

## **VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Voids Management Policy sets out Karibu Community Homes's (KCH) approach to the management and repair of empty (void) properties in order to keep void times to a minimum, and minimise any ensuing loss of rental income.
- 1.2 This policy covers general needs accommodation.
- 1.3 Voids are properties which are empty either because a tenancy has ended and a new tenancy has not yet started. Voids occur following a tenancy being terminated, a tenancy being abandoned, a tenant transferring to an alternative property, eviction of the tenant, or a tenant's death.

## **2. PURPOSE**

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
- 2.2 Outline the key principles of the void management service
- 2.3 Set out how voids will be re-let as quickly as possible by turning around quickly.
- 2.4 Show how continuous improvement will be met through the efficient repair and management of a void.

## **3.0 SCOPE**

- 3.1 This policy sets out how KCH will carry out the management of a void from the notification of a tenancy ending to the point the property is re-let, and includes :
  - End of tenancy management, including inspections;
  - Management of exceptional voids requiring significant major works;
  - Rechargeable repairs.

## **4. KEY PRINCIPLES**

- 4.1 This policy aims to ensure that the property is properly managed when empty, and is brought up to KCH's relet standard prior to a new tenant moving in.
- 4.2 It endeavours to ensure the outgoing tenant is aware of their obligations prior to leaving the property to keep KCH's costs to a minimum.
- 4.3 To make provision for recharging tenants who have caused deliberate damage to their property.
- 4.4 To minimise rent loss incurred when a property is being repaired.
- 4.5 To reduce KCH's costs for council tax liability for empty properties.
- 4.6 To re-let property as quickly as possible.

## **5. END OF TENANCY**

- 5.1 When leaving a property the tenant is required to provide 28 days' notice, which is stipulated in the tenancy agreement. The property should be clear of all possessions and all KCH's fixtures and fittings should be left in good condition.
- 5.2 There are circumstances when a void arises through other scenarios, such as abandonment, eviction and death. These cases are dealt with separately and in line with legislative requirements,
- 5.3 Once written notice has been received an inspection visit will be arranged to assess the condition of the property and to highlight any repairs the tenant needs to carry out before leaving the property.
- 5.4 At this point, if the tenant has made any unauthorised works to the property they will be asked to reinstate the property to its original state and advised failure to do so will mean they will be liable for reinstatement costs.
- 5.5.1 A further inspection will be made immediately after the tenant has left to check a number of items:
  - To check the property is empty and make arrangements for the removal of any items remaining.
  - Determine on the advice of the Void Surveyor if the property can be advertised.
  - Determine on the advice of the Void Surveyor if the property can be viewed whilst works are underway.

- Ensure property is secure and arrange for a lock change.
- Identify any repair items which may be the responsibility of the previous tenant.
- Arrange for all installations to be checked.
- Check if an asbestos survey is required.
- Check if any components which are part of the Decent Homes Standard are due to be replaced.
- Establish any works required to achieve the relet standard.
- Identify any works required to comply with health and safety requirements.
- Check if any works needed are major works or require an options appraisal undertaking.

## **6. RECHARGEABLE REPAIRS**

- 6.1 KCH will recharge outgoing tenant for the costs of making good or renewing in the property anything which may be considered outside normal wear and tear. Recharges will be applied to the cost of cleaning and/or de-infesting the property, and clearing any rubbish or belongings left by the outgoing tenant. Photographs will be taken by way of evidence of what the charges are based on.
- 6.2 KCH will make efforts to contact the previous tenant to advise them of the items for which a recharge is being applied and how to make payment.
- 6.3 The charges will be set up as a sundry account to the rent account.

## **7. SAFETY CHECKS/INSPECTIONS**

- 7.1 KCH will ensure that all electrical systems are working safely. Where KCH provides white goods as part of furnished homes KCH will ensure that these are safe to use.
- 7.2 All gas systems will be capped off at the point that a property becomes empty. KCH will carry out visual inspections and if required carry out re-commissioning of boilers once the property is ready to be let.
- 7.4 KCH's 'Voids Compliance Tracker' will be updated to monitor the compliance status of each void property. Once the Tracker is updated, KCH's Compliance Team will provide the Housing Team with a "Voids Ready-to-Let Pack", in a digital and physical form.
- 7.5 Void properties scheduled for a pre-void inspection will receive high priority status on the Tracker and reminders will be sent to prompt surveyors and contractors about pre-void inspections to prevent delay.
- 7.6 All pre-void inspections and post-repair inspection dates must be consistently recorded in the Voids Compliance Tracker and each property will be issued with a pre-void inspection form and post-repair sign-off form.
- 7.7 The Voids Ready-to-Let Pack will include all relevant H&S certificates and a property will not be re-let without it.
- 7.8 An asbestos survey will be carried out on all empty properties. If the results of the test are positive, remedial work to remove or make safe will be completed prior to commencement of repairs work.

## **8. ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE (EPC)**

- 8.1 Energy performance Certificates will be carried out once every 10 years. When a new resident moves into a property, they will be provided with a copy of an EPC and a related information leaflet.

## **9. THE RELET STANDARD**

- 9.1 KCH has a detailed relet standard, the checklist of all items to be reviewed at void stage is attached at Appendix 1.
- 9.2 The relet standard sets out the minimum standard required to let a property and is not a

modernisation or improvement standard.

- 9.3 KCH will keep prospective tenants up to date on their tenancy date and keep them informed of progress of work.
- 9.4 In some circumstances decorations vouchers will be issued to the incoming tenant, depending on the state of decoration at the property.

## **10. MAJOR WORKS VOIDS**

- 10.1 Some properties becoming void may require major works to achieve the relet standard.
- 10.2 Our definition of major works aligns with those set out by CORE (Continuous Recording of Social Housing Letting and Sales Data), repairs which need to be carried out so that the property can be re-let. They include structural works, site works, and service installations and are works that cannot be completed with the tenant in situ.
- 10.3 In some cases the level of major works required may be excessive and costly to bring a property to the relet standard. In this case an Options Appraisal is prepared for the Executive Management Team to review and determine if the works should go ahead. Factors to be considered in this appraisal are:
- Overall cost of works.
  - Demand and likely revenue from the property.
  - Loss of income if the property remains void.
- 10.4 If this review concludes that the works are financially viable the works will go ahead. If it is determined the works are not financially viable the property is taken out of use and in some cases disposal may be considered.

## **11. POST MOVE IN REPAIRS**

- 11.1 Some minor works, which are not required for health and safety may be carried out once a tenant has moved in and should not delay the void turnaround.

## **12. LEGISLATION**

- The Housing Act 1985.
- Localism Act.
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR) as amended 2018. Approved practice and guidance.
- British Standard 7671 As Amended (Electrical Installations).
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.
- Equalities Act 2010.

## **13. GENERAL**

- 13.1 The Decent Homes Standard will be adhered to when replacing elements when either the property is empty or post moving in.
- 13.2 All properties will be cleaned, including mould removal, prior to the relet.
- 13.3 When any items are left in a property in good condition/good working order they may be offered to the incoming tenant. They will be gifted to the new tenant on the understanding there is no ongoing liability with KCH.
- 13.4 All relet properties will all be issued with an Energy Performance Certificate.
- 13.5 This policy sits alongside the Allocations and Lettings Policy
- 13.6 Void performance is subject to monthly KPI reporting and scrutiny.

## 14. Appendices

### Appendix 1 - The KCH Re let Standard

# Appendix 1 – Void Lettable Standard Checklist

<p><b>General</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The property will be free from rubbish and will be swept clean.</li> <li>• The previous resident's fittings (including lights), furniture, carpets and laminate type flooring will be removed from the property (including lofts, cellars and cupboards) and disposed of responsibly.</li> <li>• The property will be checked for asbestos which will be removed or encapsulated</li> <li>• All surfaces and the inside of windows will be cleaned on completion of works</li> <li>• In blocks of flats the area immediately outside the property will be included in the Void works</li> <li>• The property will be checked to ensure it meets this standard prior to re-letting.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Bathrooms/WC's</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All sanitary ware will be free from leaks, chips and marks.</li> <li>• Taps will operate effectively</li> <li>• The toilet flush will operate effectively and a new toilet seat will be fitted.</li> <li>• All taps, plugs and chains will be in good working order</li> <li>• Minimum splash back to baths is three courses of tiles and minimum splash back to hand basin is two courses of tiles.</li> <li>• Splash back to electric shower area (only) to be full height to ceiling</li> <li>• Grouting and sealant will be in sound condition</li> <li>• Floors will be fitted with slip resistant floor covering (vinyl)</li> <li>• The bath panel and any ducting will be in sound condition</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Kitchens</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All units and worktops will be in good working order</li> <li>• Waste and stop taps for a washing machine will be provided</li> <li>• Floors will be fitted with slip resistant floor covering (vinyl).</li> <li>• Space will be made for a cooker, washing machine, dishwasher and fridge-freezer</li> <li>• Minimum splash back to sinks and units to be three courses of tiles and cooker space tiled to ground level.</li> <li>• Grouting and sealant will be in sound condition</li> <li>• Taps will operate effectively</li> <li>• All stopcocks and gate valves will be in good working order</li> <li>• All units will have a stopcock to the cold water mains</li> <li>• In the event of integral appliances, these will be tested and provided in good working order.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Door and windows</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All doors &amp; windows to fit their frames and open and close with reasonable tolerance</li> <li>• All door &amp; window furniture to be present and in good working order.</li> <li>• Door closers &amp; intumescent strips will be fitted to all <u>fire</u> doors</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Yale and Mortice locks will be fitted to the front door and keys provided.</li> <li>• Locks to external post boxes will be replaced and keys provided</li> <li>• Bathroom and toilet doors will be fitted with an appropriate bolt.</li> <li>• Keys will be provided for all external doors (we do not provide locks to internal doors)</li> <li>• All internal doors should be ply faced flush. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All glazing to be intact, 6mm laminated safety glass will be used where required to meet building regulations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Drains and wastes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stopcocks and gate valves will be in good working order. The property will have a stopcock to the cold water mains</li> <li>• All drain gulleys will be clear. Wastes and drains will be checked for blockages &amp; cleared.</li> </ul>	
<b>Electrics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) electrical check will be carried out and the certificate provided to the incoming resident</li> <li>• All work identified in the NICEIC check as requiring urgent attention will be completed before the property is re-let</li> <li>• Smoke detectors will be fitted to all properties</li> <li>• Sockets should be double: LR4 DR3 SB2 DB3 K6 H1</li> </ul>	
<b>Gas Appliances</b>	a) When the property becomes void, the gas supply should be capped at the meter as soon as possible.	
	b) When the resident moves out, a Gas Safety Check is to be carried out and a LGSR shall be issued, with a copy to be kept in digital and physical form in the "Voids Ready to Let Pack", a copy of which shall be provided to the next resident and a copy kept by KCH.	
<b>Floors and stairs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All floors and stairs will be in a condition that allows for Tenant's floor coverings to be fitted</li> <li>• All kitchens and bathrooms floors will be fitted with slip resistant floor covering.</li> </ul>	
<b>Gardens and fencing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All rubbish in gardens will be removed and overgrown shrubbery will be cut back.</li> <li>• Any out buildings (in good condition) eg green houses, timber sheds will be "gifted" to the incoming resident</li> <li>• Paths and paved areas leading to the front door and immediately outside the back door will be level and in sound condition.</li> <li>• Fences and gates that form the boundary to the dwelling will be repaired.</li> </ul>	