



Policy:	Void Property Management Policy
Effective Date:	September 2017
Date Last Reviewed:	September 2017
Scheduled Review Date:	September 2020
Supersedes:	All previous Policies and/or Statements
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1. PURPOSE

The turnover of housing stock is an integral part of social housing provision that inevitably results in periods where properties are void (empty). Tuntum Housing Association is aware that the good management of void properties and the limitation of void periods is vital to maximise rental income, provide a quality service, meet housing need and achieve good estate management.

The approval of this policy supports the following objectives:

- To ensure sustainability in provision, management and maintenance of housing stock.
- To provide and maintain properties to meet identified need.

2. SCOPE

This policy sets out the Association's position on the management of voids.

Void management activity covers a number of related activities. These include

- tenancy termination
- property inspections
- identifying rechargeable works and other tenant responsibilities
- ordering and supervising repair work
- offering tenancies and arranging viewing
- creating tenancies, signing tenancy agreements etc.

The Void Property Management Policy applies to all rented property owned or managed by the Association.

The Association will ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and support to meet the requirements of this policy and related procedures.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The overall aim of the Void Property Management Policy is to ensure that empty Tuntum properties are let in an efficient, cost effective and equitable fashion.

The specific objectives of the Void Property Management Policy are:

- to ensure that properties allocated by Tuntum meet acceptable standards
- to ensure that rent loss through vacant housing is minimised
- to ensure that Tuntum makes the most effective use of the housing resources available to it, to meet housing need

To achieve the above objectives the Association will:

- provide a clear statement of the level of service and standards to which the Association will work
- have procedures and agreed practices that are applied uniformly across the service
- re-let vacant properties as quickly as possible
- undertake repairs of vacant properties in accordance with the Association's letting standard and statutory responsibilities
- ensure that the condition of the property is of a standard that will not normally lead to an offer of accommodation being refused
- ensure that all offers of accommodation are consistent with the Association's allocations policies
- record any action taken at each stage in the void management process
- provide training to ensure that staff are equipped to carry out the roles expected of them
- keep tenants and service users informed during the void management process

- ensure that communication with tenants and service users is in plain English and makes clear in all cases who is the officer to contact in case of queries etc.

4. REFERENCES

The Void Property Management Policy complies with and supplements Tuntum's Financial Regulations.

This policy is supported by a Void Property Management Procedure, which includes processes for the effective management, monitoring, repair and re-let together with a difficult-to-let procedure for vacant properties. A copy our Letting Standard is appended to this policy for information.

5. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The approach outlined in this Policy, working in tandem with our policies on Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment and Allocation, ensures that Tuntum is striving to make positive contributions towards the sustainability of our communities. Tuntum acknowledges the negative impact that empty homes can have on the community and aims to ensure that these are kept to a minimum.

Tuntum will use the information gathered from the inspection of empty properties, from refusals and from exit surveys on termination to inform our long-term maintenance investment plans and asset management strategies and priorities.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

The Management Board will consider the Risk Management factors of Void Management including-

- Financial risk through potential failure to ensure that enough income is collected to cover operating costs due to excessive rent lost to voids
- Non-compliance with key performance indicators

7. HEALTH & SAFETY

Tuntum will ensure that staff will work in accordance with the Lone Working Policy when inspecting properties, carrying out accompanied viewings or applicant assessments as necessary.

The Association will ensure that all inspections and work undertaken at properties will be carried out in accordance with Health & Safety guidance and regulations.

8. TRAINING

Tuntum Housing is committed to training and developing staff and Board members in order that they have a good knowledge of the procedures and systems in place for void management.

9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Tuntum is committed to delivering quality services to all, responding positively to the needs and expectations of all users to the service, in line with Tuntum's Equal Opportunities Policy & Diversity Statement.

10. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Any customer may submit a complaint, using the Association's customer feedback policy if it is felt that Tuntum has failed to correctly apply this Void Management Policy.

11. MONITORING AND REVIEW

Performance will be measured against defined targets. These targets will be set annually by:

- Reviewing the performance of the previous year;
- Benchmarking the performance of other Registered Providers;
- Taking into account any developments that might impact on staff workload and any external factors, for example a lower demand for particular properties.

It is the responsibility of the Head of Housing & Sales and the Head of Asset Management & Development to monitor Key Performance Indicator (KPI) information, and to submit regular reports to the Board and sub-Committees highlighting performance.

The following KPIs will be reported:

- Average re-let periods of stock
- Rent lost through voids
- Current Void figures

This policy will be reviewed every three years, unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, operational requirements or customer feedback.

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Our Letting Standard



Appendix 1

Our Letting Standard

What you can expect from your new home

Our promise to you

We aim to provide all our tenants with quality homes that are in good order; match your needs and that are clean, tidy and secure. This guide explains the minimum standard you can expect to find from your new home.

You will find answers to some of the most frequently asked questions on page 7.

First impressions

You will be given the opportunity to view your new home before you move in. During this viewing, we will discuss the standard in this guide with you. We will explain what work we will do before you move in and we will tell you if any work will be done after you have moved in.

Further improvements

Many of our homes have already benefited from improvements such as a new kitchen, bathroom, windows, doors, re-roofing or rewiring. We carry out improvements like this on planned programmes but sometimes we have to do them whilst homes are empty to ensure that the property meets this standard.

Adapting your new home

If you, or another permanent member of the household have a disability, we will try to find you a suitable home that has already been adapted or one that can be adapted to meet your needs. If adaptations are required in your home, these will be done in line with our current Adaptations Policy.

Asbestos

Where necessary an asbestos survey will have been carried out. A copy of the survey can be supplied to you upon request, so you know if your home contains asbestos and if so, where it is.

Energy in your home

All our homes have an electrical installation, which has been fully tested by a qualified electrician.

Sometimes we cannot do the final electrical test until you have moved in and the electricity supply is turned on. When you sign up for your new home, we will tell you if we need to arrange the final test and we will agree a suitable appointment with you.

We will provide an Energy Performance Certificate. This is your guide to how energy efficient your new home is.

If there is a gas supply in your home, a Gas Safe registered engineer will test that all appliances provided comply with current regulations. You will be issued with a Gas Safety Certificate.

We will show you where the gas meter is and how to turn your supply on and off. We will show you how the heating in your home works. Instructions for all of the equipment supplied are available on request.

Smoke detectors

A minimum of two working smoke detector will be fitted within a house and a minimum of one working smoke detector will be fitted within a flat/apartment.

Plumbing and water system

All our homes have a water supply and waste pipes that are free from leaks. We will show you where the main stop tap is and how to turn your water supply on and off. All taps will be fixed securely and open and close freely and properly.

Cleanliness inside your home

Before you move in, we will:

- remove all items left by the outgoing tenant, unless agreed otherwise;
- remove all trade waste to the interior and exterior of the property;
- sweep all floors clean;
- check and clean inside and surround of bath, sinks and toilets, including taps and any other fittings;
- remove any labels and/or stickers from woodwork; check and clean the sink, worktops and draining boards to leave them smear free;
- clean the kitchen storage cupboards inside and out;
- leave all the floors in a dust free condition;
- leave one air-freshener in the hallway to leave a fresh smell; and
- wipe all ceilings free of cobwebs

Internal Decoration

If there is any graffiti or damp to your property, we will remove it whilst the property is empty.

We will remove any polystyrene ceiling tiles from your home, as these are a fire hazard.

Redecorating your new home is your responsibility.

Please note - decoration vouchers are not an automatic entitlement. However, they may be provided in line with our current Decoration Allowance Policy.

External Decoration

The property will have been decorated in the past 5 years

Guttering and down pipes will be secured and in working order

Damp and mould

Your new home will be free from damp, mould, timber decay and infestation.

Flooring general

You should expect:

- all floor treads to be secure, free from damage and trip hazards;
- floors and stairs to be free from nails and staples;
- damaged floor tiles to have been either replaced or removed as appropriate;
- floors to be secure and free from defects; and
- at least one secure handrail to be fixed to the staircase (if there is one).

Doors, locks and frames

All doors will be fixed securely within their frames, will open and close freely and will be free from damage.

External front and back doors will have at least one lock and we will provide at least two full sets of keys.

Handles and latches to doors will work correctly, will be easy to operate, and will not stick.

Where there is existing glass in doors, which is a health and safety risk, we will replace it with appropriate safety glass.

Windows

Windows in your home will be:

- watertight, easy to open and have no gaps that are causing draughts;
- fixed securely with all beading intact, and
- renewed of all defective glazing.

We will check that all glazing is safe, and n windows in the bathroom and toilet will have obscure patterned glass.

Window safety features will be installed and checked where appropriate for example, in an apartment block.

We will issue at least one window key (where applicable)

The kitchen

You can expect that your kitchen:

- units and worktops will be clean and free from defects,
- fixed securely and sealed where they meet the wall and around the sink;
- will have at least one single wall unit, a sink unit and two base units;
- will have adequate ventilation; and
- a minimum of two electrical sockets available.

Where possible, we will make space for a washing machine and fridge. Sometimes standard white goods may not be suitable to the kitchen design. Narrow goods are available from suppliers.

A cooker connection point will be provided. You will be given the opportunity to check whether this is for a gas or electric cooker before moving into your new home.

Your bathroom

Your new home will have a functional bath and/or shower, wash hand basin and toilet.

The toilet will be clean and sealed. It will have clean water in the toilet bowl and will flush correctly.

All fittings will be clean and free from defects, fixed securely and sealed where they meet the wall and around the sink.

We will also ensure there is at least one row of tiles above the wash hand basin and bath.

Where a shower has been provided, we will check it is safe, make sure it is working correctly, and free from any leaks.

Walls and ceilings

Walls and ceilings should be free from loose plaster. We will repair all obvious large areas of damaged plaster before you move into your new home.

We cannot always identify all damaged plasterwork when walls and ceilings are covered with wallpaper. If you start to strip wall or ceiling coverings once you have moved in, you may discover damaged plaster underneath.

If this happens, you need to stop and make us aware, through the repairs service, so that we can assess the damage and arrange to carry out the necessary repair.

Please note: We advise that you do not use steam strippers as these can often loosen plaster beneath causing unnecessary work.

Lighting

Electrical tests are carried out in accordance with current IEE regulations and any electrical fittings including the consumer unit are clean and in a safe condition.

Non-standard electrical fittings are tested. If safe, they will be left in the property and become yours when you move in.

If they are unsafe, they will be replaced with standard white fittings.

Staircase lighting will have a two-way switch.

Cellars/Attics

Should be left empty and rubbish removed.

The prevailing legal minimum of loft insulation will be fitted

Outside

The outside of your home is your responsibility. You must make sure your garden is tidy by cutting your lawn and trimming your hedges.

Before you move in, we will make sure it is at a standard that you can keep up with. It will be clear of rubbish from the house, garden, out buildings, shared areas and building works.

Your garden may have fencing and gates that have been provided in line with our current Fencing Policy.

We will ensure garden and hedges are cut back as necessary, trim grass areas, and remove garden rubbish. Manholes will be free from obstruction with moveable covers and access paths clear.

Trees will be left in place unless they are considered to be in a dangerous condition, or likely to cause damage to your property or neighbouring properties.

We will carry out a visual inspection of roof, rainwater goods, manhole covers and gutters to ensure there are no defects. Safety handrails to steps will be installed where needed.

Please note: non-urgent external work may be completed once you have moved into your home.

Moving home

We understand that moving home can sometimes be a stressful experience. We aim to make moving into your new home as smooth as possible.

Where necessary, we will carry out essential checks on the day you move in. This will ensure that no disruption has been caused to your new home or its services because of it being empty or repairs being made to it.

There may be some repairs to complete after you have moved into the property and we will point these out to you when you look round.

If you have any questions about these standards, please do not hesitate to contact us on 0115 9166066 or email admin@tuntum.co.uk

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