

Date: 20 December 2013
Contact name: Alethea Thompson
Contact number: 01395 517525 (group number 01395 517546)
E-mail: athompson@eastdevon.gov.uk



To: Members of the Void Standard Task and Finish Forum:
(Mike Berridge, Victor Kemp, Jim Knight, Peter Sullivan, Pauline Stott)

East Devon District Council
Knowle
Sidmouth
Devon
EX10 8HL
DX 48705 Sidmouth
Tel: 01395 516551
Fax: 01395 517507

Dennis Boobier - Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Emma Charlton – Housing Projects Officer
Mark Dale – Senior Technical Officer - Day to Day Repairs
John Golding – Head of Housing
Laurence Hughes – SW Operations Manager, MD Building Services

www.eastdevon.gov.uk

For information:

Councillor Jill Elson – Portfolio Holder, Sustainable Homes and Communities
Councillor Stephanie Jones – Deputy Portfolio Holder, Sustainable Homes and Communities

Meeting of the Void Standard Task and Finish Forum

Friday 10 January 2014 at 10am

Committee Room, Knowle, Sidmouth

Councillors and members of the public are reminded to switch off mobile phones during the meeting. If this is not practical due to particular circumstances, please advise the Chairman in advance of the meeting.

AGENDA

Page/s

- | | | |
|----|---|--------|
| 1. | Election of Chairman. | |
| 2. | Appointment of Vice Chairman. | |
| 3. | To receive any apologies for absence. | |
| 4. | To receive any declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda. | |
| 5. | To note and review the terms of reference/scope of the Void Standard Task and Finish Form. | 4 - 5 |
| 6. | To note the report considered by the Housing Review Board at its meeting on 7 November 2013, including the Tenant Scrutiny Panel's review of the voids process. | 6 - 26 |

- | | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 7. | To consider the current void leaflet produced by the Council, and some other examples from other housing authorities: | |
| | • East Devon District Council | 27 - 30 |
| | • Exeter City Council | 31 – 41 |
| | • London Borough of Hillingdon | 42 – 52 |
| | • North West Leicestershire District Council | 53 – 60 |
| | • ARK Housing | 61 – 70 |
| | • Stevenage Housing | 71 – 80 |
| | • Oxford City Homes | 81 – 82 |
| | • South Essex Homes | 83 - 95 |
| 8. | To note that the next meeting of the Void Standard TaFF will be held on Friday 24 January 2014, at 10am in the Committee Room, Knowle, Sidmouth. | |

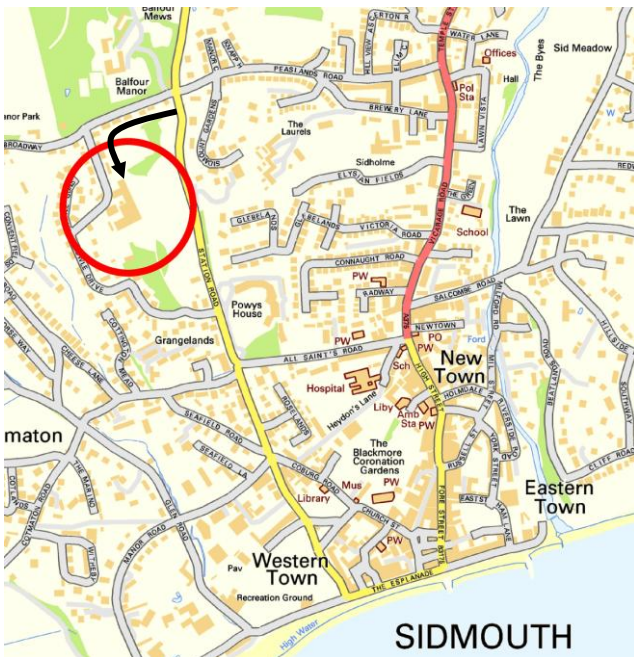
Decision making and equality duties

- The Council will give due regard under the Equality Act 2010 to the equality impact of its decisions.
- An appropriate level of analysis of equality issues, assessment of equalities impact and any mitigation and/or monitoring of impact will be addressed in committee reports.
- Consultation on major policy changes will take place in line with any legal requirements and with what is appropriate and fair for the decisions being taken.
- Members will be expected to give reasons for decisions which demonstrate they have addressed equality issues.

Members and co-opted members remember!

- You must declare the nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests. [Under the Localism Act 2011, this means the interests of your spouse, or civil partner, a person with whom you are living with as husband and wife or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners]. You must also disclose any personal interest.
- You must disclose your interest in an item whenever it becomes apparent that you have an interest in the business being considered. Make sure you say what your interest is as this has to be included in the minutes. [For example, 'I have a disclosable pecuniary interest because this planning application is made by my husband's employer'.]
- If your interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest you cannot participate in the discussion, cannot vote and must leave the room unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Council's Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee.

Getting to the Meeting – for the benefit of visitors



The entrance to the Council Offices is located on Station Road, Sidmouth. **Parking** is limited during normal working hours but normally easily available for evening meetings.

The following **bus service** stops outside the Council Offices on Station Road: **From Exmouth, Budleigh, Otterton and Newton Poppleford – 157**

The following buses all terminate at the Triangle in Sidmouth. From the Triangle, walk up Station Road until you reach the Council Offices (approximately ½ mile).

From Exeter – 52A, 52B; From Honiton – 52B;

From Seaton – 52A; From Ottery St Mary – 379, 387

Please check your local timetable for times.

© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. 100023746.2010

The Committee Suite has a separate entrance to the main building, located at the end of the visitor and Councillor car park. The rooms are at ground level and easily accessible; there is also a toilet for disabled users.

For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546

Housing Review Board

Scope of work for scrutiny: Void/lettable standard

Broad topic area:	To clarify and make the void/lettable standard more focused and specific, to ensure it is clear and unambiguous and understood by everyone.
Specific areas to explore within topic area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current void/lettable standard • What work should be carried out. • What work shouldn't be carried out. • The current standard of cleaning and garden maintenance of a void property. • Whether electric fuse boxes and stop cocks should be moved to be easily accessible to tenants. • Monitoring of work undertaken. • Service improvements that could be delivered. • Tenant expectations. • Whether a single surveyor should be used across the district to ensure consistency. • Time and cost implications of any revisions to the void/lettable standard.
Areas NOT covered by the review:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation policy. • Dates and timings of void property viewings. • Provision of 'buggy stores'. • Communal cleaning. • Grounds maintenance.
Desired outcomes of the review:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy, in writing. • To revise or produce a new void/lettable standard policy document, ideally in leaflet form. • To develop a detailed specification for the standard of cleaning of a void property. • To develop a detailed specification for the standard of gardens at the end of a void period.
Who should be consulted to obtain evidence (e.g. Ward Member, officers, stakeholders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants (via the Tenant Representative Group) • Housing Needs and Strategy Manager • Senior Technical Officer - Day to Day Repairs • Laurence Hughes, SW Operations Manager, MD Building Services • Other housing authorities for examples of good practice.

What evidence already exists (consultation, good practice examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decent home standard. • Existing legal and technical standards. • Current void policy document. • Void policy documents by other housing authorities. • Tenant Scrutiny Panel report on voids. • Work undertaken by other housing authorities. • Benchmarking.
What experts are needed to help with the review:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Needs and Strategy Manager • Senior Technical Officer - Day to Day Repairs • Voids and Allocation Officer • SW Operations Manager, MD Building Services
What other resources are needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing void policy document. • Photographic evidence of 'before and after' voids. • Democratic Services to service the meetings.
Undertaken by the Committee or is a TAFF required:	Task and Finish Forum
Timescale including start date:	2 meetings to be held: 10 January 2014 24 January 2014
Who are the recommendations being reported to:	Housing Review Board

Report to: **Housing Review Board**

Date of Meeting: 7 November 2013

Public Document: Yes

Exemption: None



Agenda item: 9

Subject: **Voids Management – A response to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel report on Voids**

Purpose of report: This report sets out an Officer response to the report on voids presented to the Board on 5 September 2013. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) undertook a review of the void process and made a number of recommendations. Members asked for a further report with a revised void procedure to be presented. The recommendations in the TSP report are at Annex A. A response to each of the recommendations has been provided. Some issues require further consideration and these are outlined in the report.

Recommendation: **Members are asked to:**

- 1. Consider the response by Officers to the recommendations made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel at Annex A.**
- 2. Agree the recommendations set out in paragraph 2.3 to the report.**

Reason for recommendation: To bring back to the Board a report on the recommendations made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel presented to the meeting on 5 September 2013 about the current number and type of empty properties available during the quarter and the length of time taken to relet the properties.

Officer: Dennis Boobier, Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk

Financial implications: Financial implications have been indicated in the report where known. None of these are currently included in the 2013/14 budget.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications on which to comment.
Giles Salter 17-01-13

Equalities impact: Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk

Links to background information: • None

Link to Council Plan: Living in this Outstanding Place.

Report in full

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel have scrutinised the subject of voids management and presented their findings and recommendations to the Board on 5 September 2013. Members asked for a further report on the subject following careful consideration of the report, with a revised void procedure.

2. Response to recommendations on Voids made by the TSP

- 2.1 The report by the TSP is at **Annex A**. A response by Officers has been made against each recommendation in the 'response by officers' column.
- 2.2 The recommendations that have been accepted have been incorporated in the void procedure. Some of the recommendations need further consideration or have financial implications and this is considered in detail in Annex A. The recommendations that have not been accepted or are already considered to be covered in the current void procedure are also highlighted at Annex A.
- 2.3 The three key recommendations are considered below in detail:

- (1) The void/lettable standard to be clarified and made more specific.

The lettable standard is specific to East Devon Homes. All landlords have a 'standard' which they bring their homes up to prior to letting. In some cases that standard is to undertake the necessary legal safety checks on gas and electricity before letting only. Others like East Devon Homes have a standard that includes undertaking improvements and bringing homes up to the decent home standard.

Most landlords prioritise turning around voids quickly and undertake any improvements or major repairs after the tenant has moved in. This is primarily to minimise rent loss due to the property being empty.

The TSP has asked that the lettable standard be reviewed to ensure it is clear and unambiguous and understood by everyone.

Recommendation: To set up a tenant and member led group to review the void lettable standard. The group could include representatives from those who have recently become tenants. A survey of new tenants could also be undertaken.

- (2) Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy in writing.

This issue is very much linked to paragraph 2.3.

Recommendation: That this recommendation is considered by the tenant and member led group.

- (3) Tenants to be given choice over dates and times of viewings.

The opportunity to view the property is already part of the void procedure. We give potential tenants who have been offered a property the opportunity to have an

accompanied viewing on Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week. There are three time slots – 9.30am; 11.30am; and 2.30pm on each of those days in each of the two contract areas.

The limiting factor is capacity of the contractor and the Void and Allocation Officer. Although it is feasible for each Maintenance Surveyor to be available in their area (four areas in district), the contract supervisor for MD or Skinners covers two areas, as does the Void and Allocation officer.

It is important to note that the 'accompanied viewing' serves two purposes. One is to allow the potential new tenant the opportunity to view the property and decide whether to accept the offer of housing; but more importantly it is to allow the technical staff and the contractor to decide what essential work needs doing and how quickly the property can be relet. This area of work has been the subject of a Systems Thinking review.

Recommendation: To continue with the current arrangements set out above.

- 2.4 Members asked for the provision of car parking to be considered at the time the property is empty. There are occasions when car parking is an issue, for example a void property at Hillside, Buckereil was provided with off road parking because of the difficulties caused parking vehicles on the narrow public highway. Maintenance Surveyors do consider essential parking issues when they are deciding what work should be done at a void property and they will continue to do so
- 2.5 Members asked for a revised void procedure to be presented. It is suggested at this stage that Members consider this report and the recommendations at Annex A before revisions to the void procedure are made. The current void procedure will be revised following this meeting.

3. Current Cost of Void Works

- 3.1 The cost of void works is made up of a number of elements including repair works; improvements such as new kitchen, bathroom and heating systems; electrical works; gas safety check; asbestos survey and associated works; and occasionally disabled adaptations. On average we have 250 voids per year.
- 3.2 In addition there is rent loss due to voids. In 2012/13 this was £190,000. From April – July 2013 the rent loss is £90,000. The expectation is that rent loss will increase this year because of the increased length of time voids are taking to be relet and the increase in the number of voids this year compared to 2012/13.

3.3 The cost of void works can be identified as follows, some of this is estimated:

	£
➤ Repair work	1,113,920
➤ Electrical works	382,115
➤ Doors (10)	12,000
➤ Heating systems (10)	50,000
➤ Kitchens (80)	240,000
➤ Bathrooms (20)	40,000
➤ Asbestos survey	30,000
➤ Asbestos work	70,000
➤ Total	1,938,035

3.4 The average cost of void works is £7,750. Our average rent is £76 per week. This means that on average it will take 2 years of rent payments to cover the cost of void works.

4. Possible increase in void costs as a result of implementation of TSP recommendations

4.1 Until the void lettable standard has been reviewed and any additional work such as changes to cleaning or garden works is identified, it is not possible to estimate all the additional costs to void works. However, some key issues identified by TSP can be costed.

4.2 The sure-stop alternative to the stopcock will cost an estimated £50 each (£30 materials and £20 labour) – total cost £12,500 per year.

4.3 The moving of electrical fuse boxes to help older or disabled tenants will cost an estimated £400 each – assume work only in sheltered housing and tenants with disability -100 units per year – total cost will be £40,000 per year.

4.4 The internal decoration of a general needs (GN) void property is estimated to cost an average of £3,000 per property. Assuming an average of 150 properties the cost would be around £450,000. A number of GN void properties are decorated internally at present. It is estimated that to decorate all GN void properties would cost an additional £350,000 per year.

4.5 The TSP has identified some additional work that they would like to see done on void properties. The work above is considered to be reasonable additional work to undertake while the property is void. However, an additional £400,000 in the COT budget will need to be provided to enable this work to go ahead in 2014/15.

4.6 Members should note that further costs may be identified following the review of the void lettable standard.



SCRUTINISE
PERFORMANCE
ANALYSE
NEGOTIATE
NETWORK
EVALUATE
REPORT
SUPPORT

Tenant Scrutiny Panel Report

THE 'OUTS AND INS' OF THE VOIDS PROCESS

July 2013

Contents:

Introduction	.....	3
Who we are		
What we do		
Why we chose to scrutinise the voids process		
How we did our investigations	.....	4
What we found	.....	5
Our recommendations	.....	6
Conclusion	.....	10
Acknowledgements	.....	10
Appendix A – Scoping paper	.....	11
Appendix B – Review of voids/lettable standard	.....	12
Appendix C – Review of welcome pack	.....	13

Introduction

Who we are:

We are the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, known as 'Spanners', made up of 5 tenants and chaired by Roger Pell.

'Spanners' stands for:

- Scrutinise
- Performance
 - Analyse
 - Negotiate
 - Network
 - Evaluate
 - Report
 - Support

What we do:

We investigate our chosen topics and report recommendations to the Housing Review Board on our findings. Whilst we are independent of the council, we liaise with officers and tenants to gain information. This enables us to give a balanced perspective to support the Housing Service to regulate and improve its performance.

Why we chose to scrutinise the voids process:

We considered a range of topics – including those recommended by staff and the Tenant Representative Group - and eliminated those that were going through a process of internal review. We examined performance information and considered value for money as well. Residents often see empty properties and wonder why it appears to take a long time to 'let' them. Voids fitted well within these criteria and so was selected as our next scrutiny project.

How we did our investigations

We developed a **plan**¹ (scoping paper) which outlined the areas to explore and set boundaries around the topic to make sure we stayed focused.

We then agreed which methods we wanted to use to complete our investigations. This included:

- Work shadowing Tenancy Sustainment Officers at various void properties at different stages
- Interviewing tenants, staff and contractors
- Undertaking a staff survey
- Examining the voids standard and voids procedure documents
- Speaking to new tenants
- Examining the new tenants satisfaction survey
- Reviewing the welcome pack and Tenant Handbook
- Examining Housemark benchmarking data and comparing our Voids Standard with Exeter City New Homes Property Standard

During the work shadowing phase we visited a total of 19 properties, at different stages along the process. We had hoped to follow several properties through from start to finish but this did not occur. We feel that there were some properties where timescales moved very quickly and we did not always get notified of the next stage. Also we did not want to hold up the process. However we feel that those properties which we did visit, a mix of sheltered and general needs, houses, flats and bungalows, gave us a good overview as to how the process was working and on which we could make comments.

Copies of all our findings can be found in our evidence box file.

It was decided not to include Devon Home Choice and allocations in this scrutiny investigation.

This scrutiny investigation took us ten months to complete. All recommendations are based on evidence provided by officers, contractors and tenants. It may be that there is information that we were not made aware of, which may impact on our findings.

¹ See Appendix A

What we found

Overall, we found the voids process to be very positive and working reasonably well. EDDC is meeting its target turn around time for voids. The staff involved seem to genuinely care about the process and the tenants. Tenants (and the Panel) have commented on the friendliness of all staff involved. We compare reasonably to others in the sector when it comes to the length of time a property is void.

Whilst we are spending more than others in the sector on void repairs and void management (and we understand this is largely due to the age of the homes and fitting things like new kitchens and bathrooms during the void period) we find that the overall voids/lettable standard is a bit vague and needs clarification to avoid ambiguity. Occasionally this led to tenants being given different messages regarding what would be done to the property from staff².

Currently tenants are given no choice as to the date and time of accompanied viewings³. Whilst we understand the need to let homes as quickly as possible in order to collect the rental income, there needs to be a balance between this and the need for tenants to be able to fit the viewings into their daily lives – this will also give more time for staff to be able to complete paperwork.⁴

Staff need to remember that some tenants will be looking at their potential new home through rose-tinted glasses which means they may not take in or may misunderstand the information given. Staff need to take time with tenants to ensure they give this information at a speed and in a way which works best for the prospective tenant⁵.

Our key recommendations include:

- Void/lettable standard to be clarified and made more specific
- Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy in writing
- Tenants to be given choice over dates and times of viewings

² Void process visits

³ Staff interview

⁴ Staff survey

⁵ Tenant interviews and staff survey

Our recommendations

Further recommendations	Response by Officers
<p>1.1 Revise the current Void/Lettable Standard so that there is no ambiguity as to meaning in line with our detailed review (see Appendix B)</p>	<p>Agreed clearer, shorter, more focussed standard required for clarity for both staff and tenants.</p> <p>Recommend working party of tenants, members and staff to review void lettable standard.</p> <p>Could include recent 'new' tenants on group and undertake a survey of new tenants. Submissions or interviews with technical staff and examples of good practice can be considered. It is important to focus on what is appropriate for East Devon Homes and tenants. A balance between meeting expectations, meeting legal/technical standards, and the cost of work needs to be considered. Anything is possible, but at a cost!</p> <p>System thinking tells us that if we get the lettable standard right then the contractor can be instructed to undertake all work to meet this standard. This may eliminate the requirement for the Maintenance Surveyor and may not require a detailed specification for each void.</p>
<p>1.2 East Devon staff (and tenants) to carry out a percentage of spot checks at the end of the void period to ensure the standard is being maintained.</p>	<p>This is already being done.</p> <p>Both the contractor and Maintenance Surveyors undertake inspections. The contractor to ensure the work they were asked to do has been completed. The Maintenance Surveyor post inspects all voids to make sure the contractor has done everything that was specified and the property is upto a lettable standard. In addition, the Voids and Allocation Officer visits the property with the tenant at start of tenancy to hand over the keys to the property. A visual inspection is undertaken by the tenant and VAO to ensure the tenant is happy with the property.</p> <p>All voids are post inspected by contractor, VAO and Maintenance Surveyor. Payment of invoice signed off by Maintenance Surveyor</p> <p>Recommend Maintenance Surveyor signs off void lettable standard as met.</p>

<p>1.3 Develop a detailed specification for the standard of cleaning similar to that in the Exeter City Council leaflet to include within the Voids/Lettable Standard.</p>	<p>Existing standard includes 'cleaning' of property. To do more may cost more.</p> <p>Recommended that this issue is considered as part of review of void lettable standard</p>
<p>1.4 Ensure this is given to the cleaners and spot checks need to be carried out to verify the standard is being upheld.</p>	<p>The cleaners are the same contractor who does the repair work to void property. Whatever is agreed would become an instruction to the contractor and if standard not met we would not pay.</p> <p>Post inspection by Maintenance Surveyor should be sufficient.</p>
<p>1.5 Develop a detailed specification for the standard of gardens at the end of the void period</p>	<p>Gardens are tenant responsibility.</p> <p>During void works we normally ensure it is free from rubbish and items that may be dangerous</p> <p>If work is required to remove rubbish or undertake landscaping or other work to bring garden up to void standard then the outgoing tenant should be recharged.</p> <p>Recommend that this is considered as part of review of void lettable standard</p> <p>This may help officers to enforce tenancy conditions if garden in reasonable condition when let.</p>
<p>1.6 Move electric fuseboxes and stop cocks so that they are easily accessible to tenants and are disability-friendly</p>	<p>The electrical safety check is undertaken on all void properties.</p> <p>Could provide a 'sure-stop' (stopcock) in kitchen as part of void works – easy to use – there is a cost</p> <p>Electric fusebox is not always accessible for tenants – again cost of moving and where do you put it without it getting in way of provision of kitchen units.</p> <p>Recommend that this is included in void lettable standard and funded in 2014/15.</p>

<p>1.7 Decorate general needs homes to similar standard as sheltered homes</p>	<p>The cost of fully decorating GN voids is estimated to be in excess of £500,000. We currently undertake decoration in some voids and therefore the additional cost to do this in every void is £350,000.</p> <p>Could specify make good and decorate fully or could make good and undercoat only. We could give tenant choice at accompanied viewing as some new tenants may wish to decorate themselves. We could consider giving vouchers for cost of paint only to those new tenants who choose to paint themselves.</p> <p>Recommendation is to decorate all void properties</p> <p>This would allow us to enforce the tenancy agreement condition that requires the tenant to keep the property in good decorative order.</p>
<p>1.8 Provide 'buggy stores' and a safe place to recharge electric disability scooters in blocks of flats</p>	<p>Adaptation Policy states this is tenant responsibility. The tenant needs to consider storage and any other work such as widening footpath when considering purchase of a mobility scooter. The cost of recharge batteries must be borne by tenant.</p> <p>Recommended that the provision of buggy stores is not undertaken on individual properties. The tenant should consider how they will store their buggy and recharge battery at time of purchase. This will be the same for sheltered housing bungalows. However, in the case of blocks of flats it is important that tenants do not store their buggy in communal areas and this should be enforced.</p> <p>Need to consider the provision of buggy store for tenants of sheltered housing and general needs blocks of flats on a 'block' basis and where the cost of provision is reasonable. Tenants should be expected to rent storage area and pay for cost of electricity to recharge battery.</p>
<p>1.9 Ensure that parts required are easily accessible and that no delays to work occur as a result of issues with suppliers, for example current kitchen supplier</p>	<p>Already working with contractors and Moores to get this right. Situation has improved since July 2013.</p>

<p>2.0 Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy in writing</p>	<p>At accompanied viewing new tenant is informed of works that will be done. It is difficult to provide tenant with details of everything that is being done. Most tenants are really only interested in the key issues around kitchen, bathroom, decoration, carpets and when will the keys be ready.</p> <p>Checking telephone survey of new tenants, this is not an issue of concern.</p> <p>Recommended that copy of void lettable standard be given to new tenant</p>
<p>2.2 Provide tenants with guideline floor plans and measurements in order to give an idea of room size. It should be made clear that these measurements should not be used to order carpet or other floor coverings</p>	<p>We already give details to tenants who ask. Opportunity for tenant to gather this information at accompanied viewing or can be provided by VAO if requested.</p>
<p>2.3 Provide a leaflet similar to the one produced by Exeter City Council. This leaflet should reflect our voids standard</p>	<p>It is possible to provide void lettable standard in leaflet form once the review is complete and the standard has been revised.</p> <p>Recommended that the leaflet is produced followign the review of the void standard</p>
<p>2.4 Ensure the information given to tenants by all staff is consistent by training staff on the voids standard and other important housing policies such as communal cleaning and grounds maintenance.</p>	<p>Usually only VAO dealing with new tenant over the 4-6 week period of the void. These two members of staff are the contact for new tenants.</p> <p>Agreed they need to be fully aware of these policies and further information on communal cleaning and grounds maintenance is being provided by the Estate team</p>
<p>2.5 Use the recommended checklist and leaflet to explain to tenants what will be done to their new home during the void period. Make sure that time is taken to explain this clearly and ensure tenants have understood.</p>	<p>Is this not a repeat of 2.0? This is already done.</p>

<p>2.6 Make sure staff are clear about important housing policies such as communal cleaning and grounds maintenance. Tenants will then know what East Devon will do and what their responsibility is once they have moved into their home, so they do not feel misled.</p>	<p>Is this not a repeat of 2.4</p>
<p>2.7 Use the Tenancy Agreement and Tenant Handbook to explain tenants' rights, entitlements and responsibilities. Make sure that time is taken to explain this clearly and ensure tenants have understood.</p>	<p>This is already done during the comprehensive tenants sign up process. This normally takes between 30-45 minutes to complete and includes input from the rental team and Housing Benefit is required.</p>
<p>2.8 Clarify the garden areas in relation to all properties especially blocks of flats. Ensure tenants are clear when they move in which piece of garden is their responsibility, or whether they are communal gardens.</p>	<p>This is a contentious issue. This needs to be considered by the Landlord Services Manager and possibly referred to Grounds Maintenance TAFF.</p> <p>Ideally all 'garden' linked to a block of flats is communal and is not designated for a specific tenant or flat. However, individual agreements with tenants over the years have allowed communal gardens areas to be used by one tenant and this is an historical issue that needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Recommended that the Landlord Services Manager/Grounds Maintenance TAFF deal with this issue</p>
<p>2.9 Give tenants a copy of electrical safety certificate. Alert tenants to the fact that the current energy supplier is British Gas but they can change supplier if they wish</p>	<p>Tenants are told there gas supplier is British Gas.</p> <p>Recommended that the tenant with a copy of the electric safety certificate</p>

3.1 Provide a choice of times for the accompanied viewings, including weekends and evenings	See paragraph 2.3.2 in report.
3.2 Ask tenants moving into sheltered accommodation if they wish the Mobile Support Officer to be present at the accompanied viewing	MSO's are invited to every accompanied viewing. Not all choose to attend.
3.3 Provide tenants with a named member of staff to contact for information and advice regarding their move	The Void and Allocation Officer perform this function and introduce themselves at the accompanied viewing.

DRAFT

<p>4.1 Identify criteria where flexibility can be used with regard to rent payment, for example, at the beginning of a tenancy where a tenant might be struggling to pay outgoing rent on a previous property, or at the end of a tenancy, where the tenant has died</p>	<p>The Council is already very flexible with rent payment periods and tenants can claim HB at two properties if eligible and applied for.</p>
<p>4.2 Review Welcome Pack in line with our detailed review (see Appendix C)</p>	<p>Recommend the tenant and member led group review welcome pack as well as void lettable standard</p>
<p>4.3 Research why 50% of tenants responding to the New Tenants Telephone Survey had issues with their homes within four weeks of moving in</p>	<p>Yes. A worthwhile exercise.</p> <p>Recommended that the Information and Analysis Officer conduct a survey of new tenants to clearly understand the ‘repair’ issues they experience early on in their tenancy.</p>
<p>4.4 Mobile Support Officer to introduce themselves to new sheltered residents during their first week of occupancy to make sure emergency information is given and recorded on the system</p>	<p>Already done.</p>

Conclusion

This was our second scrutiny activity and focussed on a service being provided by the council. There was much more work involved but we are getting more experienced in the scrutiny techniques needed and are growing as a scrutiny group.

We learned a lot about the challenges involved in delivering this housing service and hope that our recommendations help to address some of these.

We are pleased to find there are positive practices to balance our recommendations. We found the voids process to be very positive and working reasonably well, with target times met and staff who genuinely seem to care about the process and tenants.

To recap, our top three recommendations are:

1. Void/lettable standard to be clarified and made more specific
2. Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy
3. Tenants to be given choice over dates and times of viewings

We are pleased to recommend this report to the Housing Review Board.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for their contribution and support during this project:

- Officers of the council who supported us, allowed us to shadow them and patiently searched for information in answer to our questions
- Tenants, Contractors and staff who took part in our surveys and interviews
- Trafford Hall for the free training

A special thank you goes to the Housing Needs Team and Emma Charlton for their patient help in facilitating this project

Appendix A - Scoping paper

Tenant Scrutiny Panel : Review of Voids – procedures and efficiency

BROAD TOPIC AREA	Review of procedures relating to re-lets and voids
SPECIFIC AREAS TO EXPLORE	<p>Void Management</p> <p>Pre let visits</p> <p>Tenant visits (accompanied)</p> <p>Review Tenant welcome pack</p> <p>Length of time empty</p> <p>Tenant feedback – survey</p> <p>Void repairs / maintenance</p>
AREAS NOT COVERED	<p>Devon Home Choice: ease of access / landlord interaction with system</p> <p>Allocations</p> <p>Repairs system</p> <p>Routine maintenance any works not directly concerning re-lets</p> <p>Complaint system</p> <p>Garden maintenance (grass cutting)</p>
DESIRED OUTCOMES	<p>Attend visits and observe procedures</p> <p>Review, observe and recommend</p> <p>New tenant survey, staff interviews and contractors</p> <p>Look for and comment on improvement in current procedures etc</p> <p>Cut out duplication and waste</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attend visits and observe procedures 2. Review system and procedures <p>Look at systems to improve income flow</p> <p>Value for money</p>
WHO SHOULD BE CONSULTED TO OBTAIN EVIDENCE	<p>New tenants – survey, questionnaire</p> <p>Contractor's staff</p> <p>Mystery shoppers</p>

Appendix B – Review of Voids/Letable Standard

Number in specification	Comment
1. Visual inspection of exterior	Feel repairs should be done to steps and footpaths Need to fit grills over outside drains
2. Security	Don't feel that all windows are checked – eg Property 11 Also Panel feel double glazing units should be replaced if seals have been broken and condensation between panes
3. Electrical specification	Need to add into the specification that extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens should be checked and where missing fitted in appropriate location. Specification to be updated to the current minimum standards required.
7. Fittings and fixtures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Contractors need to be made aware that specification says 'smooth to touch' in several places – at meeting did not seem to be aware of this and was not always the case for properties visited ii. specification needs to be clearer as to whether the 3m run of worktops is one continuous run or can be broken up iii. Panel found that not all units are left clean (Properties 1 & 11) iv. Specification doesn't say anything about a space for a cooker v. Specification should say that if gas supplied to property then fittings for both gas and electric cookers should be put in kitchen vi. Panel feel that specification should say that new toilet seats should be fitted vii. Specification says toilets and baths free from limescale but panel feel this is not always the case
8. Decorative order	Says 'walls prepare ready for re-decoration' but feel needs more explanation about this – fill holes, smooth etc In light of changes to the way we are 'labelling' properties and recent decommissioning need to look again at which properties will be re-decorated prior to reletting. Perhaps all properties into which an older person or disabled person is moving in should be redecorated?
9. Cleaning	Panel would like to see a separate, detailed specification for the standard of cleaning similar to that in the Exeter City leaflet. This needs to be given to the cleaners and spot checks need to be carried out to check standard being upheld. Panel would like to see nicotine stains all removed (use steam cleaners?)

Appendix C – Review of the Welcome Pack

Original list	Current welcome pack (7/3/13)	Recommendation	Priority
Welcome Letter	Not included	New letter to be drafted and included in pack	1
Information about the local area (including details about doctors, dentists etc)	Not included	Sheet of local information to be put together for each area	2
Info on a leaflet to say where to find this infoServices into and within your home	Included	Leaflet on how to switch to another provider to be drafted and included in pack	1
Easy Reference Card for Repairs & Maintenance	Not included – but information in Tenant Handbook	Key phone numbers etc to be collated onto laminated card for easy reference	1
Refuse and recycling leaflet	Not included	Leaflet to be included	3
The Tenants Charter	Replaced by Tenant Handbook	No change required	
How to get involved with the Housing Service	Not included – but information in Tenant Handbook	No change required	
Housing Customer Charter Right to Repair leaflet Right to compensation leaflet Housing Benefit/Council Tax benefit claim form Home Safeguard leaflet Leaflet on dispersed alarm service Booklet on low cost home insurance	This information is now in the Tenant Handbook and/or Annual Report	No change required	
Advice on damp, condensation and mould problems Leaflet	Included	No change required	
Local 'handy pages' directory (if available for area)	Not included	No change required	
Copy of latest Housing Standard or Partnership News newsletter	Housing Matters included	No change required	
Tenant Participation Agreement	Now the Tenant and Council Partnership Agreement - in the Annual Report	No change required	

Original list	Current welcome pack (7/3/13)	Recommendation	Priority
	Flyer about Introductory tenancies	No change required	
	Leaflet on Heating Systems and controls	No change required	
	Annual Report	No change required	
	Home Focus	No change required	

DRAFT

VOID/LETTABLE STANDARD

This note sets out the minimum standard that void properties should achieve following a change of tenancy. Properties relet to new tenants should meet the standards set out below. We aim to turnaround void properties quickly and reduce the End to End times and the time that properties are with contractors is a critical part of the process.

1. EXTERIOR

- Roofing materials to be visibly sound and complete.
- Guttering and downpipes to be visibly sound, complete and securely fixed to walls and fascias.
- Walls to be visibly sound and in good repair.
- Windows, doors and frames to be visibly sound and free of defects.
- Steps and footpaths to be sound and free from obstruction.
- Gates, gate posts and fixings (where supplied by EDDC) to be sound and complete.
- Fencing where bordering public footpaths, highways or private property to be sound and securely fixed.
- Gardens to be tidy and free of debris with lawns manageable by the tenant.
- Drains and gullies to be free from obstruction and fitted with grilles.

2. SECURITY

- All windows must be capable of being fully closed and either latched or locked shut.
- All final exit doors are to have exchanged or new locks fitted.
- All cracked and broken glass is to be replaced.

3. ELECTRICAL CHECKS

- The Electrical installation and any fixed appliances must be tested and found to comply with current electrical (IEE) regulations.
- All rooms, excepting internal store-rooms, under stairs cupboards and outhouses, to have one working pendant with wall-mounted switch or pull cord as regulations require;
- Immersion heater (where fitted) to be connected via a fused switch and free from visible signs of water leaks;
- Cooker boxes and sockets throughout to be visibly complete and sound;
- Check that mains supply smoke detectors have been installed and that they are operating.
- Check and replace faulty extract fans found during inspection;
- Install external bulkhead type light fitting above all external front doors to individual flats and front and back doors to individual bungalows, to be switched from the inside.

Minimum Installation

- Kitchen - 1 x cooker box
2 No. single appliance outlets
3 No. Twin sockets
 - Lounge - 3 No. Twin sockets
 - Dining room - 2 No. Twin sockets
 - Bedrooms - 2 No. Twin sockets
 - Landing - 1 No. Single socket
- Pendent sets to be MK shock guard.

VOID/LETTABLE STANDARD

Residual current circuit breakers to ring main.
Consumer unit complete with MCB's.

4. GAS INSTALLATION

The gas installation and any fixed appliances must be tested and found to comply with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.

- Where metered supply fitted:
- 1 x cooker point with sound fittings capped in accordance with gas regulations.
- Gas fires/heaters checked to appear sound and correctly fitted in accordance with gas regulations;
- All pipes without appliances to be capped in accordance with gas regulations;
- Appliances fitted by previous tenants to be reported to Housing Management with details of type, position, condition and recommendation of action to be taken;
- Adequate ventilation must be provided;
- Note if supply is not metered and property is fitted with gas appliances/cooker point.

5. SOLID FUEL INSTALLATIONS

- All appliances to be checked and serviced.
- All flues to be swept **and clear of obstructions.**
- Adequate ventilation must be provided.

6. THERMAL INSULATION

- A minimum of **270** mm insulation quilt must be installed in the roof space.
- Hot water cylinders to be insulated.
- All exposed or vulnerable pipework and tanks/cisterns are to be lagged.
- **Where a cavity wall is present this should be filled.**
- **Thermostatic radiator valves to be fitted.**
- **All windows to the main living areas to be double glazed.**

7. FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Adequate kitchen facilities are to be provided, where practicable, in accordance with the following schedule:-

- | | | |
|---------|---|---|
| Kitchen | - | 1 Sink top and drainer sound, smooth to touch and free from sharp edges; |
| | - | Hot and cold water supply via two taps or mixer tap, securely fitted to sink top and free from leaks and drips; |
| | - | One waste pipe with trap to exterior drain connected to sink top sound and free from leaks; |
| | - | Washing machine taps to be provided, checked and securely fitted and free from leaks; |
| | - | Waste pipes to washing machine to be provided, connected to exterior drain via trap with no visible signs of leaks; |
| | - | 3m run of base units; |
| | - | 3m run of worktop sound and securely fixed; |
| | - | 1 m run of wall unit sound and securely fixed to wall; |
| | - | All units to be free from visible dirt and grease inside and out; |

VOID/LETTABLE STANDARD

- Fridge/Freezer space;
- Thermoplastic floor tiles are to be installed to concrete floors.

- Bathroom
- Wash basin to be sound, free from all cracks, smooth to touch, securely fitted and complete with clearly identified hot and cold taps, free from leaks and drips;
 - Chain and waste plug to be complete and fixed to basin;
 - Bath to be sound, free from cracks, smooth to touch, securely fixed and complete with clearly identified hot and cold taps, free from leaks and drips;
 - Bath panels to be complete and securely fixed;
 - Chain and waste plug to be complete and fixed to bath;
 - WC to comprise cistern, pan and seat – all to be sound, free from cracks, smooth to touch, securely fixed and free from limescale;
 - Shower base (where fitted) to be free from cracks, smooth to touch, securely fitted and with complete and sound cubicle/curtain;
 - All water supplies to bathroom and WC fittings to be complete, free from leaks and in working order;
 - All waste pipes to be complete and free from leaks.

- Second WC
(Where applicable)
- As per WC above;
 - Hand basin(where fitted) to be as per bathroom wash basin above;
 - Water supplies and waste systems to be as per bathroom above.
 - Thermoplastic floor tiles are to be installed to concrete floors.

New tenants may wish to retain the previous tenants fixtures and fittings and these will become the responsibility of the new tenant if they sign a disclaimer at the accompanied viewing.

8. DECORATIVE ORDER

Ceilings

- To be free from loose plaster and of a good decorative standard.
- Polystyrene ceiling tiles (where fitted) to be removed,
- Asbestos cement board ceilings to be removed and replaced with plaster board and skim.

Walls

- To be visibly free from loose plaster and wall decoration to be complete.
- Prepare ready for re-decoration.
- Wallpaper to remain when in reasonable condition.

Gloss Paint Surfaces

- Surfaces to be visibly free from dirt or grease.

NOTE

Sheltered housing dwellings to be of a good decorative standard, in order that incoming tenant has no decorating to do.

VOID/LETTABLE STANDARD

If asbestos is suspected a test should be arranged.

9. GENERAL

- Floors - To be free from carpets, underlays, foam residues, adhesive, **unless the tenant requests that they remain.**
- Tiled floors to be complete and securely fixed.
 - Floor boarding to be complete, securely fixed.
 - Carpets in good order to remain at incoming tenants request
 - Carpet grippers to be left if in good condition
- Outhouses - To be visibly sound and free from leaks **and defects.**
- Cleanliness - **The property, garden and communal areas** to be free from all household refuse, discarded furniture and equipment, papers etc.
- Building debris, excessive dust and dirt to be removed.

Updated April 2011

Contract Services/Void standard

NEW HOME
PROPERTY STANDARDS 9



This leaflet was produced in
association with Exeter City
Council tenants.



Exeter City Council

HOUSING
Repairs

Read + pick out good ideas.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

We want all our homes to be in the best possible condition when a new tenant moves in. This leaflet gives you details on the standards you can expect from your new home. If you think the property fails any of these standards contact the Repairs Team on **01392 265031**.

General

- The property is safe. The gas and electrics have been checked
- A new toilet seat has been fitted (after you move in you will become responsible for replacing it)
- The front and back door locks have been changed and you will be supplied with two sets of keys for the front and back doors
- You will be supplied with keys to fit each type of window lock that has been fitted
- If your new home is a flat you will be supplied with two keys for the communal door locks
- You will be supplied with an Energy Performance Certificate so you can see roughly how much your home is going to cost to run
- The loft space will be insulated
- We will supply a welcome pack
- You will be shown where the main water stopcock, emergency gas control valve and consumer unit are located.

NEW HOME PROPERTY STANDARDS

Decorations

- There will be no holes in the walls
- There will be no torn wallpaper
- Any polystyrene wall or ceiling tiles will be removed
- There will be no traces of mould or damp when you move in
- There will be no areas left with unfinished surfaces, e.g. bare wall plaster or bare woodwork.

Each room in your new home has been given a gold, silver or bronze standard.

Gold – The decorations are in excellent condition with neutral colours and the surfaces are unmarked.

Silver – The decorations are in reasonable condition. There are marks to the walls or woodwork but the room can be occupied. Decorating materials may be issued.

Bronze – The decorations are in below average condition. For example the wall covering is old and badly marked or a strange colour and the woodwork is in poor condition. Decorating materials will be issued.

Decorating Materials

We will supply you with a voucher that can be exchanged for decorating materials. You will be given a pack that provides full instructions.

Windows and doors will be secure and open and close properly

We will change the locks to front and back doors and you will be supplied with two sets of keys to each.

There will be a cold and hot water supply

The sink will be clean, taps will be in good condition and will not drip or leak

There will be a plug and chain to the sink

The number of kitchen cupboards will vary depending on the size of the property, but as a minimum (and where space permits) there will be a sink unit, base unit and wall unit

As a minimum, one metre of worktop space will be provided

Where space permits we will allow for two appliance spaces in addition to the cooker space

Existing cupboards will be clean

If the meters are located in the kitchen they will be accessible

A cooker space will be provided with a supply for either an electric or gas cooker.

Kitchens will be graded as follows:

Gold standard (no work required). As new.

NEW HOME PROPERTY STANDARDS

Silver standard (no work required). There will be a maximum of two styles of door front and the kitchen may not have three appliance spaces but overall, units are clean and in good condition.

Bronze standard (will require work). Requires work of less than £650 (excluding decoration) to bring it up to the silver standard.

Kitchens will be replaced if they fall below the above standards, for example:

It appears to be over 30 years old

The units are painted

The units are of ply finish

It cannot be made hygienic

The cost of works to bring it up to standard will exceed £650.

Ceilings and walls will be safe

We may leave minor cracks to plaster which can be filled prior to decorating but all major cracks (over 6mm wide) and holes will be filled

If we can see damaged plasterwork this will be repaired. However, if it is covered by a wall covering we may not spot it

Polystyrene tiles will be removed and the area decorated

Walls will not have damp or mould.

All fittings will be clean and in good condition with no cracks

There will be no leaks or drips

All toilets will work correctly

We will fit a new toilet seat

A plug and chain will be provided to the washbasin and bath

We will provide one form of washing facility. This may be a bath or shower; it may not necessarily be both.

Bathrooms and toilets will be graded as follows:

Gold standard (no work required). As new.

Silver standard (no work required). The bathroom or toilet may have old sanitary ware e.g. a sink or bath, but they are in good condition. Everything works, it can be kept clean and surfaces are in good condition with no scratches or chips.

Bronze standard (will require work to upgrade to silver standard). There are odd chips in the bath that can be filled in. No more than two of the appliances need replacing e.g. the bath, washbasin, WC pan or cistern.

Bathrooms will be replaced if they fall below the above standards, for example:

If three or more pieces of sanitary ware need replacing

If it appears to be over 40 years old

If the surfaces are in poor condition so it cannot be kept clean.

NEW HOME PROPERTY STANDARDS

Will be safe and securely fixed with handrails for the length of the staircase.

Where a previous tenant leaves floor coverings such as carpets or lino and these are considered to be in a very good condition we will leave them down. We will not accept any future responsibility for these items

Floor finishes will be in a suitable condition for floor coverings to be laid. There will not be any loose or damaged floor tiles

All wooden floors will be complete with no missing or badly damaged boards

Floorboards will be even and secure, with no nails sticking out and free from rot and woodworm.

The property will have been made gas safe
Once you know you are moving in, contact our gas engineers, **KS Engineering** on **01392 678190**. They will arrange a date when they can come round to make sure all the appliances are working correctly, provide you with advice on using your appliances and leave you with a safety certificate

You will need to contact your preferred energy supplier to let them know you are moving in.

Electric

- The electrics in the property including sockets, switches and fittings will have been checked and are safe to use
- You will be supplied with an electric safety certificate when you accept the property
- The property will have working smoke detectors
- Energy saving light bulbs will be provided throughout the property. When replacing these, dispose of all bulbs correctly
- You will need to contact your preferred energy supplier to let them know you are moving in.

For more information on gas and electricity please see your **New Home Information Gas and Electric Checklist**.

Heating

- The heating provided will be gas or electric
- Space heating will be provided in the majority of rooms
- Hot water cylinders will be insulated.

Glass

- Where possible there will be no broken panes of glass
- Double glazed windows where the seals have gone and there is condensation between the panes will be replaced
- In the case of double glazed windows it may not be possible to get the new units made

NEW HOME PROPERTY STANDARDS

and fitted before you move in but we will make sure the window is secure and the work will be done as soon as possible.

Cleaning

- There will be no rubbish inside or outside the property including in sheds, cupboards, the garden and any loft space
- We will sweep, mop and dry all tiled, concrete and hard floors to remove dirt and scuff marks
- We will wash the inside and outside of kitchen cupboards and drawers and wash sinks, taps, worktops, wall tiles, grouting and sealant
- All cobwebs will be removed
- There will be no graffiti
- We will remove blu-tak, sellotape, drawing pins etc.
- We will wash all the fixtures and fittings in the bathroom
- All woodwork will be washed down and dried
- Any plastic doors will be washed
- Any carpets that are left will be hoovered.

Adaptations

At some time in the past your new home may have been adapted so the tenant was able to continue using the property independently. We generally leave these adaptations behind because although you may not use them, a future tenant might.

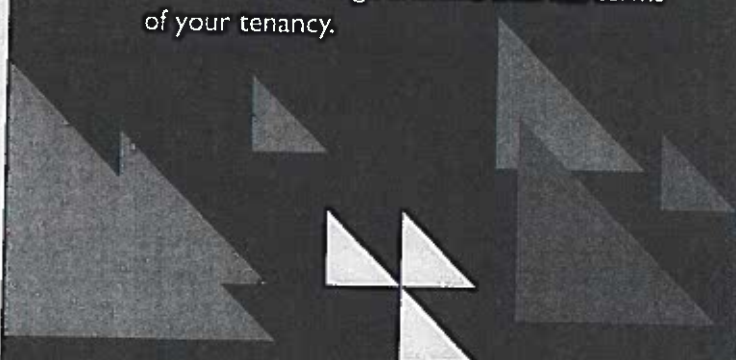
A lot of our properties contain asbestos, which was widely used in the building trade. A check of your property has been carried out to ensure any asbestos that it does contain is in good condition and poses no hazard to you or your family.

When you move in we will provide you with details of the areas in your new home that contain asbestos and we would urge you not to disturb them. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the Repairs Team on **01392 265031**.

Paths leading to the front, back and side doors will be free from trip hazards e.g. broken paving

Repairs to fencing are not considered to be part of the void work. As the tenant, it is your responsibility to repair any damaged fencing

Once you have accepted the property we will cut the grass to a manageable height and tidy the garden so that you can continue to manage it in line with the terms of your tenancy.



NEW HOME PROPERTY STANDARDS

ARE THERE 'SPOTTED' REPAIRS?

We will carry out as many repairs as possible before you move in but there may be some that we just cannot complete. This will be because we are waiting for materials (as in the case of double glazed units) or because they have been found during the later stages of the empty property work and carrying them out will delay you moving in. None of these works will interrupt the use of your new home.

All these repairs will have been 'Spotted' and a sticker applied to whatever needs doing. We will also leave a list of these outstanding repairs so that you know what will be done when you move in.

Please contact the Repairs Team on **01392 265031** to make an appointment for these works to be carried out. You should also contact the Repairs Team if you find any repairs that are not 'Spotted'.

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD

Aim

1. The over riding aim is to achieve a quick letting of an empty property. Therefore only essential work should be carried out – both to minimise the time that the contractor is in the property, and to ensure that the property is of a habitable standard.
2. The checklist is intended to help achieve a consistent standard of work across all empty properties, increase certainty in budgeting, and target more effective repairs on void properties. There is as a separate Service Standards leaflet setting out for tenants the conditions they can expect when they move in.
3. Although the overall standard is fixed the means of attaining the standard is variable to reflect the need to have as short a void period as possible. This is achieved by undertaking varying degrees of the necessary work while the property is empty and whilst it is occupied.
4. With enforcement of the four week notice period there is more opportunity to inspect prior to vacation, to identify the repairs that are the tenant's responsibility, and to carry out as much of the work required to meet this standard as possible. The essential work to be carried out while the property is void, and where feasible pre vacation, is to ensure
 - The property is habitable, and safe, secure, and reasonably clean
 - There is no risk of damage to the fabric of the property eg leaking pipes
 - Minimum disruption to the new tenant eg excessive wet trade work is carried out during the void
 - A quick letting can be achieved
 - Previous tenant alterations are removed where necessary
5. Non essential work can be done after the new tenant moves in eg minor repairs to skirtings, internal doors, etc. Also programmed investment planned for the near future may, without effecting the lettability of the property, allow some work to be omitted pending this investment and thereby shorten the void period.
6. Whether it is cost effective or appropriate to carry out repairs before or after occupation depends on a number of factors in each individual case, such as.
 - *The range and sequence of repairs and the trades involved*, eg a minor repair to a bathroom would normally be carried out when occupied; however if other more extensive work is generally required to the void it would be sensible to carry out the minor repairs at the same time if this doesn't delay the overall void period
 - *The extent of the work* and whether the repair is disruptive or non-disruptive eg if all the floor tiles in a room need replacing this is best

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD

carried out during the void period; however if there are just a small number of defective tiles, the work can be carried out when occupied.

7. The minimum lettable standard needs to be seen as a minimum, over and above which the Allocations Officer may determine additional works are needed bearing in mind the client group or new tenant identified for the property. For example, if a dwelling has been void for any period of time because demand is low, additional works over and above the minimum lettable standard may need to be agreed in order to allocate the property.

8. In setting the minimum lettable standard, account has been taken of the decorative condition and cleanliness of the property. In the majority of cases properties are in reasonable decorative condition or in a condition where the ingoing tenant could reasonably be expected to decorate (again account needs to be taken of the health of the new tenant based on information available to the Allocations Officer). Redecoration allowances are payable in line with the council's schedule of allowances which are reviewed every year. Properties in a very poor decorative condition may need to be decorated before allocation. The cost of redecoration and the need to contain funding for the repair service does not allow all properties to be redecorated as standard.

9. It is the outgoing tenant's responsibility to leave a property free of all contents, clean and tidy. In a number of cases this does not happen and we will need to clear and/or clean before a property can be relet. Therefore the standard includes the need to clear all contents (unless instructed otherwise) and to clean the property generally, and specifically the bathroom and kitchen fittings (if required).

10. Generally a recharge against the outgoing or former tenant should be raised to recover the cost of clearance, removal of tenants' alterations and for the making of good of damage beyond fair wear and tear. Tenants should be clearly advised of their responsibilities in order to avoid any misunderstanding. This includes when the tenant is evicted (see Procedure Note PN135 'Eviction – Removal of Tenant's Effects' issued November 2003). The following sets out the circumstances when we won't recharge or may waive a recharge following receipt of additional information

- The executor for a deceased tenant's estate cannot be identified. The executor is not always known straight away, but we will assume a recharge pending confirmation of the executor by the Rents and Finance Officer.
- A management transfer takes place and there is an acute vulnerability issue involved. The Housing Manager, or in his or her absence the Deputy Housing Manager, may make a recommendation to the Head of Repairs and/or the Voids team leader that a recharge should not be pursued.

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD

- Where the tenant is moving into a residential home. There may however be circumstances made known to us at a later date that require a review of the original decision to recharge.
 - The void arises under the 'tenants grant to move' (TGM). Procedure Note (PN116) 'Tenants Grant To Move' states *'with the exception of malicious damage or neglect, no action should be taken to try to recover costs of cleaning/clearance or repairs that would under normal circumstances have to be met by the tenant'*
11. The minimum lettable standard checklist must be read in conjunction with
- Procedure Note PN151 'Empty Property Management', issued January 2004
 - Procedure Note PN117 'Internal Decoration Compensation Scheme For New Lettings' issued October 2002, and
 - Repairs Standards Manual

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD: CHECKLIST

Element	Task
General	Treat rising damp
	Treat rot/timber decay
	Remove mould growth due to condensation
Gas installation	Inspect the gas supply pipework for signs of corrosion or other deterioration, and test
	Carry out safety check of every gas appliance
	If appliance has not been serviced and checked within ten months previous to the void date, disconnect, and affix warning notice. <i>Action: Refer to Gas Compliance Manager to arrange service and safety check by gas service contractor. Inform Allocations Officer of disconnection</i>
	Repair any defects that affect safety
	Seal all open pipe ends
	Disconnect and remove any gas fire or other appliance, or additions to the heating and hot water installation, left by the previous tenant that is found to be unsafe and/or may require uneconomic repair work, and seal pipe end
	If gas appliance left by previous tenant is safe, in reasonable condition, and if required can be repaired economically, retain. <i>Action: Notify Gas Compliance Manager to include on gas service contract</i>
	Disconnect and remove any cooker left by the previous tenant and fit bayonet fitting. Retain fitted hob and oven if safe on testing and in good condition. <i>Action: Notify the Allocations Officer so they can be excluded from the letting.</i>
	Leave cooker in sheltered accommodation if council appliance, service and test
	Extend cooker supply pipe to one metre above floor level as necessary and fit bayonet fitting
	<i>Action: If there is a gas fire or other appliance in any parlour that can be used as a bedroom, inform Allocations Officer that room can not be used as a bedroom, without removal or replacement of the appliance</i>
	Disconnect and remove any gas appliance from the bathroom.
	If there is no gas supply, carry out air tightness test of gas installation pipework, but affix a warning notice to each appliance. <i>Action: Inform Allocations Officer if there is no gas supply. When notified that the gas supply has been reconnected, carry out the safety checks including retesting the gas installation pipework</i>

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD: CHECKLIST

	Affix a label to the gas supply pipe adjacent to the meter stating the date of the inspection
	<i>Action: Provide copies of the safety check record to Allocations Officer no later than the time of return of the keys, and to Gas Compliance Manager for entry on record system and filing.</i> Without the safety check record the dwelling cannot be let
Solid fuel appliances and open fires	Take out of use, ensuring that there is alternative means of providing hot water and heating as necessary. <i>Action: Notify E&M Maintenance Manager to include in replacement programme. Inform Allocations Officer that central heating will be installed post let</i>
Electrical installation	Inspect and test the installation
	Repair any 'essential' defects that affect safety. Do not upgrade the installation to current requirements
	Check that accessories are securely fixed and refix as necessary
	Check that all cables and flex, including for television, telephone and bell, are safe and securely fixed. Reclip as necessary
	Replace missing or faulty MCBs, fuses and the like as necessary. Ensure that all circuits are labelled
	Damp wipe all electrical fittings and accessories including light switches, outlet plates and ceiling roses
	Remake loose connections as necessary
	Remove any luminaries fitted by the previous tenant that are unsafe, replacing with new lamp holder as necessary. Leave fittings in place if safe and in good condition. <i>Action: Notify Allocations Officer so that they can be excluded from the letting</i>
	If necessary to replace luminaire in bath/shower room, fit a low energy luminaire that complies with IP65
	Disconnect and remove any unauthorised extensions to circuits
	Disconnect and remove any cooker left by the previous tenant
	Leave cooker in sheltered accommodation if council appliance, inspect and test. Affix 'test' label to appliance.
	Encase the electrical meter if not situated in a cupboard and within reach of children
	Affix a label to the consumer control unit stating the date of the inspection
	<i>Action: Provide copies of the electrical test certificate no later than the time of return of the keys, and to E&M Maintenance</i>

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD: CHECKLIST

	<p><i>Manager for entry on record system and filing.</i></p> <p>Without the test certificate the dwelling cannot be let</p> <p><i>Action: Allocations Officer to issue two low energy lamps to new tenant</i></p>
Alarms	<p>Test carbon monoxide alarm where fitted</p> <p>Test smoke alarm where fitted, and replace battery if missing or alarm is not functioning</p> <p>If there is no smoke alarm, fit one in flats or bungalows, and two in houses and maisonettes</p> <p>If the property is connected to Careline, remove the phone and pendant, label with the address of the property and return to the Allocations Officer (general needs stock only)</p>
Roofs	<p>Repair any roof leaks, missing or slipped tiles, or other faults noted</p> <p>Repair any faults noted to chimneys and pots</p> <p>Repair any faults noted to gutters and rainwater pipes</p> <p>Remove television or other aerial if unsafe</p>
Roof space	<p><i>Action: Notify Principal Programmes Manager if roof insulation is 100mm or less for inclusion in upgrading programme</i></p>
Walls	<p>Unblock airbricks for sub floor ventilation as necessary</p> <p>Check that the dpc is not bridged, and clear as necessary</p> <p><i>Action: Notify Surveying Manager of any structural defects or other faults for more detailed inspection and/or inclusion in next cyclical programme</i></p>
Discharge pipework	<p>Ensure that waste pipes etc are free flowing, and repair any faults as necessary</p>
Windows	<p>Repair any faults to ensure that windows open and close easily, that ironmongery is operational and that window is secure</p> <p>Replace any cracked or broken glass, unless crack is minor</p> <p>Replace any failed double glazed units</p> <p>Ensure that window locks fitted are operational</p> <p>Provide keys to window locks where these are fitted</p> <p><i>Action: Notify Surveying Manager of any other faults for inclusion in next cyclical programme</i></p> <p><i>Action: Notify Principal Programmes Manager if glazing does not comply with Part N of the Building Regs for inclusion in upgrading programme</i></p>
Doors (external)	<p>Repairs any faults to ensure that doors open and close</p>

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD: CHECKLIST

and internal)	easily, that ironmongery and furniture is capable of easy operation, that door will secure, and that it is weatherproof
	Replace any cracked or broken glass
	Replace any failed double glazed units
	<i>Action: Notify Principal Programmes Manager if glazing to external doors and screens does not comply with Part N of the Building Regs for inclusion in upgrading programme</i>
	Remove any glazing to internal doors and screens that does not comply with Part N of the Building Regs, and replace with panel, safety glass or safety film
	Repair fire doors to ensure that they are returned to the closed position by door closer, and that they are fitted with the correct ironmongery, including on entrance doors, protection of the letter plate opening. Check that fire and smoke seals are effective
	Replace front door locks/cylinders where less than two sets of keys are provided, or if otherwise instructed by the Allocations Officer.
	Obtain replacement cylinders for sheltered flats from the Scheme Manager (master key suites)
	Check door entry systems, where installed, for obvious faults.
	<i>Action: If door entry system is PAC, arrange to delete fobs from system and/or reprogramme for incoming tenant</i>
<i>Action: Notify Surveying Manager of any other faults to external doors for inclusion in next cyclical programme</i>	
Hot and cold water services	Inspect the installation, including all cisterns, tanks, cylinders and water heaters for leaks and repair as necessary
	Check each draw off tap, shower fitting, float operated valve and stop or control valve for correct operation, and adjust, repair or renew as necessary. Affix label to cold water main stopvalve stating the date of the inspection. Affix label to inside face of sink unit door (or other similar location) identifying the location of the stopvalve
	Where the hot water cylinder is not pre-lagged fit an insulation jacket (minimum 80mm thickness) if not already fitted
	Insulate vulnerable pipework and cisterns to minimise risk of freezing as necessary
	Remove any shower or other fitting provided by the previous tenant if unsafe or that may require uneconomic maintenance. Leave fittings in place if safe and in good condition.
Heating system	Run system to maximum operating temperature, check for leaks and repair as necessary

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD: CHECKLIST

	<p>When boiler is operating check and adjust operation of all equipment, controls and safety devices. Balance system to achieve satisfactory temperature at each heat emitter and in the hot water system</p> <p>During the winter months from 01Nov to 01May upon completion of works in the property completely drain down the hot and cold water services and the heating system. Fix a notice in a prominent position near the source of heat for hot water and heating. <i>Action: Inform the Allocations Officer</i></p>
Sanitary appliances	<p>Check for leaks and that wastes and fittings run free and are complete, and adjust, repair or renew as necessary</p> <p>Overhaul or rewasher taps as necessary</p> <p>Replace missing plugs, chains and the like</p> <p>Secure toilet seat as necessary, replace if cracked or broken</p> <p>Renew sealant joint around sanitary appliances as necessary</p> <p>Replace cracked or badly stained (and not cleanable) sanitary appliances as necessary, including repolishing or enamelling baths with major chips, stains or other defects</p>
Walls and ceilings	<p>Replace insecure or unsound wall tiling</p> <p>Re-grout wall tiling as necessary</p> <p>Repair any major cracks or loose plaster, and leave suitable for redecoration</p> <p>Remove any polystyrene tiles and make good plaster work as necessary</p> <p>Remove fixtures left by previous tenant and make good</p>
Floors	<p>Repair faults to floor boarding as necessary and leave in a condition to lay carpet over</p> <p>Repair floor covering as necessary to kitchen, bathroom and wc, ensuring that hygienic and that there are no trip hazards</p>
Stairs	<p>Resecure handrail and balusters as necessary</p> <p>Repair stair treads and risers as necessary</p> <p>Replace balustrade if removed by previous tenant</p>
Internal joinery and trim	<p>Repair or replace as necessary</p>
Kitchens	<p>Repair as necessary to ensure that all units are in a hygienic condition, secure, that doors and drawers open and latch securely, that worktops are sound, lipped, and cleanable</p> <p>Renew sealant joint at wall abutment above worktops and around sink as necessary</p>

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD: CHECKLIST

	Where practicable provide additional units as necessary to meet the minimum fitness level set out in the Repairs Standards Manual. In the interests of safety aim to provide an unbroken sequence of worktop – cooker – worktop – sink – worktop
	Remove hob/oven housings if appliances have been removed and/or are not being retained, and replace with worktops and units to meet minimum provision above
	Fit washing machine valves and waste assembly where none present, and single socket outlet for connecting appliance as necessary
Balconies	Clear balcony of discarded or stored materials, personal effects, furnishings etc left by the previous tenant
	Ensure guarding is adequate and safe <i>Action: Notify Principal Programmes Manager if guarding to balcony does not comply with the Building Regs for inclusion in upgrading programme</i>
	Repair any faults noted to waterproof covering
Outbuildings	Repair roof and walls etc of brick sheds and outbuildings to ensure that weatherproof
	Repair locks as necessary to ensure functional and can be secured
	Repair door as necessary
	Clear contents
Garden	Clear garden
	Cut back overgrown weeds, grass and hedges, only on instruction of Allocations Officer.
	Do not provide dustbin
Paths and driveways	Repair path to entrance door as necessary to ensure reasonably even, sound, and free from tripping hazards
	Repair other paths or driveways as necessary to ensure that they are safe and free from hazards
	Remove any features such as ponds that may be a hazard
	Check that manhole covers, gully surrounds and the like are sound, and repair or replace as necessary
	Clear blocked drains and gulleys as necessary
Boundaries and gates	Repair or remove as necessary to remove any faults that may effect safety
Adaptations	Where instructed by the Allocations Officer either label items such as hoists 'do not remove', or otherwise remove and return to the Allocations Officer

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD: CHECKLIST

	<p>Check with the Allocations Officer whether grab rails and the like are to remain and if so ensure that they are securely fixed</p> <p>Arrange for any stair lift to be disconnected from the electrical supply, and if advised by the Allocations Officer, remove and place in storage</p>
Previous tenant's alterations	Remove all alterations made by the previous tenant that are non standard, unsafe or that will create a future maintenance liability
Clearance and cleanliness	<p>Remove litter, debris, sweep clean of excessive dust and dirt, wash off dirt and grime, wash and polish windows and other glazing</p> <p>Clean worktops and cupboards</p> <p>Clean any cooker or fridge provided by the council</p> <p>Clean sanitary appliances to leave free from major staining, including descaling as necessary to remove limescale and other staining</p> <p>Remove discarded or stored materials, personal effects, furnishings etc left by the previous tenant, including from roof space, gardens and outbuildings</p> <p>Leave any carpets and curtains that are in good condition. <i>Action: Notify Allocations Officer to ascertain whether incoming tenants wishes to retain.</i> Remove if not required or if no tenant yet identified.</p> <p>Disinfest as necessary to leave property free from visible infestations of fleas, cockroaches, vermin, wasps, etc</p>
Decorations	<p>Remove or obscure all graffiti of a sexual or racial nature, and other graffiti if extensive</p> <p>Remove mould growth due to condensation</p> <p>Remove polystyrene tiles and make good plasterwork</p> <p>Remove textured coating to walls only if substantially damaged</p> <p>Leave existing decorations intact and clean, and in reasonable decorative order, including sealing any stained areas, or capable of being readily redecorated by the incoming tenant</p> <p>If redecoration is required an allowance will be granted, unless the incoming tenant is incapable of carrying out decoration work through physical or medical circumstances and there is no one else to do the work (eg sheltered flats or properties specifically designated for the elderly or disabled)</p> <p>In all other circumstances, redecorate only where absolutely essential and where the Allocations Officer instructs</p>

MINIMUM LETTABLE STANDARD: CHECKLIST

New tenants pack	Provide the following information to the Allocations Officer to pass to the new tenant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the repairs that will be done post let and their target completion date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the locks have been changed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflet on how to prevent and combat condensation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the gas safety check record
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the electrical test certificate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of any appliance and equipment manuals and instruction leaflets where available
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance of gas safety (HSE leaflet)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on energy saving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on fire safety in the home 	

THE VOID LETTABLE STANDARD

North West Leicestershire District Council is responsible for allocating empty Council owned homes. The Lettable standard has been agreed in consultation with the tenants of North West Leicestershire District Council.

The purpose of this document is to ensure that a consistent minimum lettable standard is achieved and that all our properties are offered in a reasonable state of repair subject to the appropriate funding being available. In addition this standard is designed to ensure that no unnecessary expenditure is incurred.

This guide is directed toward all officers who may carry out void inspections and sets out the standard to which voids should be inspected and repaired.

The purpose of the standard is to allow officers to provide properties for incoming tenants, which are suitable and also have an understanding for both the costs of works required and the timescales that the repairs may take.

The guide allows flexibility in how it is achieved and therefore does not require that all works have to be completed before the new tenant moves in. The new tenant will be advised of any outstanding work during viewing and/or during sign-up.

The guide does not cover voids where major repairs are required to be undertaken. Major repairs are best defined as those, which, if the property were occupied, would require the Tenant to be decanted

These works include;

- Structural works to include floors, walls and roofs.
- Site works to ensure the safety and security of the Tenant such as asbestos removal.
- Works to basic amenities such as heating, gas and electricity, where these are lacking.
- Consequential works as a result of major repairs.
- Works as a result of fire and flood.

Vandalism

Any acts of vandalism are to be reported to the Police, whilst aware of difficulties in pursuing the perpetrators of these acts notifying the Police will allow accurate monitoring of these types of offences.

Gas and electric checks

Gas:

Due to difficulties in obtaining utility supplies the following procedure is followed for any works to gas heating systems:

Gas in voids procedure

- The inspecting Officer identifies the void that has gas connected and location of the meter.
- Void Officer informs Gas Officer and Gas Service Contractor and Allocations Officer via email, this will include whether standard meters or quantum/card meters.
- Gas Contractor attends property and discs meter, access to internal meter via key safe fitted by Void Contractor.
- Gas Service Contractor informs Void/Gas and Allocations officer via email and follows up with CP1 that meter is capped off with a disc.

All non-gas work is carried out in the property and on completion keys are passed to Housing Management. Where credit meters are fitted Housing Management pre-lets the property and informs incoming tenant of the need to obtain credit for meters before the Gas Contractor is able to service the appliances.

Where gas and electric supplies are live, the following applies: -

When the incoming tenant signs for the tenancy of the property, the Housing Management Officer informs the Gas Officer of the tenancy start date (where possible at least 48hrs notice of intended tenancy commencement date) During the sign-up, the incoming tenant is advised that they must have credit on the Gas and Electrical meters and have registered for the provision of the utility to allow for appliance commissioning.

Gas Officer arranges for Gas Contractor to visit the property and service/commission appliances and issue a CP12 Certificate, a copy of this is to be left with the new customer and a copy is to be passed onto the Gas Officer for updating records and filing (the Gas Service Contractor is to attend within 2 working days of tenancy commencement). A full heat test of the heating and hot water system is then carried out and is left fully operational. The incoming tenant is then instructed of its use and, where possible, identification of potentially live outlet points.

Where gas/electric supplies are not live, the Service Contractor will visit within 2 working days of the supplies being turned on when informed to do so.

Properties fitted with back boilers will receive a visual inspection whilst void and a decision to be made at this point if it is deemed the boiler may fail a full service check, with regard boiler replacement. This is because of the high levels of dust that can build up over a short period of time, and the greater likelihood of flue failure with this type of boiler.

Electricity:

A full periodic inspection of the property is to be ordered and carried out, all necessary forms completed and works are carried out to the property to bring electrical components in line with latest regulations, if after the inspection it becomes apparent the electrical installation is in a poor condition a decision is made by the Inspecting Officer along with the Electrical surveyor as to whether it may be more economical to have the property fully rewired. All Certificates issued and received for Gas and Electrical work, shall be passed to the relevant Surveyor and filed for future reference.

Services:

During cold periods ensure water service is switched off and systems are drained down; make note of meter types for gas and electricity supplies.

Solid fuel appliances:

A general check is to be carried out to include doors, seals and bars. The flue should also be checked for blockages and swept as appropriate.

The following are general guidelines for the inspection

The lettable standard is based around the criteria of

Cleanliness
A reasonable state of repair
Security
Health and Safety

The inspecting officer is to look at the exterior and interior of the property and carry out repairs as needed to bring the property up to a satisfactory standard of repair, certain works may be identified that can be carried out once the property is tenanted (follow on work), and these items are to be noted on the inspection form and where possible orders raised so incoming tenant can be made aware of these works and a likely completion date given, when signing for the tenancy

During the course of the inspection certain items may be identified that require attention but are soon likely to be part of a larger improvement works contract (Decent Homes Work), the inspecting officer is to be aware of any upcoming works of this nature and where possible arrange for their completion whilst the property is void. Wherever possible, the incoming tenant should be consulted before these work are carried out for any possible layout, colour choices etc. If the works cannot be arranged during the Void period, subject to basic Health and Hygiene, the Officer is to make a judgement on replacing/repairing items

Void standard.

and to note on inspection form when the incoming tenant can expect this work to be carried out.

The removal of existing unwanted goods is always a rechargeable repair to the outgoing Tenant. It is at the discretion of the inspecting officer to decide whether or not to leave floor coverings in the property, depending upon their condition.

The Interior

Front and rear doors to the property (excluding communal areas) are to have their locks changed. Outbuildings not attached to the property will not have locks changed. Locks are to be recycled for use on other properties.

All internal doors and door furniture should operate smoothly and latches engage properly. Small holes are unlikely to have damaged the integrity of the door and can be filled; bigger holes will necessitate door replacement.

Windows should open and close properly, broken glazing is to be replaced. Replacement of misted double glazed units will not be undertaken at void stage but the details will be noted with the works added to the deferred work list for completion at a later date, subject to appropriate funding being available.

Walls and ceilings- the property is to be free from all signs of rising damp, ensure surfaces are in fair condition for the age of the property, with no large patches missing/damaged.

Floors- All floor boards to be fixed and level any broken boards to be replaced, concrete floors to be clean and dust free, vinyl tiling to floors to be patched where possible but rooms with large areas of broken tiles to have tiles removed and floor sealed in order that a floor covering may be applied by the incoming Tenant.

Stairs /Landings- Treads and Risers to be in sound condition, free from splits and rot, Banisters and Handrails are to be securely fixed and free from damage.

Polystyrene ceiling tiles will be removed from any room.

Smoke detectors- NWLDC fits 1 smoke detector in a flat, and 2 in a house.

Any visible infestations, with the exception of ants, will have treatment commenced during the period that the property is void.

The Kitchen

A minimum of 1 x double kitchen sink unit + 1 x double base unit + 1 x single wall unit (or combination of) will be provided, unless the property has a pantry which will reduce the minimum number of units to 1 x double KSU + 1 x double base unit (or combination of)

Kitchen units should have doors that open and close and be of a serviceable condition

Stainless steel sink-tops will only be replaced if there is significant damage.

Kitchen taps should be serviceable and be free from leaks. Where taps are renewed in supported properties, these will be replaced with lever type taps.

A sink plug and chain should also be in place.

There should be minimum of 300mm of worktop space either side of the cooker area.

There should be a minimum of two (2) rows of tiled splash back fitted to worktops.

Provision is to be made for a utility supply of either gas or electricity within the kitchen; this will depend upon the amount of space in the kitchen.

Internal/external doors should open and close easily (subject to weather conditions)

Washing Machines

Washing machine connections will not be provided unless a new sink unit is installed and space allows. The sink unit will then be fitted with washing machine taps and waste connection.

Existing connections previously fitted are to be left if serviceable or removed if beyond economic repair.

Certain kitchens will currently not allow provision for a washing machine due to their size/layout

No washing machine connection will be supplied if there is a laundry room facility provided

The Bathroom

NWLDC does not provide new toilet seats for each new Tenant. This will only be replaced if it is damaged.

The WC pan should be clean and free from cracks or chips either in the pan or around the rim. The WC cistern should flush and the WC pan be adequately secured to the floor and be level.

Bath and basin taps should be serviceable, with acceptable pressure and be free from leaks. Where taps are renewed in supported properties, these will be replaced with lever type taps.

The bath and basin should have a plug and chain installed and should be free from cracks or large chips. Small enamel chips in baths can be repaired at the discretion of the voids Supervisor.

There should be at least two (2) rows of tiled splash back to the bath and basin. Mastic seals should be in good condition

If a shower is fitted, the shower components including riser, hose, head and screen should be in good condition. Any tiling that is installed should be adequate for shower use.

Internal decoration

Existing decoration should be intact and clean although it may not be to the incoming tenants taste. All wallpaper should be attached to the wall, peeling paper will be removed. Decorating vouchers may be made available to the incoming tenants; however, this allowance is not an automatic right and should not apply in every case or for every part of the home. The allowance is awarded on a room by room basis depending on the condition of the decoration, up to the maximum allowance stated in the Decorating Allowance Procedure. In extreme circumstances the Inspecting Officer will arrange for some or all of the property to be redecorated during the void period.

The Allocations Officer will discuss and agree the allowance for each property with the incoming Tenant during the accompanied viewing.

Cleaning

On completion of all works the property is to be cleaned and made ready for incoming tenant as per the following cleaning schedule;

- Skirting boards to be wiped and dusted
- Doors and frames to be wiped and dusted
- Window frames and sills to be wiped and dusted

Void standard.

- Window glass to be cleaned inside and out
- Plug/light sockets and light fittings to be wiped and dusted
- Air vents to be wiped and dusted.
- All cobwebs to be removed
- Fireplaces to be wiped and dusted.
- All floors to be swept and vinyl flooring mopped.
- All glazed tiling surfaces to be wiped down.
- All kitchen units to be wiped down.
- All sanitary units to be wiped down (i.e. bath, sink, shower, toilet).

The Exterior

The roof should be watertight with no missing ridge tiles, missing flashing, slipped or missing roof tiles, damaged gutters, missing stop ends and cracked down pipes. Due to the external nature of the types of work mentioned, repairs can be recorded and work arranged (this may be once the property is occupied).

Any council owned gates and fences should be in a sound condition.

Gardens should be cleared of all rubbish and unwanted possessions, but under normal circumstances no landscaping will be carried out, except for areas required for access such as pathways and around external doors. The property is accepted as seen and any remedial works to the garden are the responsibility of the Tenant, unless the garden is left in an exceptionally poor state.

The void officer will decide whether or not any garden tidy is to take place based on the condition of the garden and the ability of the incoming Tenant to undertake the required works themselves. If the incoming Tenant is not known by the end of the void period, this decision is to be made by the Officer completing the accompanied viewing.

Before handing the keys to Housing Management, the Inspecting Officer is to view the property to ensure all works have been completed to a satisfactory standard and that details of any further work required are noted and raised accordingly.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important to ensure that the standard is consistently adhered to and that it is, and remains, acceptable for the majority of our tenants. Therefore a survey form will be issued to all new tenants in order to obtain feedback on the standard of repair and cleanliness of the property when it is let.

In addition to this, a percentage of the properties will be inspected by our tenant void inspectors as a way of further monitoring the performance.

The void lettable standard will be reviewed on a regular basis and the feedback from the surveys and the tenant void inspectors will be considered as part of the review process.

NWLDC Void Standard version 6 amended November 2010.

VOID PROPERTIES - POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 It is our policy to:

- re-let vacant (void) properties as quickly as possible,
- minimise our costs in bringing void properties up to an acceptable letting standard, and
- minimise the loss of rental income as a result of properties being empty,

subject to:

- properties being in an acceptable condition for occupation, and
- all offers of tenancy complying with our [Allocations Policy](#).

1.2 Voids may arise for the following reasons:

- **Formal termination** - where a tenant gives notice in writing of their intention to end their tenancy of the property;
- **Abandonment** - where a tenant leaves the property without any notice and the Association has to follow a prescribed process to re-possess the property;
- **Eviction** – where a property is legally re-possessed and the tenant removed, following the granting of a Decree by the Sheriff Court;
- **Death** – where the tenant dies and there is no-one to succeed to the tenancy as currently defined in law;
- **Transfer** – where the tenant moves to another ARK property.

The action that we will take in each of these situations is covered by the procedures that support this policy (see Appendix 1 for current list of supporting procedures).

1.3 As part of our efforts to minimise voids times and costs we will remind tenants, both at the start of their tenancy as well as during the settling-in visit and regularly thereafter, e.g. through the Tenant's Handbook and tenant newsletters, that they should give 28 days written notice of their intention to end their tenancy.

1.4 This policy and the supporting procedures comply with Performance Standard AS1.5 which states:

AS1.5 Void management - *We monitor demand for our houses and maximise the use of available housing, keeping empty properties and spaces in our shared accommodation to a minimum. We make sure our properties are of an appropriate lettable standard.*

2.0 VOIDS TARGETS

2.1 As part of the annual setting of budgets and performance targets, the Board of Management will approve targets for:

- a) the total number of void days between a property becoming vacant and it being re-occupied:
 - i) where the property is being let to a mainstream tenant with no involvement of either Community Networks staff or other support providers;
 - ii) where the property is being let to a tenant requiring support provided by Community Networks staff or by other support providers, and a support package requires to be agreed with a funding authority;
- b) the maximum average time for repairing properties between lets for (i) routine repairs and (ii) complex repairs;
- c) the maximum average no. of days to identify a new tenant and have an offer accepted;
- d) the maximum amount of rental income lost as a result of void properties – expressed as a percentage of the estimated annual total rental income – agreed as part of the annual budget-setting process.

The current targets are listed in Appendix 2 to this policy.

2.2 Where there are exceptional circumstances affecting the future use of a property or the length of time it will take to bring the property back to a lettable standard, e.g. because of serious fire or flood damage, or a delay in finalising a funding package for a tenant requiring support, the Finance Director will have delegated authority to approve the removal of the rent charge from that property, in accordance with current procedures.

3.0 LETTING STANDARDS

Standards

3.1 We will aim to ensure that all vacant properties are brought up to our current Lettings Standards (Appendix 3) before they are re-let. Where certain items covered by the standards are due to be improved within a reasonable time as part of current planned maintenance programmes the new tenant will be given the appropriate information.

Decoration

3.2 Internal decoration is normally the tenant's responsibility. However where the internal condition of a void property would adversely affect the time taken to re-let it, we will consider either carrying out some decoration or providing the incoming tenant with a decoration allowance, in accordance with current procedures.

4.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The procedures supporting this policy will include measures to mitigate the risks relating to the management of void properties, as listed in the current Risk Map.
- 4.2 We will ensure that we re-let properties in a safe and habitable condition, complying with all current statutory legislation relating to our activities as a landlord and in particular with the regulations governing the completion of safety checks on gas and electrical installations and services.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.1 We will ensure that in implementing this policy and the supporting procedures we comply with our [Equalities & Diversity Policy](#).

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

- 6.1 The Housing Services Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy and the procedures that support it are implemented when required.
- 6.2 The Housing Services Manager will report on our performance against current voids targets as part of the regular reporting arrangements to each meeting of the Housing Sub-Committee.
- 6.3 The Housing Services Manager will ensure that the Housing & Property Services Sub-Committee reviews the voids targets annually, and this policy at least every three years.

Review approved by the SMT in:	November 2011
Approved by the Housing & Property Services Sub-Committee in:	November 2011
Review of annual targets due by:	November 2012
Review of policy due by:	November 2014
Complies with:	Performance Standard AS1.5

APPENDIX 1

PROCEDURES CURRENTLY SUPPORTING THE VOID PROPERTIES POLICY

[Absconds \(Abandonment\)](#)

[Action on death of a tenant](#)

Decoration allowances

[Removing properties from rent charge](#)

Transfers

Void properties

APPENDIX 2

VOIDS POLICY - PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Item	Target
1. Overall maximum length of a void period	
a) property let to a mainstream tenant – routine repairs	28 days
b) property let to a mainstream tenant – complex repairs	42 days
c) property let to a tenant requiring support – routine repairs	42 days
d) property let to a tenant requiring support – complex repairs	56 days
2. Average no. of days for repairing void properties - routine repairs	14 days
- complex repairs	28 days
3. Maximum average no. of days to identify a new tenant and have an offer accepted	
a) where the property is let to a mainstream tenant with no support	14 days
b) where a property is let to a tenant requiring support	28 days
 [Note: 'Days' means calendar days, not working days.]	
4. Maximum amount of rent loss due to voids	1.1% of rent



LETTING STANDARDS

This document sets out the standards we aim to achieve in every void property before it is occupied by a new tenant. The incoming tenant will be given a checklist based on these standards to confirm the checks and work that have been carried out during the voids period. This is the standard in which we will expect the property to be returned to us when the tenant ends their tenancy (subject to normal 'wear and tear').

GENERAL ITEMS

Standard 1: Cleanliness & tidiness

- The property, including any loft, cellar, garden area, external shed or other outbuilding, is clear of all items, rubbish etc. left by the former tenant.
- Kitchen and bathroom surfaces have been washed down.
- The property is in an acceptably clean and 'move in' standard.

Standard 2: Repairs

- All repairs are completed before the new tenant moves in, with the exception of repairs delayed by circumstances outwith our control and agreement on those repairs that may be completed after the new tenancy starts, and there are no health and safety issues.

Standard 3: Alterations & improvements

- Any alterations and/or improvements carried out by the former tenant have either been approved by us and are to be left, or, if they have not been approved by us and are not up to our standard, have been removed and the property re-instated to an acceptable standard (costs charged to former tenant).

Standard 4: Medical adaptations

- All major medical adaptations, i.e. stair lifts, wet floor/level access showers, access ramps, etc. have been checked and are operating to the required standard.
- If no new tenant requiring the current adaptations can be found, a decision has been made whether or not to remove one or more of the adaptations.

INTERNAL ITEMS

Standard 5: Electrical items

- All electrical fittings, services including the smoke and CO detectors, and any appliances, e.g. showers or cookers where provided, have been checked and a copy of the Periodical Inspection Report (PIR) for an Electrical Installation Certificate provided to the new tenant.

[Note: Where the lack of a supply prevents the inspection being carried out before the new tenant moves in, this inspection is to be completed within 1 working day of the supply being restored.]

- Switches or sockets that are badly marked, covered by paint or affected by smoke have been replaced (costs charged to the former tenant).

Standard 6: Gas services

- Gas heating services and any gas appliances or services, including the CO detector, have had a gas safety check carried out, with a copy of the Landlord's Gas Safety certificate provided to the new tenant.

[Note: Where the lack of a supply prevents the inspection being carried out before the new tenant moves in, this inspection is to be completed within 1 working day of the supply being restored.]

Standard 7: Water services

- The main stopcock is working and clearly labelled, and any other valves are working.
- All taps are operating correctly and not dripping.
- Immersion heaters, where fitted, are working and the switch is clearly labelled.
- Cold water tanks have a fitted lid.
- Drainage services are working correctly.

Standard 8: Ventilation

- Mechanical extract fans, where fitted, are clean and working correctly.

Standard 9: Doors

- All doors are intact, securely hung and operating properly.
 - Bathroom and/or WC doors have a locking device openable from the outside
- [Note:** To be achieved on a phased basis as part of a door upgrading programme.]

Standard 10: Stairs

- Stair treads, risers, banisters and handrails are safe, sound and secure.
- No sign of any active woodworm or rot.

Standard 11: Floors

- Floors are secure and free from any tripping hazard, with any loose or missing floorboards re-secured or replaced.
- No sign of any active woodworm or rot.
- Upper floor flats only: any laminate flooring has been removed (either by former tenant or costs charged to them).
- Non-slip flooring in bathrooms or kitchens (where provided) is in good condition with no gaps or cracks.

Standard 12: Woodwork, walls and ceilings

- All door or window frames, architraves, sills, skirting etc. are in place, in sound condition (undamaged), and with no sign of rot or infestation.
- All woodwork is either painted or varnished (i.e. no bare woodwork).
- All plasterwork is free from major defect and is suitable for decoration after reasonable preparation by the new tenant, i.e. no loose plaster or major cracks.

[Note: Where the existing decoration is very grubby and/or of poor quality, consideration may be given to offering a decoration allowance to the new tenant or ARK will arrange redecoration prior to relet.]

Standard 13: Bedroom wardrobes & cupboards

- Any fitted wardrobes and cupboards have at least one level shelf.
- A clothes rail is fitted, where appropriate.

Standard 14: Kitchens

- Kitchen units have been checked and all doors and drawers are operating properly.
- Worktops have been checked and are adequately sealed and not badly marked/damaged.
- Any units or worktops considered to be badly damaged and beyond economic repair have been replaced (where appropriate – costs charged to former tenant).
- Any wall cupboards are securely fixed.
- Kick plates and trims are in place.
- Where cookers and/or ovens are supplied by ARK, they have been cleaned and checked that they are operating correctly.

Standard 15: Bathrooms/Shower rooms

- All sanitary ware, baths and basins have been checked and are clean, free from rust, securely fixed, with plugs and free from major chips or cracks.
- Where one bathroom suite item is beyond economic repair, the whole suite has been replaced.
- Any shower provided is working properly and has a screen or shower curtain rail.
- All wall tiling and joints to baths and shower trays are sound and fully sealed.
- All grab rails (where fitted), toilet roll holders, cabinets and other wall-mounted items are securely installed.

EXTERNAL ITEMS

Standard 16: Roofs, gutters and downpipes (visual inspection from ground level)

- There are no missing or slipped tiles or slates.
- Flashing is in position and secure.
- Gutters and downpipes are clear of rubbish and are sound and secure.

Standard 17: Brickwork, external walls

- External walls are sound, so as to prevent the likelihood of water penetration.
- No major visible defects.

Standard 18: Front and back doors

- External doors are securely hung, are wind and watertight and opening/closing freely.
- There is a functioning letterbox on all front doors.
- Any security items provided, e.g. spy holes or chains, are operating correctly.

Standard 19: Windows

- All windows are fully operational and safe to use, and have restrictors fitted.
- Window frames are sound and serviceable until due for redecoration under the cyclical painting programme.
- Where locks are fitted, window keys are available (any lock change due to missing keys will be charged to the former tenant).

Standard 20: Footpaths, ramps, external steps

- All footpaths, ramps and external steps to the front and rear entrances are sound, reasonably smooth and free from tripping hazards.
- Any handrails fitted to external steps are securely fixed and reasonably smooth.

Standard 21: Garden areas, gates & fencing

- Garden areas are clear of rubbish and any shed left in poor condition is removed (costs charged to former tenant).
- During the growing season, if required particularly as a result of a delay in re-letting the property, the grass is cut as a 'one off' at the start of the tenancy.
- Boundary fencing and gates provided by us are in reasonably sound condition and free from defects that might cause injury (subject to agreement with adjacent owners, where responsibility for boundary fencing is shared).
- Fencing installed by the former tenant that is in poor condition is removed and the boundary reinstated to the original standard (costs charged to former tenant).

Standard 22: Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

- A current EPC is fixed in a secure location before the property is re-let and the tenancy agreement is signed. [An EPC gives information about a property's theoretical energy performance and carbon emissions. It remains valid for ten years and can be used for all new tenants in that period. The tenant will be advised to contact the Energy Saving Trust (Tel: 0800 512 012) to obtain more information about energy efficiency measures.]

Stevenage Homes standard for letting empty homes (the Lettable Standard)



STEVENAGE
HOMES



This leaflet tells you what work will have been done in your new home before you move in. We will give you this leaflet when you view your new home. If you don't think your home meets this standard, please phone the Repairs Team on 01438 242666 when you move in.

Throughout the lettings process we will:

- treat you with respect, be polite and give you support and advice where we can;
- show you around the property at the earliest opportunity;
- check the property meets our service standard for empty homes;
- give you details of our service standard for empty homes when you view a property and tell you what work we will do to the home and when it will be finished;
- give you details of who to contact if you have any questions during the first four weeks of your tenancy;
- send you a questionnaire to ask you about your experience of the lettings process; and
- give you useful information about your new home.

Supported by FOSTA (the Federation of Stevenage Tenants Associations) to improve the standard for letting empty homes





If you have any questions about the lettings process, please phone our Lettings Team on **01438 242666** or e-mail us at lettings@stevenagehomes.org.uk.










Stevenage Homes - service standard for empty homes

Before you move in




Location Types of work & comments	Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
<p>Staircases and handrails</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staircase will be safe and securely fixed. There will be a handrail for the length of the staircase 		
<p>Windows and doors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows and doors will be secure and will open and close properly • We will replace cracked or broken glass • We will change locks to the front and back door before you move into your new home 		

Location Types of work & comments	Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
<p>Kitchen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sink will be clean, taps will be in a good condition and will not leak or drip. We will provide a plug and chain • All units will be secure, the edging will be complete and doors and drawers will work properly • There will be cold and hot water • The number of storage cupboards will depend on the size of kitchen, but there will be a minimum storage space of 86 cubic metres (wall, floor or base units, cupboards or larders) • There will be at least one row of tiles above the sink • There will be a space for a cooker with either an electricity or gas supply and with one electric cooker switch • There will be two double electrical sockets (if this is possible without needing to rewire the property) • We will provide a space for either a fridge freezer, washing machine or both, depending on the size of the kitchen 		
<p>Bathroom and toilet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each property will have a washbasin, a toilet and either a bath or shower. We will provide a plug and chain for the washbasin and bath or shower • All fittings and taps will be in a good condition and will not leak or drip • There will be two rows of tiles above the washbasin and bath (if there is a bath). If the property has a shower the shower area will be fully tiled • All toilets will work properly, have no cracks and will be securely fixed • There will be a secure seat, and the flush handle or chain will be working properly 		

Location Types of work & comments	Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
Floors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpets, laminated or wooden floors left by the previous tenant may be kept if in very good condition • We will replace damaged tiles and we will try to match them with the existing flooring • We will replace missing floorboards • Floorboards will be even and secure, with no nails sticking out and free from rot and woodworm • Solid floors will be free from major faults and have a good finish 		
Ceilings and walls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will remove torn wall paper but we will not replace it • Ceilings and walls will be safe and plasterwork will not be cracked. (We will fill cracks over 6mm) • We will remove any damaged plasterwork and repair any damage there is • If the ceiling has an Artex coating and it is in a good condition, we will leave it. If it is in a poor condition, we will remove it • We will remove polystyrene ceiling tiles from the kitchen, hall, stairs and landing. We will not remove tiles that are in good condition in other rooms • Walls will not have damp and mould 		

Location Types of work & comments	Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
<p>Gas (if the property has a gas supply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will have the gas supply and appliances tested in line with current gas safety regulations to make sure they are in safe and working order • We will give you a copy of the landlord's gas safety certificate at the sign-up • A disconnected gas supply may not have been checked before you have moved in, but will be capped. Once reconnected, the cap will be removed and a test will be carried out 		
<p>Heating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heating will be either gas or electric • Hot-water cylinders will have an insulation jacket or lagging that meets the current standard • We will provide energy performance certificates with all new properties we let. We will give you the certificate at the sign up • There will be a stop tap (stopcock) for water and an emergency control valve to turn off the gas supply 		
<p>Electricity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will have the electrical supply checked in line with the National Inspection Council for Electrical Instalation Contractors (NICEIC) inspection procedure • Sockets, switches and fittings will be safe to use • Each room (except the bathroom and toilet) will have at least one plug socket 		

Location Types of work & comments	Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
<p>Cleaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will sweep all paved areas including the drive and path • We will sweep and vacuum all hard floors to remove loose dust • We will sweep, mop and dry all tiled, concrete and hard floors to remove dirt and scuff marks • We will sweep and mop all storage cupboards • We will wipe clean all fixtures, fittings, window sills and ledges, radiators, pipes, door frames, door handles, picture rails, skirting boards and fire surrounds • We will remove cobwebs from walls, ceilings and cupboards • There will be no graffiti • We will remove Blu-tak, sellotape, drawing pins, chewing gum and labels • We will wash the inside of all windows • We will wash the inside and outside of kitchen cupboards, drawers, sink, taps, plugs, worktops, wall tiles, grouting and sealant • We will wash the shower, bath, washbasin, taps, toilet and pipes • There will be no rubbish in the loft • There will be no streaks or marks from cleaning, and surfaces will be left dry 		

Location Types of work & comments	Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
<p>Outside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will replace damaged paving slabs or concrete areas that lead to the front, side or back door and could cause someone to trip • Roofs, walls, gutters and downpipes will be safe • We will remove rubbish from the front and back gardens, bin stores, and any sheds • Gardens will be tidy and in a condition that meets the standard of the tenancy contract • We do not normally repair fences before we let the property. 		
<p>Adaptations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will not remove adaptations (except stairlifts) • We will leave in place any fixtures from previous tenants if they are in a working condition (for example, washing machine plumbing fittings) 		
<p>Phone wires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will pin these to the brickwork of the property 		
<p>Asbestos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the sign-up we will give you details of what checks have been made, what asbestos has been found (if any) where it is and how you should manage it safely 		

Location Types of work & comments	Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
<p>Decorations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your home does not meet the acceptable standard for decorating in your tenancy contract, we will give you decoration vouchers at the sign-up to help you pay for the work you will need to do • We will decorate sheltered properties before you move in • In exceptional circumstances we will decorate other properties, please ask at your viewing or sign-up if you need help with decorating your home. If we do decorate, we may do this after you have moved in 		

Work that may be carried out after you have moved in

Types of work & comments	Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairing and replacing window handles and latches • Replacing cracked covers over drains • Replacing slipped or broken slates • Repairing gutters and downpipes. 		

Settling-in visit

We will visit you within 28 days of you moving into your new home to check that you have moved in successfully. At that visit one of the things we will ask you to do is to sign this document, to say that your home met this standard when we let it to you.

I agree that my home met the service standard for empty homes when it was let to me.

Name:

Signature:

Address:

The following needs to be done to meet the service standard for empty homes

1

2

3

4

When this work is finished I will be happy that my home meets the service standard for empty homes.

Name:

Signature:

Address:

Translation facilities

This is information about your housing services. We can make this information available in different languages, on audio tape, in Braille or in large print if you ask us to. We also have interpreting facilities for people who do not speak English.

Phone 01438 242666 (or textphone 01438 242150) for more information.

BENGALI

এটি আপনার আবাসন পরিষেবাগুলি সংক্রান্ত তথ্যাবলী। আমরা এই তথ্যাবলীকে অনুরোধক্রমে, বিভিন্ন ভাষায়, অডিও, ব্রিইল ও দৃষ্টিহীনদের জন্য ব্রেইলে এবং বড় প্রিন্ট প্রদান করতে পারি। ইংরেজী ভাষাভাষী নন এরকম ব্যক্তিদের জন্য আমাদের সোভাষী সুবিধা রয়েছে। আরো তথ্যের জন্য 01438 242666 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা 01438 242150 টেক্সটফোন নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।

CHINESE

关于住房服务的信息。在需要时，我们可以以各种不同的语言、适用于聋人和盲人的声频与布莱叶盲文以及大字体格式提供这些信息。我们还可以为不会说英语的人士提供便利的口译服务。请致电 01438 242666 或拨打文本电话 01438 242150 来获取更多信息。

GUJARATI

આ આપની હાઉસિંગ સેવાઓ વિશેની માહિતી છે. અમે આ માહિતી વિવિધ ભાષાઓમાં, અધિર અને અંધ લોકો માટે ઓડિયો, બ્રેઇલ સ્વરૂપે અને જો વિનંતી કરવામાં આવે તો મોટા અક્ષરો સ્વરૂપે ઉપલબ્ધ કરાવી શકીએ છીએ. જે લોકો અંગ્રેજી બોલી શકતા નથી તેમના માટે અમે દુભાષિયાઓની સેવા પણ આપીએ છીએ. વધુ માહિતી માટે 01438 242666 પર ટેલિફોન અથવા 01438 242150 ટેક્સ્ટફોન પર સંપર્ક કરો.

HINDI

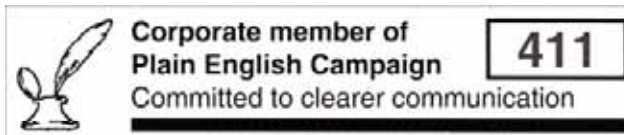
यह जानकारी आपकी आवास सेवाओं से संबंधित है। अनुरोध किये जाने पर हम यह जानकारी विभिन्न भाषाओं, ऑडियो, ब्रहरे और अंधे व्यक्तियों के लिए ब्रेल तथा बड़े प्रिंट में उपलब्ध करा सकते हैं। ऐसे लोग जो अंग्रेजी नहीं बोलते हैं, उनके लिए हमारे पास दुभाषिया की सुविधाएं भी उपलब्ध हैं। अधिक जानकारी के लिए 01438 242666 पर टेलीफोन करें अथवा 01438 242150 पर टेक्स्टफोन से सम्पर्क करें।

PUNJABI

ਇਹ ਤੁਹਾਡੀਆਂ ਬਸੋਰਾ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੈ। ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਅਸੀਂ ਇੰਡਿਓਨ ਡਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ, ਆਡੀਓ, ਬਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਅੰਨ੍ਹੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਬਰੇਲ ਲਿਖੀ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਛਪੇ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਕਰਵਾ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਅਸਿੱਧੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਵਾਸਤੇ, ਜੋ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਬੋਲਦੇ, ਸਾਡੇ ਕੋਲ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਆ ਸੁਵਿਧਾਵਾਂ ਵੀ ਹਨ। ਵਧੇਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵਾਸਤੇ 01438 242666 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਜਾਂ 01438 242150 'ਤੇ ਟੈਕਸਟ-ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

URDU

یہ معلومات آپ کی رہائشی خدمات (ہاؤسنگ سروسز) کے بارے میں ہیں۔ ہم درخواست کرنے پر یہ معلومات مختلف زبانوں، بھرے اور نابینا افراد کے لئے آڈیو، بریل اور چھاپے کے بڑے حروف میں فراہم کر سکتے ہیں۔ ہمارے یہاں ان افراد کے لئے ترجمانی کی خدمات بھی موجود ہے جو انگریزی نہیں بولتے۔ مزید معلومات کے لئے 01438 242666 یا ٹیکسٹ فون 01438 242150 پر رابطہ کریں۔



Stevenage Homes, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, Herts SG1 1HN

Telephone 01438 242666 Textphone 01438 242150

Produced by Stevenage Homes – November 2008 | To be reviewed November 2009

Stevenage Homes is a company owned by Stevenage Borough Council



appropriate the improvement will remain as part of the property. It is important to note that although Oxford City Homes will 'gift' the item to you, we will not carry out any repairs or servicing to it. The upkeep and maintenance will be your responsibility.

Decoration



Oxford City Homes will not carry out decoration to your new home. It is our policy that new tenants are issued with a Decorating Pack with a choice of colours. The only exceptions to this are:

- Where decoration is authorised though the Tenants Choice Scheme.
- Where tenants are exempt from repairs obligations
- For tenants living in sheltered accommodation.

In the previous two instances Oxford City Homes will only undertake re-decoration if:

- Wallpaper is peeling from the walls and re-sticking is impractical
- Distemper is present
- The room has areas affected by damp/mould
- The room has water or nicotine staining.

Oxford City Homes will not:

- Remove lining paper or woodchip paper.

Void Property Standards

This leaflet tells you what you can expect to be maintained or brought up to standard before you move into your new home.

This leaflet does not apply to temporary accommodation provided by Oxford City Council.

Other Related Leaflets

- *Choice for New Oxford City Council Tenants*



Contact Us

If you need a translation, a larger print version or a copy of this publication in another format please contact us:

T: freephone 0800 227676

E: contactcityhomes@oxford.gov.uk

www.oxford.gov.uk

Oxford City Homes
 Horspath Road, Cowley
 Oxford OX4 2RH

You can download a copy of this leaflet from www.oxford.gov.uk

অনুবাদের ব্যবস্থা আছে Bengali

提供有翻譯本 Cantonese

तरजमे उपलब्ध हैं Hindi

ਤਰਜਮੇ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ Punjabi

ترجمہ دستیاب ہے Urdu

Void Property Standards for Council Housing

কাউন্সিলের খালি বাড়িগুলি সম্পর্কিত মানদণ্ড Bengali

खाली घरों के स्तर Hindi

ਖਾਲੀ ਘਰਾਂ ਲਈ ਮਿਆਰ Punjabi

خالی مکانات سے متعلق معیار Urdu

空房標準 Cantonese



General Standards



All Oxford City Council properties are inspected to ensure the following overall standards.

We will:

- Test all the standard gas appliances fitted by Oxford City Homes and repair or replace as required. Carry out a gas pipe-work tightness test to ensure that the system is safe. A copy of the gas certificate (CP12) will be left for the incoming tenant.
- Test the electrical circuitry to comply with latest regulations. Ensure that all switches, light fittings and sockets are securely fixed and safe.
- Ensure that the water supply to the property is functioning correctly.
- Ensure that all rubbish is cleared from the property.
- Ensure that it is cleaned prior to letting.
- Ensure that all internal doors are in good working order.
- Change the front and rear door locks. You will be given two complete sets of keys on sign-up.
- Check all windows to ensure that the glazing is sound and that they open and close properly. Any opening restrictors are also checked. Any window locks are checked and we will provide keys.
- Ensure that all floors are in good condition and level to receive floor covering.

- Check that all major plaster-work is sound. However, some preparation may be required to the walls prior to decoration and this would be your responsibility.
- Remove and dispose of any asbestos-based materials which are identified, according to current Health & Safety procedures and in line with the Control of Asbestos at Work Act 2002.
- Remove needles or other hazardous materials found in an empty property.
- Make a decision on whether or not to rewire an empty property following the electrical test. The property may be programmed for rewiring in the future.

Kitchen Standards



We will:

- Ensure that the kitchen is clean and functional. If it is identified that the kitchen requires replacement in the future it will be put on the Homes Improvement Works Plan.
- Check pipe-work for leaks, overhaul taps and ensure that waste pipes are not blocked.
- Fit connecting taps for washing machines.
- Ensure that there is a gas and/or electric cooker connection point for a cooker. If a home does not have a gas supply we will not provide this service.
- Clean and overhaul any Oxford City Homes fitted ventilation system.
- Ensure that floor coverings to kitchens are hygienic, easy to clean and moisture resistant.

Bathroom Standards



We will:

- Check pipe-work for leaks, overhaul taps, replace the plug and chain to the bath and basin, and ensure that waste pipes are not blocked.
- Replace the toilet seat, check pipe-work for leaks and ensure that the toilet cistern is flushing properly.
- Clean and overhaul any Oxford City Homes fitted ventilation system.
- Overhaul an electric shower if fitted by Oxford City Homes.
- Ensure that floor coverings to bathrooms are hygienic, easy to clean and moisture resistant.

Garden Standards



We will:

- Clear all rubbish from the garden before you move in. The maintenance and upkeep of the garden will then be your responsibility.
- Remove ponds unless the incoming tenant wishes to keep the pond, in which case they will be asked to sign a form taking on responsibility for the upkeep of the pond.
- Remove Green houses, sheds and lean-tos except when they are in a good, serviceable and safe condition. In these circumstances, the incoming tenant will be given the option to keep them but will be asked to sign a form taking on responsibility for the maintenance of the structure.
- Ensure that fencing to any boundaries that are the responsibility of Oxford City Homes are in good order.

- Ensure that access paths and steps are checked for safety. However, upkeep of garden paths is the responsibility of the tenant.

Loft Standards



We will:

- Check that the location, size and construction of the loft access, i.e. the trap door or hatch, is safe.
- Provide new loft insulation where insulation is lacking or substandard.

Hard Wired Alarm Services Standard



We will:

- Check that alarm pull-cord equipment in sheltered and supported accommodation is in full working order.

Non-Standard Fixtures and Fittings



Some tenants carry out DIY improvements to their homes such as:

- fitted wardrobes
- electric showers
- built-in cookers
- conservatories.

Our surveyors will assess the condition of these improvements together with the maintenance and health and safety issues and where



Minimum lettable standard



Date Published: November 2008

South Essex Homes – Keeping you informed

www.southessexhomes.co.uk 0800 833 160

Minicom 0800 833 162

This document identifies the minimum standard of work you can expect when you move into an empty South Essex Homes property.

All South Essex Homes properties that we let will meet the requirements of the agreed Minimum Lettable Standard. We aim to offer empty homes in good condition in accordance with South Essex Homes Service Standard “Residents Guide” – Section 5 Looking after your home – Your new home – Service Standard.

South Essex Homes aims to achieve high levels of tenant satisfaction by offering homes which have met these agreed standards and re-let empty properties as quickly as possible.

South Essex Homes also have a 30 year planned work programme in place and is also carrying out its Decent Homes works in which items such as kitchens, bathrooms and windows are renewed, some of this work may be carried out after you move in. Details of the properties included in the current year programmes may be obtained from the Asset Management Team.

1. The structure of the home. We will :

- Make sure the structure is safe, secure and watertight
- Make sure the property is free from damp, wet rot or decaying wood
- Remove vermin or insects
- Remove polystyrene tiles
- Remove syringes and any other dangerous objects
- Repair or renew faulty stairs, banisters or handrails
- Make sure walls and ceilings are in good condition, e.g. fill large holes and where identified repair areas of blown plaster
- Make sure that all windows and doors are operational and that they are easy to open and close, with glass, locks, handles and hinges in good condition
- Replace damaged doors which are deemed not to be economically repairable
- Has a kitchen and bathroom that is in a reasonable condition (decent home renewal

work may be undertaken following occupation)

- Board up fireplaces (where necessary)
- Repair or renew floor coverings which are damaged. Where floor tiles require renewing the new tiles may not match the existing ones.
- Please note that in some cases floor finishes will comprise of concrete or composite screeds
- Make sure that any asbestos is in a safe condition.

2. Services and utilities. We will:

- Record meter readings when void work is complete
- Make sure there is a safe gas or electrical supply (or both), and check any gas, electric, solid fuel or oil-fired appliances
- Repair replace or remove any faulty appliances and fittings
- Make sure there is an adequate source of heating

- Test existing smoke detectors for correct operation or install smoke detectors where not present
- Check that extract fans (where present) are clean and working
- Check that the mains water stop cock is working and accessible
- Make sure that the plumbing systems are working correctly.

3. Fixtures and fittings:

- Repair or replace any faulty baths, wash hand basins, showers or toilets
- Make sure baths, wash hand basins and toilets are clean, secure and well sealed without leaks or cracks
- Make sure all taps work well
- Replace wall tiles which are damaged
- Remove non-standard items put in by previous residents, unless we consider these items to be improvements that enhance the property or where the new resident requests to keep them and agrees to maintain them thereafter

- Remove carpets (except in sheltered housing schemes)
- Make sure the bathroom is in a reasonable condition
- Make sure the kitchen has a suitable amount of units and that work surfaces are not damaged or stained
- Make sure that there are an adequate number of electric sockets in each room and particular attention will be given to the number and position of socket outlets in the kitchen area for functional use. (Previous recommendations were that there should be six sockets in a standard sized kitchen)
- Carry out all minor repairs to existing fittings.

4. Cleaning and decoration:

- The property will be left clean, all work surfaces, floors and paintwork sinks, bath wash hand basins and toilets will be cleaned following void work.
- The property will be cleared of all rubbish and any items left by the previous occupants.
- Any offensive graffiti will be removed.

- Where appropriate, decoration vouchers may be issued as a contribution to the costs of redecoration.
- Where appropriate/necessary redecoration works may be undertaken by South Essex Homes – (generally this will be in sheltered housing schemes).

Decorations:

The internal redecoration of empty properties is not carried out automatically as it is dependant on the condition of the existing decoration and the physical capabilities of the potential occupiers and also the type of tenancy being offered.

In cases where a new tenant (or a member of their household) is able to carry out the decoration themselves, the tenant will be offered a Decoration Voucher which can be used to purchase decorating materials at the South Essex Homes designated paint supply outlet. The value of the Decoration Voucher is determined by the level of redecoration needed on a room by room basis, subject to a maximum overall limit.

External decoration is carried out as part of planned and cyclical maintenance programme.

5. A Standard Void Property Clean shall include:

All rubbish and debris from the works will be cleared from all properties prior to the professional cleaning of the property commencing.

Appliances supplied by South Essex Homes

- Appliances shall be cleaned leaving them free from dirt, grease and any food deposits.

Floors and skirting generally:

- Remove any articles impeding the proper cleaning of the floor areas
- Sweep and/or mop all floor areas and leave in a clean condition
- Clean skirting, leaving them free from dust and cobwebs.

Ceilings and other high level places generally:

- All high level areas to be cleared of cobwebs and the like
- Ceiling roses to be cleaned to remove stains and paint

Walls:

- All walls to be swept over to remove dust, grease or any food deposits
- Electrical sockets and switches are to be cleaned to remove staining, paint and the like
- Clean all glass to internal partitions.

Cupboard and room doors:

- All door surfaces are to be washed and wiped over and left clean
- All ironmongery is to be cleaned and wiped over
- Clean all glass to doors and fanlights leaving them clean

- All surfaces and shelves within cupboards are to be cleaned.

Bathroom Area:

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all sanitary fittings to remove all soiling and limescale leaving them clean and ready for use
- Wash and clean both sides of WC seats and covers ready for use – where necessary these may be renewed
- Clean down tiled wall areas and leave free from marks
- Floors to be cleaned
- Clean all fixtures and fittings and buff where necessary
- Clean ceilings and electrical fittings.

Kitchen Area:

- Thoroughly clean all kitchen cupboards both inside and out
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all worktop areas

- Clean sink and drainer and leave free from smears
- Clean down wall tiled areas and leave free from grease, fat
- Floors to be cleaned
- Clean ceilings roses and electrical fittings.

Windows Generally:

- Carry out cleaning to all windows & frames, removing all stains / stickers
- Clean glass inside to all windows leaving them clean
- If windows are reversible, outside is to be cleaned where possible.

Extract Fans:

- Carry out cleaning to extract fans and their control units, leaving them free from grease, dust and dirt.

6. Outside of the home:

- Remove rubbish and anything which is unsafe
- Clear and cut back overgrown gardens and trees
- Fill in ponds
- Remove any non-standard items e.g. barbecues
- Remove unsafe non standard structures such as sheds, green houses or lean to roofs not installed by the Council
- Ensure that fence lines are intact and complete at time of moving in, existing fencing will be repaired and where necessary fencing will be installed (complete or in part – this will often be with post and wire type fencing).

Bengali

যদি আপনার মাতৃভাষায় এই ডকুমেন্টটির একটি কপি পেতে চান অথবা যদি আপনি আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন। আমাদের টেলিফোন অনুবাদক আছেন যারা আপনার প্রশ্নের উত্তর দিতে পারবেন।

Albanian

Nëse dëshironi një kopje të këtij dokumenti në gjuhën tuaj ose nëse dëshironi të na kontaktoni, ju lutemi telefononi në numrin e mëposhtëm. Ne kemi përkthyes nëpërmjet telefonit të cilët mund t'iu përgjigjen pyetjeve tuaja.

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી પહેલી ભાષામાં જોઈતી હોય, અથવા જો તમારે અમારો સંપર્ક સાધવો હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર ઉપર ફોન કરો. અમારી પાસે અનુવાદકો છે, જે તમારા પ્રશ્નોના જવાબ ફોન ઉપર આપી શકે છે.

Cantonese

如果你想要一份中文譯本，請撥打以下號碼與我們聯絡。我們有翻譯人員透過電話來解答你的提問。

French

Si vous souhaitez obtenir une copie de ce document dans votre langue maternelle ou si vous souhaitez nous contacter, veuillez téléphoner au numéro indiqué ci-dessous. Nous avons des traducteurs qui peuvent répondre au téléphone à vos questions.



0800 833 160

This document is also available in large print, on audio tape or CD, Braille or on CD rom. Please contact the number above and this can be arranged for you.

Please contact us for more information

Visit us at South Essex Homes, 49 Alexandra Street, Southend on Sea, SS1 1BW

Write to us at South Essex Homes, Cheviot House, PO BOX 5817, Southend on Sea, SS1 9EL

Minicom 0800 833 162

Telephone us on freephone 0800 833 160

Email us customerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk

Visit our website www.southessexhomes.co.uk