

# Void Management

## 2022

<b>Approved On</b>	<b>March 2022</b>
<b>Next Review Date</b>	<b>March 2025</b>

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<a href="#"><u>Policy statement</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Roles and responsibilities</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>References and sources</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Equalities</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Consultation</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Monitoring and compliance</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Approval</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Void Management</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Letting Standard</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Performance</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Health and Safety</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Complaints</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Appendix 1 – Letting Standard</u></a>	9

## **1. Policy statement**

- 1.1 The Void Management Policy forms part of West of Scotland Housing Association's (WSHA) suite of policies that set out our approach to the management of our properties. Good management of the voids is essential if the Association is to minimise lost rent and ensure the key stages of the void process are managed effectively and efficiently.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our empty homes are re-let to a good standard, within our target timescales and to meet our agreed standard of repair and our legislative, contractual, and regulatory obligations.
- 1.3 The specific objectives of the policy are:
  - to ensure all properties let by the Association meet our minimum re-let standard
  - to ensure the rent lost through the void period is kept to a minimum
  - to ensure our health and safety responsibilities are met (contractor and staff)
  - to meet the housing needs of applicants on our housing lists
  - to contribute to high quality estate management
  - to assist with tenancy sustainment.
- 1.4 This policy and associated procedure are applicable to the housing management services delivered by WSHA to general needs, sheltered, amenity and mid-market rent customers.

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

- 2.1 The Director of Housing & Community Services is responsible for ensuring adoption of, and adherence to, this policy and its associated procedures relevant to their operation.
- 2.2 The Housing Manager is responsible for:
  - ensuring that this policy is implemented by staff;
  - ensuring that staff are designated to deal with void management;
  - providing clear procedures for our staff to work to, ensuring they work safely at all times
  - monitoring the void maintenance budget
  - provide training for staff to ensure there is effective joint working within and between teams
  - publicising our void relet standards and void performance
  - and monitoring the systems and practices at local levels in terms of void management, ensuring there is a consistent and fair approach.

## **3. References and sources**

3.1 The following legislation, references and sources are relevant to the development and delivery of this policy and associated procedure:

- Abandonment Policy – aims to ensure that any abandoned properties are quickly identified and recovered
- Allocations Policy - aims to match applicants with properties, which will suit their current and future needs, promote balanced communities and promote tenancy sustainment and reduce turnover
- Compensation Policy – includes the statutory right to compensation for tenant improvements when the tenancy is terminated
- Complaints Handling Procedure
- [Construction \(Design and Management\) Regulations 2015](#) - require that the Association meets the health and safety requirements in how contractual works are organised and undertaken, throughout the time the property is void.
- [Energy Performance of Buildings \(Scotland\) Regulations 2008](#) – the requirement that all properties will have a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)
- Estate Management Policy - aims to ensure that our estates and the surrounding environment are managed and maintained to a high standard.
- [Gas Safety \(Installation and Use\) Regulations 1998](#) as amended by the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 – requirement for a Social Landlord to undertake an annual inspection of gas installations and appliances as well as a gas safety check on void properties, completed before the property is relet.
- [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#) – the Association must hold information provided by a tenant / applicant for housing securely and confidentially and only retain when it is relevant for the management of void properties. Individuals have the right to see their personal information.
- Green Strategy 2020-2023 – aims to deliver more services in an environmentally friendly way, reducing waste and energy consumption and improving the overall efficiency of our services and minimise their impact on the environment
- Health & Safety Control Manual
- [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) - legal obligations in the Act covers allocations, termination of a tenancy, compensation for improvements and access rights for inspection
- [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) – includes the repairing standard for the private rented sector (i.e. mid-market rent)
- [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) – includes changes to the allocation of social housing
- [Letting Agent Code of Practice \(Scotland\) Regulations 2016](#) – includes the Letting Agent obligations in relation to the management and maintenance of mid-market rent properties
- [Private Housing \(Tenancies\) \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) – includes details of the Private Rented Tenancy, conditions related to maintenance and management of the property, and ending the tenancy

- Recharge Policy – details our position in relation to recharging tenants for damage to our property
- Rent and Service Charge Policy - aims to address issues of affordability.
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy – provides an overall policy framework for our reactive repairs activities.
- [Scottish Social Housing Charter](#) Outcomes 4, 11 and 13 – which state:

Outcome 4: Quality of housing - Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard ( SHQS) when they are allocated; are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair; and also meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing ( EESSH)

Outcome 11: Tenancy sustainment - Social landlords ensure that tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

Outcome 13: Value for money - Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that tenants, owners, and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

#### **4. Equalities**

- 4.1 We will not unlawfully discriminate against any person within the protected characteristic groups as contained within the Equality Act 2010. To ensure equal access to the information contained in this policy for all, we are happy to provide copies in Braille, in larger print, translated into other languages or on tape to you or anybody that you know upon request and where practicable.
- 4.2 WSHA will seek to ensure that empty properties are managed in a manner that is fair to all sections of the community regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- 4.3 As with all Association policies and practices, the Association will adhere to Outcome 1 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter (Equalities):

‘Social Landlords perform in all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services’.

#### **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 The Tenant Action Group and Tenant Scrutiny Panel were consulted on the proposed changes to this Policy and no further recommendations for changes were received.

## **6. Monitoring and compliance**

- 6.1 This policy will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that the content remains compliant with legislation and reflects best practice. Audits may take place if commissioned by the Director of Housing & Community Services to ensure there is consistent practice and adoption of the policy principles.
- 6.2 Period of review
- 6.2.1 Until a new policy is formally adopted this document will remain in force and operational.
- 6.2.2 This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the policy review programme agreed by CMT.
- 6.2.3 If there are significant changes to legislation or regulation or there are found to be deficiencies or failures in this policy, as a result of complaints or findings from any independent organisations, the Director of Housing & Community Services will initiate an immediate review.
- 6.2.4 Where appropriate, key stakeholders such as tenants and interested parties will be consulted as part of any review of this policy.

## **7. Approval**

- 7.1 This policy is approved by the Board of Management of WSHA.

## **8. Void Management**

- 8.1 Void Management incorporates a range of coordinated activities which we have to implement, often adjusting our approach depending on how the property became void. The main reasons a tenancy is terminated or a property is void include:
- When the tenant has given written notice terminating their tenancy
  - Abandonment of the property by the tenant
  - Death of the tenant
  - Temporary move/decant
  - Eviction
  - New build void when returned from the builder/developer
  - Transfers or mutual exchanges when the tenant moves to another property.
- 8.2 WSHA currently operates a schedule of rates for the issuing of void works. WSHA will also consider the use of a price per property (PPV) approach to void maintenance where this represents value for money and it is also efficient and effective.

8.3 WSHA will ensure that all voids are inspected within two working days of access to the property. At the time of writing, WSHA has four timescales for void works to be completed depending on the condition of the void property – 3, 5, 8 and 10 days. All works will be completed within these timescales.

#### 8.4 **Letting Standard**

8.4.1 WSHA will ensure that all properties for re-letting have been subject to our standard checks for cleanliness and condition, for the integrity of all services including gas, electricity, and water supply and for the proper operation of appliances for the use of water and heating.

8.4.2 The Letting Standard is detailed in Appendix 1. It will be applied as a minimum to every void property that is being considered for letting. The standard may be exceeded in certain circumstances such as for emergency decant accommodation, letting initiatives or where the previous tenant's alterations are of a higher standard than our own. In such cases, any enhancements must be approved by the Housing Manager or someone of at least equivalent seniority.

8.4.3 All repairs detailed within WSHA's 'Letting Standard' will be completed as a minimum before tenants move into their new home unless we previously agree with a prospective tenant to complete specific repairs upon allocation.

8.4.4 Mid-Market Rent (MMR) properties have a unique specification which includes the provision of blinds, floor coverings and white goods. These differences will be accounted for when carrying out void works in a mid-market rent property (and is reflected in the Letting Standard). A deposit is also taken at the start of the tenancy and lodged with a tenancy deposit scheme within 30 working days of the beginning of the tenancy, which can cover the costs of tenant damage/neglect and bringing the property up to The Repairing Standard as set out in the Housing (Scotland) 2006 Act:

- the property must be wind and water tight and in all other respects reasonably fit for people to live in
- the structure and exterior (including drains, gutters and external pipes) must be in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order
- installations for supplying water, gas and electricity and for sanitation, space heating and heating water must be in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order
- any fixtures, fittings and appliances that the landlord provides under the tenancy must be in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order
- any furnishings that the landlord provides under the tenancy must be capable of being used safely for the purpose for which they are designed;
- the property must have a satisfactory way of detecting fires and for giving warning in the event of a fire or suspected fire, and
- the property must have satisfactory provision for giving warning if carbon monoxide is present in a concentration that is hazardous to health.

8.4.5 At the end of a private rented tenancy, WSHA will make a claim to the Tenancy Deposit scheme for any damage etc caused to the property by the tenant. At the end of a social rented tenancy, tenants will be recharged for any damage in the property in line with our Recharge Policy.

## **9. Performance**

9.1 The Association will monitor its void performance and the spend against our void budget. The key performance measures we will use will be those adopted by the Scottish Housing Regulator in the Scottish Housing Charter:

- Percentage of rent due lost properties being empty during the last year
- Average length of time taken to re-let properties in the last year
- Percentage of tenants satisfied with the standard of their homes when moving in
- Percentage of tenancy offers refused during the year
- Percentage of lettable houses that became vacant in the last year
- Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year, by source of let

9.2 We will also utilise local performance indicators, targets and exception reports covering:

- Stock turnover
- Properties not relet within timescales
- Average cost of repairs per void
- Void contractor performance
- Spend against budget.

## **10. Health and Safety**

10.1 The Association will ensure that all inspections and work undertaken at properties will be carried out in accordance with our health and safety responsibilities.

10.2 The Associations lone working procedures for staff apply to staff involved in inspections and allocations processes including accompanied viewings.

## **11. Complaints**

11.1 The Association has a comprehensive approach to handling complaints and monitoring outcomes. Tenants and service users wishing to complain about our void management process can expect their concerns to be responded to as detailed in our Complaints Handling Procedure.



## Appendix 1 – Letting Standard

<b>BATHROOM SUITE</b>	Bathroom suite should be checked for chips/cracks. Where these are deemed to be a potential health and safety risk the item should be replaced. If all items colours do not match then all items should be replaced with a white bathroom suite. All taps to be operational and plugs to be intact and in place. Overhaul WC cistern and leave operational. All seals to baths and WHB to be intact and free from mould. Toilet seat to be replaced.
<b>CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS</b>	All properties with a gas supply must have a mains operated carbon monoxide alarm fitted next to the boiler or gas cooker if no gas boiler.
<b>DECORATION</b>	WSHA is generally not responsible for the condition/level of decoration in a property. However, where the condition of the decoration is deemed to be sufficiently poor to affect the likelihood of the property being allocated, then a minimum decoration allowance may be given. In certain situations, WSHA may remove the decoration and provide the new tenant with a decoration allowance or undertake decorative works before letting the property which would be works over and above the Letting Standard.
<b>ELECTRICS</b>	<p>All electrics checked and certified. EICR certification to be passed to WSHA for placing in the house file. Any alteration to the electric system not undertaken by WSHA must be removed unless certified as fit on the compliance certificate. Certification and a report should confirm that the following works have been undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaned and serviced extract fans indicating quantity and locations and that they were left in working order</li> <li>• Cleaned and serviced two mains operated smoke detectors and that they were left in working order</li> <li>• Cleaned and serviced mains operated carbon monoxide detectors</li> <li>• That the electrical installation within the flat is safe for use, electrical contractor to ensure that all necessary checks have been carried out to ensure this</li> <li>• Remove and replace any non-standard light fittings, switches and sockets</li> <li>• Supply and fit LED bulbs to all light fittings</li> <li>• Remove and dispose of all light shades</li> </ul>

	<p>All fittings repaired as required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repairs of a more costly nature should be reported to WSHA in order that approval can be granted</li> <li>• Electrician to complete void safety sheet when returning keys to the WSHA</li> <li>• Existing electric fires have been disconnected and removed</li> <li>• Electric storage heaters serviced, tested and functional</li> <li>• Electric wet boilers tested and functional</li> <li>• Hot water cylinders tested and functional</li> <li>• Gas boiler heating controls tested and functional.</li> </ul> <p>Standard electrical fittings to MK Logic Plus or equivalent, with a plastic finish. Any fittings which are coloured, chrome or brass finish should be replaced. Any fittings that are covered in paint to be replaced if paint cannot be removed. Fluorescent strip lights to be replaced with single 1200mm LED replacement. Bathroom pendant to be replaced with 2D drum fittings. Where bathroom extractor fan is fitted in Zone 1, it should be replaced with an SELV equivalent to comply with current BS7671 regulations. Energy efficient light bulbs to be provided if not already in situ.</p>
<p><b>ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE (EPC)</b></p>	<p>An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) assessment will be carried out on each void property where the existing certificate is not valid and the certificate handed to WSHA as part of the handover procedures. A copy of the EPC showing the Energy Efficiency Rating and (CO2) Rating will be passed to the new tenant by WSHA at sign up and data explained. WSHA will endeavour to resolve minor issues highlighted within the EPC which fall within budget. Issues which fall out with budget will be addressed through our planned and major repair programme. Certificates will be held centrally within WSHA.</p>
<p><b>FLOORS</b></p>	<p>All loose and missing floorboards to be re-secured/ replaced. Floor surface to be even to allow carpets to be laid.</p>
<p><b>FRONT DOOR</b></p>	<p>Minimum one mortice and one yale on timber doors or security lock on double glazed door. Letterbox and back flap on all front doors. External finish should complement other doors in the block or street. If door</p>

	cannot be made wind, watertight and lockfast, replace existing door with similar or improved component which would be over and above the minimum Letting Standard.
<b>FURNISHINGS/FIXTURES (MMR ONLY)</b>	<p>Any furnishings or fixtures (including floor coverings and blinds) that WSHA provides under the tenancy must be capable of being used safely for the purpose for which they are designed and must be in reasonable condition, clean and free from dust, dirt/grime.</p> <p>If more than 30% of the floor coverings are damaged and cannot be repaired, full replacement should be considered.</p> <p>Blind pull cord system works correctly. Material has no holes/tears in, it is not stained or discoloured. Total replacement should be considered if the blind does not function properly and is beyond repair.</p>
<b>GARDENS</b>	<p>Gardens attached to the property, which are for the sole use of the tenant, should be cleared of rubbish and if required, grass cut as one-off before tenant moves in. In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The garden and any sheds or outhouses, if there are any, are safe and free from rubbish</li> <li>• All drainpipes, guttering and manhole covers are safe and in good condition</li> <li>• Any lawns and shrubs are not overgrown</li> <li>• There's no graffiti on external surfaces, like walls</li> <li>• Pathways and driveways, within the boundary of your property, are safe.</li> </ul>
<b>GAS</b>	<p>All houses with a gas supply to be checked, open ends blanked off and certified. CP12 certification to be passed to WSHA. Disconnect and remove all gas appliances that are not the property of WSHA. Where a gas fire is fitted, this should be removed, the opening bricked up and vent fitted and the supply pipe capped under the floor. Where necessary, properties will be considered for a new/replacement heating system.</p>
<b>GENERAL CLEANLINESS</b>	<p>The house must be cleared of furniture, carpets and underlay, vinyl floor coverings, laminate floor coverings and belongings/ rubbish including white goods left by the previous tenant, unless supplied originally by WSHA. Floors should be swept out, kitchen cupboards and surfaces and bathrooms surfaces, gas radiators and electric storage/panel heaters etc to be washed down and windows</p>

	washed. Occasionally Housing Officers may request for some carpets/vinyl floor covering to be retained and re-fitted.
<b>GENERAL CONDITION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the property must be wind and watertight and in all other respects reasonably fit for people to live in</li> <li>• the structure and exterior (including drains, gutters and external pipes) must be in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order</li> <li>• installations for supplying water, gas and electricity and for sanitation, space heating and heating water must be in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order</li> <li>• the property must have a satisfactory way of detecting fires and for giving warning in the event of a fire or suspected fire, and</li> <li>• the property must have satisfactory provision for giving warning if carbon monoxide is present in a concentration that is hazardous to health</li> <li>• the property must be free from odours/infestations</li> <li>• the loft (if there is one) must be free from rubbish</li> </ul>
<b>GENERAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	Conduct environmental audit, highlighting any health and safety issues and provide copy to WSHA for placing copy of the form in the house file for handover to new tenant during sign up process.
<b>INTERNAL PASS AND CUPBOARD DOOR</b>	All pass doors should be intact and operating properly, with damaged doors being replaced and non-standard doors being replaced where they do not meet current Building Regulations in relation to fire resistance. Living room and kitchen doors should have functional door-closers where fitted. Bathroom doors should have a lock. Where ironmongery is replaced, it should best match the existing fittings, or if necessary, all ironmongery should be replaced to the same standard.
<b>KEYS</b>	Every tenant will receive two full sets of house keys, two front close door keys or fobs and one rear close door key. Contractor will be re-imbursed for cost of supplying close door keys or fobs and rear close door if instructed to be provided.
<b>KITCHEN UNITS</b>	All kitchen units to be thoroughly checked and hinges replaced/adjusted where necessary. Damaged drawers and doors should be replaced. Damaged

	worktops as a result of burning/water ingress should be replaced. Taps to be operational. Seal to worktop to be intact and free from mould.
<b>MEDICAL ADAPTATIONS</b>	All medical adaptations should be inspected to ensure they are fully operational.
<b>REAR DOOR</b> (Where fitted)	Minimum one mortice on timber doors or security lock on double glazed door. Existing finish should complement the other door in the block or street. If door cannot be made wind, watertight and lockfast, replace existing door with similar or improved component which would be over and above the minimum Letting Standard.
<b>SHOWER</b>	Any instantaneous electric shower installed by WSHA or the tenant should be included in the electric check. Any damaged wallboards or tiles to be replaced. Grout to tiles to shower cubicle to be free from mould and shower tray sealant to be intact and free from mould. Shower to be installed if one is not already in place.
<b>SKIRTINGS/FACINGS</b>	Missing or badly damaged skirtings/facings to be replaced. If possible to repair; should be resecured and filled where necessary.
<b>SMOKE ALARMS/HEAT DETECTORS</b>	<p>Smoke alarm(s)/heat detectors should be tested as part of the electric safety check. Each property should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one smoke alarm in the room the tenant spends most of the day, usually the living room</li> <li>• one smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings</li> <li>• one heat alarm in the kitchen.</li> </ul> <p>All smoke and heat alarms should be mounted on the ceiling and be interlinked.</p>
<b>WALL/CEILING FINISHES</b>	Wall and ceiling plaster/plasterboard surfaces made good to receive decorative finish with all holes/cracks filled and patched. The Housing Officer (Voids) or Technical Officer will determine at inspection if required plaster repairs over and above the minimum Letting Standard.
<b>WATER SUPPLY</b>	WSHA does not anticipate lettable voids being vacant for a long period of time. However, consideration should be paid to whether stopcocks should be shut off and the water supply drained down during winter months or severe cold spells. Where feasible, the cold water supply should be converted to run off the main supply, and where necessary include for a stopcock for incoming main

	<p>and/or isolation of cold water storage tank: tank to be disconnected and remove if practical. All dead legs to be removed as far as possible.</p>
<p><b>WHITE GOODS (MMR ONLY)</b></p>	<p>Must be in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order. Must have an appropriate Fixed Appliance Test (FAT) certificate before letting the property.</p> <p>Cookers/hobs/hoods must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free from obvious defect or damage.</li> <li>• Interior and exterior fittings are clean; free of food and grease that may also discolour glass screens.</li> <li>• Oven racks and oven floor is clean – no burnt food fixed to surfaces.</li> </ul> <p>Individual components should be replaced if they are damaged or hazardous, for example, oven doors not closing properly. Individual components should not be replaced if the issue is solely related to poor cleaning.</p> <p>Total replacement of the oven/cooker/hood should be considered if the oven/cooker/hood does not function and is beyond repair – for example the ignition does not work so the oven or hob cannot produce heat.</p> <p>Washing machine must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free from obvious defect or damage.</li> <li>• Interior and exterior fittings are clean – free from dirt, grime, dust, hair, excessive liquid/powder.</li> <li>• Appliance is not obviously leaking.</li> <li>• Drawers or dispensers for liquid/powder soap in proper working order.</li> </ul> <p>Individual components should be replaced if they are damaged or hazardous, for example, washer doors not closing properly.</p> <p>Individual components should not be replaced if the issue is solely related to poor cleaning.</p> <p>Total replacement of the appliance should be considered if it does not function and is beyond repair – for example there are serious leaks, or the temperature does not work for washing clothes at different settings.</p>

	<p>Fridge/freezer must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free from obvious defect or damage.</li> <li>• Interior and exterior fittings are clean.</li> <li>• No broken shelves or trays.</li> <li>• Trays and doors function correctly.</li> <li>• Temperature control functions as expected (this item should be left cleaned and defrosted but check that temperature control does work)</li> <li>• Appliance is not obviously leaking.</li> </ul> <p>Individual components should be replaced if they are damaged or hazardous, for example, broken shelves or door does not close properly.</p> <p>Individual components should not be replaced if the issue is solely related to poor cleaning.</p> <p>Total replacement of the fridge/freezer should be considered if it does not function and is beyond repair – for example the temperature control does not work which would mean food cannot be stored at safe temperatures.</p>
<b>WINDOWS</b>	<p>All windows should be fully operational, safety catches/safety restrictors checked and operational. Window keys should be issued to tenants where there are fitted locks (WSHA will provide keys to tenant). All ground floor flats to be fitted with lockable handles if not already installed.</p>