



## VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

**Status: Approved**

<b>Policy Lead :</b>	Director of Assets & Sustainability
<b>Owned By :</b>	Repairs Lead
<b>Date Approved:</b>	January 2026
<b>Approved By :</b>	BHA Board
<b>Review Date:</b>	January 2029
<b>Regulatory / Legislative Considerations/ References</b>	<p>The policy should be considered as an essential document to BHA's fulfilment of its duties under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 including provision of housing services in line with the Scottish Social Housing Charter and compliance with the standards set out in the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Housing Regulator Social Housing Charter</li> <li>• The Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) 2008</li> <li>• The Gas Safety (Installations and Use) Regulations 1994</li> <li>• Equalities Act 2010</li> <li>• Housing (Scotland) Act 2001</li> </ul>
<b>Other Documents to be read in conjunction with this policy :</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation Policy</li> <li>• Recharge Repairs Policy</li> <li>• Lettable Standard</li> <li>• Repairs Service Policy</li> <li>• Voids Procedure</li> <li>• Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Asbestos Policy</li> <li>• Scottish Social Housing Charter</li> <li>• SHR Regulatory Framework</li> <li>• Housing (Scotland) Act 2010</li> <li>• UK General Data Protection Regulation</li> </ul>

<b>Policy Title:</b>	<b>Void Management Policy</b>
<b>Purpose / Aim of policy:</b>	To minimise rent loss on vacant (void) homes by achieving an efficient void turnaround time which results in a short void period whilst maintaining high levels of satisfaction. Ensuring best use of BHA’s housing stock whilst creating sustainable tenancies.
<b>Scope of Policy:</b>	To set out practice BHA will ensure on receipt of a tenancy termination. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenancy Termination</li> <li>• Asbestos</li> <li>• Advertising &amp; Allocation</li> <li>• Pre-Termination Inspection (Advise Responsibilities &amp; Recharge Policy)</li> <li>• Full Void Inspection</li> <li>• Accompanied Viewings</li> <li>• New Tenancy</li> <li>• Re-decoration Allowances</li> </ul>
<b>Definitions:</b>	Void: An empty property where there is no tenancy in place. Void Period: The period starts on the first date there is no rental charge and ends when a new tenancy is created which causes a rental charge.
<b>Approval Source:</b>	Operations Committee
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	At all times BHA will comply with our Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy to ensure that all customers are treated without discrimination or prejudice.  We will consider all customers regardless of sex, faith, religion, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, mental or physical health, disability, or marital status.
<b>Sustainability Assessment:</b>	Some void works may contribute towards the carbon reduction agenda and ESSH. These works will be agreed following inspection.
<b>Partnership Assessment:</b>	No major partnership implications other than working closely with contractors who carry out void work.
<b>Risk Implications:</b>	The procedures to support this Policy will ensure measures to mitigate the risks relating to management of void properties.

## **1. INTRODUCTION & AIMS**

Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA) have a number of properties each year which are terminated by our customers and become void. Our aim is to ensure that the properties are re-let as quickly as possible to minimise any rental loss to the Association and to provide a property which, at the minimum, achieves our lettable standard (appendix 1). We strive to have high satisfaction from our customers and understand that the home they sign up for will be their first impressions of BHA as a landlord.

This policy aims to comply with the Scottish Housing Charter 2017 in accordance with Outcome 4 (Quality of Housing) and Outcome 13 (Value for Money):

- Outcome 4 states that: Social landlords manage their business so that: tenant's homes, as a minimum meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.
- Outcome 13 states that: Social landlords manage all aspects of their business so that: tenants, owners and customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

Effective void management starts with a high standard of service and advice to our outgoing customers, advertising the property correctly to ensure we make best use of our housing stock and contribute to effective estate management and identifying and managing the repairs required to reach the lettable standard whilst being cost effective. The process ends with a successful, accompanied viewing and sign up to a new tenancy building a strong relationship with our new customer throughout the process. Communication is paramount in all areas.

This policy provides a framework for our approach to the management of our void properties. The Neighbourhood Service Lead (NSL) & Repairs Lead (RL) are responsible for the performance of void management with the Repairs Team and Neighbourhood Managers (NM) being responsible for the actions needed within their patch. Independent Living Housing Support Staff (ILHS) are responsible for the performance within their respective Courts.

BHA have an overall target of 15 days to turn around a void property, however, each property is classed as either a 3, 5, or 10 working days void for the contractors, depending on works required. Extensions to these targets can be agreed with the contractor in exceptional circumstances. This target is reviewed annually.

## **2. SCOPE**

### **2.1 Tenancy Termination**

Most tenancies end by providing 28 days written notice to BHA, however, there are various ways a property can be terminated; these are defined below:

- Formal Termination: 28 days written notice within the terms of their tenancy agreement. Rent will continue if keys are not handed in on time.
- Abandonment : Where BHA issues a legal notice to a customer who has left the tenancy and has not provided written notice
- Death of a Tenant: When a customer dies and there is no successor to the tenancy the tenancy legally ends at the date of death. We will work sensitively with any family, next of kin or representative acting on behalf of the customer to effectively hand the property back to BHA. No rent will be charged for 14 days after the tenancy ends, thereafter a daily charge will apply until the keys are returned to us. Persons dealing with the estate will be advised of the charge and to remove all items from the property before returning the keys.
- Eviction: Where we have taken court action to end a tenancy and have received a decree. We terminate the tenancy on the day we carry out the eviction.

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- Internal Transfers: Where a customer is re-housed to another BHA property, customers carrying out this type of move do not require to provide 28 days' notice however are responsible for paying rent on their previous property until they hand the keys back to BHA.
- New Build Void: Where a property is handed back to BHA as complete and untenanted from Developers

When a customer gives notice of intention to terminate the tenancy BHA will seek to clarify the main reason/s for the termination of tenancy. This information will be collated to enable us to identify any key trends and to take remedial action where feasible. This work will also inform our Development Programme and the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

The NM/ILHSO/RT staff will agree a date for a pre-termination visit with the outgoing customer and diarise a full void inspection in conjunction with our contractors on the date that we are due to receive the keys.

### 2.2 Asbestos

When we receive a termination, we will immediately check our system to ascertain if there is asbestos within the property. If there is, and no survey has been carried out, we will organise this with our approved contractors ideally when the property is still tenanted but at the very latest the day the keys are handed back. The report is provided to our regular maintenance contractors and retained by BHA.

Our Asbestos Policy supports any work undertaken where there is asbestos uncovered.

### 2.3 Pre-Termination Inspections & Rechargeable Repairs

The purpose of pre-termination inspections is to ensure that the outgoing customer understands which repairs are their responsibility and are advised of the approximate cost of BHA carrying out these repairs which will be recharged to them should they not do so. BHA will also gain an insight into what works may need to be carried out earlier than when the keys are returned so we can liaise with our Contractors to minimise the void cost and time to BHA.

The NM/ILHSO colleagues will discuss rental obligations to prevent end of tenancy arrears. The NM/ILHSO colleagues will confirm with the outgoing customer the date on which keys are to be received and the procedure, this must be by 9.30am or another day's rental will be charged until keys are received.

The Rechargeable Repairs Policy & Voids Procedure sets out how the NM/ILHSO/RT colleagues will manage this with our customers.

### 2.4 Advertising & Allocation

When BHA become aware that a tenancy will terminate the NM/ILHSO colleagues will advertise the property via TheseHomes.com following our Allocation Policy. A prospective new customer will be offered the property in accordance with said policy as soon as possible. Allocating the property early into the notice period ensures that the new customer has time to terminate any tenancy they already have, is aware of their obligations for rental payment upfront, can organise and start planning their move along with building a relationship with their NM/ILTSO colleagues. The Allocation Policy supports this part of the process.

### 2.5 Full Void Inspection

The void inspection should take place jointly with our contractors on the day BHA receives keys back and a target timescale agreed at that meeting. The work required will be identified and raised by the Repairs Team.

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The Repairs Team will oversee all the works liaising with our contractors on the timescales and aiming for the property to be returned in accordance with the lettable standard and within the target timescales. From time-to-time minor works will be carried out after a customer sign their new tenancy, however, this will only happen if the house is safe for habitation and secure. All properties will have an electrical safety check and properties with gas will have a gas safety check.

Where a property becomes void within the winter months arrangements will be made to drain down, to avoid burst pipes, or for heating to be left on at a low level.

### **2.6 Accompanied Viewings**

The NM/ILHSO colleagues will arrange an accompanied viewing with the prospective customer as soon as reasonably possible. The property will be in a safe condition and the NM/ILHSO colleagues will explain what works are still to be carried out. The prospective customer must then decide whether to proceed with the tenancy within 24 hours.

## **3. New Tenancy**

Once the property is returned in lettable condition the NM/ILHSO colleagues will seek to have the new tenancy signed up within 24-48 hours. There will be some exceptions to this however BHA do expect new customers to be prepared for a move if they have been offered the property some weeks prior. We should note that BHA have a small number of harder to let properties and that these may take longer to allocate.

The new customer will receive copies of all relevant safety checks, an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and up to date information in relation to their tenancy, they will be asked if they understand the terms and conditions contained within their tenancy agreement. If there are any tenancy support requirements, then the NM/ILHSO colleagues will liaise with the Tenancy Sustainability Managers (TSM) to provide this. A payment agreement is agreed at this time however the first weeks rent must be paid upfront unless in exceptional circumstances which will be agreed with the NSL.

Within 6-8 weeks of the new tenancy commencement, the NM/ILHSO colleagues will arrange a settling in visit and ensure that the customer is managing their tenancy. If there are any new support requirements the NM/ILHSO colleagues will again liaise with the TSM.

New Build Sign-ups are targeted to be completed within 7 days of receiving the keys from the Developer.

### **3.1 Redecoration Allowances**

In most instances new customers will carry out redecoration themselves. There will be exception to this identified by the NM/ILHSO colleagues where the customer is unable, due to health or disability or the property is in such poor condition that extensive works are required. In these cases, we may request a contractor to carry out the works required. In Independent Living or Wheelchair properties BHA will normally carry out this work.

Slower to let properties may be decorated and, in some cases, floor coverings provided to minimise void loss. This is decided by the NM/ILHSO/RT colleagues in conjunction with the NSL/RL on a discretionary basis.

Where a customer is to carry out the decoration themselves, we may offer a decoration allowance. This allowance will assist in meeting the costs of redecoration but is not intended to cover them in full.

Please see Appendix 1 (Lettable Standard) for further information.

### **4. Void Periods**

There are various void categories that BHA use. Within void management there are three main categories:

- Modernisation - there are a few instances where a property can be classed as in modernisation (Appendix 2 – Scottish Housing Regulator – Technical Guidance Note) which the Scottish Housing Regulator have set out. The days that a property sits in this category do not count toward the 15 - day target.
- Maintenance - where the property is undergoing general repairs.
- Allocation - where the property is ready to let but has not been signed up to a tenancy.

### **5. Communication**

The key to an efficient and effective void turnaround is good communication between all parties. The NM/ILHSO colleagues will be the conduit to this liaising with Repairs Team (who will manage the contractors), customers, and other internal team members. Customers will know exactly what is expected of them and what stage properties are at. Any issues with Contractor performance will be raised promptly and directly to resolve the situation with any recurring issues brought to the regular weekly void meeting and to the attention of the NSL and Repairs Lead.

### **6. Assets-Planned Works**

The Repairs Team will work closely with their colleagues within Assets to determine whether any planned works are due to happen within the property imminently. Where this is the case, we will make effective use of the void period to carry out the works, where possible, to avoid major disruption to the new customer.

### **7. Complaints**

If a customer is unhappy with the service they receive throughout the void management process, they can raise a complaint in accordance with our Complaints Policy.

### **8. Insurance**

Where a property has been empty for more than 30 days it will be checked on a weekly basis with clear documented records of such checks in order to comply with our insurance arrangements.

### **9. Monitoring**

Monitoring reports against targets are provided each month to the Executive and Leadership Team and quarterly to the Operations Committee. The NSL/ RL will produce the reports.

### **10. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years unless required earlier due to change in legislation, regulation, best practice or the requirements of BHA.

## Lettable Standard (Appendix 1)

What you should expect when you're offered a new property with Berwickshire Housing

### April 2025

This document sets out the standard that all our properties will meet when they are let to you and ensures your new home is safe, secure, clean and in a good state of repair.

### Decoration

We want you to be able to make your home your own. We will not usually decorate, although we may contribute towards the cost of redecoration by providing vouchers. Where the decoration is neutral and in good condition, we would expect this to meet the lettable standard.

- Walls and ceilings will be free from defects and structurally sound – this may include patch plaster at times
- Walls and ceilings will be left in a condition ready for decoration
- Wallpaper will be left intact or stripped when this is damaged
- We'll ensure walls are free from damp, mould, graffiti, large cracks, loose plaster and bulge
- Where the decoration has been disturbed by repairs, we'll factor this into our contribution for decoration vouchers

### Kitchen

Our kitchens are clean, fit for purpose and in working order. An electric cooker point is fitted as standard. Where the property is on our programme for a new kitchen to be fitted, we'll let you know at your viewing.

- Worktops will be free from damage and clean. Where these are chipped or badly scratched, the worktop will be replaced.
- Sealant will be renewed and applied where the worktop meets the wall and around the sink
- Cupboards will be free from damage, clean and in good working order
- Taps will be clean, easy to operate and drip free
- Where gas is provided, this will be left clean and capped ready for a cooker to be installed. This is your responsibility and must be a Gas Safe registered engineer
- Sinks will be clean and free from rust or stains – the plug and chain will be secure. There will be no leaks, and the waste will flow and clear freely
- We'll make sure there is space for a washing machine or a fridge. In most homes, there is space for both appliances however in smaller properties, this cannot be guaranteed. Spaces for appliances should be standard sizes but should be checked and measured when viewing. The connection of your cooker and washing machine are your responsibility
- An extractor fan will be in place and in good working order.
- Any tiles or wet wall in place around work surfaces, sinks or cooker spaces will be clean, intact with no loose or cracked fixings.

### Bathroom

Our bathrooms are clean, fit for purpose and in working order. Where the property is on our programme for a new bathroom to be fitted, we'll let you know at your viewing.

- Every toilet will have a new seat fitted
- Where a shower is in place, the shower curtain will be renewed. Or where there are shower screens, these will be functioning safely and correctly
- Toilets and cisterns will be secure, clean and in good working order
- Taps will be clean, easy to operate and drip free
- Baths and washbasins will be secure, clean and free from chips or stains - the plug and chain will be secure. There will be no leaks, and the waste will flow and clear freely
- Where a shower is in place, it will be secure, clean and in good working order. There will be no drips or leaks from the shower
- An extractor fan will be in place and in good working order.

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- Any tiles or wet wall in place around baths and showers will be clean, intact with no loose or cracked fixings
- Where bath panels are in place, these will be removable for access to plumbing when required. Bath panels will be clean, intact and no with cracks or loose fixings. Where possible, these will be plastic

### Flooring

We don't provide flooring as standard but where safe and appropriate to do so, floor coverings will be left in place. Where floor coverings are in place, these will be gifted to you and become your responsibility. We will remove them if you would prefer.

- Any tired or unsafe floor coverings will be removed
- Any floor coverings left will be gifted to you and will become your responsibility
- Floors will be safe and level with no trip hazards

### Woodwork and joinery

All internal woodwork will be free from major defect. All windows and external doors will be secure, wind and watertight, and in good working order. Where the property is on our programme for new windows/doors to be fitted, we'll let you know at your viewing.

- All external locks will be renewed when a home becomes empty – you will receive three keys for each lock
- Internal doors will be clean, secure, easy to open and close. Handles and latches will be secure and in working order
- Where internal doors are glazed, these will be inspected to ensure safety glass in place and where this is not possible, a flush ply internal door will be installed
- Doors will be free from damage, including glazing
- All windows, doors, kitchen components and general joinery items will be clean and fit for purpose
- All woodwork will be wiped down

### Electrics and energy

Ahead of sign up, we'll ensure the property has a valid energy performance certificate (EPC), electrical condition report and where applicable, a gas safety check carried out. You will be provided with:

- A valid EPC (carried out in the last 10 years) to inform you of the energy efficiency of your home
- An electrical condition report to ensure your home is electrically compliant with a retest every five years
- A gas safety check certificate to ensure your home is gas compliant with a retest every year, if your home has a gas supply

Electric and gas meter housings will be secure and clear from debris.

You'll be advised where the utility meters are at sign up and whether a prepayment or credit meter is in place with the details of the current supplier. Where your meter is in a locked cupboard externally, we'll provide you with a key for access.

### Gardens and outdoor spaces

We'll clear anything left in the garden before you move into the property and cut the grass/shrubs/hedges if needed. There may be circumstances where this hasn't happened, but we will discuss this with you at sign up.

- We'll cut grass, shrubs, hedges and trees ahead of your sign up – gardens will be left at the standard we expect to be maintained
- Perimeter paths around the property and leading to the front door will be free from trip hazards within the current guidelines
- We will remove decking unless it has been formally agreed with the previous customer and

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inspected to ensure it is safe. Where decking is left, it will be gifted to you and will become your responsibility for ongoing maintenance or replacement

- We'll repair or reinstate any fence belonging to BHA to our specification. Gates to the property will be in safe working order. Fences and boundary walls will be safe and secure
- Outhouses will have a new lock fitted if they are assigned to the property – where sheds have been left from the previous tenancy, these will be inspected and if in safe condition, these will be gifted to you if you would like them and become your responsibility

### Communal areas

We'll provide three keys and/or three fobs for communal entrance doors as applicable, with one key for the common bin store where these are in place and ensure door entry systems are in full working order. We'll ensure any landings, stairwells, entrances and exits are clean and clear as part of our regular inspections by your Neighbourhood Manager. Where a stair cleaning programme is in place, we'll advise you of this at your viewing and explain your responsibilities for common areas.

- Windows and doors will be compliant with fire safety regulations
- Fire access and exit doors will be clear and remain obstruction free and no alterations are to be made to any fire doors
- There should be at least one handrail per staircase. Handrails, steps, balustrades, Newell posts and treads will be securely fitted and free from any rot or trip hazards

### BHA's cleaning standard

All new homes will be clean and sanitised prior to customers moving in.

- Properties (inclusive of loft space) are cleared of any rubbish, hazardous materials or items not previously agreed to be gifted to you
- Cleaning of all bathrooms and kitchens (including extractor fans)
- Cleaning of all cupboards and woodwork (including disinfecting)
- All floors swept and mopped with disinfectant
- All windows (internal and external) and external doors cleaned
- Your home will be free of vermin, fleas or any other pests
- We'll ensure every room has a light bulb in place

### Miscellaneous

Asbestos in the property will comply with current legislation and treated where required including the garden or communal area.

Hardwired or Wireless battery interlinked smoke detectors are provided as part of our obligations as your landlord.

Where a blockage has been identified, balcony drains and gullies will be unblocked, and overflows repaired.

Roofs will be free from visual defects, missing roof tiles may be replaced after the start of your tenancy, provided there are no leaks.

### Important information

To avoid causing you any unnecessary delays in moving into your new home, we may need to carry out some repairs after the start of your tenancy. Any such repairs will be discussed and agreed with you before you sign your tenancy, and you will be provided with timescales for completing the work.

Please remember, all BHA customers must obtain permission from us to carry out any improvements or alterations to your home. We wish you all the best in your new home

**Appendix 2 - Scottish Housing Regulator – Technical Guidance Note**

When calculating the time taken to re-let, do not include periods where the property was empty due to:

- An insurance claim because of fire or flood damage;
- Awaiting or undergoing major repairs/structural work during which period it would be unsafe for it to be occupied;
- A Governing Body/Sub-Committee/Council decision that they are not to be let because they are to be transferred; reconfigured or disposed of/demolished or are surplus to long-term requirements;
- The periods of time when major improvements/modernisation works are being undertaken. so major that it cannot reasonably be occupied;
- A reasonable time taken to clear the house following a tenant's death; and
- Keys being held by the Police to assist with their investigation.