



Void Management Policy

V.5 – May 2019

Policy Number	H.31			
Document Owner	Housing			
Review Frequency	3 Yearly			
Reviewed by	Housing and Maintenance			
Date Approved	29th May 2019			
Next Review Due	29th May 2022			
Version Number	5			
Consultation Required	Yes	x	No	
Equalities Impact Assessment	Yes		No	x
Added to Website	Yes	x	No	

SSHC Reference	Standard 4 – Quality of Housing Outcome 5 – Repairs, Maintenance & Improvements
-----------------------	--

Related Documents

- Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement
- Fyne Homes Lettable Standard
- Electrical Safety Procedure
- Gas Safety Policy
- Reactive Repairs Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- HOME Argyll Allocation Policy
- Compensation for improvements Policy
- Procedure for Winter and Long Term Void Management
- Abandonment Policy

Translation Statement

If you have any difficulties reading this information or need further help understanding our processes please contact us. We can make this document available in a variety of formats. All you need to do is let us know what you need and we will try to assist.

Compliance

This policy has been drafted to ensure that it complies with current legislation and industry good practice.

Equality & Diversity

Fyne Homes is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and which promote equality of opportunity. As an employer we are also committed to equality and diversity within our workforce. Our goal is to ensure these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded in our day-to-day working practices.

Openness & Confidentiality

Fyne Homes believes its members, tenants and other interested parties should have access to information on how it conducts itself. This means - unless information requested is considered commercially sensitive or personally confidential it will be made available on request.

Data Protection

Fyne Homes recognises that the Data Protection Act 1998 is an important piece of legislation to protect the rights of individuals in respect to any personal information we may keep about them, whether on computer or in manual systems. We are registered with the Information Commissioner as a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act and must ensure that our practices in the handling of personal information are of a high standard and comply fully with the Act.

1. Introduction

1.1. Fyne Homes has a commitment to its customers to maximise the use it makes of its housing stock and to minimise rental loss. To this end, we require void properties are effectively managed in line with legal requirements and letting standards.

2. Aim

2.1. The overall aim of this policy is to ensure empty properties are let in an efficient, cost effective and equitable way.

2.2. Specific objectives of the policy are:

- 2.2.1. To ensure properties allocated by the Association meet the minimum letting standards.
- 2.2.2. To ensure rent loss through vacant housing is minimised.
- 2.2.3. To minimise cost of void repairs.
- 2.2.4. Ensure outgoing tenants are fully aware of their responsibilities prior to a termination date, in order to keep repair costs to a minimum and limit recharge repairs.
- 2.2.5. Ensure voids are let as quickly as possible to assist in meeting housing need, and support the local authorities in the elimination of homelessness.
- 2.2.6. To pre-allocate the property during the termination period seeking to commence the new tenancy as quickly as possible.
- 2.2.7. Comply fully with legal duties, regulatory requirements and good practice standards.
- 2.2.8. Implement procedures that adhere to all the above which are clear, easy to follow and accessible for both staff and members

3. Links to strategic aims/goals

3.1. This policy aims to fulfil the needs of the Association's Strategic Priorities, in particular (i) ensuring value for money (ii) minimise void properties and mitigate against the negative impact of welfare reforms (iii) meeting housing need (iv) invest in our properties through our programme of capital, cyclical and reactive maintenance.

4. Legal framework

4.1. This policy acts in accordance with the

- 4.1.1. Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act
- 4.1.2. Housing (Scotland) 2014 Act
- 4.1.3. The Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2008
- 4.1.4. The Gas Safety (Installations and Use) Regulations 1994
- 4.1.5. The Constructions, Design and Management Regulations
- 4.1.6. Data Protection Act 2018
- 4.1.7. Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)
- 4.1.8. Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH)

5. Minimum Lettable Standard

5.1. The Association has in place a Minimum Lettable Standard (see [Appendix 1](#)) approved by the Management Committee, which all properties shall meet prior to re- allocation.

5.2. This standard will meet all relevant statutory requirements and reflect good practice in relation to standards of safety and security.

5.3. A copy of this will be included in the Tenants Handbook which is given to every new tenant.

5.4. This standard will be reviewed by the Void Working Group every 3 years to ensure it meets the needs of our customers and complies with best practice and will be approved by the Management Committee.

6. Minimising Voids and Void Rent Loss

6.1. Through effective housing management we will seek to minimise the number of voids which occur, this may include providing information to tenants at risk of losing their homes.

6.2. We will also take steps to identify and address issues which cause voids and/or affect void periods. This includes:

- 6.2.1. Carrying out a pre-termination inspections prior to the termination date to:
 - Ensure we identify any damage which is required to be made good by the tenant.
 - Identify the level of redecoration required to minimise rechargeable repairs.

- Ensure the property will be left in a lettable condition.
- Advise the tenant of any agreed alterations work which qualify for compensation payment.
- Discuss outstanding arrears and obtain forwarding addresses.
- Provide photographic examples of what is and isn't an acceptable property condition.

6.3. We will accompany a prospective tenant when viewing a property and gain feedback on refusal reasons.

6.4. We will make sure we advise the applicant of the rent and service charge for the property, in order to allow them to make an informed decision.

7. Tenant Participation

7.1. In order to capture information about the quality of our properties we will carry out Exit Surveys and New Tenant Satisfaction Surveys. This feedback will be collated and reported to the Senior Management Team and will be used to inform future service delivery.

7.2. New tenants will be visited within 6 weeks of the start of their tenancy.

7.3. In line with the Scottish Social Housing Charter requirements Tenant Satisfaction Surveys will be carried out for all properties every 3 years.

8. Winter Voids

8.1. A procedure will be implemented in order to prevent damage to properties due to winter conditions. This can be found in the *Procedure for Winter & Long Term Void Management*.

8.2. This procedure will be reviewed by the Void Working Group every 3 years.

9. Void property due to death of tenant

9.1. Where the void property is due to the death of the tenant (and no one is entitled to succeed to the tenancy), the termination date will be the date on which the tenant died. The tenant's representative/s will now have 14 days to clear out the property of furniture, floor and window coverings during which time no rent charge will be made.

However where the tenant's representative/s take longer than 14 days, the Association may make a charge for loss of rent and service charges (if applicable) for each day's rent and service charge lost to the Association beyond those 14 days.

- 9.2. Next of Kin/Executors will be provided with an information pack explaining the process and will be given a named Housing Officer as their point of contact.

10. Decoration Allowance

- 10.1. The Association may offer decoration allowances to ingoing tenants where a property is considered to be in poor decorative order. This can be found in the *Policy for Payments to Tenants Decoration Allowances*.

11. Right to Compensation

- 11.1. The Association recognise that some outgoing tenants may have the right to receive compensation for certain improvement works which have been carried out during their tenancy. This is detailed in our *Compensation for Improvements Policy*.

12. Specially adapted properties

- 12.1. When notice of termination is given for a property with adaptations (e.g. level access showers, stair lifts etc.) as per the Housing (Scotland) 2014 Act every effort will be made to allocate to an applicant with needs that will be met by this type of property.

13. Letting targets

- 13.1. The void period is the time – measured in calendar days – between the date of termination of a previous tenancy or repossession, and the start date of a new tenancy. An empty property is not a void where the tenant is still legally 'in occupation', for example where someone is in hospital for a long period.
- 13.2. The figures for the accumulated time a property is with Technical Services and Housing Management and the associated loss in rental income are collated by the relevant members of staff and reviewed by the Management Committee.

13.3. Void periods over 28 days are highlighted separately on the Housing Void Report and reviewed with the relevant members of staff through the performance management framework meetings.

13.4. The targets are

13.4.1. For the first let of a new build property, to be let on the day following the date of the handover.

13.4.2. For properties being re-let, within 28 days of the termination date of the previous tenancy.

13.4.3. For total void loss to not exceed 1% of rents due in any financial year.

14. Void properties held for other purposes

14.1. On occasion, the Association will hold a property long-term without re-letting it through its Allocation Policy. For example, this can be because the property is due to be sold, required for decanting other tenants, or it is due to be refurbished.

14.2. The holding of voids for other purposes needs to be approved by the Housing Services Director in collaboration with the Technical Services Manager.

14.3. In these circumstances, the void loss will be recorded separately on the Void Report.

15. Difficult to let/Low demand properties

15.1 It is recognised the Association may have within its housing stock difficult to let properties within low demand areas. This may be for various reasons e.g. small rooms, lack of local amenities. We may consider the following for difficult to let properties:

15.1.1 Decorating properties in property.

15.1.2 Advertising online and in local press.

15.1.3 Providing floor coverings and/or some furnishings.

16. Abandoned Properties

16.1. The Association is aware, whilst most tenants give notice of their intention to terminate their tenancies, occasionally properties will be abandoned.

16.2. The Association will attempt, through the Arrears and Prevention Policy, to identify those most likely to abandon their tenancy and take steps to prevent abandonment.

17. Monitoring and Reporting

17.1. The Association's Management Committee monitors voids performance and receives information on the following:

- 17.1.1. Numbers of void properties.
- 17.1.2. Performance in re-letting properties.
- 17.1.3. Rent loss through void properties.
- 17.1.4. Analysis of refusals of accommodation.
- 17.1.5. Analysis of allocations made by type of applicant.
- 17.1.6. Analysis of applications and allocations by ethnic background.

18. Responsible Officer

18.1. The officer responsible for ensuring the delivery of this policy will be the Housing Services Director.

19. Reviewing process

- 19.1. This policy will be reviewed in line with the respective current Fyne Homes policies, and/or where a change in legislation arises.
- 19.2. If there is a procedural delay in the policy revision then the relative legislation in force at the time will prevail.

Version number	Revision Date	Part of doc revised	Reason for revision	Approved by
5	29.5.19	Section 9	Changes to process upon death of a tenant	Mgt Comm

Appendix 1

FYNE HOMES LTD MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD

Works	Minimum Standard
General Cleanliness	Technical Services will liaise with Housing Dept regarding clearing of furniture, carpets & belongings/rubbish from the previous tenant. Floors should be swept out. Woodwork, kitchen and bathroom surfaces, including sanitary ware, to be washed down. Attics, basements and out buildings should be emptied.
Garden Areas	Garden areas attached to the property should be cleared of rubbish and grass given a one off cut, if required
Electrics	All electrics must be checked and a copy of certificate of inspection filed in servicing file. Alterations to the electrical system, which has clearly been undertaken by the tenant to be removed unless compliance certificate covers them.
Gas	All properties with gas supply/appliances to have a full gas safety check and cooker supply (where applicable) capped. Copy of certificate to be given to tenant. Original to be placed in servicing file.
Gas/Electric Cooking	Where the previous tenant has left a gas or electric cooker, this will be removed as we are unable to certify their safety
Smoke/ Carbon Monoxide Alarm/s	The smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms will be tested as part of the electrical safety check. Copy of user instructions to be given to tenant.
Water Supply	Where there is no new tenant identified for a property at completion of maintenance works stopcocks should be shut off and water supply drained down. Where new tenant has been identified, stopcock should be shut off. (See Void Procedure) Winter Void procedure should be referred to during the months Nov – March. For long term voids insurance requirements should be referred to. (See Void Procedure)
Windows	All windows should be fully operational and checked for safety. Window keys should be issued to tenants where fitted locks are installed.
Entrance Doors	Minimum security locks on all doors. Check for security and drafts/water ingress. Front entrance doors to have letterbox and back flap.
Internal Pass Doors	All pass doors should be intact and operating properly. Bathroom doors should have locking device. All doors should be fitted as per building regulations.
Floors	All loose and missing floorboards to be re-secured/replaced. Floor surface to be even to allow carpets to be laid.
Skirtings & Facings	Missing or badly damaged skirtings/facings to be replaced. If possible to repair – should be re-secured and filled where necessary

Appendix 1

Bedroom Cupboards	Should all have level shelf and clothes rail below, space permitting
Hall Cupboard	Hall cupboards should have one shelf, space permitting
Kitchen Units	All kitchen units to be thoroughly checked and hinges replaced/adjusted where necessary. Damaged drawers and doors should be repaired/replaced, where necessary. Damaged worktops as a result of burning/water ingress should be replaced where appropriate. If we are unable to match the damaged section, all worktops should be replaced.
Medical Adaptations	All medical adaptations should be inspected to ensure that they are fully operational and meet with the needs of the incoming tenant where possible.
Bathroom Suite	Bathroom suite should be checked for chips/cracks and repaired or renewed as appropriate. Where replacement of a part of the suite is required the available colour match should be investigated. If colour match is not available a 3 piece white bathroom suite to be installed.
Shower Unit	Instantaneous electric showers shall be included in the electrical check. Any instantaneous shower not fitted by the Association that does not visually appear in good condition shall be removed and capped. Tiles not fixed/sealed properly will be replaced
Decoration	Redecoration Allowances will be paid in accordance with the Association's Policy for Payments to Tenants – Decoration Allowances