



# WILLIAMSBURGH

HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

## Voids and Lettings Policy

<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Reviewer(s)</b>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Description of Revision</b>
February 2022	Housing Management	February 2025	To update existing policy

This policy can be made available in different languages and other formats such as Braille, large print or tape, on request.

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Equal Opportunities
3. Scottish Social Housing Charter and Legal Framework
4. Aims and Objectives
5. Monitoring and Assessment
6. Policy Review
7. Appendix 1 - Williamsburgh Housing Association's Minimum Lettable Standards

## 1. Introduction

We recognise that good void management and the limitation of property void periods are vital to maximising rental income, providing a quality service, meeting housing need and achieving good estate management. We aim, therefore, to minimise the period during which properties are void and make best use of our resources in housing people who are in need.

The Scottish Housing Regulator defines the void period as the time, measured in calendar days, between the date of termination of a previous tenancy or repossession and the start of a new tenancy. A void is a property which has no tenant for a period of time.

Williamsburgh Housing Association will manage void properties effectively in an attempt to minimise void periods, maximise rental income and ensure that our housing stock will meet minimum, legally required standards.

To ensure an effective service close working relationships are required between Housing Management and Maintenance staff in respect of void management to ensure that void repairs and allocation processes work in tandem and that we comply with all relevant legislation in this area.

This policy is supported by our voids and lettings procedure.

This policy also links with our policies and procedures on repairs, gas servicing and allocations.

## 2. Equal Opportunities

The Association is committed to the principles of equal opportunities and good practice. In this regard, we acknowledge the Scottish Social Housing Charter (2012): 1 - Equalities, which states

“every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services”.

Accordingly, we shall ensure that specifically in regard to the allocation of properties, all applicants are treated equally, irrespective of their sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other social attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

### 3. Scottish Social Housing Charter and Legal Framework

#### 3.1 Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Association, in preparing this policy and the related procedures has given consideration to and sought compliance with, the following:

Scottish Social Housing Charter, as defined by The Scottish Housing Regulator – the regulatory body for housing associations. The relevant Charter Outcome numbers 4 and 11 state:

##### 4: Quality of housing

“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.”

##### Outcome 11: Tenancy sustainment

“Social landlords ensure that: tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.”

##### Outcome 13: Value for Money from rents and service charges:

“Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.”

## 3.2 Legal Framework

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- I.E.E. Regulations (16<sup>th</sup> Edition) 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Construction Design and Management (CDM) Regulations 1994
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2008
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing
- The Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement
- The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 as amended by the Climate Change Bill 2018
- Scottish Secure Tenants (Compensation for Improvement) Regulations 2002
- Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998

#### 4. Aims and Objectives

The voids and lettings policy and associated procedures aims to ensure that we provide fair and open access to our housing list and assessment process, ensuring the efficient allocation of properties, as they become available. In doing so, we will ensure that the number of empty properties is kept to a minimum and that void rent loss is contained within our target of 1.0%.

In order to this, the following principles will be complied with, in the allocation of our houses:

- To minimise void rental loss, void periods and void repair costs.
- To achieve our target of less than 1% of gross rental income.
- To achieve our void and letting targets.
- To have a joint housing management and maintenance approach from receipt of notice of a tenancy termination.
- To monitor demand and make best use of existing stock when identifying prospective tenants.
- To pre-allocate the property during the termination period seeking to commence the new tenancy as quickly as possible.
- To ensure that full gas safety checks are conducted and audited prior to the letting of the property.
- To ensure that all works required to meet our lettable standard have been conducted prior to the letting of the property.

- To ensure that adequate security measures are in place in order to prevent vandalism or unnecessary deterioration to the empty property.
- To ensure effective measures are in place to monitor overall performance and service delivery against targets set.
- To comply with legal duties, regulatory requirements and good practice standards.

## 5. Monitoring and Assessment

### 5.1 Purpose of Voids and Lettings Monitoring

Voids and lettings monitoring is undertaken for the following purposes:

- To provide day to day control over the void and letting function and individual void properties.
- To monitor our overall performance in relation to voids and lettings over a period of time.
- To provide good quality information about our void and letting performance against our stated objectives to inform service review.
- To allow benchmarking against other landlord organisations whilst seeking continuous improvement.



## 5.2 Monitoring of Voids and Lettings

Monitoring reports will include the following:

- Average days to re-let properties.
- Properties where the tenancy has been terminated including reason for termination, area, type and size.
- Void properties offered, refused and accepted. On annual basis, this will identify any trends or reasons for concern.
- Void turnaround times,
- Cumulative void loss,
- Cost of works, and
- Benchmarking information i.e. comparisons against other RSLs.

## 5.3 Benchmarking

Benchmarking, or comparing performance across organisations, is good practice and is a useful tool in improving performance. It assesses the organisation's performance against its own internal targets and those of other organisations. It enables us to review voids management and re-letting periods against our set targets.

It highlights reasons for differences in void re-letting periods between ourselves and the other FLAIR organisations. It may identify changes to void management practices in order to achieve improvements in service delivery or performance. It also enables us to compare trends and identify the processes which prove most effective.

## 5.4 Void Repair and Re-Let Targets

The Scottish Housing Regulator expects:

*RSLs... to set definitions and targets to enable monitoring of their own performance.*

Targets are an essential factor in ensuring that we are working to specific timescales in managing the void and letting of our properties. They encourage our staff, make clear the importance of speed in dealing with voids and enable us to measure our performance against our targets, taking remedial action if necessary.

Our targets for void repairs, re-lets and new lets are as follows:

<b>Re-Let Targets : Maintenance</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
<u>Void Process</u> Gas safety check. Electrical safety check. Essential routine repairs.	Within 7 working days of receipt of keys from outgoing tenant.
<u>Exceptional Repairs</u> Where exceptional repairs are required (e.g. major repair works), installations will be accounted for separately.	Within 21 days
<b>Re-Let Targets : Housing Management</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Identify prospective tenants. Perform verification checks in advance of receipt of keys, where possible. Make offer.	Within 20 days of keys being received from Maintenance.
<b>New Let Targets : Housing Management</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Identify prospective tenants. Perform verification checks in advance of receipt of keys, where possible. Make offer.	Within 5 days of keys being received from Maintenance.

## 6. Policy Review

The Housing Management Sub Committee will have regard to this policy, as per our review schedule. As such, the policy will be considered every three years to ensure that it responds to any changing circumstances.

7. Appendix 1

The following minimum standards will be achieved for all void properties:

<b>Works</b>	<b>Minimum Lettable Standard</b>
General Cleanliness	The house will be cleared of furniture, carpets and belongings/rubbish from the previous tenant, cleaned and cleared, where required.
Garden Areas	Gardens attached to the property will be cleared of rubbish and grass cut, where required. Ongoing maintenance will be considered where the property is identified as low demand.
Communal Areas	Close cleaning will be considered, where appropriate as a one off, or on-going where the property is identified as low demand.
Electrics	All electrics must be checked prior to let.
Gas, Smoke Alarm and CO Alarm	All houses with a gas supply will have a full gas safety check, including smoke and CO alarm, undertaken and the compliance certificate issued to the tenant, with a copy being retained by the Association.
Water Supply	During the months October – April, consideration will be given as to whether stopcocks should be shut off and the water supply drained down.
Windows	All windows will be fully operational and checked for safety. Window keys will be issued to tenants where there are fitted locks.
Front Door	As a minimum, there will be a mortice lock (5 lever mortice, type 81 night latch).
Back Door	We will check for security.
Floors	Floors should be checked and all loose and missing floorboards will be secured or replaced.

<b>Works</b>	<b>Minimum Lettable Standard</b>
Kitchen Units	All kitchen units will be thoroughly checked, repaired or replaced, as necessary.
Medical Adaptations	All medical adaptations will be inspected and checked to ensure that they are fully operational.
Shower Unit	Any instantaneous electric shower will be included in the electrical check. The shower must have a shower rail and curtain.
Decoration	An assessment of the existing decoration will be undertaken where it is deemed to be of a poor standard and may affect the re-letting of the property. Redecoration, a decoration pack, or an appropriate decoration allowance will be considered.