

Empty Homes Policy

1.0	SCOPE
	Purpose
1.1.	This document sets out whg's policy towards ensuring empty homes are brought back into management as quickly and efficiently as possible.
	Legal and regulatory framework
1.2.	All void properties must comply with the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.
1.3.	The Act aims to raise property standards and make it easier for customers to hold their landlords to account where standards are not met.
1.4.	To comply with this regulation whg needs to ensure that the property is fit for human habitation at the commencement of the tenancy and must remain fit for occupation during the lifetime of the tenancy.
1.5.	When setting the lettable standard consideration to the Home Standard (2015), the Decent Home Standard and the Tenancy Standard must ensure we meet the needs and aspirations of our customers.
1.6.	The Charities Act will be relevant if we sell properties through our Capital Development Appraisal Panel (CDAP) process.
2.0	POLICY STATEMENT
2.1.	The Policy aims to bring empty homes back into management as quickly as possible to maximise their social value to communities and prospective customers and to ensure we maximise our rental income.
2.2.	To improve customer satisfaction through achieving whg's lettable standards in a timely and consistent manner
2.3.	Empty property surveys are carried out on all properties to include works that ensure we meet the requirements of the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.

2.4.	When a home becomes empty an inspection will be carried out to ensure that the services are safe so that colleagues can assess the home for any repairs or work needed.
2.5.	Where a home is in a vulnerable area due to vandalism and theft, security alarms and screens will be installed. A controlled access/egress process will be implemented to manage risk.
2.6.	When a home has been assessed it will be categorised as either requiring 'Major' or 'Minor' works or placed 'Under Review' due to substantial investment requirements.
2.7.	A 'Major' void is classified as requiring extensive repairs and will require a major component replacing such as a kitchen/bathroom/heating replacement, a rewire, re-roofing, large asbestos removal or full plastering to ensure that it complies with the Decent Homes Standard.
2.8.	A 'Minor' void requires works to bring it back into management to meet the Standard, but may require a component replacing within the following six months which will be included onto the next available programme of works.
2.9.	A home placed 'Under Review' will have an appraisal carried out to determine whether retaining the home is viable considering the cost of works required, the potential future financial returns and the impact on the community.
2.10.	All homes will have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) available for any prospective customer to view the typical energy use and costs. The certificate will rate the home using a scale of A - G where 'A' is the most energy efficient. whg are committed to achieving the A-D rating by 2024.
2.11.	This Policy will ensure that all homes meet a minimum standard and comply with all legal health and safety requirements when they are let.
2.12.	This Policy will also ensure that all homes are free from damp and mould when they are met. All contributory structural and environmental defects will have been rectified including the provision of sufficient mechanical extraction in kitchen and bathrooms wherever practicable. In addition, fire safety compartmentation is also assessed and verified for any flatted accommodation.
2.13.	When a decision has been made to demolish a home, a timetable will be drawn up from the time a customer leaves until the demolition date. During this period, we will ensure that the home has its services capped off and that the windows/doors are boarded up and secure.
2.14.	Properties with works identified as in excess of 15k will go through the appraisal process for 'Under Review' homes which may occasionally result in

	the decision of whg to dispose of the home. The assets value and viability / desirability to let will be considered initially to determine whether disposal is a viable option.
2.15.	Where the property is deemed viable for disposal, the properties valuation is prepared and it is presented to CDAP, subject to the necessary approval by whg's Trustees.
3.0	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
3.1.	Performance against key performance indicators will be reported quarterly to the Customer Experience Committee. We will also benchmark our performance with peers on an annual basis.
3.2.	Where an appraisal determines that it is no longer viable to retain a home, a business case will be taken to CDAP to seek approval for disposal.
4.0	EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY
4.1	This policy considers the needs of all occupants and is designed to ensure customers are not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics.
5.0	TRAINING AND DISSEMINATION
5.1.	Current processes ensure the delivery of all Home Maintenance services outlined in the policy are disseminated to appropriate colleagues. We also incorporate policy awareness and training within induction sessions with new starters.
6.0	MONITOR AND REVIEW
6.1	This Policy will be monitored by the Director of Home Maintenance Services and reviewed every three years by the Policy Group or whenever there is any significant change in legislation.
7.0	ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
7.1	Documents, policies and procedures associated with this Policy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management Strategy • Allocations Policy • Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 • Building Regulations • Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy • Decent Homes Standard

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Standard 2015 • Tenancy Standard 2012 • Letting and Void Procedures • Charities Act • European Union Directive 2002/91/EC • Housing Act 2004 • The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property, England and Wales) Regulations 2015 • Gas Safety (installations and use) regulations 1998 • Electricity at work regulations 1989 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ BS-7671: 2008 (wiring regulations)
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Document author	Steve Walters, Home Maintenance Projects Manager
Document owner	Nigel Harris, Director of Home Maintenance Services
Legal advice	None
Consultation	None
Approved by	Policy Group 20 April 2023
Review Date	April 2026
Corporate Plan aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver High Quality Homes and Services to our Customers
Equality Assessment	Not Required
Key changes made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement included about damp remediation 2.12. • Added section 5, 'Training and Dissemination'