

Title:	Void Management Policy
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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy contributes to our 3 Corporate Objectives as set out in our Corporate Plan.

2. Purpose

2.1 The Purpose of the policy is to ensure that we effectively manage the process of bringing empty flats back into lettable standards and let. This will:

- Minimise the loss of rental income
- Encourage residents to look after their homes
- Make the most effective use of our stock
- Provide an effective service to residents

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all socially rented properties owned and managed by Women's Pioneer Housing (WPH). A separate policy applies for properties let by Women's Pioneer Homes. Leasehold and Market Rent properties are not covered by this policy.
- 3.2 The works we carry out to properties that was last let, last had a stock condition or tenancy audit, will be those to meet the WPH Homes Standard, This excludes properties within buildings identified for redevelopment or with leases less than 5 years tleft and where the scope of works may be limited to meeting our legal obligations.
- 3.3 Our void works wall fall under 3 categories:
- Minor Voids: These are voids needing minimal works to bring them into a lettable standard.
 - Major Voids: These are voids requiring refurbishment works such as kitchen and bathrooms upgrades
 - Management Voids: These are voids requiring major/multiple refurbishment works and upgrades. This will include structural works and full electrical upgrades
 - Mutual exchanges do not result in flats being void and therefore changes of tenancy resulting from mutual exchanges are excluded from this policy and are covered within the Tenancy Management Policy.

4. Legislation and relevant WPH policies and procedures

- 4.1. WPH will comply with all relevant legislation when re-letting a property including The Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS), and the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018. In addition, this policy helps to ensure that WPH meets the Regulator for Social Housing's Decent Homes Standard and the Consumer Standard.
- 4.2. In addition, there are other WPH policies and obligations that influence this policy, including:
- The Allocations and Lettings policy
 - The Asset Management Strategy
 - The Home Standard
 - The Void Management procedure
 - The Responsive Repairs policy
 - Recharges Policy
 - Tenant Engagement Strategy
 - Tenancy Management Policy

- Starter Tenancy procedure
- Decant Policy
- Mutual Exchange Policy

5. The Policy

5.1 This policy supports our 3 Objectives of the Corporate Plan as follows:

5.1.1 **Objective 1: Our Homes** – Our homes will be safe and warm in desirable neighbourhoods and built to a high standard.

5.1.2. The Housing Officer and Surveyor will carry out an inspection of the flat during the one month notice period. The tenant will then be advised of any works that they are responsible for before the end of tenancy. Where works are not carried out as advised, the tenant may be recharged for these works, under the recharge policy.

5.1.3. We will refurbish all voids to meet the, WPH Home Standard and the Decent Homes Standard.

5.1.4. We will consider altering the layout of our older properties where this will offer greater flexibility of use.

5.1.5. We will improve the fire safety of the property where required.

5.1.6. We will ensure that works are completed such that they are free of defects , hazards or potential hazards.

5.1.7. We will provide effective communication with residents to ensure that they understand who is responsible for different types of maintenance and repairs.

5.1.8. We will allocate the property t in accordance with the Allocations and Lettings policy.

5.1.9. We will improve the Energy Efficiency of the home to a minimum of EPC C rating where permitted,* and where is it practical, and financially feasible to do so.

*Some works will require planning and listed building consent

5.2 **Objective 2: Our Services**– Our services will be excellent, delivered professionally and designed to meet the needs of single women.

5.2.1. We will support tenants in their homes by providing helpful documentation and ensuring that a member of the Housing Team visits We will tailor this information and the way it is provided, to ensure that it is clearly understood.

5.2.2. We will obtain customer feedback from tenants who have accepted a property as well as from those who have refused, so that we can continually seek ways of improving the service.

5.2.3. In making allocations we will take into account the tenant's needs.

5.3. **Objective 3– Our Organisation-** Our organisation will be financially robust, well governed with a culture that values people who are passionate about doing a great job.

5.3.1. We will act promptly at all stages of the voids process to meet the KPI in respect of void turn-around time. We will aim to improve on the KPI where this is possible.

5.3.2. We will seek to keep financial void losses to a minimum.

5.3.3. We will continually review the procedures so that all staff are aware of their responsibilities.

5.3.4. We will aim to achieve value for money through appropriate procurement of the building works.

5.3.5 We will benchmark our performance in this area against our peers.

5.3.6 We will recharge outgoing tenants in accordance with our Resident Recharges Policy, making good any damage caused or any costs of clearing the flat of any personal effects left behind.

6. Financial implications and value for money

6.1 A budget is provided for minor, major, and management voids, and is included within the annual budget. The budget is monitored regularly by the Finance and Property teams. Similarly, an allowance is included within the annual budget for void losses.

6.1.1 If it is anticipated that costs will exceed the budget, then, as void works cannot be deferred nor standards reduced, monies will be wired from other parts of the property budget to cover the overspend.

6.3 Works are procured through a framework of approved contractors.

7. Tenant Engagement

7.1 We will continue to seek feedback from tenants and consider recommendations from the Homes and Services Committee and any consultation groups considering any element of the voids process. We will:

- Provide a guidance note on what new tenants can expect from a WPH home;
- A 'Moving in' pack that provides essential information relating to the home;

- Health and Safety information and tenant responsibilities;
- WPH Responsibilities
- Introduce inspections prior to tenants moving out with a moving out pack being provided;
- Obtain satisfaction feedback from new tenants;
- Provide money saving tips for new tenants.

8. Stakeholder Engagement

8.1. We will meet our commitments required through Nomination agreements with local authorities or other bodies as appropriate.

8.2 We will meet periodically with contractors to review the effectiveness of the arrangements for minor, major, and management voids.

9. Equality and Diversity

9.1. WPH will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently. We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy. We will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and communities and will take positive action or make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

10. Reporting Key Performance Indicators

10.1 We will report performance against the following KPI's:

- In properties where major refurbishments are required, the total void time will be no more than 80 days, with the work period being 71 days.
- In minor voids, the total void period should be no more than 28 days with the works period being 21 days.
- Voids likely to exceed 71 days are categorised as management voids.

10.2 Management Voids are properties requiring kitchen, bathroom and any further major component upgrades. Investigative works are also listed within this category, as this extends the scope of works. Management Voids may only be authorised by the Senior Management Team.

10.3 We will monitor the average cost of voids and regularly compare total costs against the annual budget.

10.4 We will periodically review these KPI's.

11. Contact officer

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