

Void Management Policy & Procedure

Approved by:	Leadership Management Team
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Policy developed by:	HHT Staff Team & TQA Committee

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Appendix 1 – Lettable Standard

Appendix 2 – Lettable Standard Checklist

1 Purpose and scope of this policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
- 1.1.1 Set out Hornsey Housing Trust's (HHT) approach to managing empty (void) properties within its stock.
- 1.1.2 Minimise the amount of rental income loss and cost incurred from void properties.
- 1.1.3 Reduce the length of time that homes remain empty.
- 1.1.4 Ensure the best use of HHT's housing stock.
- 1.1.5 Ensure that properties are managed efficiently throughout the void process by supplying transparency in tasks and responsibilities.
- 1.2 The scope of this policy
- 1.2.1 This policy applies to all homes that that Hornsey Housing Trust (HHT) owns and manages. It also applies to all staff and contractors that are involved in dealing with and managing the voids process on behalf of HHT.
- 1.3 In implementing this policy HHT will:
- 1.3.1 Comply with relevant legislation, and meet its responsibilities and duties as a landlord set by meeting the Regulator for Social Housing's Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England
- 1.3.2 Set out the Lettable Standard for its void/empty properties.
- 1.3.3 Set out HHT's and tenants' responsibilities within the void management process.

2 Policy Statement

2.1 Hornsey Housing Trust (HHT) is committed to meeting housing need, maintaining a good standard of housing and maximising its rental income through the efficient and effective management of its void properties.

3 Legal Framework

- 3.1 This Policy is underpinned by:
 - Housing Acts 1985, 1988, 1996 and 2004
 - Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
 - Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations 2022
 - The Gas Safety (Installations and Use) Regulations 2018

- The Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2015
- Building Safety Act 2022
- HHT Voids Management Procedure
- HHT Tenancy Agreement

4 Definition and circumstances

- 4.1 A void is a property that is currently empty either because a tenancy has ended and a new tenancy has not yet started, or a property that has been acquired/built and is not yet let.
- 4.2 Void properties can arise from the following reasons:
- 4.2.1 Formal termination of tenancy by the tenant
- 4.2.2 Transfer of a tenant from one property to another
- 4.2.3 Death of a tenant
- 4.2.4 Abandonment of a tenancy
- 4.2.5 Eviction of a tenant
- 4.2.6 A tenant moving out for regeneration purposes
- 4.2.7 Management void arising from decant requirement
- 4.2.8 Major works long term void

5 Approach and method

- 5.1 All our homes will be let in accordance with our Allocations Policy.
- 5.2 Nominations agreements are agreed with Haringey Council, and will usually be split into:
- 5.2.1 New Build homes a newly built home for rent, which has never been tenanted before. 100% of new build lets are offered to Haringey Council and no internal transfers will apply at first let stage.
- 5.2.2 Relets any home that is not on its first let, and will usually have a void period between tenancies, to ensure the home is let according to our Lettable Standard, in a safe, clean condition and with all necessary repairs completed.
- 5.2.3 On an annual basis, relets will normally be allocated 75% to the Local Authority to make direct lets, and up to 25% to HHT tenants seeking a transfer. The use of choice-based lettings and advertising properties is also intended to minimise void periods.

5.2 Terminations

- 5.2.1 Tenants are required to give 4 weeks' written notice to end their tenancy as stated under the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement. If keys are kept longer than the 4 weeks' notice, further rent will be charged. The 4 weeks' notice period also applies to a next of kin or executor of the estate following the death of a tenant.
- 5.2.2 If a tenant fails to give proper notice but surrenders the keys to their home, HHT can assume that by vacating their home the tenant has brought the tenancy to an end and may take possession of the property.

5.3 Transfers

- 5.3.1 Where a void property has been allocated to a transfer applicant, the transferring tenant is obliged to provide the 4 weeks' notice on their former home. It is important that the transfer applicant returns the keys promptly and leaves the property in a clear and clean condition. If there is good reason to achieve the transfer quickly, a reduced notice period can be accepted by the outgoing tenant, but this must be agreed by the Housing Manager.
- 5.3.2 We will ensure inspection visits during the pre-transfer period to allow us to make a partial assessment of the scope and nature of works and streamline the process.

5.4 Tenant Responsibilities

- 5.4.1 Tenants must meet their obligations as described under the terms of the Tenancy Agreement, including giving the required notice period. The tenant must leave the property in an acceptable condition which as far as practically possible meets the Lettable Standard (Appendix 1), except for fair wear and tear.
- 5.4.2 Where the property is in poor condition, we may recharge outgoing tenants for:
 - any repairs required to the property which are due to tenant damage, disrepair or neglect
 - changing locks or replacing keys if not returned
 - garden clearance and removal of rubbish, furniture or personal belongings

6 Repairs and improvements

- 6.1 Properties will always be let in line with our Lettable Standard. We recognise that often the main factor in delaying the relet of a void is the need to carry out repairs and improvements.
- Where practicable, appropriate repairs and improvements will be undertaken while the property is still occupied by the outgoing tenant, or before /after the new tenant has moved in.
- 6.3 Alterations in void properties left by previous tenants will be left for the incoming tenant only where they are to an acceptable standard, fit for purpose and pass any required safety inspections. If HHT does not intend to maintain such alterations or fixtures, the new tenant must be advised that they are 'gifted' and sign an acceptance that they are be responsible for maintaining such items.
- 6.4 Properties previously adapted for particular needs will be assessed as to their practicality for relet as part of the specification process, to ensure that we do not create letting problems. If there are identified tenants suited to the adaptations, for cost efficiency we will retain the adaptations. More bespoke alterations may require reinstatement for letting purposes.
- 6.5 Targets are set for statutory checks and repair work, in accordance with the following table.

Category of works	Target
Minor	
Minor works shall include items such as mandatory safety checks; removal of small amounts of furniture / abandoned items; cleaning of property; lock changes.	To be completed within 3 working days.
Routine	
It is anticipated that most voids will fall into this category and will involve multiple trade works in addition to other works included in the Minor category.	To be completed within 5 working days.

Major	
Includes properties requiring significant refurbishment: full replastering and redecoration of multiple rooms; installation of gas central heating; replacement kitchen or bathroom.	To be completed within 20 working days.

7 Void management procedure

- 7.1 Pre-void Inspection
- 7.1.1 The Housing Officer should inspect an imminent void property within 5 working days of receiving notification. This will allow maximum time to organise works and for the tenant to rectify any defects for which they are responsible.
- 7.1.2 If void works are required, the Housing Officer must pass the keys to the property team upon receipt.
- 7.1.3 If void works are not required, the Housing team will arrange a clear and clean and ensure the floor covering is in acceptable condition. The Repairs & Compliance Manager will carry out the required void safety checks and keys should go into the void key cupboard, ready for the next let.
- 7.2 Void property subject to internal transfer or mutual exchange
- 7.2.1 The Housing Officer should identify and list all required repairs and items for clearance.
- 7.2.2 Details of the required works and timescale are agreed with the tenant. Where possible the tenant should be advised of any rechargeable repair in writing and be given the opportunity to carry out required works themselves prior to the keys being returned.
- 7.2.3 Photographs of identified rechargeable repairs will be taken prior to works commencing and be saved to the former tenant file.
- 7.2.4 A follow up visit should be agreed before vacation of the property. Failure of the tenant to complete the works may result in recharges.

7.3 Void Inspection

- 7.3.1 The Asset Surveyor should carry out the void inspection within 3 working days of the keys being returned.
- 7.3.2 During void inspections, the Asset Surveyor will also seek to identify any planned maintenance improvements which may logically be completed with the void works to maintain the property standard and desirability.
- 7.3.3 The Asset Surveyor will liaise with the voids contractor and agree the works to be carried out.
- 7.3.4 Repair orders must be placed immediately following an inspection. Contractors should always be given an agreed specification of works and a target completion date.
- 7.3.5 The extent and standard of repair work expected by the contractors should be agreed in accordance with the HHT's Lettable Standard (Appendix 1) and checklists for Street & Sheltered Properties (Appendix 2.)
- 7.3.6 The checklist highlights in detail the items which should be met to achieve the overall condition identified in the HHT's Lettable Standard.
- 7.3.7 Any repairs required to empty properties will be categorised into appropriate categories of work.
- 7.3.8 The Asset Surveyor will carry out 100% post inspections on all repair work to void properties.

7.3 Void Work

- 7.3.1 If a property requires only minor works, safety compliance works will be completed while the property is empty. In certain cases, some work may be completed after the new tenant has moved into the property.
- 7.3.2 If the property requires routine work (i.e. it does not meet the definition of a decent home) work will take place to ensure it meets the minimum Lettable Standard.
- 7.3.3 If the property is a major works void and involves significant refurbishment, a decision will be made as to the most cost-effective solution for the property in question.
- 7.3.4 Work which may put health and safety at risk, such as the removal of asbestos or damp treatments, will always be completed when the property is empty and prior to the start of the new tenancy.
- 7.3.5 All voids will be issued with electrical and gas safety certificates and an EPC in compliance with our legal requirements.
- 7.3.6 In accordance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating Systems (HHSRS) contained within the Housing Act 2004, the property should be

- free from "any deficiency that might give rise to a hazard which interferes with or puts at risk the health or safety or lives of the occupants."
- 7.3.7 Redecoration will be carried out as required, or decoration vouchers will be issued to the incoming tenant where the property is in such a condition that it does not meet the Trust's Lettable Standards.
- 7.3.8 Floor coverings will be provided and gifted to the incoming tenant.

8 Monitoring, measuring and reporting

- 8.1 Performance against the following metrics with be reported to HHT's Board of Management and Tenant Quality Assurance Committee:
- 8.1.1 Percentage of rental income lost through void periods.
- 8.1.2 Relet target durations (from date last tenancy ended to start of the new tenancy).
- 8.1.3 Total cost of void works per property

9 Roles and responsibilities

- 9.1 The **Head of Property** will have overall responsibility for the implementation of the Voids Policy. The management of void properties involves both the Housing and Asset Management functions of the business. The following tasks are allocated to staff in the process
- 9.2. The **Housing Officer** is responsible for:
- 9.2.1 Ensuring that outgoing tenants are aware of their responsibilities with regard to notice of termination, removal of belongings and any rechargeable repairs.
- 9.2.2 Liaising with the appropriate agencies regarding tenant transfers and exchanges and Housing Benefit payments for outgoing tenants.
- 9.2.3 Advising the Asset Surveyor of the need for a voids inspection.
- 9.2.5 Arranging for and enabling the viewing of void properties by prospective tenants; and recording any reasons for refusal of a property.
- 9.2.6 Notifying relevant agencies of transfer of responsibility for utilities and council tax to new tenants upon relet.
- 9.3 The **Asset Surveyor** is responsible for;
- 9.3.1 Carrying out void inspections and specifying repair works as necessary.
- 9.3.2 Carrying out post-inspections of 100% of voids works. Post-inspections may be carried out simultaneously with new tenant viewings.

- 9.3.3 Liaising with the voids contractor to ensure that all specified works are carried out within target times.
- 9.3.4 Maintaining up to date records of voids progress.
- 9.4 The **Repairs & Compliance Manager** is responsible for:
- 9.4.1 Instructing the specified repair works in relation to void properties.
- 9.4 The **Housing Manager** is responsible for:
- 9.5.1 Notifying Haringey Council of properties where notice of termination has been given and requesting early nominations before the property becomes void.
- 9.5.2 Performance monitoring and producing void performance reports for the management team in order that they can verify performance against stated objectives.
- 9.5.3 Maintaining up to date records of voids progress and tenant circumstances on our IT systems.
- 9.5.4 Liaising with the Asset Surveyor & voids contractor to ensure that properties are ready to let.

10 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

10.1 This policy is applied in line with HHT's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy along with the associated legislation, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010. At HHT we aim to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and respect protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation

11 Departure from policy standard

11.1 In exceptional circumstances determined by the Chief Executive or Head of Property, there may be a requirement to work outside the policy standards. This must be fully justified in terms of the business of HHT and the wellbeing of our tenants.

12 Review

12.1 The policy will be reviewed every 3 years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to best practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.



Lettable Standard for homes

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The HHT Lettable Standard is our minimum required to make a home habitable. The Standard takes into consideration how "lettable" a property may be, and properties which are difficult to let, may require additional specification.
- 1.2 All homes must meet basic standards to achieve weather tightness, safe and clean surroundings and be free from disrepair.
- 1.3 All voids will meet the Decent Homes Standard. The overall standards are:
- 1.3.1 It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing.
- 1.3.2 It is in a reasonable state of repair.
- 1.3.3 It has reasonably modern facilities and services.
- 1.3.4 It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.
- 1.4 This will further require:
- 1.4.1 A reasonably modern kitchen with adequate space and layout.
- 1.4.2 A reasonably modern bathroom, appropriately located.
- 1.4.3 Effective insulation where possible (e.g. loft insulation, roof coverings with roofing felt, cavity wall insulation).
- 1.4.4 Energy efficient heating and adequate ventilation.
- 1.4.5 Consideration will made to improving the overall EPC rating where it falls below a 'C' rating and is economical to achieve.

2. Structure, Fixtures and fittings

- 2.1 Roof
- 2.1.1 The structure should be sound and the covering to be in good repair.
- 2.1.2 The rainwater guttering system should be clean and clear of blockages and debris.
- 2.1.3 Roof tiles will be checked for breakages, slips, flashing and pointing defects.
- 2.1.4 Ridge tiles, valleys and hips to be in good condition.
- 2.1.4 Chimneys to be checked for defects.

- 2.2 Windows and external doors
- 2.2.1 To be watertight, safe, secure and operable.
- 2.2.2 Door locks and window catches to be intact, glazing to be secure and without defects, with window lock keys where available. Where locking handles do not have keys and are currently unlocked these will not be replaced with new keys/locks (except in the case of a safety/security requirement).

2.3 Ceilings and walls

- 2.3.1 Generally, to be in reasonable condition. Plaster, plaster boards and the finish to be as smooth as possible without undue bumps and bow. The age of the property and construction may be a factor in a superficial defect, which may be acceptable.
- 2.3.2 If there is a structural concern or suspected defect, an investigation shall be undertaken and followed up with corrective measures.
- 2.3.3 All dampness to be investigated and treated.
- 2.3.4 Shrinkage / decoration cracks are acceptable but larger cracks should be made good and prepared for decoration.
- 2.3.5 Any polystyrene finishes to walls and ceilings should be removed and made good.
- 2.3.6 Wall tiles to be stable and clean. Cracked and chipped tiles are to be renewed and a minimum of three courses of splash back tiles will be provided if missing.

2.4 Floors

- 2.4.1 Floors should be stable and free from defects. Floorboards shall not be loose, broken, badly splintered, rotting or affected by damp and in a condition to accept floor coverings.
- 2.4.2 Timber floors to be free from insect attack or fungal decay.
- 2.4.3 Carpets or other floor coverings which are in reasonable condition will be retained and cleaned for the next tenant's use.
- 2.5 Health and Safety
- 2.5.1 The property should comply with all health and safety standards

- 2.6 General finish, fixtures and fittings
- 2.6.1 All void homes should be cleaned to a lettable standard.
- 2.6.2 All void homes to be fitted with hardwired smoke detectors and battery Co2 detectors.
- 2.6.3 All baths, basins, sinks and toilet bowls should be descaled and cleaned as required.
- 2.6.4 All kitchen fittings to be functioning and cleaned or degreased if required. Loose hinges, drawers to be checked and repaired.
- 2.6.5 All extractor fans (including overhead kitchen extractors where provided) should be overhauled (including checking and changing / cleaning filters) if functional or renewed if faults cannot be repaired.
- 2.6.6 Shower curtains, rails and screens as appropriate are to be provided.
- 2.6.7 White goods which are deemed in a reasonable condition will be tested and gifted to incoming tenants if desired.
- 2.7 Gas and electricity
- 2.7.1 Retained gas appliances and equipment to be checked for safety and operation by qualified personnel. A "pass" safety certificate must be issued.
- 2.7.2 Outstanding debt on key/card gas and electrical meters & utility bill balances to be resolved prior to letting.
- 2.7.3 All existing electrical fittings must be in sound condition with no signs of damage, with particular attention to light switches, power points, ceiling pendants, cooker control points, immersion heaters, cabling and switches.
- 2.7.4 Working light bulbs will be provided for each room as standard.
- 2.7.5 A full electrical test and "pass" certificate is to be issued.
- 2.7.6 Housing units for utility meters to be in a good condition.

2.8 Plumbing

- 2.8.1 All plumbing must be checked, including taps, stopcocks and service valves to ensure they are in good working order. Plumbing fitments may not be changed due to age or slight scaling, they may be only changed where they are not operational.
- 2.8.2 Shower heads and hoses are to be provided and / or cleaned.

2.9 General

2.9.1 All discarded rubbish and materials and personal belongings are to be cleared off site. If the previous tenant / estate has not completed this, they may be recharged as necessary.

2.10 External

- 2.10.1 Gardens should be cleared of all debris such as old furniture, white goods and household items.
- 2.10.2 Private gardens are to be left accessible, cutting back overgrown areas to a reasonable level only.
- 2.10.3 Fences, walls are to be left in a safe condition.
- 2.10.4 All paths and gulleys to be cleaned and freed of blockages.
- 2.10.5 Wall brickwork to be checked for defects and pointing completed if required.

2.11 Tenant Improvements

2.11.1 Tenant improvements (i,e, not done by HHT) are considered on a case by case basis. If they are not reinstated in the process, they will normally have to be maintained by HHT, unless approriately 'gifted' to the incoming tenant.

3. Decorations

3.1 Decoration standards

- 3.1.1 Generally decorations are to be clean. If required, a thorough wash down of the surfaces should be specified to provide a clean look to the Lettable Standard. This should also include gloss painted surfaces.
- 3.1.2 Decorations will be emulsion to ceilings and walls, and gloss work to skirtings & architraves.
- 3.1.3 Wallpaper should only be stripped from walls where the existing wallpaper is torn or damaged, or is considered a health & safety risk.
- 3.1.4 Floor coverings will be provided and gifted as standard.
- 3.1.5 Where required, decorations throughout may be considered on a tenant needs basis or if the property has been deemed hard to let. This should be specified in advance to the contractor.

3.2 Decoration Allowance

3.2.1 Decoration allowances may be granted where surfaces remain dirty after a wash down or where the wash down is not possible due to condition. The decorations allowance may be awarded on a needs basis according to the condition of the particular room and the amount of work required.



Appendix 2 Lettable Standard Check List

Property inspected	
Date of Inspection	
Inspector	
Signed as lettable	

Item	Element	Comments	Check
1	General		
	Electric test	Test cert required.	
	Gas Installation	Test cert required.	
	Door locks	Lock change.	
	Clearance	Home cleared of unwanted items.	
	Cleaning	Home cleaned to acceptable standard.	
	Pest Control	Any required treatment undertaken and pests eradicated.	
2	Kitchen		
	Kitchen Base/Wall Homes	Doors & drawers to be fully functional.	
	Work tops	All sealant & ends to be in good condition.	
	Sink & Taps/waste/plug	No leaks to joints. All taps to function properly. Sink to be descaled.	
	Tiles	No cracks to tiles. Grouting to be complete & clean. Silicone Mastic to be good.	
	Floor	Vinyl covering. No holes or tears. Joints sealed.	
	Lights	Ceiling light to be a moisture proof fitting. To be safe clean & functional.	
	Extractor Unit	Fully functional, clean & filter changed where required.	

Item	Element	Comments	Check
	Door & Closer	Fire door 30 minute compliant, fitted with closer. Ensure door closes correctly & all ironmongery is functioning.	
	Window	All opening casements functional. Limiters & night vents to work where fitted.	
	Woodwork	In reasonable condition & decoration.	
	Walls & Ceiling	Clean & neutral colour. No cracks or holes. In reasonable condition & decoration.	
	Appliances (i.e. if any) and gas cooker anchor points	Must be safety compliant & fully functional. Cap off service as required.	
3	Bathroom		
	Bath & taps/waste/plug	All must function correctly and be in reasonable condition.	
	Wash basin/taps/waste plug	All must function correctly and be in reasonable condition.	
	WC & Cistern	All must function correctly and be in reasonable condition.	
	Shower/hose/curtain	All must function correctly and be in reasonable condition.	
	Special adaptations	Record & check with housing/surveyor whether to keep. If retained must be in good condition.	
	Tiling	No cracks to tiles. Grouting to be complete & clean. Silicone Mastic to be good.	
	Floor	Vinyl covering. No holes or tears. Joints sealed.	
	Lights	Ceiling light to be moisture proof fitting. To be safe Clean & functional.	
	Extractor Unit	Where fitted to be functional, clean & filter changed where fitted.	
	Door	To be functional & ironmongery to work.	
	Window	All opening casements functional. Limiters & night vents to work where fitted.	
	Woodwork	In reasonable condition & decoration.	
	Walls & ceiling	Clean & neutral colour. No cracks or holes. In reasonable condition & decoration.	

Item	Element	Comments	Check
4	Lounge		
	Floor	Carpet provided on sound deadening underlay.	
	Walls & Ceiling	Clean & neutral colour. No cracks or holes. In reasonable condition & decoration	
	Door	Fire door 30 minute compliant, fitted with closer. Ensure door closes correctly & all ironmongery is functioning.	
	Woodwork	In reasonable condition & decoration.	
	Window	All opening casements functional. Limiters & night vents to work where fitted.	
	Features	Retain any existing features such as cornices or mouldings where possible.	
	Lights & power provision	To be adequate provision of lights & outlets in accessible locations.	
5	First Bedroom		
	Floor	Carpet provided on sound deadening underlay.	
	Walls & Ceiling	Clean & neutral colour. No cracks or holes. In reasonable condition & decoration	
	Door	Fire door 30 minute compliant, fitted with closer. Ensure door closes correctly & all ironmongery is functioning.	
	Woodwork	In reasonable condition & decoration.	
	Window	All opening casements functional. Limiters & night vents to work where fitted.	
	Features	Retain any existing features such as cornices or mouldings where possible.	
	Lights & power provision	To be adequate provision of lights & outlets in accessible locations.	
6	Second Bedroom	or other rooms applicable	
	Floor	Carpet provided on sound deadening underlay.	
	Walls & Ceiling	Clean & neutral colour. No cracks or holes. In reasonable condition & decoration	
	Door	Fire door 30 minute compliant, fitted with closer. Ensure door closes correctly & all ironmongery is functioning.	
	Woodwork	In reasonable condition & decoration.	

Item	Element	Comments	Check
	Window	All opening casements functional. Limiters & night vents to work where fitted.	
	Features	Retain any existing features such as cornices or mouldings where possible.	
	Lights & power provision	To be adequate provision of lights & outlets in accessible locations.	
7	Hall/Corridor/Stair in Flat		
	Floor	Carpet provided on sound deadening underlay	
	Walls & Ceiling	Clean & neutral colour. No cracks or holes. In reasonable condition & decoration.	
	Woodwork	In reasonable condition & decoration.	
	Flat Front Door	Secure fire door 30 minute compliant, fitted with closer. Ensure door closes correctly & all ironmongery is functioning.	
8	Other Comments		
	Door entry system	Check all in working order.	
	Heating Provision	Adequate radiator provision & controls. Must be fully functioning with instructions or directions at handover	
	Gas Meter	Take current reading.	
	Electric Meter	Take current reading.	
9	Sheltered specific		
	Warden call system	Must be fully operational with cord points all in place.	
	Integrated fire alarm system	Relevant detection and sounding equipment fully operational.	