



VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

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VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Policy outlines the Co-operative's framework on the management of void properties. A void property is a property that is currently empty, without a tenant or occupier for a period of time, and therefore not generating rent or income. The void period would be from the end date of the previous tenancy and the start date of the new tenancy.

We are committed to ensure that good management of void properties and limitation of void period is vital to maximise rental income. Every property that becomes empty is let as quickly as possible while, at the same time, meeting our lettable standards.

In doing so we will minimise the loss of rental income and maximise the use of the Co-operative's properties to those in housing need, provide a quality service and achieve good overall management of our estates.

This Policy will provide guidance on the compliance with the legal regulatory frameworks within which voids must be managed and the practical guide on the process.

2.0 POLICY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of this Policy is to set out the Co-operative's position on the management of voids.

The primary objective of this Policy is to ensure the Co-operative has effective, efficient, and cost-effective processes in place that will minimise the void period and the loss of rental income and maximise the use of the Co-operative's housing stock.

To achieve this objective the policy aims to ensure that:

- We comply with our legal, contractual and regulatory obligations and operate in accordance with good practice.
- Minimise void rental loss, void periods and void repair costs.
- Ensure that tenants are aware of their end of tenancy obligations, such as the need to give at least 28 days written notice of their intention to leave the property and the condition in which the property must be left.
- Properties are let as quickly as possible and are let to the same good standard complying with our Lettable Standard and statutory responsibilities.
- All properties are wind and watertight, safe and secure, well-maintained and meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS).

- Ensure properties are energy efficient and achieve the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH1) and work towards Social Housing Net Zero Standards (SHNZS).
- Void loss and costs are minimised while not compromising the Co-operative's standards.
- The Co-operative's financial stability and viability is protected.
- To let properties to a standard which maximises the prospects of the incoming tenant sustaining the tenancy and reducing the likelihood of a tenant terminating the tenancy as a consequence of the property condition itself.
- Keep tenants and applicants informed during the void management process.
- Internal communication process is clear which include staff/team briefings and use of the void record board.
- Good communications are established with external bodies such as contractors, utility companies etc. to ensure an efficient process in receiving, repairing and letting void properties.
- Ensure the condition of the property is of a standard that will not normally lead to an offer of accommodation being refused.
- Identify factors leading to high void turnover and low demand stock / difficult to let properties and appropriate strategies are developed to address these issues.
- Continually monitor our performance and amend our policy and procedures as required.

3.0 DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF VOIDS

The purpose of the policy is to set out the Co-operative's position on the management of voids and applies to all rented properties owned by the Co-operative.

Void Properties

A property is classed as a void from when the previous tenancy has ended as a result of:

➤ **Termination of Tenancy by Tenant**

In terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement the tenant is required to give 28 days' written notice advising of their intention to leave the property.

Their liability for rent will continue until the end of the notice period (or longer if the keys are not returned by the end of the notice period).

In exceptional circumstances it may not be reasonable for a tenant to give 28 days' notice prior to vacating, in these circumstances the Housing Officer will decide as to whether the tenant will be held liable for the rent for the full notice period. The Housing Officer has discretion to shorten this period in circumstances where a new tenant has been identified, and this is acceptable to the outgoing tenant thus minimising rent liability to them.

➤ **Death of the Tenant**

The Co-operative has been informed of the death of a tenant and there is no successor the tenancy will terminate from the date of death.

We will work sensitively with the family, Next of Kin or representative acting on behalf of the deceased when discussing the termination process etc.

The Next of Kin (or family of the deceased tenant) will be advised that keys to the property should be returned as soon as possible after bereavement. This may be granted for a period up to 2 weeks after the date of death allowing them to clear the property and hand in the keys and the death certificate.

If they wish to keep the keys longer this can be arranged following a request, however, there will be a charge for every additional day the keys are kept. This can only be allowed by arrangement with the Co-operative. Payment will be due for any days the keys are kept beyond the 2 weeks period allowed.

Where there is a substantial arrear on the rent account or any other tenancy related debt, the Co-operative may make a claim against the estate for the outstanding debt.

Any credit on the account will be paid out to the Next of Kin or the Executor of the estate within a reasonable time of the tenancy ending.

The Co-operative has the discretion to assist by clearing out items of furniture where disposal is requested. If the Next of Kin is unwilling or unable to clear the property they will be asked to sign a mandate authorising disposal of the contents.

➤ **No Known Next of Kin**

In the event of no Next of Kin coming forward, the Co-operative will work with other departments to actively trace a Next of Kin. Police Scotland will be the main partner in this case.

If no Next of Kin can be identified, Police Scotland will liaise with the Local Authority who has a legal obligation to arrange and cover the cost of a funeral.

The Procurator Fiscal is likely to become involved in the case of a sudden, suspicious, accidental or unexplained death. They will also make preliminary enquiries on behalf of the National Ultimate Haeres Unit (NUHU) where no Next of Kin can be traced.

The NUHU will make preliminary inquiries as regards a deceased's estate and where the estate is likely to be solvent but no relatives can be traced the Unit will pass information

regarding the estate to the office of the King's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (KLTR) who will administer any estate which has fallen to the Crown as Ultimus Haeres.

We will work with all relevant agencies as deemed necessary in each individual case. The NUHU will have the authority on the instruction of disposal of the household contents.

Where no Next of Kin has been identified and the NUHU and/or Police provides authorisation, a full inventory will be compiled, and photographs taken.

➤ **Internal Transfer**

A tenant has been offered and accepted a move to another Co-operative property. In these circumstances the tenant is not required to give the standard 28 days' notice. They will, however, be liable for the rent and responsible for the tenancy until the keys are returned.

➤ **Mutual Exchange**

Where a mutual exchange application is received, an inspection of the property will be undertaken to identify if any repairs or replacements are the tenant's responsibility. Where these are identified this work will require to be completed by the current tenant.

➤ **Eviction**

The Co-operative has enforced court action to evict a tenant. The tenancy will terminate on the date that we repossess the property, and normal void process will begin.

➤ **Abandonment**

The Co-operative has issued an Abandonment Notice to a tenant who has vacated the property without notice. We can recover the property in line with our Abandonment Policy and Procedures and normal void management process with then follow.

➤ **Development Voids**

The void period will be measured from when a newly built property is handed over to the Co-operative as complete but is not let to the tenant on the handover date.

Definitions

➤ **Void Period**

The void period is the time, measured in calendar days, between the date of termination of a previous tenancy or the date the property was repossessed to the start date of a new tenancy. Mutual exchanges, successions and other transfers of tenancy are not reported as void properties.

➤ **Void Costs**

Void costs cover the cost of all work undertaken to the property during the void period. The Co-operative is responsible to comply with all legislation in relation to void management and Scottish Housing Quality Standards.

- Gas Safety inspection
- Electrical Safety Inspection
- Energy Performance Certificate
- Asbestos checks (where required)
- Legionella checks (where appropriate)
- All other repairs that are required to the property to meet lettable standards

➤ **Void Loss**

Void loss is rent which is not collected during the void period and is therefore lost income to the Co-operative.

4.0 **LEGAL REQUIRMENTS, REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND GOOD PRACTICE REQUIRMENTS**

The Co-operative will seek to confirm and comply with all regulatory, legislative and good practice requirements in all aspects of managing void properties.

We will ensure our properties are let in a condition which meets the legal obligations under the relevant legislation and associated legislation such as the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, 2001, 2010 and 2014 which incorporates relevant repairing and tenancy related obligations.

We must comply with a number of different legislative requirements when dealing with void properties including health & safety, energy efficiency and zero emission heat standard for social housing, gas safety, electrical safety, asbestos and legionella and meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter

As required by Section 31 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, the Social Housing Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities to ensure good practice: -

- **Outcome 1 – Equalities** “Every tenant and other customers has their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and received fair access to housing and housing services”.
- **Outcome 4 – Quality of Housing** “Tenants’ homes, when they are allocated are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard

(SHQS) and any other building standard in place throughout the tenancy; and also meet the relevant Energy Efficiency and Zero Emission Heat Standard”.

- **Outcome 5 – Repairs, Maintenance and improvements** “Tenants’ homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done”.
- **Outcome 11 – Tenancy Sustainment** “Tenants get the information they need on how to access support options to help them to remain in their home and can get suitable support including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations”.
- **Outcome 13 – Value for Money** “Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay”.

Scottish Housing Regulatory Framework

To adhere to the Scottish Housing Regulatory Standard 3 of the Framework of Standards of Governance and Financial Management for RSLs’

“The registered social landlord manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level tenants can afford to pay.”

Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement

The **Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement** outlines the roles and responsibilities of both landlord and tenant when a property is to be vacated (e.g. give notice, leaving the house in reasonable condition etc).

It is a condition of this agreement that all properties should be wind and watertight, safe and secure, which applies to void properties. Contained within the agreement are the end of tenancy responsibilities. These are also clearly explained to the incoming tenant when they sign up for their tenancy. In addition, when a tenant expresses an interest to move the requirement of 28 days’ notice in writing is emphasised.

Our Void Management Policy is consistent with all other relevant policies held by the Co-operative.

5.0 VOID MANAGEMENT

➤ **Notification of a Termination of Tenancy**

Tenants are required to give the Co-operative 28 days’ notice of their intention to terminate their tenancy.

As soon as the tenant advises the Co-operative of their wish to terminate their tenancy an end of tenancy form will be issued to the tenant(s). The void management process will start when we receive notification of a tenancy ending. Housing staff should pursue a signed and completed Termination of Tenancy form from the outgoing tenant(s).

➤ **Pre-Termination Visit & Property Inspection**

Our void management process starts as soon as we receive written notification of a tenancy ending.

Upon receipt of the notice of tenancy termination, a termination confirmation letter will be issued which states that a pre-termination visits and property inspection is required.

This visit should involve a joint visit by our Maintenance Officer and Housing Officer. It will enable the maintenance staff to inspect the condition of the property and discuss any repairs which may be deemed as the outgoing tenant's responsibility such as:

- Check if any alterations carried out to property by the tenant and check if they are carried out to an acceptable standard and if they qualify for compensation for improvement.
- Identify any rechargeable repairs and provide the outgoing tenant with the opportunity to rectify any damage to the property before leaving.
- Identify and agree any removal of carpets/floor coverings and any other items in the property. Discretion will be used where these are in good condition and would be of benefit to the new tenant. In these cases, they may be left by mutual agreement.

The Housing Officer will provide advice to the outgoing tenant and confirm when the keys are due to be handed in, requirements in regard to house clearance, ensure that all outstanding tenancy related payments are made in full, re-chargeable repairs, energy suppliers etc. It should be reinforced to the tenant the importance the property being cleared, cleaned and left in good condition and also obtain a forwarding address.

To minimise void periods housing management and maintenance staff will provide tenants or their representatives with clear information and guidance on tenancy end procedures and responsibilities.

Following the inspection, the tenant should be advised in writing by the Maintenance Officer of the work that is required to be carried out by them and the date for a return visit to check if the work has been completed. Where the work is not completed at the time of termination the tenant will be re-charged the costs.

Tenants are required to make good any damage to the property that is due to misuse or neglect, even if this is not visible and discussed at the pre-termination visit.

When the tenancy end date is known the maintenance staff should pre-book any standard safety checks to the property i.e., gas & electrical safety, lock change etc.

There will be circumstances where we do not receive notice and where it is not possible to carry out a pre-termination visit such as where the tenant has died, where a property has been abandoned by the former tenant or where the former tenant has been evicted. In these cases,

our aim will be to have keys returned or have locks changed as quickly and as practically possible so that the property can be relet without delay.

All transfer applicants will be visited by the Housing Officer and Maintenance Officer prior to an offer being made. This will determine if the property is maintained to an acceptable standard to allow an offer to be made and if required advise the tenant of the necessary work to be carried out to allow an offer to proceed.

➤ **Return of Keys**

The outgoing tenant is required to return a full set of keys and must be returned to the Co-operative by 12 noon on the agreed date of termination. Otherwise, the termination date will be changed to the next working day and will result in an additional daily rent charge and thereafter charged daily until the keys are returned to the office.

In the event of the keys not being returned on the agreed date the Housing Officer will pursue them as soon as possible. If the keys are returned with no termination form, the Housing Officer must pursue a signed termination form, otherwise the Abandoned House procedure should be instigated.

Should the keys be returned due to the death of a tenant, the Housing Officer should obtain a death certificate from the Next of Kin or nearest relative.

➤ **Void Inspection & Repairs**

Wherever possible the Maintenance Officer will carry out the void inspection within **1 working day** of the keys being handed into the office. They will inspect the property to assess its condition, suitability for reletting, identify any repairs and instruct any essential repairs.

In the case of abandoned properties an inspection must be carried out on the day the property is repossessed under the Abandonment procedures.

As the Co-operative seeks to ensure that all empty properties are allocated in a reasonable condition. Our Void Lettable Standard document (**see Appendix 1**) sets out a checklist to ensure that a minimum lettable standard is achieved and the type of repair work that will be carried out for a property to be ready for let.

The former tenant will be advised of any rechargeable repairs and where possible an indicative cost provided by the Maintenance Officer to allow them to make payment/commence with arrangement to re-pay at the earliest possible date.

On receipt of the contractor's invoice for the rechargeable repair(s) they will be sent to the former tenant in accordance with the Re-chargeable Repair Policy & Procedures.

Staff are aware of the priority voids are given within their workload and the importance of speed. The process to reallocate a property will begin as soon as the termination notification is received. Ideally, we are given 28 days' notice of a termination of tenancy and therefore be able to use this time to follow the procedure outlined to minimise the void loss and relet the property.

Where possible, with the agreement of the outgoing tenant accompanied viewings with prospective tenants may take place during the notice period.

All of our properties will require to be wind and watertight, safe and secure, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and energy efficient by achieving the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH1) and work towards Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS).

➤ **Void Repairs Timescales**

The Co-operative will split void works into the following repair timescales categories:

- 3 working days (safety checks, minor clear outs, cleans and small repairs)
- 5 working days (minor repairs)
- 10 working days (substantial void repairs)

However, the re-let of a property will not be delayed for minor repairs which could be carried out once the tenant has moved in.

➤ **Transfers/ Mutual Exchanges**

Where a tenant is to be offered an internal transfer, they will be advised of the possible offer available. No formal offer of re-housing or mutual exchange will be made until an inspection has been carried out in their current property. Where repairs are evident, no offer of housing will be made until these are satisfactorily rectified and within a designated timescale.

6.0 LETTABLE STANDARDS

The Co-operative has lettable standard document that will be communicated and signed by the new tenant. These set out minimum requirements for the Co-operative to achieve prior to releasing a property to a new tenant (**see Appendix 1**).

7.0 ALLOCATION MANAGEMENT

➤ **Pre-Allocations and Early Viewings**

To minimise any void loss, the Co-operative will pre-select an applicant for the void property as soon as possible after the notice has been received.

Where the outgoing tenant has agreed to a viewing of a prospective tenant this must be carried out to ascertain if they are accepting the offer of tenancy. This should be an accompanied viewing to give applicants realistic advice on their options, provide advice on the property, the surrounding area any outstanding repairs and any proposed investment work.

This will therefore assist in preventing the delay in re-letting the property after it has been returned to a lettable standard.

➤ **Minimising Refusals**

A suitable allocation, accompanied viewings, the condition of the property and the proper housing advice can all help to minimise the number of refusals.

This in turn achieves sustainable communities, good estate management and reduces the risk of anti-social behaviour problems. In addition, the property is let as quickly as possible to ensure their housing need is addressed.

➤ **Tenancy Sign Up**

The Housing Officer will explain the terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement at the sign-up stage.

New tenants will be provided with a Tenancy Information Pack once they have accepted the offer of tenancy. The Housing Officer will read over and explain the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement before they sign the agreement. Information will also be provided to new tenants on the tenancy, property related matters, volunteer opportunities, membership and recent publications i.e., newsletters, annual reports etc.

➤ **Settling In Visit**

A visit will be made by the Housing Officer within 6 weeks of the tenancy start date. This will be to check the new tenant has moved into the property, they are paying their rent charge and used to identify if any tenancy support is required or help with any property related issue. In addition, it is an opportunity to re-iterate their responsibilities as a tenant and identify at an early stage if they need any support to help them sustain their tenancy.

At this stage, the Housing Officer will also seek the new tenant's views on how satisfied or dissatisfied a tenant is with the condition of their home when moving in and the standard of service they received from the Co-operative. In addition, it is an opportunity to identify any areas of support they need to help them sustain their tenancy.

8.0 DIFFICULT TO LET/LOW DEMAND PROPERTIES

A low demand property is classified as a property where one or more of the following definitions are applicable:

- High levels of empty houses.
- A small or non-existent waiting list for the property/area.
- High refusal rates i.e. tenancy offers on a property are frequently refused for reasons other than personal reasons.
- Higher than normal rates of tenancy turnover for a property in an area/low level of tenancy sustainment.

Initiatives and Strategies

The priority of the Co-operative will always be to avoid any of its properties becoming unattractive to potential tenants. We will monitor turnover of stock, refusal rates and waiting list demand to identify potential difficulties in letting any individual property or allocating within any area.

We will consider appropriate initiatives or strategies to assist in minimising difficult to let properties or improving take up of properties in low demand areas in accordance with our Allocations Policy.

These may be offering incentives, introduce local letting initiatives to encourage people to take up properties in the area that are more difficult to let while ensuring a well-balanced housing mix and sustainable communities.

Decoration Allowance

The Co-operative will not offer decoration allowances to new or existing tenants, however, it will be at the discretion of the Housing Manager to consider this where the condition of the property is such that it makes it difficult to let.

9.0 TENANCY SUSTAINMENT

Supporting new tenants and maintaining an effective relationship with them at the outset through accompanied viewing stage through to sign-up and settling in visit. This allows the Housing Officer to identify those who might benefit from extra support.

The initial support offered will ensure the new tenant understands their responsibility to pay rent and keep to their tenancy conditions, along with the implications of not doing so. This will identify any support required with welfare benefits including Scottish Welfare Fund, Money Advice and any ongoing housing management support required. Those new tenants that will need support to help them get settled in and maintain their tenancy and should be identified at an early stage and should continue throughout the duration of their tenancy.

In addition, within our housing management policies and procedures it recognises the importance of our contribution to enable tenants to remain in their own homes. This is reflected within the various areas we manage:

- Allocations, which aims to match applicants with properties, which will suit their current and future needs, in order to reduce turnover.
- Tenancy Sustainability, which aims to minimise tenancy breakdown through abandonment, eviction or early end of tenancy and to work with tenants to help them live independently

on their own with appropriate support and work in partnership with other agencies to assist tenants in sustaining their tenancies.

- Estate Management, which aims to ensure that the tenancies and environment are managed and maintained to a high standard.
- Rent Arrears, which aims to resolve arrears problems in order to reduce the number of evictions.
- Maintenance, which aims to ensure that properties are maintained to a high standard.
- Rents, which aims to address issues of affordability.
- Anti-Social Behaviour, which aims to resolve neighbour disputes and wider anti-social problems within a development.
- Abandonment, which ensures that any abandoned properties are quickly identified.

10.0 RE-CHARGEABLE REPAIRS

The Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement clearly outlines the responsibility of the outgoing tenant for any repairs which they are due to their neglect or damage. The tenant is advised in writing of the work required to be carried out to the Co-operative's satisfaction and the timescales to be complied.

Where a property has been vacated without damage made good, or repairs that the tenant was required to complete the Co-operative will complete the work and recharge the former tenant in line with Rechargeable Repair Policy.

11.0 THE RIGHT TO COMPENSATION FOR IMPROVEMENTS

The Co-operative recognises that some outgoing tenants may have the right to receive compensation for certain qualifying improvements. This will only be considered where the

outgoing tenant obtained written permission to do the work, and they can provide evidence of the cost involved.

The Tenant's Right to Compensation for Improvements will be assessed in line with Section 30 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

12.0 SECURITY OF VOID PROPERTIES

The Co-operative will take the appropriate security measures at the earliest opportunity where a void property is deemed as vulnerable to vandalism etc.

This may include changing locks, boarding windows and fitting “Sitex” doors. Maintenance staff will ensure all security measures comply with building insurance requirements.

13.0 VOIDS IN WINTER MONTHS

We will ensure specific procedures are in place to ensure that properties becoming void within the winter months are properly managed in order to prevent frost and/or flood damage.

Our Maintenance Officer in conjunction with our Housing Officer will assess if the void cannot be let within a quick turnaround i.e. over the festive period, the necessary precautions should be put in place by the maintenance staff. They should make an assessment to either keep the heating on at low and conduct regular inspections or drain down the water supply pipes and water heating system.

14.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Co-operative will ensure that all void properties are managed in a safe and secure manner. To minimise risk to staff, contractors, residents and members of the public they will ensure that all necessary health and safety measures are followed.

Any potential hazards will be identified by the Maintenance Officer such as asbestos, gas leaks, unsafe electrics, structural issues, sharps, bodily fluids or vermin.

The Maintenance Officer will deal with these in accordance with specific policies and procedures to ensure health and safety of staff and contractors are maintained, and the relevant safe protocols are followed throughout the void management process and re-letting stages.

15.0 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

We will monitor and control our void management procedures by regular liaison between housing and technical staff.

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will monitor performance in terms of the outcomes and standards achieved in line with the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter through our ARC submissions with results published in our Annual Report and newsletters.

Our performance on void management will be reported to our Management Committee on a quarterly basis by performance reports and annual basis by our ARC returns.

The quarterly reports will include our performance in the areas noted and will provide comparisons to that of the Scottish Average, the previous year's performance and our Key Performance Indicator Targets:

- Number of terminations and reasons.
- Number of re-lets.
- Rental loss as a percentage of annual rental income.
- Void loss in monetary terms.
- Average number of calendar days voids for re-lets.
- Percentage of tenancy offers refused and reasons.
- Percentage of tenancies starting in previous year that remained + 1 year.

We also benchmark our performance against similar landlords through the Quality & Efficiency Forum and via comparisons with Landlord Reports of similar size and demographic.

Target times are set for inspecting vacated dwellings and for carrying out repairs. External contractors involved in the void procedure will also be set targets and standards in terms of safety checks and repair timescales.

16.0 TENANT CONSULTATION & PARTICIPATION

The Co-operative will review its services by taking into account staff and tenant feedback and used to improve service delivery by:

- Tenant satisfaction obtained at settling in visit stage with new tenants.
- Monitor any comments and complaints from tenants when reviewing policies and service delivery.
- Seek comments/views from interested or affected parties i.e. consult with relevant groups/focus groups.

17.0 CONFIDENTIALITY & DATA PROTECTION

The Co-operative will ensure all information provided by tenants and applicants will only be used for the purpose provided.

We will process information and data contained within the application in accordance with its policies and procedures relating to the General Data Protection Regulations.

Information regarding how data will be used and the basis for processing data is provided in the Co-operative's Fair Processing Notice.

18.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

By having this policy and procedure it minimises the risk associated with this area of work.

It outlines who is responsible for the different stages of the void procedure and ensures that potentially hazardous elements such as gas, electricity, legionella, asbestos etc takes a proactive approach to the management of risks at both a strategic and operational level.

The key risks that this policy seeks to mitigate are:

- Inconsistent application of a lettable standard resulting in increased costs to the Co-operative, increased rent loss and increased relet times.
- Decrease in tenant satisfaction with the condition of their new home.
- Failure to make best use of the Co-operative stock.
- Lack of clarity of tenant responsibilities when terminating their tenancy, resulting in increased void costs, rechargeable repairs and longer relet times.
- Impact on tenancy sustainment.
- Failure to comply with Health & Safety requirements.

19.0 COMPLAINTS

Any complaints in relation to this Policy, its implementation or its operation will be dealt with in line with the Co-operative's Complaints Policy.

A copy of our Complaints Policy and summary leaflets is available from our office or to download from our website www.forgewoodcoop.org.uk

20.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Co-operative is committed to promoting an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination by providing equality of opportunity for all.

We will endeavour to ensure a fair and equal service to everyone and that all services are carried out in an undiscriminating manner in line with the Co-operative's Equality and Diversity Policy.

In particular, we will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation.

We will ensure that everyone has equal access to information and services to meet specific needs. Upon request we will make available documents in a range of alternative formats/language.

21.0 POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed on a 5 yearly basis or earlier if the legislation changes to ensure that its aims and good practice are being met.

Appendix 1

LETTABLE STANDARD

The Co-operative will carry out an inspection of a property when it becomes void to assess the level of work required in order to bring each of our properties up to an acceptable standard for a new occupier to move in.

This document is a summary of the condition that all void properties should meet before being re-let and is used as a checklist to ensure that a minimum lettable standard is achieved and the property is left wind and watertight.

This list is not exhaustive, and the scope of necessary work will vary between properties.

Minimum standard	Works
General Cleanliness	The house will be cleared of furniture, rubbish and belongings including any attic/loft space from the previous occupier. Carpets and similar floor finishes are to be removed if they are heavily soiled, extensively damaged or inappropriately installed. Floors will be swept out and cleaned, as necessary. Kitchen work surfaces, associated fittings, and sanitary ware should be washed down. Property should be clean and tidy.
Locks	The property will have the locks changed on the front and back doors (where applicable) and minimum 2 sets of keys will be available. If residing in flatted accommodation minimum 2 front door keys / 2 fobs and 1 common back door key will also be provided along with a bin store key (if applicable).
Windows	All windows throughout the property will be fully operational and checked for safety. All glass to be complete and crack free. All sealant to be intact and mould free. Any mould or mildew is to be removed and cleaned thoroughly. Window keys to be provided.
Kitchen Units	All kitchen base and wall units will be checked and necessary repair carried out to ensure that all hinges, drawer units guides are fully operational. Kitchen worktops may have some wear and tear but should be free from deep scratches or multiple dents/burns. Where extensive repairs are necessary and costs are not prohibitive, consideration should be given by the Maintenance Officer to fully replace the kitchen units.
Cooker Connection	A suitable cooker connection will be provided (tenant will be responsible for connection).
Electrical	All electrics will be checked and deemed safe as per IEE standards and a copy of the certificate issued to new tenants. Any faulty or unsafe lighting to be removed and replaced to original standard.
Gas	Houses with gas central heating will have a full safety check undertaken and a copy of the compliance certificate will be issued to new tenants. Any gas supply for cooking facilities will be made safe, and new tenant can arrange for this to be removed at time of fitting their gas cooker.

Minimum standard	Works
Legionella Control	Where applicable water tanks are fully chlorinated cleaned and flushed, outlets run, and a new shower hose and head will be provided where required.
Smoke Alarms	These will be checked and left in working order i.e. • One smoke alarm installed in the living room and in every circulation space on each storey such as hallways and landings; • One heat alarm installed in every kitchen and carbon monoxide detector (where required); • All smoke alarms and heat detectors should be interlinked.
Bathroom Fitments	All sanitary ware will be in good condition and free from chips and cracks (including the bath panel). New toilet seat will be replaced where necessary. Replace sealant where required. Tiled/grout surfaces to be free of mould / mildew free.
Showers (where fitted)	Where showers are installed, these will be in working order and have a shower curtain and appropriate wall coverings. A new shower head and hose will be fitted if required.
Floor Coverings	Generally, if they are deemed to be in a reasonable condition, these will be left. These will not be maintained by the Co-operative.
Water Supply	We will ensure a supply of running water in the kitchen and bathroom.
Skirtings and Facings	Missing or broken skirtings and facings will be repaired or replaced as required.
Sinks and Wash Hand Basins	Sinks and wash hand basins will be free from chips and will be securely fitted with taps in working order and plugs and chains in place.
External Doors	Any front and rear close doors will be secure and fully operational. Spy hole on front door where flatted accommodation located in a close. Lock change with minimum 2 sets of keys. Letterbox and flaps on all front doors.
Internal Doors	All internal doors (including cupboards) will be intact and operating correctly. The kitchen door where present will be half hour fire rated. Bathrooms and toilets should have a locking device. Where self-closing devices have been deactivated on fire doors these should be refitted or replaced, as necessary.
Communal Areas	Minimum 2 fobs for door entry and 1 key for rear door. Minimum 1 drying area key (if applicable).
Wardrobes	Fitted wardrobes will have adequate shelving/clothes rails in place.

Minimum standard	Works
Walls	Any major damages to plaster/plasterboard walls will be made good.
Floorboards	All visible loose flooring will be re secured and even to enable a level surface for floor coverings.
Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)	An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) provides information about how energy efficient a property is, and how the efficiency could be improved. Buildings are rated on a scale from A to G, with A being the most efficient. It is a requirement to produce an EPC when a property is being let to a new tenant. This certificate is usually displayed inside the electric meter cupboard. The EPC is valid for 10 years and does not have to be updated during this time.
Dampness & Mould	As part of the handover pack the Maintenance Officer will add "A guide to Dampness in Mould" booklet which provides good practice information to tenants on how to reduce dampness in their homes. Our properties are also inspected visually at void stage for dampness and mould, and should any observations be picked up they are treated on a Stage 1,2 and 3 basis which is recorded. Once the property has been allocated, we will revisit the property to inspect previous issues to make sure there has been no reoccurrence.
Door Entry Intercom	Door entry intercom to be in full working order.
Garden areas/Backcourts	Any garden areas / communal backcourt areas will be cleared of rubbish and refuse and left in a tidy condition. Refuse bin(s), where applicable, will be left in place.
Fire Safety	The property has been visually checked to ensure compliance with all aspects of fire safety. Relevant doors have been checked to ensure operational and fully compliant along with fire escape windows where relevant. Additionally, the smoke and heat alarms have been tested and are in full working order.
Asbestos	An asbestos survey will be carried out at each void property if there has not been one already completed. This information will then be added to the Asbestos register and updated in the current housing software / dashboard used by the Co-operative.

Decoration

Decoration is the new tenant's responsibility including the filling of minor holes from wall fixings, however, where the condition is deemed poor by the Maintenance Officer then assistance with decoration i.e. a supply of paint may be given. This will be at the discretion of the Co-operative.

On some occasions non-essential repair work may be required after you sign your Tenancy Agreement. We try to minimise this where possible however if additional repair work is required you will be asked to provide access at a time that is suitable to you in order to complete this work.

I/We hereby certify that I/we have read and fully understand the above in respect of the lettable standard.

Signed Tenant Dated.....

Signed Joint Tenant Dated.....

Signed Housing Officer Dated.....