

Void Management Policy

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CORPORATE FIT	
Corporate Strategy	✓
Risk Register	✓
Business Plan	✓
Regulatory Standards	✓
Equalities Strategy	✓
Legislation	✓

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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 Allocations Policies and should meet our Minimum Lettable Standard

Effective void management includes offering advice and assistance to outgoing tenants on tenancy matters, identifying and initiating repairs necessary to relet a property, selecting a new tenant and providing follow-up advice and assistance as appropriate.

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.
- expediting void turnaround.
- minimising void rent loss.
- identifying low demand stock and developing appropriate local initiatives.
- 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) by April 2015 and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) by 2020 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.
- 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 and 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 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 and 2010; 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:

- Corporate Strategy.
- Business Plan.
- All other internal policies.

1.5.2 Equalities

Our Void Management Policy complies with CVHA's Equality Policy to ensure equality of treatment for all tenants without discrimination or prejudice. At all times CVHA will therefore consider all tenants, regardless of sex, faith or religion, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, mental or physical health, disability or marital status.

1.5.3 Confidentiality

CVHA recognises that confidentiality is important to tenants and will treat their tenancy information in the strictest confidence under the Data Protection Law and in line with CVHA's Openness and Confidentiality Statement.

1.5.4 Business Plan and risk management

Our 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 Customer Services Director has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Void Management Policy. The Customer Services Manager is responsible for key aspects of allocating void tenancies and the Maintenance 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 and Delegated Authority Policy.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of this policy, Key Performance Indicators (see Appendix 1) will be used to measure void management outcomes and a number of associated outcomes. We will 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. The Audit and Risk Committee may also seek assurance in this regard.

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 the void management process – 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 house 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 also 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 as practically possible so that they 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, as well as meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) where appropriate – this also applies to void properties.
- 2.4.3 Our Minimum Lettable Standard (Please refer to our CVHA Maintenance Procedures Manual) sets out the type of repair work that will be carried out for a property to be ready for let and our Customer Allowances Policy provides 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 Asset Management Strategy. However, in certain circumstances it may be more expedient to carry out planned programme renewals when a property is void – there is discretion to do so where this has been agreed between the Customer Services Manager and Asset Manager.

2.5 Selection and allocation

- 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 Policies.
- 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. A viewing and sign-up appointment will be arranged, and applicants will be advised that if they sign for the property at viewing their tenancy will start from that date.
- 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 Tenants Handbook and a settling in visit will be carried out with 8 weeks of the tenancy start date.

Clyde Valley Housing Association

Void Management Policy– Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators	Target
Percentage of allocations to statutory homeless households (OP3)	≥ 37%
Average time taken to relet properties (OP4)	≤ 16days
Percentage of tenancy offers refused (OP5)	≤ 15%
Percentage of rent loss through properties being empty (OP6)	≤ 0.45%
Percentage of lettable homes that become vacant (OP7)	≤ 5.80%