



# REIDVALE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

## Void Management Policy

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Author	Housing Manager

## POLICY SUMMARY

<b>Purpose:</b>	The purpose of this policy is to set out Reidvale Housing Association's approach in relation to managing void property.
<b>Legislation / Guidance:</b>	The Association is a company under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, and a company regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Statutory Guidance The Scottish Social Housing Charter Requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator
<b>Regulatory Compliance</b>	Standard 1: The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.  Standard 2: The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.  Standard 3: The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.  Standard 4: The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.
<b>Linked Policies</b>	Allocation Policy Rechargeable Repair Policy Privacy Policy Complaints Policy Equality & Diversity Policy Adaptations Policy Alterations and Improvements Policy Asbestos Policy Legionella Policy Maintenance Policy
<b>Financial Impact</b>	Low
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Low
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment</b>	Yes
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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page no.</b>
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	1
3. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK	2
4. VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY	3
5. STAFF TRAINING	7
6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	7
7. COMPLAINTS	7
8. GDPR	7
9. POLICY REVISION	7
10. APPENDIX 1	8

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Reidvale Housing Association (RHA) is a community based housing association operating in the South Dennistoun area of the east end of Glasgow with the aim of providing good quality, affordable, rented accommodation for those in housing need whilst promoting a balanced community.

## 2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline how the Association manages its empty properties (voids).
- 2.2 The Association will seek to minimise the time that a property is left empty recognising that an empty house is associated with:
- lost rental income to the Association;
  - a lost chance to provide housing to a household in housing need;
  - a potential target for vandalism resulting in increased costs and safety concerns for neighbours;
  - the danger of physical deterioration resulting in increased costs; and
  - a negative image of the area – in particular for immediate neighbours.
- 2.3 RHA are committed to maximising its rental income and making the best use of the available stock, through efficient and effective control of voids.
- 2.4 RHA's main source of income is derived from rents and service charges, steps need to be taken to minimise the length of time between tenancies, whilst ensuring sensitive letting to sustain a balanced community. The Void Management Policy has been developed to ensure that good performance is achieved
- 2.5 Good void property management is based on Housing Services managing the process effectively and working with the outgoing tenant and as necessary, with other agencies. It involves dealing with three key areas:
- Tenancy termination
  - Identification and completion of any work to the property
  - Letting and occupation
- 2.6 To achieve the objectives the policy aims to ensure:
- Outgoing tenants are aware of their responsibilities prior to their termination date in order that void repair costs are kept to a minimum;
  - Minimise the loss of rental income by carrying out void repairs and reletting the properties as economically and efficiently as possible;
  - Maximise the opportunity to meet housing need by allocating properties effectively as possible;
  - Minimise the number of offers made before a house is let;
  - Continually improve the service through regular review of the void process, taking account of the views of residents, particularly new tenants;

- To provide the Management Committee with the necessary information that assists them to effectively monitor void performance;
- RHA complies fully with legal duties, contractual and regulatory requirements and good practice standards;
- RHA's properties are allocated in the same high lettable standard;
- RHA's financial stability and viability is protected;
- RHA's properties remain desirable and in high demand;
- Other related policies and procedures complement and support the aims and objectives of the Void Management Policy;
- Void costs are minimised whilst not compromising the Association's standards;
- RHA continues to meet the demand and expectations of potential tenants with regards to the standard of accommodation offered;
- There is a clear statement of RHA's service and standards in relation to void properties.

### **3. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

- 3.1 This policy has been developed within a framework that ensures proper compliance with all relevant legislation, regulatory standards and good practice guidance.
- 3.2 Reidvale Housing Association is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, a registered social landlord and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).
- 3.3 We are regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). Their Regulatory Framework sets out seven Standards of Governance and Financial Management. Relevant to this Policy are particular elements under Standards:

Standard 1: The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.

Standard 2: The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.

Standard 3: The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.

Standard 4: The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.

3.4 The Scottish Social Housing Charter was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2012 and subsequently revised in 2017. The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes for all social landlords when performing their wide range of activities. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors associations' performance against the Charter through their regulatory assessments. The Association will comply with the following Scottish Social Housing Charter requirements most relevant to this policy:

- **1:** Equalities – Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly with respect, and requires fair access to housing and housing services.
- **4:** Quality of Housing – 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 (ESSH) by December 2020.
- **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.
- **13:** Value for money – Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay,

3.5 The Void Management Policy aims to ensure that RHA complies fully with the following legislation:

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2011, 2010 and 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Scottish Secure Tenants (Compensation for Improvements) Regulations 2002
- The Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2008
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2013
- Scottish Fire Safety Legislation 2021
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all subsequent amendments and regulations created by virtue of the Act

## **4. VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **4.1 WHEN A PROPERTY IS DEEMED VOID**

RHA will deem a property void in the following circumstances:

- where a tenant has formally terminated the tenancy by written notice
- on the death of the tenant where there is no qualifying successor
- by abandonment of a tenant(s), where the required legal notices have been served
- by eviction where the Association is granted Decree by the Glasgow Sheriff Court

## 4.2 INVOLVING TENANTS IN THE VOID MANAGEMENT PROCESS

RHA will involve tenants in void management by:

- giving tenants information about the void procedures in the Tenant's Handbook, newsletters and on the Association's website
- encouraging tenants to report abandoned properties by providing information in the Tenant's Handbook, newsletters and on the Association's website
- ensuring all new tenants are given the opportunity to complete a new tenant satisfaction survey which will help RHA identify any problems with the allocations/void process

## 4.3 ENDING TENANCIES

4.3.1 RHA will ensure that procedures relating to empty properties are put in motion as soon as a notice to terminate a tenancy is received.

4.3.2 RHA will require all tenants to provide at least four weeks written notice of their intention to leave a property and to complete an end of tenancy form which seeks information on the following:

- date of tenancy termination
- intended date of leaving the property
- reasons for leaving
- details of any outstanding repairs
- tenure of new property
- forwarding address

4.3.3 The notice of termination must be in writing. We will not accept verbal notice in person or by phone. In exceptional circumstances the Association may accept a reduced termination notice period. Where this is done full details must be recorded by the housing officer.

4.3.4 The Association will acknowledge receipt of end of tenancy notices.

4.3.5 As soon as a tenant has notified the Association that they wish to give up their tenancy the Association will arrange for a pre termination of tenancy inspection to be carried out at the earliest opportunity. The purpose of this inspection is to reach agreement with the outgoing tenant concerning the condition in which the property is to be left, rechargeable repairs, repairs required to be done by the Association and to clarify rental liability.

4.3.6 The Housing Officer will then arrange a mutually convenient time to meet the outgoing tenant at the property on the date of the termination of tenancy in order to do a final property inspection, take meter readings and collect at least 2 full sets of property keys.

4.3.7 If a tenant fails to attend an end of tenancy inspection and handover the property keys on the due date then the Housing Officer will pursue the outgoing tenant. In cases where the tenant fails to return property keys until after the proposed date of termination this will result in the outgoing tenant being charged rent up to this later date. The date that the keys are returned will become the final termination date.

#### **4.4 DEATH OF A TENANT**

4.4.1 In cases where the property has become empty due to the death of a tenant the Housing Officer will contact the next of kin or nominated person for full sets of property keys and a copy of the death certificate.

4.4.2 In such cases, a period of 4 weeks should be allowed for the house to be cleared. The Association recognises the difficulties and sensitivities associated with clearing the belongings of a deceased person. In cases where the property cannot be cleared by relatives the Association will seek the earliest return of the keys in order to ensure the Association can commence void repair work with minimum further delay.

4.4.3 On occasions there may be an estate which is being administered by a solicitor. The Association will liaise with the appointed solicitor to obtain the return of the keys at the earliest opportunity.

#### **4.5 ABANDONED PROPERTIES**

4.5.1 The Association has clear procedures for dealing with properties that are believed to be abandoned. These procedures cover:

- the checking of apparently unoccupied property
- means for attempting to discover a tenant's whereabouts
- serving official abandonment notices
- storing and disposing of items left in abandoned houses
- dealing with services such as gas/electricity

#### **4.6 REPAIRS TO EMPTY HOUSES**

4.6.1 The Association will arrange for a property that is due to be vacated to be inspected before the outgoing tenant leaves.

4.6.2 Tenants will be required to organise any outstanding repair work for which they have responsibility before they leave.

4.6.3 Repairs that are the responsibility of the Association will be ordered within 1 working day of the void property being inspected.

4.6.4 The Association does not anticipate the vandalism of void properties being a problem but housing officers should assess the vulnerability of each void property and arrange for appropriate security measures in conjunction with maintenance services as appropriate. In the event of a property being vandalised this should be reported to the police and a crime number obtained, which should be used to facilitate any insurance claim in relation to the required works.

## **4.7 RELETING EMPTY HOUSES**

- 4.7.1 The Association will ensure that empty properties are relet as promptly and efficiently as possible.
- 4.7.2 The Association will seek to minimise the number of offers made before a property is let by:
- conducting regular reviews of the housing lists
  - collecting accurate records on the needs/preferences of applicants
  - closely matching applicant and housing needs
  - giving applicants accurate information about the property
  - making appropriate offers
  - checking the condition of the property before it is viewed
- 4.7.3 Applicants will be accompanied to view an empty property in order that the housing officer can answer any queries the applicant might have and also to enable the Association to obtain immediate feedback on the outcome of our void/allocations process.
- 4.7.4 Refusal rates and reasons for refusal information will be collated and monitored.

## **4.8 LETTABLE STANDARDS**

- 4.8.1 The Association has lettable standards for void properties. These set down minimum requirements for tenants to attain prior to leaving a tenancy and for the Association to achieve prior to releasing a property to a new tenant. The void letting standard are given in Appendix 1.

## **4.9 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING**

- 4.9.1 A written procedure note has been provided for all staff involved in the void management process. The written procedures clearly identify the various steps involved in the void management process and identify areas of responsibility where appropriate. The aim is that all involved in the process communicate clearly and effectively in working to clearly identified standards.
- 4.9.2 Housing Services Staff will monitor progress with voids at their weekly co-ordination meeting, the minutes of which are distributed to all staff.
- 4.9.3 Quarterly Key Performance Indicator reports enable the Management Committee to monitor the Association's void management performance.
- 4.9.4 Periodic audits of policy compliance will be conducted by the Internal Auditor with results being reported as appropriate to the Management Committee. Key areas of audit will include:
- risk management
  - provision of training and/or information to staff
  - compliance with policy and procedure
  - progress towards strategic targets
  - compliance with regulations e.g. Gas, Health & Safety

- budgetary and expenditure control
- contract administration and contractor performance
- customer satisfaction with Property Maintenance

4.9.5 In addition, in accordance with the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) for the Scottish Housing Regulator, the overall annual void loss figure is also reported as part of the ARC Return.

4.9.6 The Association's performance on void management is made available to our residents via our newsletters, annual reports and annual summary report on our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

## **5. STAFF TRAINING**

5.1 Reidvale Housing Association will ensure that all staff who are required to undertake work in void management receive appropriate and regular training.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

6.1 Reidvale Housing Association is an equal opportunities organisation. We are committed to providing an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination. No person or group of persons applying for housing and housing services will be treated less favourably than any other persons or groups of persons because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

## **7. COMPLAINTS**

7.1 Although we are committed to providing high levels of service, we accept that there may be occasions where a service user may not be satisfied with the service received from the Association. We value all complaints and use this information to help us improve our service. Any service user, complying with the procedure, but remaining dissatisfied with any aspect of the service they have received have the right to submit a complaint to the Association in accordance with the Complaints Handling Procedure.

## **8. GDPR**

8.1 Reidvale Housing Association will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current General Data Protection Regulation and our Privacy Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in our Fair Processing Notice.

## **9. POLICY REVISION**

9.1 The Association undertakes to carry out a comprehensive review of all aspects of this policy at least every three years. The review will take account of legislative changes, new policy guidance, best practice advice and the views of service users.



## Appendix 1

### Reidvale Lettable Standard

#### Introduction

Reidvale Housing Association are committed to providing our Tenants with excellent quality housing, which is safe, secure and meet the expectations of our Tenants.

To help us achieve this, we have produced this Lettable Standard which will ensure that all properties let by Reidvale Housing Association meet these high standards.

#### Aims

To ensure that properties are offered for let in a condition:

- Which exceeds the tolerable standards
- Which is free from damp or mould
- Which is wind proof and water tight
- Which meets the SHQS standard.
- Which meets EESSH Standard

#### Objectives

To provide a house which meets the expectations of the incoming tenant the Association will ensure all empty flats reach the following standards.

#### LETTABLE STANDARD

##### 1. Common Areas

The common area, accessible to the tenants, will be inspected to ensure it is free from major defects. The close, backcourt, stair lighting and controlled entry will be maintained on a regular basis. This also includes graffiti removal, reporting bulk items and repairing damage to the common elements.

##### 2. Doors

Flat entrance door to be well fitting, secure and free from any major defects, all locks will be changed and two sets of keys will be provided to each new tenant. Two fobs or keys will also be provided for the secured close entrance door. Back door and Cellar door keys will be provided where appropriate.

Pass doors to be well fitting, free from major defects. All doors handles and latches will be checked to ensure they are working freely and operating properly.

### **3. Flooring**

All floors will be secure and free of any major gaps which may cause damage to any floor covering. All protruding nails will be removed. All floors will be brushed, cleaned and mopped where required

### **4. Floor coverings**

Where carpets, laminate and other floor coverings are left in the property, it will be at the discretion of the Housing and Maintenance Officer as to whether they should be removed. Any floor coverings that remain will be the responsibility of the incoming tenant. Anti slip floor coverings, where provided should be in good condition and free from any major defect. Carpet grips will be left if they are in good condition.

### **5. Skirting's and Facings**

Skirting's and facings will be complete and similar in appearance. Any new skirting or facing will be painted to suit surrounding.

### **6. Kitchen Units**

Kitchen units/ worktops will be operational and free of any major defects eg obvious unsightly appearance or damage. All units will be of matching appearance. Work surfaces to be hygienic, clean and presentable. All kitchens will meet SQHS where possible

### **7. Kitchen Sink**

The kitchen sink to be clean, complete with plugs and chains, free of any major defects e.g. obvious unsightly appearance or damage and taps operational.

### **8. Windows**

All windows will be checked to make sure they open and close easily, and restrictors to be fitted and working properly.

### **9. Sanitary ware**

Sanitary ware will be clean, complete with plugs and chains, free of any major defects eg obvious unsightly appearance or damage and taps will be operational. A thermostatic shower will be fitted were no previous facility is available.

### **10. Pipework**

Pipework to be free of any leaks or blockages and provision made for connection to automatic washing machine supply and waste.

## **11. Plasterwork**

Walls and ceilings will be free of any major defects. .

## **12. Tiling/ Wet wall panels**

All missing and defective wall tiles will be replaced, grouted and sealed (where possible). Where the layout of the bathroom has been changed new splashback's will be installed at both bath and wash hand basin this may be installed as wet wall panels.

Where a shower is installed tiling/ wet wall panels should be full height on walls adjacent to the shower with either a shower rail and curtain or shower screen fitted.

## **13. Glazing**

Glazing to be cleaned inside and out, presentable and appropriate for the room it is fitted in. All glazing to be free from defect e.g. cracks or condensation between panes

## **14. Electrical Installation**

An electrical safety check will be carried out by a qualified electrician and all remedial works highlighted will be rectified before re-letting. Electrical safety certificate will also be provided

Energy efficient light bulbs should be in place in all areas

Adequate switches and sockets will be fitted to each room following the electrical check.

Paint to be removed from all switches and sockets

Interconnected smoke alarms will be fitted to the lounge and hallway and a CO detector will be fitted where required. A heat detector will be fitted in the kitchen with a central control unit in the hallway for testing where appropriate/ required.

All Extractor fans will be serviced and left fully operational.

The Association will provide one outlet in the living room that will access all digital channels and sky or cable TV

## **15. Gas/Heating System**

A full gas service will be carried out by a gas safe engineer and relevant paperwork will be provided. All remedial works found at the gas service will be rectified before re-letting. All bayonet fittings for cooker supplies will be removed and pipe work capped.

## **16. Cleanliness**

The property is to be left in a good and clean condition. All rooms, including cupboards to be in accordance with the following criteria.

**17. Windows**

Wash inside and outside surfaces of glazed windows, including sashes, sills and frames.

**18. Floors**

All timber floors to be brushed and debris removed. Timber floors to be scrubbed with soap/disinfectant and water and mopped dry where applicable. Vinyl floors should be washed with cloth or sponge and mopped dry.

**19. Ceilings and walls**

Should be dusted down and any cobwebs etc. and removed. Any grease or mould marks should also be cleaned especially in the kitchen area

**20. Paintwork**

Windows and frames should be free of mould and condensation and the surfaces clean. All skirting's and facings should be dusted down and washed.

**21. Sanitary ware**

Sanitary ware shall be cleaned and shall include bath panel(s), WHB and pedestal, WC bowl and cistern. Ceramic tiled surfaces in bathroom shall also be cleaned.

**22. Kitchen Units**

Kitchen fitments, units (including tops of wall units), worktops and sink tops shall have ALL external, surfaces cleaned. Insides of drawers and unit cupboards shall be cleaned. Ceramic tiled surfaces and splash backs in kitchen should also be cleaned

**23. Switches/ Sockets**

Switches, sockets, door handles, fingerplates etc. shall also be cleaned

**24. Doors**

All marks on doors to be cleaned including door handles.

Two air fresheners blocks to be left i.e. bathroom and kitchen.

**25. Decoration**

The interior decoration of the dwelling is to be left in a good state of repair.

**a) Ceiling**

- ensure the ceilings are not heavily nicotine stained
- ensure the emulsion paint is not flaking, especially kitchens and bathrooms
- ensure any textured finish has not been badly applied.

**b) Walls**

- ensure if wallpapered it is done neatly and completed
- ensure if emulsioned it is complete and uniformly covering the walls
- ensure there are no **excessive** holes from shelves, picture hooks etc
- ensure the surfaces are not heavily nicotine stained, check especially tops of walls.

**c) Paintwork**

- ensure all the surfaces are uniformly glossed
- the surfaces are not **excessively** chipped, especially door frames, skirting and inside of front and back doors
- ensure door handles etc., are free of paint.

**d) Sanitary ware**

- ensure the tiles/ wet wall, sanitary ware, and splash backs are free of paint.

**e) Decoration Allowance**

- decoration vouchers will be given to the incoming tenants should the house fail to meet the Association's decoration standards.

**f) Redecoration**

- in extreme cases, where a flat may be refused because of the condition of the decoration and especially if it is a retirement property, consideration may be given to redecorating part or all of the property.