



Letting and Void Management Policy

If you have difficulty with sight or hearing, or if you require this document translated, please contact us and we will be happy to provide this information in a format that suits your needs.

Our Vision, Our Mission, Our Values

Our Vision

Elderpark Housing will lead the way in delivering outstanding customer services and great places to live.

Our Mission

To provide quality, affordable homes and excellent services which place a focus on our customers and enhancing our communities.

Our Values



Equality and Diversity Statement

Elderpark Housing are committed to ensuring people or communities do not face discrimination or social exclusion due to any of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex or sexual orientation.

This document complies with the Associations Equality and Diversity Policy.

The Association will regularly review this Policy for equal opportunities implications and take the necessary action to address any inequalities that result from the implementation of this Policy.

Executive Summary

Policy Author

This responsibility for this policy sits with the Director of Housing and Customer Service.

However, service delivery includes the Housing Management, Maintenance and the Customer Service Teams. The objective is that all staff understand their role along this service journey, which ends with a satisfied tenant living in a tenancy, which they can sustain.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the policy is:

- To minimise rent loss when a property is empty
- To put in places procedures to take account of the applicant/ tenant experience along this journey and where possible enact improvement
- To enhance tenancy sustainability by supporting vulnerable tenants set up home and settle in to their new home

The policy will outline the legislative and regulatory requirements, which relates to letting homes. It will detail the effective principles behind achieving this and outline the purpose of the various stages along this journey.

Accompanying procedures will detail the operational steps and information flow required to achieve these aims and objectives.

Aims and Objectives of the Policy

1. Aims and Objectives of Policy

The Objectives

- To minimise void loss -the length of time that the property is untenanted.
- To achieve value for money by balancing costs against positive outcomes.
- To take account of the applicant/ tenant experience along this journey and where possible improve that experience.
- To minimise paperwork, administration task if possible and use digital information to improve efficiencies.
- To work in partnership with agencies to help vulnerable new tenants set up home and settle in to their new home.
- To ensure that the Association provides a consistency of service in letting our properties, as determined by our procedures

- To put in place measures to identify circumstances, should service delivery fall below consistency of service.
- To monitor outcomes require for regulatory purposes.

Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Gas Safety (Installation and use) Regulations 1994
- BS 7671:2018 Requirements for Electrical Installations, IEE Wiring Regulations 18th Edition
- The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 [1]
- Data Protection Act 1998

Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out. The policy is not specifically relevant to any one protected characteristic group in the Equality Legislation. Instead, the policy impacts housing applicants who are prioritised in the allocation policy as a result of being offered accommodation.

However, the policy recognises that vulnerable tenants due to poor health or who are impacted by poverty will require additional support to set up home.

The outcome of the policy from the tenants' perspective will be measured using CX feedback. The results of these surveys will be used to enhance the tenants' experience.

Privacy

Record keeping for the purposes of this Policy relate to the contracts that are in place and servicing / thorough examination's records, which are carried out. All data will be held in line with GDPR requirements. This Policy is written to be open and transparent in line with FOISA. A GDPR Impact Assessment has been carried out and attached to this Policy.

Related Policies

Policy Title	Location
Abandonment Policy	V:\Elderpark Policy Suite\Housing Management Policies\H1 Abandonment Policy.pdf
Allocation Policy	V:\Elderpark Policy Suite\Housing Management Policies\H2 Allocations Policy.pdf
Reactive Maintenance Policy	V:\Elderpark Policy Suite\Maintenance Policies\M4 Reactive Maintenance Policy.pdf
Tenancy Sustainability Policy	U:\Housing Management Procedures\Sustainability Issues\sustainability policy updated.doc

Contents Page

1. Introduction	Page 7
2. Purpose of the Report	Page 7
3. Aims and Objective of the Policy	Page 7
4. Legal and Regulatory Framework	Page 8
5. Principles for Effective Letting of Void Properties	Page 9
6. Implementation of the Policy	Page 10
7. Monitoring of the Policy	Page 12
8. Records Complaints and Continual Feedback	Page 13
9. Review	Page 13

1. Introduction

Elderark Housing Association manages 1325 properties and approximately 120/130 of these properties will become empty during the course of a financial year. This Policy details our objectives of trying to re-let these properties as quickly as possible, whilst addressing the housing need of applicants and supporting tenancy sustainability.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This Policy and the accompanying procedures outlines the way in which Elderprark Housing will provide a service to new tenants in relation to the management and letting of empty properties within its stock.

This Policy recognises this service starts when the outgoing tenant gives notice or when housing staff and/or the homeless section (as part of void led matching service) contact an applicant about an offer of accommodation. It ends when the tenant is satisfied with their new home, are settled in and the rent is paid. All staff involved in the process have a responsibility to understand the service from the potential tenants' view point and work towards improving their experience, within the remits the Policy objectives.

The Policy outlines the effective principles of letting empty properties including reducing void times and achieving sustainable tenancies.

3. Aims and Objectives of Policy

The Objectives include

- Minimise void re-let times (the length of time that the property is untenanted).
- Achieve value for money by balancing costs against positive outcomes.
- Take account of the applicant/ tenant experience through this journey and where possible improve that experience.
- Minimise paperwork, administration tasks if possible and use digital information to improve efficiencies.
- Work in partnership with agencies to help vulnerable new tenants set up home and settle in to their new home.
- Ensure that the Association provides a consistency of service in letting our properties, as determined by our procedures.
- Put in place measures to identify circumstances, should service delivery fall below consistency of service.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

4.1 The following legislation applies to the management of void properties:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Gas Safety (Installation and use) Regulations 1994

4.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter indicators, which apply to this Policy are cross-referenced with the indicators from the Annual Return on the Charter, including relevant Contextual and EESSH indicators. This is detailed in the table below:-

The Scottish Social Housing Charter	ARC Charter indicators and Contextual and EESH indicators
<p>4: Quality of Housing</p> <p>Tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) when they are allocated; are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair; and also meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by December 2020.</p>	<p>C8 Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) stock condition survey information.</p> <p>C 10 Percentage of stock meeting EESSHH</p> <p>C11 Anticipated exemptions from EESSH</p> <p>C12 Energy Performance Certificates</p>
<p>5: Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements</p> <p>Tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.</p>	<p>Indicator 6: The percentage of stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard</p> <p>Indicator 7: The percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home.</p>
<p>Access to Housing and Support 7, 8 and 9: Housing options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them • Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options. • People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness. 	<p>Indicator 14: The percentage of tenancy offers refused during the year.</p>
<p>11: Tenancy Sustainment</p> <p>Tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is</p>	<p>Indicator 16: The percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year by source of let.</p> <p>Indicator 17. The percentage of lettable homes, which are vacant in the year.</p>

available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations	
13: Value for money Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that are provided, continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay	Indicator 18. The percentage of rent lost through properties being empty during the last year. Indicator 30. Average length of time taken to re-let properties in the last year.

5. Principles for Effective Letting of Void Properties

5.1 Elderpark will ensure our procedures are reviewed on an ongoing basis to encompass the principles detailed below which outline the effective letting on empty properties:

- Involve tenants and other service users in setting standards (for example re-let standards and number of offers).
- Ensure that tenants are aware of their tenancy obligations in relation to giving notice to end their tenancy and the condition in which the property must be left.
- Identify the needs of applicants prior to offering accommodation.
- Pre-allocate properties before properties become empty wherever possible.
- Take action to minimise the number of refusals.
- Keep void properties in a safe and well-kept condition for the protection of tenants, the property and the general appearance of the area.
- Bring the void property to a lettable standard as quickly as possible, so as to minimise rent loss.
- To identify factors leading to high void turnover and / or where there is a small waiting list and adopt specific procedures and strategies to achieve the Policy objectives.
- Take the opportunity during the void period to undertake, where appropriate, programmed major and cyclical repairs rather than wait until the property is next tenanted.
- Provide support for new tenants to set up home, within the scope of the services available and our financial constraints.
- Set targets and monitor performance for each aspect of dealing with empty properties.
- Benchmark performance against that achieved by other comparable landlords.
- Collate feedback from applicants and tenants along the service journey, including the use of digital feedback to understand their experience and feedback into service improvements.
- Train staff in the implementation of the Policy and procedures to ensure consistency in service delivery.

6. Implementation of the Policy

The Policy for letting empty properties cannot be seen in isolation and must work in conjunction with the Association's Allocation Policy, Tenancy Agreement, Abandonment Procedures, Reactive and Planned Maintenance Policy and Tenant Sustainment Policy and Procedures.

These documents are interlinked into the implementation of the Policy, which can be summarised below and which are reflected in the procedures which support this Policy.

6.1 Tenancy Termination.

We will have in place effective processes, so that we begin void property procedures as soon as the notice of tenancy termination is received and ensure that the outgoing tenant is aware of the tenancy obligations.

Details of Tenancy Termination include:

- Acknowledge that a tenancy can end in a number of ways, as detailed in Section 6: Ending your Tenancy in Section 6 of the Model Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.
- In the event of an abandonment property, staff will seek to take possession in line with the Abandonment Policy and Procedures.
- The void procedures will detail steps required if the tenants dies, including steps required if there is no next of kin or succession. The procedures will detail the time family have to clear the house after tenants' death. Currently this is two weeks, which can expanded to four weeks in exceptional circumstances.
- In event of a tenant transferring the Association currently gives the tenant two days to move without incurring rent payments on two homes.

6.2 Pre Termination Inspections.

The purpose of which is:

- Identify rechargeable repairs
- Help assess compensation for improvement work
- Understand why the tenant is leaving
- Collect all relevant data including a forwarding address and information on meters
- Remind the outgoing tenant their tenancy obligations including rent account and the disposal of unwanted items
- Assess, if potentially, there could be minor enhancements to the property to make it more functional, for example putting up an additional kitchen unit or fitting a socket in the kitchen

- Crosscheck the tenancy attributes on the IT system to ensure that they are correct

6.2 Pre Tenancy Interview

The purpose of which is to:

- To identify if there has been changes in the applicants circumstances
- To help reduce refusals of offers of accommodation by ensuring that there is no misunderstanding between the applicant's requirements and the property on offer
- To build a relationship between the potential new tenant and the Housing Officer
- To identify the needs of the tenant and the extent to which we can match their needs to the services we have available to assist in setting up home.

6.3 Void Inspection

The purpose is to carry out remedial work to bring the empty property up to a lettable standard, within the time targets, set within the contract for Responsive and Void Repairs.

The lettable standard is detailed in the void procedures. There may be exceptional occasions when the Maintenance Officer returns the keys and additional work is required, such as a specialist trade if required or, there are difficulties sourcing a material.

If planned maintenance work is required and is deemed prudent by the Maintenance department to carry out the work, this will be completed during the void period.

6.4 Offer of Accommodation

Properties are offered in conjunction with the Association's Allocation Policy. The procedure can differentiate when dealing with properties with small waiting lists whereby, we may ask applicants to "note their interest in a property" and /or advertise properties on Gumtree.

We work in conjunction with the local Homeless Team to secure homeless people sustainable and settled accommodation. The procedure can vary including using a Void Led Matching Service or Housing First procedures.

6.5 Tenancy Sustainable Issues

The Association will provide a range of initiatives and services to promote tenancy sustainment, by helping the more vulnerable tenants set up home and settle in their

new home. In addition, we will offer assistance to help decorate the property if we think that an offer of accommodation is likely to be refused, or falls below our acceptable standard.

The extent to these initiatives, which are detailed below, will be curtailed by our financial constraints and budgetary requirements

The range of services and initiatives currently include:

- Financial Inclusion Advice
- Fuel Inclusion Advice
- Carpet and Blinds Service Charge
- Starter Packs
- Decoration Allowance
- New Tenant Visits

7.0 Monitoring of the Policy

7.1 The Housing and Maintenance Sub Committee will receive reports on a quarterly basis and approve the targets for letting void properties on an annual basis.

Performance in relation to these targets, will be monitored by the Housing Manager and Maintenance Manager and reported to the Management Committee on a quarterly basis.

- Turnover of stock and percentage of lettable homes that became vacant in the last year. (ARC 17) and the reason for termination
- Void loss as a percentage of rental income. (ARC Indicator 18)
- Time between end of tenancy and keys returned by the outgoing tenant
- Void loss incurred during period planned maintenance/major works being undertaken (**Target time 28 calendar days**)
- **Time in Maintenance:** Target time of **(to be updated)** days from receipt of the keys from Housing to the when they are returned to Housing
- Housing Management: Target time 5 days from receipt of keys from the Maintenance Section to the property being let
- Average time to re-let a void property. Target Time of **(to be updated)** days (ARC Indicator 30)
- Number and reason for refusals (ARC Indicator 14)
- Analysis of new tenant surveys, using CX Feedback
- Adhoc reports pertinent to issues relating to difficult to let property

7.2 Supplementary Reporting

The effectiveness of this Policy, can also be assessed by other KPI and financial reporting, in terms of service delivery. These include:

- The number of new tenants in arrears by Housing Officer - Arrears Report
- Tenancy Sustainment Report The percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year by source of let (ARC Indicator 16)
- Abandonment Reporting (ARC Reporting C4)
- Quarterly Management Accounts
 - Void Maintenance Spent
 - Carpets and Blinds Service Charge, Income Vs Expenditure
 - Tenancy Sustainment Spend against Budget
 - Starter Packs & Decoration Allowance, Spend against Budget.
- Complaints and Compliments Reporting

8.0 Record Complaints and Continual Feedback:

In recognition that this services ends when a tenant is content, settled in their home and the rent is being paid. Elderpark will carry out a survey, which will examine a new tenant's journey of being offered a home and then moving in and setting up home.

This will be collated through the digital reporting tool CX Feedback and reported to the Housing and Maintenance Sub-Committee. This survey will collect satisfaction levels including whether the new tenant is satisfied with their new home. The information will be used to identify complaints and service improvement opportunities.

Complaints relating to this Policy and procedures, in which a tenant is not happy with the service, can be identified through CX feedback. This is in addition to other direct methods of contact. Such complaints will be recorded and handled in accordance with the Model Complaints Handling Policy

9.0 Review

The Policy will be reviewed in 5 years' time. Procedures will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis in accordance with demand, feedback from tenants and other external factors.

Equality Impact Assessment

Name of Policy to be assessed	Letting and Void Policy	New Policy or revision of existing?	Revision
Person(s) responsible for assessment		Aidan McGuinness	
Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the Policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise rent loss when a property is empty. To take account of the applicant/ tenant experience and where possible enact improvement. To enhance tenancy sustainability by supporting vulnerable tenants set up home and settle in to their new home 		
Who is intended to benefit from the Policy? (e.g. applicants, tenants, staff, contractors)	All Housing Applicants		
What outcomes are wanted from this Policy? (e.g. the measurable changes or benefits to members/ tenants / staff)	<p>The outcomes include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce Void loss from empty homes Enhance tenancy sustainment by supporting vulnerable set up home. 		
Which groups could be affected by the Policy? (note all that apply)			
Age	N/A	Disability	N/A
Gender reassignment	N/A	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N/A
Pregnancy and Maternity	N/A	Race	N/A
Religion or Belief	N/A	Sex	N/A
Sexual Orientation	N/A		
If the Policy is not relevant to any of the equality groups listed above, state why and end the process here.			
It reflects the priorities of the allocation policy and therefore is not relevant to a specific group.			
Have those affected by the Policy / decision been involved?			
This has included digital surveys, face-to-face surveys and detailed interviews with vulnerable groups.			
Describe the likely positive or negative impact(s) that the Policy could have on the groups identified above.	Positive Impact(s)		Negative Impact(s)
	Not relevant to a specific group		Not relevant to a specific group
What actions are required to address the impacts arising from this assessment? (This might include: additional data, putting monitoring in place, making adjustments, taking specific action to mitigate any potentially negative impacts)	The tenants experience will be collated on as CX feedback report.		
Signed:	A McGuinness		
Dated:	11/08/21		

GDPR Impact Assessment

Name of Policy to be assessed	Letting and Void Policy	New policy or revision of existing?	Revision of existing policy
Person(s) responsible for assessment		Aidan McGuinness	
Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise rent loss when a property is empty. To take account of the applicant/ tenant experience and where possible enact improvement. To enhance tenancy sustainability by supporting vulnerable tenants set up home and settle in to their new home 		
Which type of data will be used by implementation of this policy? (e.g. personal, sensitive or special category)	Personal data will be used in the implementation of this policy		
What outcomes are wanted from this policy? (e.g. necessary to meet legal obligations)	<p>Help tenants sustain their tenancy</p> <p>Ensure consistency of service delivery</p> <p>Fulfil the obligations in our Allocation policy.</p>		
Which groups could be affected by the policy? (note all that apply)			
Tenants	X	Committee	
Employees		Contractors	
If the policy is not relevant to any of the data groups listed above, state why and end the process here.			
Have those affected by the policy / decision been involved?			
Face to face surveys and digital surveys			
Describe the likely positive or negative impact(s) that the policy could have on the groups identified above.	Positive Impact(s)		Negative Impact(s)
	Let properties to those in need		
What actions are required to address the impacts arising from this assessment? (This might include: additional data, putting monitoring in place, making adjustments, taking specific action to mitigate any potentially negative impacts)	The Association has robust systems and checks in place to ensure that personal data remains confidential.		
Signed:	Aidan McGuinness		
Dated:	12/8/21		