.

5.2 Gas

All houses with a gas supply to be checked and certified. A gas safety check will be carried out, so that all gas heating will be safe, functioning and meet the relevant standard.

Gas installations will be supplied with a current gas service certificate where there is a functioning meter. Otherwise, the gas supply will be capped at the meter until the tenancy is let.

All properties with a gas supply will be checked and certified. The certified gas safety check should be passed to the Property Services team upon completion of the void process and logged appropriately.

Where a gas fire is fitted this should be removed and the supply pipe capped under the floor and where necessary properties will be considered for a new heating system.

5.3 Carbon monoxide

All properties with a gas supply will have a carbon monoxide (CO) detector fitted and this will be checked and replaced where this is appropriate.

5.4 Asbestos

Comprehensive asbestos checks will be carried out throughout all void properties and remedial action taken as appropriate.

Any suspected asbestos will be tested accordingly.

Details of any asbestos will be recorded on the asbestos register, which is maintained by the Property Services Team.

5.5 Footpaths & steps

All footpaths and steps will be safe and level.

All doorsteps will be safe and secure.

5.6 Energy performance

An up-to-date Energy Performance Certificate will be provided and will be appropriately displayed within the property.

6. Kitchens

A fully functional kitchen will be provided with an appropriate number of units and worktops for the property type and size.

All kitchens will include a cooker connection point.

All kitchens will have adequate ventilation.

All kitchens will include a washing machine connection point.

Plugs and chains will be replaced if required.

7. Joinery – doors, facings, skirting boards, handrails, etc.

All internal pass doors will be functioning and undamaged.

All pass doors that require a fire rating will be functioning accordingly.

All external entrance doors will be secure, functioning and undamaged.

All door-facings and skirting boards will be serviceable.

A secure handrail will be fitted where there is an internal flight of stairs with more than three steps.

8. Windows

All windows will be checked and repaired, if necessary, to ensure that they are secure, functioning properly, serviceable and have window catches.

9. Plumbing

All plumbing will be functioning.

All disused pipes will be removed and any resulting damage to walls / floors repaired.

Water systems will be drained down during the winter months (usually 1 November to 31 March) when there is a risk of severe frost. Water supplies will be reinstated when the new tenant moves in.

10. Sanitary ware and bathing facilities

All sanitary ware will be fully functioning.

All sanitary ware will be free from holes or cracks that may cause water leakage or injury.

Plugs and chains will be replaced, if required.

11. Rainwater goods

Rainwater goods will be free of obvious blockages or growth such as weeds, grass, etc.

12. Rot, dampness, condensation, etc.

All reasonable steps will be taken to identify and remedy dry rot, wet rot, rising or penetrating damp, condensation, etc.

13. Locks and keys

All cylinder barrels will be changed.

At least two sets of keys will be provided to the tenant for their main entrance door/s. Tenant will also receive a key/fob for each common entrance.

At least one key will be provided for cellars, meter cupboards, etc.

14. Gardens, drying areas, etc.

Any debris and rubbish in garden areas and bin stores will be removed. Outgoing tenants will be recharged for this work where appropriate.

Drying facilities will be provided (e.g. clothes poles or rotary driers) and will be functioning.

Grassed areas and hedges will receive a first cut if necessary.

Fencing will be inspected and repaired or replaced as appropriate.

Every property will have a bin for refuse collection.

15. Planned programmed renewals & cyclical maintenance work

Planned programmed renewals and cyclical maintenance work is generally carried out in properties when they are occupied. New tenants will be advised of forthcoming programmed renewals or cyclical work, and where possible the estimated date for the work to be carried out.

By exception, there may be justification for carrying out one-off planned renewals or cyclical work while a property is empty, but this will depend upon consideration of the following factors:

- level of rent loss while works carried out in empty property;
- availability of budget to carry out planned renewals or cyclical works;
- consistency of approach in terms of planned or cyclical works programmed for neighboring occupied properties;
- extent of renewals or cyclical work required and anticipated level of upheaval;
and

- potential to ensure lettability of a void property.

16. New build properties

Snagging work will be completed in advance of the new tenant moving in to a new build property. However where minor snagging work is incomplete, the new tenant will be notified and arrangements made for access so that the contractor can complete works as part of their defects liability.

17. Minor outstanding repairs

Properties may be let with minor repairs outstanding, provided that they do not prevent the new tenant from moving in and occupying the property safely. Where this happens, the new tenant will be provided with a list of outstanding repairs and agreement will be reached with the tenant on a convenient time for these minor repairs to be carried out.

18. Void turnaround time

The target void turnaround time is set out within our Key Performance Indicators. Targets are reviewed at least annually. Our expectation is for the majority of empty properties to be brought up to our Lettable Standard and let within the target response time.

However, where we have an empty property in reasonable condition and where it is a property with strong housing demand, we may prioritise void turnaround and seek to exceed the void turnaround target. In these circumstances we will focus on carrying out only essential safety checks and scheduling any repairs to meet the Lettable Standard for when the new tenant plans to move in.

19. Review of the Lettable Standard

The Lettable Standard will be reviewed routinely within the context of the Allocation Policy. New tenants should receive a settling in visit shortly after moving into their new tenancy and will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Lettable Standard.