



## Dunbritton Housing Association Limited

<b>Name of Policy</b>	<b>Void Management</b>
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Customer Services Manager</b>
<b>Date approved by Board</b>	
<b>Date of next Review</b>	<b>August 2019</b>

**We can produce information, on request, in large print, Braille, tape and on disc. It is also available in other languages. If you need information in any of these formats please contact us on 01389 761 486**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Dunbritton Housing Association is a registered social landlord established in 1992 to provide housing for social rent and services to owners through factoring.
- 1.2. We are governed by our Board, which is supported by a number of Committees. Our governance arrangements set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of our Board and Committee members and our members of staff.
- 1.3. Operational services are delivered through our office based in 32 High Street Dumbarton G82 1LL.
- 1.4. Void management is a core function of the Association and is a key performance indicator, used by the Scottish Housing Regulator when assessing our performance. Void management covers a number of key activities including –
  - Tenancy terminations
  - Property inspections
  - Identifying rechargeable works and other outgoing tenant responsibilities when leaving a property
  - Ordering and inspecting repair work
  - Minimising rent loss on empty properties
  - Offering tenancies and arranging viewings

## **2.0 PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 The Void Management Policy aims to ensure that properties vacated by Dunbritton tenants are re-let to a good standard, within a reasonable time scale, where the repairs that have been carried out represent value for money and the rent lost during the void period is minimised.
- 2.2 To only let properties that meet our minimum re-let standard.
- 2.3 To ensure that voids are re-let as quickly as possible to meet demand for the Association's properties.
- 2.4 To monitor and report on void performance in order to ensure standards and targets are being maintained and met.
- 2.5 To comply with legal duties, regulatory requirements and good practice in the sector.
- 2.6 To ensure staff and contractors carry out all void management tasks to a high standard while meeting legal and regulatory requirements.

2.7 To record tenant satisfaction with their home when they move in and use the information gathered to monitor and improve practice.

### 3.0 **LEGAL AND GOOD PRACTICE**

3.1 This Void Management Policy applies to all rented property owned or managed by the Association and meets with legal and legislative good practice requirements as detailed below:

**Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** in particular guidance relating to the termination of a tenancy (notified or abandoned), compensation for improvements and access rights for inspection.

**The Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2008** – all properties allocated will have a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) in place

**The Gas Safety (Installations and Use) Regulations 1994** – the Association will ensure that all allocated properties will have had an annual inspection of gas installations and appliances as appropriate. In all cases a gas safety check will be carried out prior to the tenant being given the keys to their new home.

**The Construction, Design and Management Regulations** – all Dunbritton properties will meet health and safety requirements in the management of voids, particularly relating to repairs by the Association or contractors.

**Data Protection Act 1988** – within the terms of the DPA the Association will ensure that information provided by an applicant and/or tenant is relevant only to the management of void properties and that all such information received is managed securely and confidentially.

Under the provisions of the Data Protection Act, individuals have the right to see and receive a copy of any personal information (for which an administration fee will be payable) that is held about them by the Association and to have any inaccuracies corrected.

3.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets guidelines in terms of the management of voids within the social rented sector – our Policy reflects Standard 4 Housing Quality and Maintenance: Quality of Housing which states:

***“Social landlords manage their businesses so that: tenants’ homes, as a minimum meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair”***

## 4. VOID PROPERTIES AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES

### 4.1 Definition of a Void

The Association defines a void property as ***“any property that has no tenant for a period of time”***

- 4.2 The Association recognises that there are different ways in which a property can become void and these are shown below:

**Formal Termination** – a tenant gives the required 28 days written notice of their intention to leave the property;

**Death of a Tenant** – where the Association receives notification that the occupying tenant has died and there is no successor

**Abandonment** – where the Association has issued a legal notice to a tenant who has vacated the property without giving notice

**Eviction** – where the Association has enforced an order for Decree for repossession of our property from a tenant

**Transfers/Mutual Exchanges** – where a tenant is rehoused by Dunbritton or another Home Argyll partner Landlord

**Development Voids** – where a new property is handed over to Dunbritton and no tenant has been identified

**Decants** – where a tenant has been moved temporarily from their property for the purpose of refurbishment or as a result of the property being uninhabitable due to emergency ie fire or flood

- 4.3 The terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and Short Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement that are specific to the implementation of the Void Management Policy are found in **Section 6 - Ending the Tenancy**.

- 4.4 The Association is required to ensure that where an outgoing tenant has been given permission for, and has carried out **improvement works** to their property (for example installing a new kitchen) that they are entitled to compensation. Additional information on Right to Compensation can be found at Appendix 1.

### 4.5 Minimum Letting Standard

The Association has a defined list of standards which will be applied to all void properties before it is re-let to the next customer. This is known as the Minimum Re-let Standard. The current Minimum Re-let Standard is shown at Appendix 2.

- 4.6 **Inspections** are a vital element of good void management practice – Dunbritton’s void management procedures include a **Pre Termination inspection** carried out by the Housing Officer and the Asset Officer in the presence of the outgoing tenant; an **End of Tenancy Inspection** after the tenant has vacated the property and a **Post Inspection** carried out when all void works have been completed and prior to the new tenant moving in. Housing and Asset staff will have joint responsibility for the management of voids.

## 5. FINANCIAL MATTERS

- 5.1 The Association will work with approved contractors to ensure value for money and quality of repairs to void properties through regular review of contracts, post inspection of work and monitoring of tenant satisfaction with their home when they move in.
- 5.2 Outgoing tenants will be given details in writing of all repairs and remedial works to be carried out by them before the tenancy ends at the Joint Inspection visit. Failure to carry out all agreed works will result in rechargeable repair accounts being issued to tenants for payment in full. Debt recovery procedures will be applied where necessary to minimise financial loss to the Association linked to unpaid rechargeable repair costs.

## 6. POLICY REVIEW/ PERFORMANCE

- 6.1 The Association will provide the Scottish Housing Regulator with information on our management of voids and lets as part of our Annual Return of the Charter (ARC) in May of each year – the relevant statutory performance indicators relevant to this Policy are:-
- Percentage of rent due lost through properties being empty during the last year;
  - Average length of time taken to re-let properties in the last year;
  - Percentage of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in;
  - Percentage of tenancy offers refused during the year;
  - Percentage of lettable houses that became vacant in the last year;
  - Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year; by source of let
- 6.2 The Association’s performance targets for voids and re-lets are included within our Internal Management Plan and are reviewed annually.
- 6.3 The Association’s Board of Management monitors performance on void management and re-let activity. Monitoring reports are produced every month

and performance outcomes are reported to the Customer Services Committee on a quarterly basis.

- 6.4 The Association will ensure that in line with all other relevant Association Policies and procedures, all standards are met in relation to void management procedures.
- 6.5 The Association's Void Management Policy and procedures will be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis. They may also be reviewed earlier to reflect any changes in legislation, to adopt any good practice updates or to ensure continuous improvement in the service provided.

## **7. CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- 7.1 The Association recognises the important role of tenants in shaping service improvement and will undertake feedback from every tenant who is allocated one of our homes, both at date of entry and at their settling in visit. This data will be recorded and used to shape and improve tenant experience in the letting our homes.
- 7.2 Confidentiality: We will treat any information we receive from our tenants under this Policy in strict confidence and we will not disclose it to any third parties without the customer's consent.
- 7.3 Our aim is to get it right first time for every tenant, if we do not, we have a Complaints Policy which tenants can use where they are dissatisfied with this Policy or actions linked to its use. Our Complaints Information leaflet is available from our office, our website or available on request via telephone.

## **8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

- 8.1 As a service provider and employer we recognise the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, oppose any form of discrimination and will treat all customers, internal and external, with dignity and respect. We recognise diversity and will ensure that all of our actions ensure accessibility and reduce barriers to employment and the services we provide.

## **9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES**

- 9.1 Our Void Management Policy is supported by and links to a number of other Policies and strategies – details of these are shown below
- Allocations Policy
  - Data Protection Policy
  - Equality and Diversity Policy
  - Internal Management Plan & Business Plan
  - The Scottish Social Housing Charter
  - Legislative requirements relating to Data Protection and Equalities

- The Association's Procurement Manual
- Complaints Handling Procedure

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Right to Compensation for Improvements**

Where a tenant has carried out improvements to their home after taking entry and these improvements have been approved by the Association, on termination, the Association will give compensation in accordance with the Right to Compensation for Improvements, as contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

An information booklet detailing all qualifications produced by the Scottish Government is provided to tenants on commencement of their tenancy.

Following receipt of the tenant's notice of intention to terminate their tenancy the Housing Officer and Asset Officer will attend to carry out a Pre Termination Inspection.

If a tenant has carried out improvements for which permission has been given - the Housing Officer and Asset Officer will provide the tenant with a written offer of compensation within 10 working days of the Pre Termination inspection being carried out.

Before final payment of Compensation under this Policy – the tenant will be required to confirm that there is no owed debt to the Association in respect of rent due, rechargeable repairs and/or end of tenancy repairs required prior to the tenancy ending.

Any outstanding costs relating to any of the above categories will be deducted from any compensation payment made to the tenant.

All payments due to the tenant under Right to Compensation will be made within 10 working days of the end of tenancy date subject to the above checks being complete.

## **APPENDIX 2 – Minimum Re-Let Standard**

Dunbritton Housing Association will ensure that when our properties are re-let that they will meet a minimum standard as outlined in this document.

All void properties will be subject to standard checks for condition and cleanliness, the integrity of all services including gas and electricity and for the proper operation of appliances for the provision of water and heating.

The repairs detailed below will be completed before the new tenant moves in to their home.

All properties will comply with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard **\*\* (see note at the end of page 3)** with the exception of those properties that are currently exempt. This will be explained to the new tenant at viewing.

### **Safety**

- All electrical and gas services will be checked for faults and general integrity
- All gas appliances will be tested and all properties with gas will have a gas safety check carried out. New tenants will be provided with a copy of the gas safety certificate when signing for the property
- All properties will have a minimum of one mains smoke alarm – this will be fitted where required or existing smoke alarms will be checked to ensure they are in working order
- Where properties will have a carbon monoxide alarm this will be checked to ensure operating satisfactorily
- An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) will be provided for the property.

### **Kitchens and Bathrooms**

- All taps, wastes and overflows will be secure, clean, and free from blockages and in good working order.
- All kitchens will have a minimum of 7 units (where space allows)
- All units and worktops will be securely fixed and be safe for the preparation of food.
- Will have a minimum of 6 power points (includes socket for washing machine, supply for fan etc)
- All kitchens will have an extractor fan
- A fully operational bath that is fully boxed in or a walk in shower
- WC pan with seat
- Fully operational wash hand basin
- All bathrooms will have either an operational extractor fan or an opening window

### External

- Roofs, walls and chimneys will be in a safe condition
- Access to the property will be safe, all fencing, gates etc will be in sound condition, paths and steps will be repaired where they are in an unsafe condition
- Clothes poles or rotary drier will be present (depending on development)
- Grass cut if overgrown (April to October only)
- Door entry systems will in working order and if not a full explanation will be given with a date of repair.

### General

- the property will be wind and water tight
- the property will be in a clean, hygienic condition – all sanitary ware will be washed and clean
- the property will be clear of rubbish (includes) loft space and cellars
- all external doors and windows shall be secure
- there will be a minimum of 2 keys for each external door
- all broken and cracked glass will be replaced
- window keys will be provided where required
- all internal doors will be free of damage and fully operational.
- all facings and skirting boards will be securely fixed and free from loose nails/screws
- if there are carpets, laminate or other floor coverings remaining in the property from the previous tenant they will be in a reasonable, clean condition
- All polystyrene decorative finishes will be removed
- Banisters, balustrades and stairs will be in a safe condition.
- All habitable rooms will have at least 2 double sockets
- All loose/missing floorboards will be secured/repaired

### Decoration

The rooms within the property will be in a reasonable condition. This will mean –

- Existing decoration including wallpaper or painted finishes are of a reasonable standard; or
- Walls and finishes will be of a condition where the new tenant can carry out their own re-decoration - ***where appropriate a decoration allowance may be awarded to assist the new tenant with redecoration – this will be agreed by the housing officer and advised to the tenant at the viewing stage***

## Scottish Housing Quality Standard

To ensure compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. An element is deemed to fail if 20% of it or more requires replacement.

### 1. The Tolerable Standard

A property fails the SHQS if it fails to pass any of the following requirements:

- Is structurally stable
- Is substantially free from rising or penetrative damp
- Has satisfactory provision for natural and artificial light, for ventilation and for heating
- Has an adequate piped supply of wholesome water within the house
- Has a sink provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water within the house
- Has a WC available for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house suitably located within the house
- Has a fixed bath/shower and a wash basin all with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water suitable located within the house
- Has an effective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water
- Has satisfactory facilities for the cooking of food within the house
- Has satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings

### 2. Primary Building Elements

A property fails the SHQS if any **one** of the following elements requires replacement of 20% or more:

- Wall structures
- Internal floor structures
- Foundations
- Roof structure

### 3. Secondary Building Elements

Property fails the SHQS if any **two** of the following elements requires replacement of 20% or more:

- Roof covering
- Chimney stacks
- Flashings
- Rainwater goods
- External wall finishes
- Access decks/balustrades
- Common access stairs/landings, pathways within the curtilage of the dwelling
- Individual dwelling balconies/verandas
- Individual dwelling attached garages, internal stairs
- Damp Proof Course
- Windows/ doors
- Common windows/roof lights
- Underground drainage