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Void Property Policy

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| Title | Void Property Policy |
| Date Created | February 2025 |
| Next Review Date | February 2028 |
| Author | Reece Cahalane |
| Approver | Board of Management |
| Applies to | General Needs |

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines our approach to managing the transition from the end of an active tenancy, through the stage where the property is un-tenanted (void) and then the re-letting of the property.
- 1.2 The policy excludes properties that have a change in tenure from cases of succession, mutual exchange or assignment as these case types do not involve the property passing through the voids process .
- 1.3 This policy applies to all general needs housing properties let by CDS and will ensure that homes will always be let in line with our lettable standard (appendix 1). We recognise that often the main factor in delaying the re-let of a void is the need to carry out repairs and improvements.
- 1.4 It is the responsibility of the Board to approve this policy and to amend appropriately. The policy should be periodically reviewed by Board to ensure that the void turnaround is continuing efficiently in keeping with the aims and objectives.
- 1.5 All officers and associated stakeholders have accountability to follow the policy and associated procedures to ensure the prompt turnaround of void properties is completed to maximise rental income, in keeping with the aim and objectives.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The key aims and objectives of the policy are to:
 - Enable CDS to achieve the letting target of 28 calendar days 'key-to-key'.
 - Ensure that properties are managed efficiently throughout the void process by supplying transparency of tasks and responsibilities.
 - Minimise rental loss by turning around void properties quickly and efficiently.
 - Establish that outgoing tenants are aware of their responsibility when returning the property to CDS.

- Minimise the rechargeable repairs costs through clear and effective communication with tenants.
- Minimise void repair costs and ensuring value for money.
- Properties returned by appointed contractor after void works are to be in line with the agreed void standard policy and reflect the decent home requirements.
- Supply efficient process of early inspection and notification to an upcoming void to CDS on the ending of tenure.
- Deliver prompt sign up for new tenants to properties as soon as they are completed by the contractor working on the void

3 Key Performance Indicators and Targets

3.1 CDS have established a range of key performance indicators which are reviewed annually. These include measurements covering the following:

- Void rent loss
- Number of properties let
- Actual and average void turnaround times

3.2 These indicators will be monitored internally by the senior management team. The information is also used to highlight areas of concern and, if appropriate, to inform discussions with teams and contractors who can contribute to the overall performance.

3.3 Targets are set for statutory checks and for repair work which are closely monitored by managers and teams responsible.

A major void is classed as a property which has failed an important compliance check and/or has a replacement of a major component, such as kitchen, bathroom, windows or heating system. The repairs would usually take longer to complete.

A standard void is all other voids that do not meet these criteria.

We report the different classification centrally and it is used to inform our monthly Key Performance Indicators and manage performance.

| Work | Timescale |
|---------------|------------------|
| Standard Void | 28 calendar days |
| Major Void | 65 calendar days |

4 Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants must meet their obligations as described in the Tenancy Agreement including giving the required notice period. The tenant must leave the home in an acceptable condition which as far as practically possible meets the Lettable Standard (Appendix 1), except for fair wear and tear. Where this is not the case, we will recharge outgoing tenants for any repairs required to the home which are due to tenant damage, disrepair or neglect, for changing locks or replacing keys if not returned, garden clearance and removal of rubbish, furniture or personal belongings.

5 CDS Responsibilities

5.1 Day to day responsibility for the operation and monitoring of this policy lies with the appropriate managers. Our employees have a responsibility to ensure this policy is adhered to. We will aim to ensure all vacant homes are brought up to our current Lettable Standard (Appendix 1), before they are re-let.

6 Termination

6.1 A tenant must give at least four weeks' notice of their intention to end their tenure with CDS in writing. On receipt of this the Housing Services Officer will confirm with the tenant the vacant possession date and remind them of their end of tenancy responsibilities, including:

- A pre-termination inspection of the property will be completed during the notice period.
- The property, including the garden is to be left in a clean, tidy condition, and clear of all tenant belongings and items.
- The removal of improvements, fittings and fixtures must result in the property being left safe and not detrimental to the condition of the property.
- Improvements installed without permission or repairs being carried out due to tenant neglect, will be subject to the recharge.
- Pay all rent owed up to the end of the tenancy.
- Return keys on or before the end of tenancy date via the key safe.
- Provision of a forwarding address.

6.2 The ending of tenancy responsibilities is specified in the Tenancy Conditions – Section 7 “Ending this Agreement”.

7 Pre-termination inspections (PTI)

7.1 Carrying out pre-termination Inspections is considered helpful for the following reasons:

- Aid to minimise the void period of a property.
- Find problems that can be discussed with the tenant and are resolved prior to the tenancy end date.
- Tenants are made aware of potential recharges.
- Reduce works being carried out in the void period.
- Minimise repair costs.
- Avoid rechargeable repairs.

7.2 Provisions to collect the keys from the outgoing tenant will be discussed during the visit by the Housing Officer and instructions given. In most cases, it will involve a key safe at the property being used to deposit the keys.

8. Recharge for repair

- 8.1 When elements of a property have been considered to have been deliberately damaged by the tenant, or unauthorised alterations have been found, the Housing Services Officer will advise the outgoing tenant at the pre-termination stage of the potential recharge.
- 8.2 If intentional damage or unauthorised improvements are not picked up by the Housing Services Officer at the pre-termination inspection, but are later discovered, CDS will decide the proper course of action at this time depending upon the cost of the recharge.
- 8.3 If a tenant is known to have a disability, mental health concerns, or any other issue that needed the involvement of a support service, the Housing Services Officer will communicate this with the Operations Director to make an informed decision around whether to pursue recharges.

9.0 Internal transfer

- 9.1 The end of tenancy responsibilities for a tenant transferring to another CDS property, are the same as those in the case of a formal termination:
- The property, including the garden is to be left in a clean, tidy condition and clear of all tenant belongings and items.
 - The removal of improvements, fittings and fixtures must result in the property being left safe and not detrimental to the condition of the property.
 - Improvements installed without permission or repairs being carried out due to tenant neglect, will be subject to a recharge.
 - Pay all rent owed up to the end of the tenancy.
 - Return keys on or before the end of tenancy date.

10 Health and Safety

- 10.1 All inspections and accompanied viewings conducted at void properties pre- and post-termination, will be carried out following good practice and health and safety guidelines.

11 Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

- 11.1 On 20th March 2019, a new law came into force to make sure that rented houses and flats are 'fit for human habitation', which means that they are safe, healthy, and free from things that could cause serious harm. The void standard must oblige the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act to prevent avoidable legal action.

A link to the government website supplying guidance for landlords on the act can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018/guide-for-landlords-homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018>

13 Data Protection

- 13.1 When handling tenancy terminations, staff will encounter personal information. The handling and use of the data will be carried out under the CDS GDPR policy.
- 13.2 Any breach of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) should be reported to your line manager and the CDS Data Control Officer informed at once.

14 Associated Policies

- Damp and Mould Policy
- Repairs Policy
- Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- Complaint Policy
- Lettings Policy

14 Appendix 1- Lettable Standard

Cleaning

- The property will be clean and free from rubbish including the loft space.
- Surfaces and cupboards will be cleaned.
- Kitchen and bathroom floors will be mopped.
- The sink, wash hand basin, bath/shower and toilet will be sanitised.

Ceilings and walls

- Visible plasterwork will be in a condition that can be decorated.
- Removal of Wallpaper will be your responsibility and care must be taken to avoid unnecessary damage to underlying plasterwork.
- Graffiti will be removed or decorated over internally and externally.
- Aertex will be left in situ if it is in good condition.
- Mould affected area will be cleaned and treated with anti-fungal paint and the issue repaired to help reduce the risk of damp and mould and the likelihood of condensation occurring. More information can be found online at our website <https://www.cds.coop/damp-mould-and-condensation-reporting/>.

Doors, internal woodwork, windows and glazing

- All fire doors will be checked to meet agreed FD30 or FD60 standards.
- All internal and external doors will operate correctly and be fit for purpose.
- The locks to all external doors will be changed.
- All glazing will be intact when you move in and all windows that are designed to open will be in working order.
- Loft insulation will be maintained to the required legal standard.
- Glass panels within 800mm from floor level will be fitted with safety glass where possible.

Floors and stairs

- New carpets are not supplied. Existing carpets or laminate flooring are removed unless considered to be in good condition and are then 'gifted' to you. Such items are not maintained by CDS.

- With your agreement the previous tenants' carpets, lino, ceramic tiles, laminated or wooden floor coverings that are in reasonably good condition will be left in the property. The ongoing maintenance and replacement of these items would become your responsibility.
- Floors will be even and free from tripping hazards.
- The flooring in the kitchen and bathroom will have a clean and washable non-slip covering, broken and damaged tiles will be replaced.
- Timber floors will be secure and in an acceptable condition.
- Solid floors will have no major ongoing defects.
- Stairs will have safe and secure handrails and balustrades.

Decoration

- The redecoration of the property is your responsibility, walls will be left in a serviceable condition.
- If the standard of the walls and ceiling is not of a serviceable condition, CDS may provide the incoming tenant with a redecoration voucher to aid with the decoration, the granting of this is purely discretionary.
- The number of rooms requiring redecoration and the vouchers payable is decided by the Housing Services Officer (HSO) and the vouchers are paid at the rate agreed with the HSO. This is typically calculated based on the number of rooms.

Heating and mains services

- We will give you a copy of the landlord's gas safety certificate and let you know where the emergency control valve is when you sign the tenancy agreement.
- The mains water supply will be left working, the main stopcock will be checked and left operational. We will let you know where it is on the sign-up visit.
- We will have the electrical supply checked in line with the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contractors (NICEIC) inspection procedure.
- Appropriate smoke alarms will be installed at the property.
- There will be a working carbon monoxide (CO) detector in all required rooms in accordance with legislation and regulations.
- If the property has a gas supply, we will have the gas supply and any appliances tested in line with current gas safety regulations to make sure they are safe and in working order.

External areas

- Access and egress to front and rear property entrances will be clear of obstructions.
- Where possible boundaries will be clearly defined.
- Roofs, walls, gutters and downpipes will be safe and in working condition.
- We will remove rubbish from the front and back gardens, bin stores and any sheds.
- We will remove sheds, greenhouses and other similar garden structures unless they are in good condition. In the event that any of these items are left, the ongoing maintenance and replacement of these items would become your responsibility.
- We will cut back any overgrown hedges, lawns and trees to an acceptable height. The ongoing maintenance and replacement of these items would become your responsibility.

Bathroom and toilet

- All existing bathroom elements will be operational and free from leaks
- All Splashback areas will be correctly sealed and free from defects and mould
- All toilets will work properly and be securely fixed in place.

Kitchen

- The sink-top and work surfaces will be in a clean and hygienic condition
- All units will be secure and doors and drawers will operate satisfactorily
- The water supply will be working
- There will be a safe and compliant cooker space with a suitable gas and electric point if both are available. It is your responsibility to arrange the connection of your cooker by a suitably qualified person
- There will be a minimum of two double electrical sockets
- We will provide space for a tall fridge and, washing machine with plumbing, taps and waste, the connection of your washing machine is your responsibility
- Kitchen floor will have a washable clean non-slip covering free from broken and damaged tiles
- If the property is a new build we will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the “as built” components/parts for as long as reasonably practicable
- All kitchens will have a minimum of the following:

1 bedroom property

- *1x double wall unit*
- *1x double sink unit*
- *1x double base unit.*

2 bedroom property

- *1x double wall unit*
- *1x double sink unit*
- *1x double base unit*
- *1x single base unit*

3 bedroom property

- *2x double wall unit*
- *1x double sink unit*
- *2x double base unit*
- *1x single base unit*
- *1x single wall unit*

Version control

| Date | Amendment | Version control |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>24 March 2025</i> | <i>New policy approved by board</i> | <i>V1.0</i> |