



Void Management Policy

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1. Purpose

We aim to provide safe, secure, and affordable homes to the new and existing customers.

This policy sets our approach to the management of domestic void properties owned or managed by North Devon Homes (NDH).

2. Principles

The following principles will apply to this policy:

- It will promote health and safe working practices whilst meeting our compliance obligations
- It will monitor performance of our voids systems and processes on an ongoing basis
- It will take all reasonable steps to ensure that properties meet or exceed our defined Letting standard
- It will deliver repairs and improvements in the most cost effective way using our internal contractor wherever possible
- It will seek to ensure value for money throughout the voids process
- It will undertake a pre-tenancy assessment for customers moving into a new home
- It will work with our partners to making best use of the property
- It will provide incoming customers with key information on the property and the local services available
- It will assess the long term viability of property upon notification that the property is becoming void
- It will use the opportunity that is presented at void to ensure up to date records of stock are maintained
- It will hold monthly reviews of performance with key staff

3. Review

We will review this policy and procedures every three years or following any relevant change to government policy, regulation or legislation.

This will ensure that it continues to be relevant and meeting reasonable customer expectation.

4. Scope

The policy covers the management of the void process from receiving notification of the existing tenancy ending, to the re-letting of the property to a new customer.

5. Responsibilities

Responsibility for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented is with the Head of Asset Management for the repairs and maintenance elements and the Head of Housing and Customer Services for the lettings and handover of the property elements. The different aspects of the void process are summarised in the table below:

6. Policy Statement

Policy Statement	Section
We will promote healthy and safe working practices whilst meeting our compliance obligations	6.1
We will monitor performance of our voids systems and processes on an ongoing basis	6.2
We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that properties meet our defined Letting standard	6.3
We will deliver repairs and improvements in the most cost effective way using our internal contractor wherever possible	6.4
We will work with our partners to make best use of the property	6.5
We will provide incoming customers with important information on the property and the local services available	6.6
We will assess the long term viability of property upon notification that the property is becoming void	6.7
We will use the opportunity that is presented at void to ensure up to date records of stock are maintained	6.8

6.1 Health and Safety

We will promote healthy and safe working practices whilst meeting our compliance obligations

Scope

We will aim to take reasonable steps to provide a safe working environment for all contractors working at a void property, and ensure the building has been tested to meet our safety requirements before the new customer is given the keys to their new home.

Application

The company will complete a plan for safe working for contractors involved in the void works for the property; setting out roles and responsibilities, and how work is expected to be undertaken.

The risk assessment and plan will be completed before a contractor is allowed access to the property and will as a minimum meet the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations of 2015.

The programme of work will provide details of any relevant information for the contractors including the information that we might hold on the known location of any asbestos present in the building.

We will test all services present, to ensure they meet the relevant safety standards before the property is re-let. These services may include:

- gas appliances
- electrics including smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms
- The identification, and where necessary, testing and / or removal of any asbestos in the property
- solid fuel appliances and other heating systems
- fire doors in the property
- the assessment of risk of any potential Legionella

We will test any gas appliances and isolate the gas supply to a property for the duration of any works. The Lettings Officer will provide the incoming customer with copies of the safety certificates and appropriate information for the property.

6.2 Performance Monitoring

We will monitor performance of our voids systems and processes on an ongoing basis

Scope

We will measure our performance through tracking the rent loss of an empty home and the total cost of repairs.

Application

We will measure the following areas of performance:

- The loss of income whilst the property is vacant (this includes the loss of rent; service charges income and any discretionary non-chargeable periods)
- The total repairs costs of the void property broken down by individual trade, and/or contractor.
- The amount of time a property remains empty
- The collection of any rechargeable works that are invoiced to outgoing customers

We will identify properties held strategically void (for future disposal; re-development or decant purposes), and those properties being re-let as part of the normal voids process and provide separate measurement.

The lost income for each category of void will be recorded and be a key performance indicator provided to the Board on a quarterly basis. We will ensure that any property damage or clearance works that are required on a void property are recharged to the outgoing customer.

The repair costs and repair completion times will be reviewed monthly by the Response Repairs Manager and the time taken to complete the lettings elements of the process will be monitored by the Head of Customer and Housing Services.

6.3 Letting Standard

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that properties meets our defined Letting Standard

Scope

We will assess the level of repair for each vacancy and incorporate improvement works where required. The Letting Standard (attached in Appendix A) will be available to provide incoming customer) with details of what they can expect as a minimum level of repair / service.

Application

The Home2Home Inspector will undertake a thorough inspection of the empty property to ensure the areas listed in the Lettings Standard are adhered to correctly. This will include energy improvement works to ensure that loft spaces are insulated and low energy light bulbs provided. The inspector will also assess any structural issues with the property, particularly if there is evidence of damp and condensation.

We will also take the opportunity to remove solid fuel appliances and any non standard fixtures and fittings as part of the void works.

All contractors (including internal contractors) will be made aware of the requirements of the standard and the need to comply with it fully.

The Home2Home Inspector or voids charge hand will undertake some post inspections to confirm that works have been undertaken as requested and to an appropriate standard. The voids and Lettings Officer will also visit properties when handing over the keys and will feedback on any issues found.

Our involved customer group will also undertake post inspections to provide feedback on the quality of the void work and to check the standard set has been met

The incoming customer(s) will be provided with safety certification confirming compliance with these requirements and a copy of the post inspection report. The voids and lettings Officer will also notify customer of any major works that are likely to take place over the coming 2 years such as a kitchen replacement, particularly where the customer has been left with a non matching kitchen.

6.4 Repairs and Improvements

We will deliver repairs and improvements in the most cost effective way using our internal contractor wherever possible, seeking to ensure value for money

Scope

As part of the performance focus on overall void costs there will be presumption to offer void works to the in-house (Home 2 Home) maintenance team wherever possible. The time taken, the standard of workmanship and the cost incurred, to repair vacant homes will be monitored to ensure expected time; standards and costs are met.

Application

The use of our Home 2 Home in-house maintenance team both supports delivery of value for money and Corporate Strategy

External contractors will be employed for specialist trades and / or where Home 2 Home does not have the capacity to undertake the works within expected timescales where there are peaks in workload.

Where Home 2 Home do not have the capacity to immediately undertake the works, the additional cost of out-sourcing the works will be weighed against the increased loss of income if the property remains vacant longer, to decide which is most cost effective option.

The Response Repairs Manager will monitor the success of this on an ongoing and regular basis.

Contractors will be expected to confirm when they start and complete works. This time will be measured and reviewed at regular contractor meetings and through monthly review meetings with key staff involved in the voids process.

The Home2Home Inspector will carry out a minimum of 50% post inspections for works completed by external contractors to provide a quality assurance that the works have been completed to the standard expected.

We will assess, in conjunction with the new customer, whether any planned improvement works can be undertaken after they have moved into the property rather than when the property is void which may incur additional rent loss. It is our preference however to try and complete works whilst the property is void.

6.5 Partnership Working

We will work with our partners to make best use of the property

Scope

We will aim to find a suitable household that makes best use of the property in terms of capacity, bedroom size; any adaptations provided along with location of available support or employment, if required.

Application

We will normally look to allocate a property to a household that requires and can make full use of the number of bedrooms available in the vacant home. This is both to support the aims of the Local Authority, to meet

expected standards and to support customers who may otherwise be impacted by the spare room subsidy.

Where appropriate we may exercise discretion. All instances of discretion will be reviewed by a senior manager and ordinarily will be reviewed by the Head of Customer and Housing Services. Examples of where we may exercise discretion include:

- Where there is a Local Lettings Policy in place, that limits the number of children in a particular location
- Where is a local occupancy agreement in place and the number of persons meeting this criterion is limited (in such circumstances we may allow one additional bedroom beyond the needs of the household).
- Where the property has specific adaptations that limit the number of potential suitable applicants (in such circumstances we may allow one additional bedroom beyond the needs of the household).
- Where an existing tenant is looking to downsize from a large family house (3 bedrooms or more) we may consider offering them a 2 bed property if appropriate.
- If the property is needed for a temporary decant,
- The resulting vacancy is of strategic importance and / or will allow other customers in need to benefit
- The Lettings Officer will ensure that the property meets the needs of the customer e.g. it is already suitably adapted if there are specialist needs. NDH do not want to put pressure on the Local Authority adaptations budgets unless adaptations are agreed with the Local Authority prior to acceptance of the property.

6.6 Important Information

We will provide incoming customers with important information on the property and the local services available

Scope

We want to support new customers to have a smooth transition into their new home by providing them with all of the important information on the property and local services available.

Application

When the new customer collects the keys for their home we will provide them with an information pack which includes the customer handbook which will include important information on their home and Neighbourhood. This will include where appropriate and available:

- Safety certificates for the electrics; gas and legionella where applicable

- Details and location of any known asbestos in the property
- An Energy Performance Certificate
- Operating details for the heating system installed in their home
- Details about rent payment; key tenancy conditions and how to apply for any consents required
- Refuse collection day in the area
- Key Local information (e.g. Location of local shop(s) or public transport)
- Information on location of stopcock, meters etc
- Leaflets providing relevant advice and guidance

6.7 Long Term Viability

We will assess the long term viability of property upon notification that the property is becoming void

Scope

When notification that the property will becoming vacant is received, based on the Stock Appraisal principles agreed by the Board, we may decide to undertake an options appraisal prior to re-letting the property. This will normally be done when there is reason for concern about the location, suitability for our customers or repairs liability that a home may present.

Application

If the property meets some or all of the Stock Appraisal principles then we will undertake an assessment of its long term viability.

If the assessment recommends that the property is disposed of then a report will be taken to the Executive Team and then ultimately to the Board providing the supporting information and rationale for this recommendation.

Once the Executive Team has approved the recommendation to dispose of the property it will be classified as a Strategic Void and any rent loss incurred will be accounted for separately (as described under the Performance Focus section in this policy).

6.8 Record Keeping

We will use the opportunity that is presented at void to ensure up to date records of stock are maintained

Scope

We will use the voids inspection to verify if the existing stock information we hold on the property is up to date.

Application

We will carry out a stock condition survey on each void to ensure the asset management information we hold for individual property components is accurate.

We will also record any adaptations in the property which will remain and for which we will have a repairing obligation.

7. Consultation

Who has been consulted in developing the Policy?

Date	Consultation methodology	Challenge / impact / result
February 2017	Customer Forum meeting	
September 2020	Scrutiny Review of Void Standard	Customer leaflet developed, patios to remain if in good condition, improved garden and decoration standard
October 2021	Key staff involved in the void process	Elements changed in relation to damp and condensation
November 2021	Zoom meeting with customer group	Areas of policy revised to include customer inspections etc. Standard updated

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8. Equality Impact Assessment form

8.1 Potential impact on each of the diversity “groups”.

Strand	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Comments / evidence (if negative impact, how does the policy address this)?
Race	X			Those with disabilities are matched to appropriate properties. Sheltered scheme
Disability			X	
Gender	X			
Gender Reassignment	X			
Sexual orientation	X			
Religion or belief	X			
Age			X	
Rural issues	X			

Social Inclusion issues	X			properties will be decorated fully if required
Pregnancy and maternity	X			
Marriage and civil partnership	X			

8.2 Does the Policy promote equality of opportunity?

Yes

Next review date:	Responsible Officer
Three years Date: November 2024	Response Repairs Manager
Author	Related Documents
Claire Fallow Head of Asset Management 01271 312500 claire.fallow@ndh-ltd.co.uk	Appendix A: Void Letting Standard Appendix B: Customer leaflet for our empty homes standard