

Void Policy

Version Control						
Version	Date drafted	Date approved	Approved by	Date reviewed	Next review date	Owner
Final	16/03/2023	27/03/2023	Board	27/03/2023	16/03/2025	Head of Property and Assets

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Voids are properties which are currently empty because a tenancy has ended and a new tenancy has not yet started. Voids may arise due to formal termination of a tenancy, abandonment of a tenancy, the tenant transferring to another tenancy, eviction of the tenant or the tenant's death.
- 1.2. Because rent is not due on a void, unless agreed with WSHL's landlord, it represents a loss. The aim is to keep this loss to a minimum whilst ensuring that a property is ready to let and to the right applicant as quickly as possible.
- 1.3. The purpose of this policy is to set out our approach when dealing with void properties.
- 1.4. This policy is linked to the Lettings Policy.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to set out our approach when dealing with void properties to ensure that WHSL provides an efficient and customer focused service which:
 - complies with regulatory and legislative requirements;
 - ensures value for money in repairing void properties and achieving the relet standard;
 - balances the need to minimise rent loss whilst letting empty properties to the right applicant in terms of our allocations policy, so ensuring best use of the property;
 - maximises customer satisfaction in relation to the standard of their new home;
 - is consistent with our Asset Management Strategy

3. Scope

3.1 This policy is designed to meet the following strategic objectives:

- To continue to improve the quality and accessibility of our services, meeting customer's needs at different stages of their lives.
- To extend housing and tenure choice for supported housing.
- To demonstrate more clearly value for money and social impact to our range of stakeholders.

3.2 The specific objectives of this policy are:

- To minimise the loss of rental income as a result of properties being empty.

- To ensure that WSHL makes the most effective use of its housing stock to let to the best matched applicant.
- To ensure that tenants and prospective tenants understand the basis for our decisions in managing vacant properties and organising for these to be relet quickly and appropriately.
- To ensure that properties are brought up to a consistent and acceptable standard when let.
- To ensure that staff are well trained and supported to deliver a high-quality service which meets tenants' needs.

4. Approach

- 4.1. Day-to-day responsibility for the operation and monitoring of this policy lies with the appropriate managers. All relevant employees have a responsibility to ensure that this policy is applied as instructed.
- 4.2. Once WSHL know that a tenant is vacating the property, the void process starts. The Housing Officer will arrange a visit during the notice period and create a void specification (Appendix 1) to meet the minimum standard and send this over to the Contractor along with the void expected start date.
- 4.3. If the works are already part of the agreed basket rates (Decoration, Kitchen, Bathroom, Flooring, all Property Compliance Checks) and ad hoc items are in total less than £300 then this is to be instructed. If not, the Contractor will obtain a quote and send this to WSHL within 5 working days.
- 4.4. The service level agreement with the contractor will be 10 days (Unless agreed otherwise) from the void start date to complete the works and upload completion photos.
- 4.5. The quotation will be agreed by the Surveyor and they will update the Void Tracker to notify of start and finish dates.
- 4.6. A weekly phone call will take place between the Contract Manager (Contractor), Housing Manager and Building Surveyor to update the tracker.
- 4.7. The Building Surveyor will manage the Contractor, approve costs and be technical assistance when required. If the void requires major works, the Building Surveyor will inspect and create a specification of works.

5. Financial Limits & Reimbursement

- 5.1. The Contractor has a preauthorised value of £300 outside the agreed basket rates.
- 5.2. The Building Surveyor can authorise up to £3,000 for any void, should a Building Surveyor wish to authorise above this value, approval must be sought from one of the Head of Property and Assets, Operations Director or Finance Director prior to committing to the spend.

6. Void Standard

6.1. The Dwelling Should be Safe and Compliant

- 6.2. The gas installation, including any fixed appliances should be tested, and certified working safe in compliance with current regulations including a CO Detector. Where there is an overdue gas service or the annual gas service is due within the 60-day period, the appliance/s will also be serviced as part of the overall voids work.
- 6.3. The dwelling should be checked for damp. If minor damp is detected, then this will be treated as part of the voids work. Any major damp issues should be referred to the Building Surveyor. This damp check should also include checking ground floors and cellars where applicable.
- 6.4. Any fire doors and fire prevention mechanisms will be checked and if necessary repaired.
- 6.5. Stair treads, banisters, and any handrails both inside and outside the dwelling should be checked for security. If the property does not have a handrail to any stair between the ground and upper storeys, then one is to be provided.
- 6.6. Floorboards and any fixed floor coverings should be secure and free from any tripping hazards.
- 6.7. Where found, any polystyrene ceiling tiles which have been fixed to the kitchen ceiling are to be removed and the ceiling made good if required.
- 6.8. Where a whole property is void between the first day in December and the last day in February then the mains water supply to the dwelling will be turned off at the stop tap and all taps (hot and cold) opened to minimise risk of burst damage whilst empty. The central heating system will also be drained down. This will be identified as part of the void specification. Any voids that have been empty prior to December will be identified as part of the weekly void meeting.
- 6.9. Toilet seats are to be intact and safely fitted.
- 6.10. WC pans are to be replaced if they are found to be cracked.
- 6.11. For Asbestos please refer to the asbestos management policy.



- 6.12. Each property will have a valid EPC prior to a tenant moving in the property with a rating between A and E – with the ambition that all eligible properties will be at C by 2025.
- 6.13. **The Dwelling Should Be Secure**
- 6.14. All doors and windows will be checked for ease of operation and security.
- 6.15. External door locks will be changed and replaced with re-cycled locks from other void properties wherever possible.
- 6.16. All windows must close and be able to either be latched or locked shut. Where windows benefit from existing window locks, these will be checked, and keys provided where possible.
- 6.17. Door entry systems (where applicable) will be tested for correct operation.
- 6.18. Any cracked or broken glass will be replaced.
- 6.19. **The Dwelling Should Be Clean**
- 6.20. All furniture, rubbish, remaining goods, personal effects, loose electrical equipment, and clothes will be disposed of. All laminate flooring and loose floor coverings (carpets and the like) are to be retained unless they are in a poor or unsafe condition - if so, they'll be replaced. All waste material is to be removed from the property and taken on the day of removal to a licensed disposal or storage site as appropriate. WSHL will arrange for fumigation or other appropriate treatment of a void to take place if evidence of vermin or insect infestation is found.
- 6.21. Cleaning is to be done using appropriate cleaning equipment and safe cleaning materials.
- 6.22. All floors and stairs are to be swept and wet mopped. Bathroom floors are to be disinfected.
- 6.23. Any excess moisture / water to be fully removed as part of cleaning process.
- 6.24. Remove all scuffs and paint splashes (where possible)
- 6.25. Any areas of 'Black Mould' are to be washed down with an appropriate anti fungicide in accordance with the mould specification. If mould is visible on or beneath the wallpaper, the wallpaper shall be removed, and mould treatment works carried out accordingly. Treat or replace any mould affected grouting or sealant. All work will be done in line with WSHL's Damp and Mould Policy.
- 6.26. Loose wall coverings only are to be removed.
- 6.27. Clean down all doors, doorframes, architraves, including both sides of any external

doors, skirting boards, internal windows, window frames, cills, radiators (including behind the radiator) and pipe work.

- 6.28. Remove all drawing pins, nails, screws, picture hooks, carpet grippers, fixings, and the like from all surfaces.
- 6.29. All electrical sockets, light fittings and switches are to be thoroughly cleaned. If electrical fittings are badly stained (i.e., badly ingrained staining which cannot easily be cleaned off) then these should be replaced.
- 6.30. Ensure cobwebs are removed from all areas.
- 6.31. Kitchen units, including all work surfaces, cupboards, drawers, boiler casings, cooker hobs, ovens, extractor fans / cooker extractor units, sinks, baths, showers, wash hand basins, tile splash backs, taps, WC pans, WC seats, cisterns and pipework are to be cleaned and sanitised.
- 6.32. **Decoration and flooring standards for all the Voids**
- 6.33. All choices have been chosen prior to the works to ensure there is a timely turn around on all voids.
- 6.34. The first approach will be to provide a deep clean of the room, however, if the flooring and decoration are not to a fair standard and need of further works, we will provide the following;
- A redecoration of the room, the general decoration works will consist of filling and sanding the walls, application of a single mist coat and 2x coats of Dulux Easycare Washable and Tough Matt. All void room walls will be painted in Dulux Easycare Brilliant White.
 - Ceilings will all receive 2x coats of Dulux Matt in brilliant white.
 - Woodwork will be on an ad hoc basis and only done if required and cannot be cleaned – if required the work will consist of rubbing down and filling the woodwork along with 2 coats of Brilliant White oil-based gloss or a Brilliant White satin depending on choice made by the property.
 - If flooring is unable to be cleaned, we will replace with either a carpet or vinyl depending on the needs of the service user / property.
 - If carpet is to be laid, the following carpet will be laid; Rocket loop pile in silver - https://www.carpetright.co.uk/carpets/rocket-cuts-loop-pile-carpet/?VariationId=V_5637375400



- If vinyl is to be laid, the following vinyl will be used: Towy 532 Chianti
<https://www.carpetright.co.uk/vinyl/towy-532-chianti-vinyl/>

6.35. Any further works that need carried out in void rooms will be done on an ad hoc basis and will need to be scoped to receive further quotes.

7. Policy Review

7.1. This policy will be reviewed every two years.