



# Void Policy

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MONITORING, APPROVAL AND REVIEW	
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<b>Consultation</b>	Customers, Members of Void Review Group including representatives from housing advice and allocations, Neighbourhood Management, Assets, Finance, Governance and Property Care
<b>Equality Analysis</b>	The Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.
<b>Approved by</b>	Executive Team and Investment and Development Committee
<b>Approval date</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
<b>Review Frequency</b>	The Policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with legislative or regulatory changes. Due 2023

# VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 Your New Home Standard

## **1. What is the Purpose of this Policy?**

1.1 This Policy sets out the way in which First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) will end tenancies and repair and let properties. The aims of the Policy are to:

- Reduce the length of time that a property is empty and minimise the amount of rental income lost and costs incurred.
- Let the property in a clean and safe condition that meets the Your New Home standard.
- Meet customers' needs and maximises their satisfaction.
- Provide a value for money service.
- Make best use of the void period to meet our investment requirements in line with the Asset Management Strategy.
- Meet our statutory, regulatory and compliance requirements.

## **2. The Policy**

### **2.1 Ending Tenancies – the Start of the Void Process**

2.1.1 All customers are required to give FCHO due notice that they intend to terminate their tenancy in line with their Tenancy or Licence Agreement conditions.

2.1.2 The notice period is usually four full rental weeks. The last day of the tenancy will be a Sunday. The customer must inform FCHO that they have vacated the property by noon on the Monday after the tenancy end date otherwise a further week's rent will be charged.

2.1.3 Where keys are not returned the cost of any legal action and the costs of changing locks will be re-charged to the outgoing customer.

2.1.4 Where the keys are not received then the property will be transferred to a 'Use and Occupation' account where charges for use and occupation will be charged to the outgoing customer until the matter is resolved.

2.1.5 If the outgoing customer does not leave the property and garden in an acceptable condition (i.e. in line with the Your New Home Standard), any damages or works that are identified in the inspections will be discussed with the outgoing customer and the remedial action agreed. If the property condition has not improved when the tenancy ends the customer will be recharged. This may include items that were not initially identified during the pre-termination inspection.

2.1.6 All customers will be reminded of their rights and responsibilities in relation to ending the tenancy and the condition of the property following notice being given.

2.1.7 All customers that give notice will be asked to complete an End of Tenancy Satisfaction Survey. This enables FCHO to better understand their reasons

for leaving, their views on our properties and services and what we can do to improve service delivery.

## **2.2 Inspections**

2.2.1 The re-let process will commence immediately on receipt of notice.

2.2.2 Wherever possible a pre termination inspection of the property will be arranged with the outgoing customer in order to get an early assessment of property condition. All properties will be inspected when the tenancy ends to determine what action is required to re-let the property. This may include but is not limited to:

- Identifying any aids and adaptations.
- Identifying if the property is suitable for a direct let.
- Agreeing any recharges with the customer.
- Agreeing any improvements which are eligible for compensation or need removing.
- Determining if the property requires major works or component replacements.

2.2.3 The customer will also be advised of the status of their rent account and agree payments to clear any outstanding debts before the tenancy end date.

## **2.3 Repairs to Void Properties**

2.3.1 A repairs inspection will be carried out using the Your New Home Standard and repairs will be categorised in line with the Void Management Policy.

2.3.2 All essential works will be completed whilst the property is empty. In certain cases, some works may be completed after the new customer has moved into the property.

2.3.3 All empty homes will have the necessary health and safety checks completed and will be issued with electrical and gas safety certificates and an EPC in compliance with our legal requirements.

2.3.4 Health and safety works that will cause a high level of disruption or put safety at risk, such as the removal of asbestos, damp treatments will always be completed when the property is empty and prior to the start of the new tenancy.

2.3.5 On completion of the works a further inspection will take place to ensure the property meets the Your New Home Standard. Any unsatisfactory works will be rectified

2.3.6 All void properties will be checked against the planned works programme to make the most cost effective investment decisions in line with the Asset

Management Strategy, 2020-2022. Component replacement may take place at void stage or as an opportunity for the new customer to select things such as worktops, tiles.

- 2.3.7 When a property has been refused 3 times or more and there is no shortlist it is deemed to be 'Difficult to let' and additional works may be required. This will be discussed at the FCHO Void Review Group and considered on an individual basis

## **2.4 New Lettings**

- 2.4.1 All new tenancies will be offered in accordance with the current Lettings Policy and in line with any agreed nominations arrangements.
- 2.4.2 The tenancy will commence after all essential repairs and safety checks have been completed and on the day that the customer agrees to the conditions of the tenancy. This may be carried out in person or digitally, depending on the needs of the incoming customers.

## **2.5 Roles and Responsibilities**

- 2.5.1 The Lettings Team is responsible for making provisional and full offers of accommodation to customers.
- 2.5.2 The Repairs Inspectors are responsible for carrying out inspections to the property. The inspector will assess and order any routine works, component replacements, carry out safety inspections and post works inspections following completion of the works.
- 2.5.3 The Compliance Team is responsible for checking that asbestos works, electrical, legionella, gas safety checks and EPC inspections are carried out and providing any necessary certification. They are also responsible for ensuring the heating to properties is decommissioned and tested and recommissioned after the new customer has moved in.
- 2.5.5 The Property Care Team is responsible for completing and managing the repair works, completing safety checks and cleaning the property.
- 2.5.6 The Neighbourhood Care Team is responsible for any maintenance to the garden identified during the pre-termination inspection or whilst void.
- 2.5.7 The Neighbourhoods Team is responsible for determining the level of security to a property in consultation with the Community Legal Services Manager.
- 2.5.8 The Neighbourhood Officer is responsible for managing and monitoring void properties. This includes carrying out quality checks as part of the viewings and sign up process following completion and post inspection of works by Property Care. As part of the sign up process the Neighbourhood Officer will ensure the customer is provided with all relevant property information and safety related certification.

### 3. Void categories

3.1.1 Voids performance will be monitored across all void properties and reporting will be categorised into three void categories:

**Minor voids** - properties requiring a low value of works (under £3,000) to bring them up to the Your New Home Standard

**Major voids** - properties requiring larger scale, higher value works which may include component replacements such as kitchens and bathrooms, rewires, licensed asbestos removal, planning, etc. to bring them up to the Your New Home Standard.

A review will be undertaken of all properties with an estimated value in excess of £7,500 to decide if the void works should commence or if an option appraisal is required.

**Policy voids** – properties that require an option appraisal due to either high void costs, are difficult to let or there are issues with regards to long term sustainability based upon the Asset Performance Evaluation Assessment will undergo an option appraisal. Policy voids will also include properties where specialist or complex works such as remodelling or structural works are required which may involve Planning or Building Control. These properties will be overseen by the Void Review Group. Bespoke target dates will be agreed for each property based upon the complexity of the issue.

3.1.2 All voids will remain on debit and will be reported within the Performance Indicators and will be closely monitored.

### 4. Monitoring Performance

4.1.1 Void performance is monitored on a daily basis by the relevant Neighbourhoods, Property Care and Lettings teams. An Operational Void Working group will meet weekly to review all voids. The group will discuss any operational issues and update and agree any actions that will improve performance against targets. The Void Operational Group reports to the Void Review Group. Details of all void properties and associated performance information are reported weekly to the Executive Team.

4.1.2 The Void Review Group meets monthly to review overall performance and to identify areas for improvement.

4.1.3 Satisfaction with new tenancies is measured via touchpoint surveys which are monitored to ensure customer satisfaction meets the agreed KPI targets.

4.1.4 The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Operational Performance Indicators (OPI) are monitored on a monthly basis and Key Performance Indicators are reported to the Board via the quarterly performance report

4.1.5 The table below contains the performance targets. The aim is to constantly improve performance and these targets will be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the Business Planning process.

<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/2022</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Total void turnaround time	31 calendar days	28 calendar days	25 calendar days
Total void loss	0.78%	0.70%	0.63%
Customer satisfaction with the condition / repair of the property	80%	82%	85%
Customer satisfaction with the cleanliness of the property	80%	82%	85%
Overall rehousing satisfaction with FCHO	90%	91%	92%

## 5. Legislative or other Guidelines

5.1.1 As a Registered Provider of social housing, FCHO's provision to customers is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The Tenancy Standard states that:

Registered Providers shall minimise the time that properties are empty between each letting. When doing this, they shall take into account the circumstances of the tenants who have been offered the properties

5.1.2 The void management policy will be subject to the following legislation:

- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Construction Act 1996
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Equality Act 2010
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- HCA – The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012

- Housing Act 1988
- Housing Act 2004
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System 2006
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Localism Bill 2011
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957

## 6. Links to First Choice Home's Strategic Delivery (SDP) Plan

This policy links to the areas of 'Excellent Landlord' and 'Business Assurance' aspects within the Strategic Delivery Plan and could impact on the following measures:

### **KPIs:**

Excellent Landlord - Percentage of stock tenanted  
Business Assurance - Compliance measures

### **Strategic Milestones:**

Help create independent and resilient communities  
Implement digital end to end customer tenancy journey  
Develop Asset Management Strategy

The policy links to the following strategic risks:

Failure to meet landlord health, safety and compliance requirements.