WILLIAMSBURGH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Voids & Lettings Policy

Revision History

Policy	Voids & Lettings Policy
Reviewer(s)	Louise McDonald
Committee Name	Operations and Performance
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This policy is available in different languages and other formats such as Braille or tape on request.

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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.

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 (November 2022), Outcome 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 voids and lettings, applicants, tenants, former tenants and other customers are treated fairly, with respect, and without discrimination, including in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We will make reasonable adjustments where required and take account of individual needs and rights, including the needs of victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

Scottish Social Housing Charter and Legal Framework

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 (November 2022), as defined by the Scottish Government and monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The relevant Charter outcomes and standards include 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 13, and 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."
> The policy also supports Outcome 2 (Communication), Outcome 5 (Repairs, maintenance and improvements) and Outcome 10 (Access to social housing), as void and letting activity must be communicated clearly, completed within published standards and support fair access to available homes.

Legal Framework

This section has been updated to reflect the Scottish Social Housing Charter November 2022, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 provisions coming into force during 2026, the new 2026 Model Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement, current data protection law, and current repair, safety and energy efficiency requirements relevant to voids and lettings.

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and current tolerable standard requirements, including fire, smoke and carbon monoxide alarm standards
    - BS 7671 Requirements for Electrical Installations (IET Wiring Regulations, 18th Edition, as amended) and relevant electrical safety inspection requirements
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
    - Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2008
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard
    - Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESSH), including current Scottish Government interim guidance pending review of EESSH2
- The Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement
    - Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as amended by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019
- Scottish Secure Tenants (Compensation for Improvement) Regulations 2002
    - UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2025, including provisions coming into force in 2026 affecting social landlords, tenancy notices and succession
- Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021, Part 2, and related statutory guidance for social landlords
- The Investigation and Commencement of Repair (Scotland) Regulations 2026 (Awaab's Law), from 6 October 2026
- Model Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement 2026 and relevant Model Short Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreements for tenancies created on or after 1 August 2026

Aims and Objectives

The voids and lettings policy and associated procedures aim 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%.

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 outgoing tenants are aware of their responsibilities prior to termination, in order to keep costs to a minimum.
- 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.

Void Properties

Definition of a Void

For the purposes of this policy, a void property is any property owned or managed by the Association which is available, or is being prepared, for letting but does not currently have a tenant in occupation under a tenancy agreement.

The Association identifies that there are different ways in which a property can become void:

Formal Termination:
Where the tenant gives 28 days written notice as per the terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement of their intention to leave the property.

Death of Tenant:
Where the Association is notified of the death of a Tenant. If there are no successors, we will normally allow up to two weeks for the house to be cleared.
Where there are successors, we will follow our policy and associated procedures on Succession.

Abandonment:
Where the Association issues a notice of abandonment, we will follow the procedures as per our Abandonment Policy.

Transfers:
Where the tenant applies and is re-housed through the allocations policy to another association property.

Eviction:
Where the Association proceeds with court action to evict a tenant.

New Lets:
Where a new property is handed over to the Association as complete and is untenanted.

Decants:
Where a tenant must be moved, usually temporarily, from their property for purpose of refurbishment or as a result of the property becoming inhabitable for example fire or flood (refer to our Decant Policy for further information).

Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement

The terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and the Short Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement that are specific to the implementation of the Void Policy are found in Section 6 entitled “Ending the Tenancy”. The Association will ensure that these terms are explained to new tenants, outlined in the tenants handbook and when a tenant expresses their wish to move on or transfer they will be given clear guidelines on their termination responsibilities.

The Right to Compensation for Improvements

The Association recognises that some outgoing tenants may have the right to receive compensation for certain improvement works that have been carried out during their tenancy with the Associations. Compensation will be granted under the Right to Compensation for Improvements provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Minimum Letting Standards

The Association has defined a condition standard to which a property will be brought up to before letting it to a new tenant. This is to ensure a high quality of housing, effective maintenance of its housing stock and transparency of services to its current and prospective tenants.

Inspections

The Association recognises that inspections are a vital element of good void management practice. The following inspections will be carried out throughout the void process:

Pre termination Inspections

The Association will carry out pre termination inspections within 10 working days of the notice of termination being received subject to tenant availability. The main purpose of this inspection is to:

- Ensure that the general condition of the property is satisfactory and to advise the tenant what work requires to be carried out by the tenant, prior to the tenant leaving.
- To identify who utility providers are.
- Identify any repairs that are the responsibility of the Association.
- Identify any repairs that are the responsibility of the outgoing tenant (per recharge policy)
- To identify and check any alterations or improvements carried out by the outgoing tenant. It will also be useful to determine if any compensation may be required for improvements carried out by the tenant as per Section 30 Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- To identify any adaptation or special features of the property that may assist the Association in the allocation process.
- To agree the general condition of the property on termination.

Post Inspections

The Association will carry out post termination inspections within 2 working days of the keys being received. The purpose of this inspection will be to:

- Ensure the property meets the Association's minimum standards for properties to be relet.
- Ensure that the property is completely safe for reletting.
- Identify any further repairs that are required to the property.
- Identify whether there are any outstanding items of disrepair that are the responsibility of the outgoing tenant.
- Review qualifying improvements for compensation.
- Review the level of decoration.
- Determine whether the property can be viewed by prospective tenants.

Statutory Works

The Association has a statutory duty to carry out specific work when properties are void, as a minimum. These are:

- Gas Safety Check
- Full Electrical Safety test
- Fire Detection Check
- Valid EPC

Decoration Allowances

In circumstances where the decorative condition of an empty property is considered to be particularly poor by staff, a decoration allowance may be offered following discussion between Housing Services and Property Services staff.

Offering Tenancies

The allocations process will be initiated as soon as notice to terminate a tenancy is received.

Monitoring and Assessment

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.

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.

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.

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:

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

Complaints

Should any tenant be dissatisfied with the implementation of this policy they should submit a complaint to the Association in order to get the matter resolved.

If, after exhausting the Association's complaints procedure (full details of which are available on our website, from staff or located in our reception) a tenant is still unhappy, they should contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO):

SPSO
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS
(if you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment first)

Their freepost address is:

FREEPOST SPSO

Freephone:	0800 377 7330
Online contact	**www.spso.org.uk/contact-us**
Website:	**www.spso.org.uk**

Data Protection

The Association will handle personal information carefully and keep it secure, whether it is held on paper, on our computer systems, or through approved cloud services. Access to personal information will be limited to staff and authorised partners who need it to carry out their role. We will keep information only for as long as it is needed for the purpose it was collected, or where we are required to keep it by law, and will securely delete, archive, or dispose of it when it is no longer required. At all times, we will act in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Association's Committee every three years to ensure that it responds to any changing circumstances.

This review will take place following appropriate consultation with tenants and other customers, as outlined in our Tenant Participation Strategy, and will take account of any changes to legislation, regulatory guidance or good practice.

Appendix 1

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

Health and Safety:

- The house will have a current Landlord Gas Safety Record with a copy issued to the new tenant.
- A valid Energy Performance Certificate will be displayed in the house.
- We will also carry out an electrical safety check.
- Smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors will be fitted and checked.
- Safety restrictors on windows (where fitted) will be in working order.
- The house will be free of polystyrene tiles or coving.
- Shower heads, hose and curtains will be changed at every void.

Gas and Electrics:

- Gas heating systems will be in working order.
- Electrical wiring and all switches, sockets and light pendants will be in working order.
- The gas and electricity will be on with suppliers provided.

Kitchen:

- Kitchen units will be sound and useable - drawers and doors will open and close without catching and worktops will be free from obvious damage such as significant chips, scores and water damage.
- Kitchen layouts will vary from home to home and storage space will consist of base and wall units.
- Sinks will be in working order with taps being free of leaks or drips and plugs will be fitted.
- Plumbing will be visually checked and in working order.

Electric or gas points will be available for a cooker (where appropriate):

- Where fitted, extractor fans will be in working order.
- As minimum, spaces are provided for a cooker, washing machine and fridge.

Bathroom:

- Toilets/wash hand basins/baths and showers, where fitted, will be secure and free from obvious damage such as leaks, significant chips and cracks.
- Taps will be free from leaks or drips and plugs will be replaced, if required.
- Plumbing will be visually checked and in working order.
- A new toilet seat will be provided, and the toilet will flush properly.
- Where fitted, extractor fans will be in working order.

Windows and Doors:

- External doors and windows will be secure and wind and watertight.
- All external and internal doors will be free of damage and will open and close properly.
- Locks will be changed on external doors and 3 sets of new keys provided.
- In tenements, 2 fobs will be issued for the close controlled entry system.
- Windows will be checked and in working order.
- Where window locks are fitted, keys will be provided.

Floors and Stairs:

- Floors will be as secure and level as possible.
- Stairs, handrails and banisters will be safe and secure.

Walls and Ceilings:

- These will be sound, free from visible damp, large cracks, loose plaster and large holes.

Decoration:

- It is the tenant's responsibility for decorating/re-decorating, including filling small cracks and holes with fillers.
- Dulux decoration vouchers will be issued where the conditions set out in our Decoration Allowance or Difficult to Let Policy are met.

Adaptations and Tenant Improvements/ Alterations:

- In the case of houses that have been adapted for the previous tenant e.g. installation of walk-in showers or wet floor bathrooms, the adaptations will be checked and left in working order.
- Non-standard tenant improvements/alterations e.g. plumbing or electrical work will be tested.

Cleanliness (Internal and External):

- The house, including the loft, will be cleared of the previous tenant's furniture and belongings.
- All fixtures, fittings and surfaces will be cleaned and will be free from dirt, grime and grease.
- During the months of April to October, the garden will be left in a neat and tidy condition ready for the tenant to maintain.
- Litter picks will be carried out on properties with gardens.