

Empty Homes Policy

1.0 SCOPE

Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to ensure 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 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.
- 2.13 Through the appraisal process for 'Under Review' homes, occasionally it may be the decision of whg to dispose of the home, this will be decided by CDAP, subject to the necessary approval by whg's Trustees and will consider the cost of works required and its desirability within the neighbourhood.

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 TRAINING AND DISSEMINATION

- 4.1 All relevant teams will be issued with the new Policy at team meetings for discussion.

5.0 MONITOR AND REVIEW

- 5.1 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.

6.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 6.1 Documents, policies and procedures associated with this Policy are:
- Asset Management Strategy
 - Allocations Policy
 - Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
 - Building Regulations
 - Decent Homes Standard
 - 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
 - BS-7671: 2008 (wiring regulations)

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Consultation	None
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Corporate Plan aim	Deliver High Quality Homes and Services to our Customers
Equality Assessment	Not Required
Key changes made	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All void properties must comply with Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.• Landlords who grant new tenancy the 'minimum level of energy efficiency standard is EPC band E.• The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015.