Void Policy

# Introduction

* 1. The policy outlines the way in which Medway Council (the Council) Housing Services will control and manage empty (void) properties within its stock.

# Purpose

* 1. The purpose of this policy is to set out Housing Services position on the management of void properties.
  2. The specific objectives of the Void Management Policy are:
     1. To ensure tenants are aware of their end of tenancy obligations;
     2. To ensure that properties let by Medway Council meet the agreed void standards;
     3. To ensure that rent loss through vacant housing is minimised;
     4. To ensure that Medway Council makes the most effective use of the housing resources available to it, to meet housing need.

# Scope

* 1. The Void Management Policy applies to all property owned by Medway Council Housing Services.
  2. This policy applies to all tenure and occupancy types and Medway Council staff involved in void management duties including contractors and sub-contractors used on the Councils behalf.

# Legislation and Guidance

* 1. External
     1. Health and Safety Rating System 2006 (HHSRS)
  2. Internal
     1. Tenancy management policy and procedure
     2. Rechargeable repairs policy and procedure
     3. Allocations policy
     4. Responsive repairs policy and procedure
     5. Medway Council Tenancy Agreement(s)
     6. Asset Management Strategy

# Policy

* 1. Tenants must end their tenancy in accordance with the Medway Council’s Housing Services Tenancy Management Policy.
  2. Where Housing Services suspects a property to be abandoned the statutory procedures will be followed as detailed on our Tenancy Management Policy.
  3. Upon receipt of a valid notice from a tenant our repairs and maintenance contractor will conduct a ‘pre-termination’ visit with the tenant before they vacate the property to ascertain the condition of the property
  4. Outgoing tenants will be asked to sign a ‘pre termination property inspection form’ during this visit. This form will be taken as an agreement that they will adhere to the following conditions:
     1. I need to complete the work highlighted during inspection
     2. I need to make sure that the property and garden are emptied and cleared of all items and rubbish
     3. I need to ensure that my rent and any other payment due to the Council are paid in full or an agreement reached.
  5. Outgoing tenants will be responsible for the full costs of clearing out the property and any other rechargeable repairs as laid out in the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.
  6. If the outgoing tenant wishes to dispute the rechargeable repairs that have been applied to the property they must do so in writing, addressing it to their previous Housing Officer, who will escalate it appropriately. The final decision on whether charges should apply will be communicated to the former tenant of the property in writing in accordance with our corporate service standards.
  7. A further inspection will take place by the contractor once the tenant has vacated the property to identify any outstanding repair issues and/or rechargeable work.
  8. Void property works will be implemented immediately on receipt of the keys from the tenant to enable the property to be re-let as soon as possible.
  9. Void properties will be checked against the planned works programme to make most cost effective use of resources.
  10. All works undertaken in the property will be completed to the Medway Void Standard (Appendix 1) and to the Medway Standard as set out in the Asset Management Strategy.
  11. All void properties must have had a gas and electrical check and have the necessary certificates in place before they can be deemed as ready to let. Copies of these will be given to the new tenant as part of the sign up process.
  12. Major and Health and Safety works that would cause a high level of disruption to tenants or put their safety at risk, such as necessary removal of asbestos, damp and rot treatments will be completed prior to the start of the new tenancy.
  13. Every attempt will be made to complete all repairs prior to the new tenant taking up their tenancy, however, in some circumstances minor, non-essential repairs will be undertaken once the tenancy has commenced. These repairs will be undertaken once the tenancy has commenced. These repairs and the timescales for their completion will be in accordance with our Responsive Repairs Policy.
  14. Secure tenants have the right to improve their home after seeking written permission from the Council. Providing that any improvements found in void properties were properly inspected and approved at the time of their installation, or in retrospect and they pass any current health and safety inspections required and are fire risk compliant, they will remain in the property as a gifted item to the new tenant.
  15. Once work to a void property has been completed the property will be post inspected to ensure the work meets Medway’s void standards.
  16. On becoming available for letting, the property will be offered in accordance with Medway Council’s Housing Allocations Policy.
  17. Housing Service will operate a multiple viewings system on ready to let properties.
  18. An individual property will be defined as hard to let when it has been offered and refused 4 times. If Housing Services are unable to rectify the problem the property may be offered as temporary accommodation.
  19. Any new tenancy will be offered in accordance with our Tenancy Management Policy.
  20. Housing Services will decorate Homes for Independent Living (HfIL) properties prior to a tenant moving in.
  21. Housing Services will not decorate General Needs (non HfIL) properties prior to new tenants moving in. Where an officer feels a general needs property is in a poor state of decoration compared to what one expects when moving in to a new home (for example walls have been extensively filled, or paintwork is very poor) a decoration pack will be issued that contains appropriate types and amounts of decorating products to assist the new tenant in decorating the area/room deemed to be in a poor state of decoration. If only a particular number of rooms are in a poor state of decoration then single room packs will be issued for the number of rooms needing decoration whereas if the whole property is in a poor state of decoration a while property pack will be issued based on the size of the property. Packs are only issued if officers feel the property needs to be decorated as it is in a poor state, they will not be issued so that tenants can update the decoration to their choice. The type of decoration pack issued can be found in appendix 2.
  22. New tenants will be given the opportunity to feed back their satisfaction with the void management process and condition of the property when let during the new tenant visit that will be conducted within the first 6 weeks of their tenancy commencing.

# Role, responsibilities and authority

* 1. The Assistant Director for Physical and Cultural Regeneration retains the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
  2. The Neighbourhood Services Manager is responsible for the operational delivery of this policy, the associated procedures and has the responsibility for ensuring that this policy complies with Regulatory and Legislative requirements.

# Monitoring, review and evaluation

* 1. The Neighbourhood Services Manager will monitor lettable void standard and void turnaround time. Void performance will also be discussed regularly at void meetings which are attended by Medway Council employees and the contractors carrying out the void works. Void performance will also be monitored on a monthly and quarterly basis via the following performance indicators:
     1. Void turnaround tome against annual performance target
     2. The number of new tenants satisfied with the condition of their property upon sign up
     3. Void rent loss
  2. This policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis or in line with legislative or regulatory changes.

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Next review due: January 2022

Appendix 1

# Lettable standard

The following standard relates to all of Medway’s void turnaround times

| 5 day turnaround | Spec |
| --- | --- |
| Clear and wash down property | Clear garden and cut grass |
| Clean dirty windows and window frames | Make good floor screed as required |
| Cap off gas supply | Carry out SPC |
| Lock change | Carry out gas safety check |
| Electrical safety check | Change single sockets to doubles |
| Carry out management asbestos survey | Renew door handles and latches |
| Repair kitchen units | Minor joinery repairs |
| Ease and adjust doors | Ease and adjust windows |
| Renew window catches | Secure handrail |
| Renew glazing (single glazed) | Remove gripper rods and nails |
| Re-fix loose floorboards | Renew kitchen taps |
| Plumb for washer | Renew isolated wall of floor tiles |
| Renew bathroom taps | Re-programme alarm |
| Strip out laminate flooring | Fit new WC seat |
| Make safe damaged doubled glazing | Supply and fit side bolt to bathroom door |
| Renew shower curtain | Renew loft hatch if frame missing |

| **Ten day turnaround** | **Spec** |
| --- | --- |
| Remove polystyrene ceiling tiles and skim ceilings | Renew isolated floor tiles |
| Renew all floor tiles to kitchen | Renew vinyl sheeting to bathroom |
| Renew floorboards | Re-plaster large areas |
| Renew external doors | Renew window units |
| Renew up to 2 radiators | Renew concealed pipe runs |
| Remove floor tiles (including ACM tiles) | Renew fire and/or surround |
| Repair main roof, missing tiles or flashings | Repair or renew flat roof covering |
| Damp proofing (one room) | Point brickwork |
| Renew consumer unit | Upgrade earth |
| Strip, prepare walls and decorate (HFIL properties) | Emulsion and gloss 1 room |
| Renew individual kitchen unit | Renew kitchen sink top |
| Renew internal doors | Renew isolated floorboards |
| Re-plaster up to 40% of a room | Renew glazing (double glazed) |
| Remove tiled hearth and surround, brick up, ventilate and make plaster and skirting where back boiler/fire has been removed | Additional circuits, sockets, spurs |
| Renew defective electrical wiring and equipment (showers, security lights etc. | Renew damaged concrete panels |
| Renew up to 2 items of bathroom suite, WC and cistern, WHB and pedestal, bath | Keep concrete bases following shed removal if in good condition |
| Satellite dishes – to be left in situ if safe. Remove aerials and dishes where unsafe and in dangerous condition | Replace batten lamp holders with a vapour proof light fitting in bathroom |
| Fences – repair/replace missing panels and rotten areas. Make panels, posts and gates secure and safe (photo evidence required if not on original specification) | Secure bath panel and replace if missing (following asbestos test) |
| Ensure existing garden gates are fit for purpose and repaired as necessary | Fill in fishponds ensuring adequate top covering of soil |
| Remove unsafe structures i.e. unsafe sheds, brick built screens (unless asbestos, which are to be reported to Medway Council on discovery). Authorisation required prior to removal | Repair/replace handrail and spindles or ranch rails |
| Replace broken patio slabs and replace where these are a danger | Repair/replace handrail newel post as required |
| Repair/replace damaged treads and risers | Install units of there are less than one wall unit and one floor unit |

| **20 day turnaround** | **Spec** |
| --- | --- |
| Renew kitchen and part rewire \* | Renew bathroom suite \* |
| Full heating system \* | Full rewire \* |
| Asbestos removal (except floor tiles) \*\* | Damp proofing more than 1 room \*\* |
| Rebuild structural walls \*\* | Renew boiler \* |
| Decoration of more than 1 room \*\* | Demolish and remove all greenhouses from gardens (unless request to leave in situ) |

| **Void turnaround to be agreed** | **Spec** |
| --- | --- |
| Major fire or Flood damage \*\* | New structural floor (whole room) \*\* |
| Renew whole roof \*\* |  |