

NORTH VIEW Housing Association

North View is a registered Scottish charity – charity registration number SC032963

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POLICY

VOID MANAGEMENT

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All North View policies and publications can be made available on CD/data-to-voice, in Braille, large print and community languages.

For further details please contact us on 0141 634 0555 or email us on enquiries@nvha.org.uk

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this document is to define a Policy for the effective, efficient control and management of the Association's void properties. In managing void properties, the main aims of the Association are to:

- Minimise void period and rental loss;
- Effectively assist in meeting housing need through allocating flats to an appropriate applicant within the shortest possible timescale;
- Ensure flats are brought up to a lettable standard in a cost effective manner;
- Ensure that tenants are aware of their end of tenancy obligations, including the requirement to provide 28 days' notice, to carry out repairs as identified at the end of tenancy inspections and to hand in keys no later than the termination date;
- Monitor performance in respect of void management to establish day to day control, measure and compare performance over a period of time and compare performance against appropriate benchmarks;
- Comply with legislative requirements, regulatory requirements and best practice guidance as they apply to the management of void properties.

1.2 This document is to be read in conjunction with the Association's Policies and Procedures in respect of Allocations, Abandonment, Asbestos Management, Legionella, Gas Management and Rechargeable Repairs, as well as section 6.0 of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

2.0 Legal Framework

2.1 This Policy is intended to ensure that the Association meets the requirements of:

- The Housing Scotland Act 2001 & 2014
- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulation 1998
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all subsequent amendments and regulations created by virtue of the Act
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)
- Construction Design and Management (CDM) 2015



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3.0 Scottish Social Housing Charter

3.1 This Policy seeks to comply with the following outcomes laid down in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

3.2 **Outcome 4: Quality of housing:**

Social Landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants' homes, as a minimum, when they are allocated are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), and any other building quality standard in place throughout the tenancy; and also meet the relevant Energy Efficiency and Zero Emission Heat Standard.

3.3 **Outcome 13 Value for Money :**

Social Landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges that they pay.

4.0 Equal Opportunities Policy

4.1 The Association operates an Equal Opportunities Policy under which it is committed to promoting an environment of respect and understanding that aims to eliminate discrimination by and towards members of the public, tenants, Committee Members, contractors and staff.

4.2 The Association will at all times endeavour to ensure that in all its activities (primarily the provision of services), the principles of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be fully applied.

5.0 Ending the Tenancy:

5.1 Termination by the Tenant

5.1.1 Under the terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement, the tenant is required to provide 28 days' written notice of termination.

6.0 Mutual Exchange

6.1 All tenants are entitled to apply for a mutual exchange to another of the Association's properties. In managing these transfers, the following will apply



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- Generally, the tenant will be expected to carry out the identified repairs as soon as possible and notify the Association on completion. An inspection will then be carried out to ensure the works have been completed to a satisfactory standard;
- A tenant will not usually be considered for transfer until identified repairs have been completed, although in certain circumstances (e.g. where works are considered minor) a conditional offer of accommodation may be made on the basis that the tenant agrees to carry out the work before transfer.

6.2 Consistent with procedures followed in respect of other tenants terminating their tenancy, transferring tenants will also be given other appropriate advice such as rent due, meter readings, return of keys and the condition in which the property is to be left.

7.0 Abandonment and Eviction

- 7.1 Where the void is as a result of a tenant abandoning the property (including abandonment with keys), the Housing Officer will arrange for all notices required under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to be served in order that the Association can regain possession of the property as soon as possible.
- 7.2 In the case of an eviction, the Association will instruct the Sheriff Officer and a joiner to attend. The Housing Officer and Maintenance Officer will also attend evictions. In cases where there are safety concerns, a police presence will be requested.
- 7.3 As soon as access to the property can be gained, the Association's staff will inspect the property and take an inventory of (plus photographs) any goods and furnishings left behind by the previous tenant. In the case of an abandonment, an inspection should take place within one working day of the expiry of the abandonment notices. In relation to an eviction, an inspection should take place within one working day of the eviction having been carried out.
- 7.4 Following inspection of abandoned properties, a decision will be taken as to whether or not the goods will be stored for a short period. Storage will only take place where the value of the goods is estimated to be in excess of the cost of storage and, ultimately, delivery of the goods to the former tenant plus any rent arrears owed. All documentation and photographs in respect of the property should be retained in the former tenant's file. In the case of eviction, goods and furnishings left behind will normally be disposed of during the voids repair



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process.

- 7.5 Once the inventory has been carried out and goods stored or disposed of, all necessary works will be processed as for other void properties.

8.0 Death of a Tenant

- 8.1 Following the death of a tenant where no person qualifies to succeed to the tenancy, the Association will allow a period of up to two weeks from the date of the funeral for family to clear the property.

9.0 Void Property Inspections

- 9.1 All work to be carried out in the property, including rechargeable repairs, will be recorded. Where textured coatings are noted and or other materials suspected to be asbestos containing materials (ACMs), the Association's asbestos management procedures will be applied.

10.0 Security During Void Period

- 10.1 Due to the extremely low incidence of vandalism historically in respect of void properties in the Association's area, other than ensuring that the properties concerned are lockfast, it is not considered necessary to install additional security measures under normal circumstances.
- 10.2 Where properties are void during the winter period (November to end February), the Association will ensure the gas, electricity and water supplies are shut off and drained down in the interest of health and safety and to reduce the possibility of flood damage.

11.0 Allocation Process

- 11.1 The Association will aim to re-let void properties as quickly and effectively as possible under the terms of its Allocation Policy.

12.0 Low Demand Properties

- 12.1 Although most of the Association's properties are in relatively high demand, some stock may be more difficult to let ('low demand' properties), leading to higher than average void periods, greater void turnover and increased rent loss for the



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properties concerned. Generally, a property would be considered low demand if three or more offers have been refused and/or there is a very small or non-existent list of applicants who have indicated a willingness to consider an offer of such accommodation. There are a variety of reasons as to why a property may be low demand, examples of which are:

- Size;
- Unpopular design and layout;
- Specific location/surrounding environment (e.g. evidence of vandalism, graffiti, anti-social behaviour, etc).

12.2 For the reasons outlined earlier in relation to effective void management, the Association recognises the need to adopt strategies aimed at minimising the number of properties considered low demand and/or improving the void period in respect of such properties. The strategies adopted by the Association to improve performance in respect of low demand properties may, as and when considered appropriate, include:

- The option of carrying out redecoration and/or improvement works to a higher standard;
- The option of offering a redecoration allowance (i.e. as an alternative to higher standard decoration at void stage);

12.3 The foregoing are examples and not an exhaustive list of measures which may be adopted, individually or in conjunction, in order to enhance performance in re-letting low demand properties.

12.4 Other more fundamental measures likely to require a substantial input of funding or other resources by the Association (for example, carrying out physical improvements to the local environment), would require authorisation by the Association's Management Committee.

13.0 Performance Monitoring

13.1 The Association requires to monitor its performance in respect of void management for four main reasons, as outlined below:

- To establish effective day to day control over the void management function and to monitor progress in relation to individual void properties;
- To monitor and compare the Association's performance on voids over time;
- To monitor and review actual performance on voids against the Association's agreed targets;



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- To compare performance against appropriate benchmarks (i.e. based on the performance of similar RSLs) and identify areas requiring improvement.

13.2 Quarterly performance reports measuring various aspects of void management, taking account of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Annual Return on the Charter requirements, will be produced by the Housing Manager for the Management Committee, which enables performance to be effectively monitored and measured.

13.3 The monitoring reports will cover a range of issues indicating context and performance in respect of void management, such as:

- Average void days;
- Rent loss as a percentage of total rent receivable for the period concerned;
- Void turnover - actual number of properties as a percentage of total stock;
- Refusal rates including reasons where known.

In addition, the Management Committee will be provided with monthly information on:

- Satisfaction with standard of re-let property.

13.4 The above is not an exhaustive list and reports may be created or amended as requested by the Management Committee or as deemed appropriate by staff in response to specific circumstances.

14.0 Tenant Satisfaction

14.1 Tenant satisfaction will be sought by obtaining feedback from new tenants through settling in visits and satisfaction surveys. The Association aims to have carried out settling in visits within six weeks of the tenancy commencing.

14.2 It should also be noted that new tenant visits provide a further opportunity to identify any support needs which if put in place may be key to achieving longer term tenancy sustainment.

14.3 Applicants or tenants who are dissatisfied with the service that they have received may use the Association's 'Complaints Procedure' to complain about the service that they received.



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15.0 Complaints

- 15.1 If an applicant wishes to complain about how our Voids Management Policy or any aspect of how our voids are managed, please refer to the Association's Complaints Procedure.
- 15.2 Information about how to make a complaint is available from the Association's company website and direct from the office.
- 15.3 Our decision on a Stage 2 (investigatory) complaint represents the end of the Association's internal complaints procedure. If an applicant remains dissatisfied, they can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to ask for a review of how the complaint has been handled and the outcome. Full details on how to contact the Ombudsman are available from our website, at the office or by contacting the Ombudsman direct.

End



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reviews and amendments

25/11/15 - Policy completely revised

October 2020 – Policy reviewed

August 2023 – Policy reviewed and following amendments made:

- Section 3.2, Outcome 4: Quality of housing – updated to the Scottish Social Housing Charter 2022
- Paragraph 5.1.2: removal of re Pre-End of Tenancy Inspection as procedural
- Section 6: removal of 'Termination without Adequate Notice' as procedural
- Section 7.1: removal of re joint inspections as procedural
- Section 10.2 to 10.7: removal of 'Void Inspections' as procedural
- Paragraph 13.3: removal of 'Satisfaction with allocations process' at
- Section 15 Complaints: inclusion of section



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