



## Void Management Policy

**Status: Approved**

<b>Policy Lead :</b>	Executive Director – Customer Experience
<b>Owned By :</b>	Neighbourhood Services Lead
<b>Date Approved:</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
<b>Approved By :</b>	BHA Board
<b>Review Date:</b>	January 2026
<b>Regulatory / Legislative Considerations/ References</b>	<p>This policy shall be reviewed by Operations Committee before tabling for approval by BHA's Board.</p> <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>

**Other Documents to be read in conjunction with this policy :**

- Allocation Policy
- Recharge Repairs Policy
- Lettable Standard
- Repairs Service Policy
- Voids Procedure
- Complaints Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Scottish Social Housing Charter
- SHR Regulatory Framework
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- UK General Data Protection Regulation

<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 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>	BHA Board
<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 EESSH. 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) is responsible for the performance of void management with the 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 18 days to turn around a void property, however, each property is classed as either a 5,10- or 20-days void depending on works required. 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. Abandonments are often from households who have rent arrears, facing legal actions, vulnerable customers, first time tenants, those receiving support or a history of anti-social behaviour.

- We are proactive in our attempts to identify any abandonment using a range of measures including early engagement with rent arrears, regular estate inspections along with annual visits to each home and settling in visits.
- 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.
- 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/ILHS 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 works 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 they keys are returned so can liaise with our Contractors to minimise the void cost and time to BHA.

The NM/ILHS colleagues will discuss rental obligation to prevent end of tenancy arrears. The NM/ILHS colleagues will confirm with the outgoing customer the date 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/ILHS colleagues will manage this with our customers.

## **2.4 Advertising & Allocation**

When BHA become aware that a tenancy will terminate the NM/ILHS 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/ILTS 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 receive keys back and a target timescale agreed at that meeting. The works required will be identified by the NM/ILHS colleagues and then initiated by the Customer Experience Team (CE Team). The NM/ILHS colleagues will aim to have the works instructions to the CE Team within 24 hours.

The NM/ILHS colleagues 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/ILHS 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/ILHS 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/ILHS 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/ILHS colleagues will liaise with the Tenancy Sustainability Managers (TSM) to provide this. A payment agreement is agreed at this time.

Within 6-8 weeks of the new tenancy commencement, the NM/ILHS 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/ILHS 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/ILHS 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/ILHS colleagues in conjunction with the NSL 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 18 - 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/ILHS colleagues will be the conduit to this liaising with 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.

### **Assets-Planned Works**

The NM/ILHS colleagues 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring reports against targets are provided each month to the Executive and Leadership Team and quarterly to the Operations Committee. Each NM provides reports on their own patch to the NSL monthly.

### **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)**

We will aim to achieve these standards for every void property before it is occupied by a new customer. The incoming customer will be given a copy of the void and lettable standard to allow confirmation that works have been carried out in accordance with this policy.

This policy covers standard void properties. A separate policy covers mutual exchange properties.

### **1. GENERAL ITEMS**

#### **1.1 Cleanliness**

We will ensure that:

- The house is cleared of furniture, carpets and belongings/rubbish from the previous customer. Depending on their condition, curtains, floor coverings or blinds left by the former customer are left as a security measure and/or for possible use by the new customer in agreement with the Neighbourhood Manager/Independent Living Housing Support (NM/ILHS) Staff. If these items are retained by the new customer, the customer will be made aware that BHA has no responsibility/liability for these items going forward.
- Floors are swept and washed if required.
- Kitchen and bathroom surfaces are washed down including tiled areas, bath panels and unit fronts.
- Attics, cellars, and outbuildings are emptied.
- A deep clean will be carried out if the NM/ILHS Staff considers this necessary
- The property is presented clean and in a “lettable standard”.

#### **1.2 Repairs**

We will ensure that:

- All repairs relating to these standards are carried out before the new tenancy (apart from circumstances out with our control).
- In exceptional circumstances where we are not able to carry out a repair, for example due to a delay in the delivery of a replacement internal door, and with the agreement of the new customer, we complete the repair as soon as possible after the start of the new tenancy.
- Come replacement of existing fittings such as kitchen and bathroom and heating systems if still serviceable will be held over if a contract to carry out these works in the same area will be planned within the next 2 years.

#### **1.3 Alterations & Improvements**

We will ensure that:

- Any alterations & improvements carried out by the previous customer have either been approved by us and are of an acceptable standard or, if they have not been approved by us and are of an unacceptable standard then they are removed.

#### **1.4 Garden areas**

Where possible we will ensure that:

- Gardens attached to the property are cleared of rubbish and any sheds left by former customers that are in poor condition are removed. If a shed is left in good condition this may be adopted by the incoming customer. BHA will retain no liability for this once the tenancy has commenced.
- During the growing season, if required, the grass is cut/strimmed as a 'one off' at the start of the tenancy.
- Where required, gardens are brought up to a reasonable standard, e.g., overgrown bushes and trees are trimmed or removed, excessive slabbing is removed, broken paving is renewed etc.

#### **1.5 Brickwork, external walls**

We will ensure that:

- External walls are sound to prevent the likelihood of water penetration.
- There are no major defects.
- Any external building i.e., outhouse buildings are repaired or removed (if there are particular health & safety issues).

#### **1.6 Roofs, gutters & downpipes** (visual inspection from ground level)

We will ensure that:

- Roofs are weatherproof with no missing or slipped tiles/slates.
- All existing flashing is in position and secure.
- Pointing is secure to ridge/hip/verges and eaves and is sufficient to ensure tiles etc. do not move or allow water ingress.
- Gutters and downpipes are clear of rubbish, sound and secure.

#### **1.7 Footpaths, ramps, external steps & handrails, driveways**

We will ensure that:

- Any such items to the front and rear entrances are reasonably smooth, free of tripping hazards, safe and any broken areas repaired.

#### **1.8 Fencing, gates**

We will ensure that:

- Boundary fencing and gates provided by us are in reasonably sound condition and free from defects that may cause injury (subject to agreement with adjacent owners where responsibility for boundary fencing is shared).
- Dividing fencing installed by a former customer that is in good condition is left and the new customer is advised that maintenance is their responsibility, but where the fencing is in poor condition it is removed, and the boundary reinstated to the original standard. Boundary areas will be explained to customers.

## **1.9 Front and back doors**

We will ensure that:

- Doors are securely hung and opening/closing freely.
- There is a letterbox and back flap on all front doors.
- We check for draughts, and for evidence of water ingress.
- Where there are both mortice and yale locks only one of them is changed, but where there is only one lock it is automatically changed (mortice locks will be a minimum 5 lever for insurance standard).
- We check on security and that spy holes and chains, where provided, are working.

## **1.10 Windows**

We will ensure that:

- All windows are fully operational, with sashes opening and closing freely.
- All windows are secure and checked for safety.
- Window frames are sound and serviceable, where there is a programme of major works within the next 2 years, we may make good if a frame requires replacement.
- There is no cracked glazing, and any major failing to double glazing seals is replaced.
- Ground floor windows are fitted with keyed locks as standard.
- Where window locks are fitted, window keys are supplied or, if keys are missing, locks are replaced.

External works not crucial to the re-letting of the property and may be programmed out with the void period of the property. This would be particularly relevant if works are planned under planned maintenance contracts. Any work of a Health & Safety nature would be made safe or completed before a new tenancy begins.

## **2. INTERNAL ITEMS**

### **2.1 Electrics**

We will ensure that:

- All electrical fittings (including light fittings left by the former customer that are not being removed) and fixed appliances (e.g., showers) are checked and a certificate of inspection issued to the new customer (copy to be held by BHA).
- Any switches or socket outlets that are badly marked, covered by paint, smoke affected or damaged in any other way are replaced.
- Where provided by us, TV aerial points are in position.
- Where relevant, an electric meter box key will be provided.

### **2.2 Gas**

We will ensure that:

- All houses with a gas supply have an appropriate void safety check.
- A full gas safety check is undertaken, and a compliance certificate is issued to the new customer (copy to be held by BHA).
- A gas meter box key will be provided.

- The CO detector is included in the safety check and has a valid expiry date.

### **2.3 Gas/electric cooking**

We will ensure that:

- Where the previous customer has left a gas or electric cooker it is removed, as we will be unable to certify its safety. The outlet will then be left in a safe condition as defined by the relevant legislation.

### **2.4 Smoke alarm/carbon monoxide detector**

We will ensure that:

- The smoke alarm(s) is/are tested and cleaned as part of the electric safety check and are all within their current lifespan.
- The carbon monoxide detector (where fitted) is tested and cleaned and is within their current lifespan.

### **2.5 Water supply, waste pipes**

We will ensure that:

- Stopcocks and valves are free and in working order.
- Taps are free and not dripping.
- Between October and April, during severe cold spells, we assess whether stopcocks should be shut off and the water supply drained down and traps filled with anti-freeze solution.
- We replace any plugs that have been fitted to drainage systems for domestic appliances, e.g., dish washing machines.
- Immersion heaters, where fitted, are in working order and switches clearly labelled.
- Cold water tanks have a fitted lid and insulation jacket, and overflow pipes are supported.

### **2.6 Insulation**

We will ensure that:

- All hot water cylinders have a British Standard insulation jacket fitted, where they are not pre-lagged.

### **2.7 Ventilation, air vents**

We will ensure that:

- Mechanical extractor fans are clean and in working order where fitted.

### **2.8 Dampness**

We will ensure that:

- The property is free from damp due to water penetration or leaks

- The property is free from evidence of significant condensation and new customers will be advised of procedures to avoid condensation within their property especially if the property has been empty for a longer period of time.

## **2.9 Internal pass doors**

We will ensure that:

- All pass doors are intact, securely hung and operating properly.
- Bathroom and WC doors have a locking device operable where possible from the outside.
- Ironmongery is replaced if unserviceable.
- Where an internal door has a glazing aperture, we will ensure that safety glass is fitted.

## **2.10 Floors**

We will ensure that:

- Floors are secure and free from any tripping hazard.
- All loose and missing floorboards are re-secured or replaced, with no sign of active woodworm or rot.
- All floors are de-nailed and carpet backing removed where applicable.
- Laminate flooring is removed in upper floor.
- Laminate flooring in other properties that is not up to our standards is removed.
- Non-slip flooring where provided is whole, clean & free of paint splashes.
- Floorboards are tested for excessive creaking and adjusted as required.
- Where thermoplastic tiles are used as a floor surface, any loose or crumbling tiles are replaced, though not necessarily with an exact colour match (cracked tiles will be left) or screeded flush with the surrounding surfaces.

## **2.11 Stairs**

We will ensure that:

- Stair treads & risers are secure and free from excessive creaking.
- Banisters and handrails are secure.
- There is no sign of active woodworm or rot.

## **2.12 Skirting, facings**

We will ensure that:

- Missing or badly damaged skirtings or facings are replaced or, if it is possible to repair them, that they are re-secured and filled where necessary.
- Skirtings and facings are in sound condition.

### **2.13 Internal walls & ceilings**

We will ensure that:

- Plasterwork is free from major defect and is suitable for decoration after reasonable preparation by the new customer – with no loose plaster, a reasonably level surface and with no cracks greater than 3mm wide.
- Any large holes are filled in and left flush for decoration.
- Any polystyrene tiles are removed either on walls or ceilings and the plasterwork is made good and the area either redecorated or a decoration allowance is given to the new customer.
- Surfaces that have a textured coating (Artex) are free from damage.
- Where surfaces have a textured coating in need of repair, this will be done as close to the original pattern as possible.
- Any loose or defective joint taping is replaced.

### **2.14 Bedroom wardrobes & cupboards**

We will ensure that:

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

### **2.15 Kitchen units**

We will ensure that:

- All kitchen units are thoroughly checked, cleaned, and fully functioning.
- Defective door hinges are repaired, replaced, or adjusted where necessary.
- Damaged drawers and doors are repaired, or replaced, where possible with the closest match available.
- Worktops damaged due to burning and/or water ingress are replaced where appropriate, and worktops are fully sealed.
- Kick plates & trims are in place.
- Wall cupboards are securely fixed.
- Washer/dryers, where provided, are clean and functioning.
- Space for kitchen appliances will be a minimum of 610mm.

### **2.16 Showers**

We will ensure that:

- Any instantaneous electric shower is included in the electrical safety check.
- Any electric shower is fully functioning.
- The shower has a screen or shower rail and curtain (curtains will be replaced).
- Tiling, grout, and/or waterproof paneling is sound and sealed to the bath and shower tray.

## **2.17 Bathrooms**

We will ensure that:

- All sanitary ware, baths and basins are checked and are clean, free from rust, securely fixed, with all plugs in place, and free from major chips or cracks.
- Taps are operating easily and not dripping.
- Where replacement of part of a coloured suite is required, if the matching colour is not available all sanitaryware will be replaced in white.
- Flushing mechanisms are working satisfactorily, and PVC cisterns are replaced, if required.
- All existing tiling is sound and sealed.
- All joints to baths and shower trays are sound and in good condition.
- Grab rails, toilet roll holders, cabinets & other fixtures and fittings are securely installed where fitted.
- Boxing-in under wash-hand basins etc. is checked, and if in poor condition is removed and the area made good.
- Toilet seats will be replaced.

## **2.18 Energy Performance Certificates**

An Energy performance Certificate (EPC) will be displayed in a prominent place within the property. Any updated certificate will be presented to the customer during sign up. The EPC rating must be available for the property advert.

## **3. Decoration and Dulux Voucher Scheme**

This part of the policy sets out the circumstances where Berwickshire Housing Association will issue decoration allowances.

### **Aims and Objectives:**

- The overall aim of the Decoration Scheme is to assist customers with the cost of decorating their home and in doing so assist in the efficient and effective maintenance of the Association's housing stock.
- Decoration allowances are intended as a contribution towards the cost of materials and equipment needed to carry out internal redecoration work.
- The allowances are not intended to meet the full costs involved.
- They are intended to allow customers choice in the decoration of their home.
- The award of a decoration allowance does not remove the need for customers to adequately insure the contents of their home from damage.
- The award of a decoration allowance does not remove the need for persons carrying out work on behalf of the Association to take adequate care to ensure that damage does not occur.

The specific objectives of the Decoration Scheme are to:-

- Give clear guidance on when a decoration allowance will and will not be paid, how much will be paid and in what form.
- Publicise the terms of the scheme to enable a wider understanding by customers, staff and the public.
- Identify the checks that we will use.
- Give clear guidance on how disputes will be dealt with.

### **3.1 Definition of a Decoration Allowance:**

A decoration allowance can be payment in vouchers given to assist both new and existing customers:

- When a new customer moves into a property where the standard of decoration is below a reasonable standard as defined by the Association's Lettable Standard; or
- Following work that has been carried out by the Association or by a contractor working on our behalf that has caused excessive damage to the interior decoration of the property.
- To change the interior decoration of a property because the decoration is a dark or strong colour that would prove costly to change, for example black.

A decoration allowance will not be awarded:

- To change the interior decoration of a property because it is not the incoming customers' personal taste.
- To act as payment after an incident a customer should have been insured for.
- Where a new tenancy is as a result of a mutual exchange.
- Where the Association or its contractor has completed decoration.

### **3.2 Decoration Allowance - New Tenancy:**

It will be at the discretion of our colleagues while carrying out a void inspection of a property, to determine whether or not the property warrants a decoration allowance.

An allowance may be awarded where:

- The wallpaper is considerably torn; or
- The walls or ceilings are badly marked; or
- The walls or ceilings have been cleaned but continue to look dirty; or
- The walls or ceilings have been painted with a dark or strong colour which is not easily covered up.
- The woodwork has been badly chipped /poorly painted where extensive work is required to correct, for example, the paint is peeling off the woodwork or has been painted a dark or strong colour which is not easily covered up.

The above list shows examples only and is not an exhaustive list of circumstances where a decoration allowance may be awarded.



We will endeavor to advise as early as possible how much decoration allowance is to be awarded. Prospective customers will be advised how much decoration allowance they would be entitled to prior to sign up of the property.

New customers will be given any decoration allowance when they sign their tenancy agreement.

There will be circumstances where decoration will be completed by BHA during the void period e.g. sheltered housing; supported housing; properties where major works have been completed or when a property decor is deemed to be in such poor condition a décor is required to let the property.

### **3.3 Decoration Allowance- Following Repair Work:**

We may award a decoration allowance following repair work carried out by the Association where the interior decoration has been damaged.

Where the damage is as a result of neglect by our colleagues or our contractor then this matter will be dealt with on an individual basis through the Complaints Procedure.

Once the repair work has been completed and we have been informed of any damage to the decoration then we will carry out an inspection to assess decoration allowance entitlement.

### **3.4 Decoration Allowance-Rates:**

The amount of allowance a property is eligible for will depend on the size/number of rooms that need to be decorated and will be calculated on a room-by-room basis.

The table below shows the average rate per room and will be used as guidance when identifying the amount of decoration allowance up to a maximum of £500.00 per property.

<b>Decoration Allowance Per Room</b>	
Kitchen	£50
Bathroom	£50
Hall (no stair/landing)	£40
Hall (plus stair/landing)	£60
Living Room	£60
Single Bedroom	£50
Double Bedroom	£60

### **3.5 Issuing Decoration Allowance:**

All decoration allowances will be issued in the form of vouchers for a local Dulux Decorator Centre.

Decoration allowances awarded to customers can be collected in person by the customer(s) or posted out (with prior arrangement). Before the customer is given the allowance, he/she will be asked to provide proof of his/her identity if not known to the member of staff issuing the voucher(s).

### **3.6 Using Decoration Allowances:**

Where the cost of the customers' chosen materials exceeds the amount of their decoration allowance, he/she will be expected to make up the difference.

No credit notes will be given where a customer fails to use the full monetary value of the voucher(s).

Decoration Vouchers cannot be exchanged for cash.

### **3.7 Follow Up Inspection:**

We may wish to inspect the property to confirm that the decoration allowance has been spent appropriately.

The inspection should coincide with the customers' settling in visit.

Colleagues also have at their discretion the option to issue decoration vouchers on a room-by-room basis if several rooms have been identified for a decoration voucher e.g. when one room completed to a satisfactory standard then the next one is issued. This would be applicable in all vouchers above £300.00.

If at an inspection the decoration of the property is unchanged or the customer is unable to demonstrate that they have purchased decoration materials, either through the presence of the materials themselves, or the Voucher becomes time expired no further voucher will be issued and it is then the responsibility of the Customer(s) to decorate.

### **3.8 Lost or Stolen Vouchers:**

Once issued to the customer, decoration allowances become the customer's responsibility.

Lost, damaged, defaced or time expired vouchers will only be replaced in very exceptional circumstances at the discretion of a staff member, following appropriate enquiries.

## **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.