

Void Standard

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Introduction

Our Void Standard details the standard to which we will bring our empty properties between lettings. It aims to ensure that properties are safe, secure, clean and free from health and safety hazards as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018. So that we manage our repairs to empty properties efficiently and in the most cost-effective way. The Standard supports the specific commitments contained in our Lettings Policy, to repair and let properties to a defined property standard and to minimise the period that properties are empty. This document contains detailed guidance intended for staff use. A summary of the Standard is made available for residents as part of the lettings process. So as not to delay a letting, it should be noted that some non-urgent repairs may be carried out after the start of the new tenancy. In bringing properties to the required standard, staff must be vigilant at identifying repairs that should appropriately be charged to the outgoing tenant.

Scope

This document applies to re-let properties within our General Needs and Older People's Services Housing stock. For Supported and Temporary Accommodation schemes, please refer to the relevant sections in this standard.

1.0 General External Works

Repairs instructions must take account of any conservation and preservation areas and any Tree Preservation Orders.

1.1 Property Structure

Guidelines:

Property to be secure and water tight. Repairs may be carried out in tenancy depending on severity.

- Visual check to roof and appropriate repairs carried out to ensure wind and water tight.
- Check for any defect or holes to external brickwork/render, all holes to be filled and any defects repaired.
- Check for signs of any structural damage, movement, penetrating or rising damp.

1.2 Garages, Sheds and Outbuildings	
Instructions:	Garage to be clear of debris.

- Check to see if garage door is functional, if not, make safe and repair in tenancy.
- If greenhouses and wooden sheds are in very good condition, to be offered as a gift to incoming tenant and no further maintenance to be carried out. Otherwise remove and dispose.
- Remove wooden sheds with roof containing ACM (see 2.11)
- Assess any brick-built sheds with roof/outbuilding structure, if ok – leave and maintain. If in disrepair, assess cost of removal vs. 10-year maintenance cost
- Remove & cap off outside WCs/sinks and make good

1.3 Paths and Steps

Guidelines:

All footpaths, driveways, steps and handrails within the boundary. Remove anything consider to be a trip hazard.

Instructions:

- Ensure no obvious trip hazards are present to footpaths, repair as required.
- Maintain any steps within the boundary, eradicate any H&S hazards
- Inspect handrails and key clamps if present
- Decking to be removed and disposed.
- At time of void, any other significant hazards to be removed or repaired

1.4 Boundaries

Guidelines:

To include boundary walls, fencing and gates. All rear garden boundaries to have a minimum of 900mm chain link to mark the boundary. Front garden boundary line to be marked.

- Fencing in good condition will be left as is.
- If the fence is likely to last more than 2 years and cost of repair is no more than 40% of the replacement cost,

- then carry out repair to existing wooden fence panel (like for like).
- Rear garden only –
 If full replacement install 1x1.8m privacy panels (use existing panels if in perfect working order) between properties, chain link (900mm unless next to public boundary then 1.8m high fencing) for remainder of boundary (may be carried out in tenancy).
- Front garden Chain link only if requires replacement.
- Gates to be in working order to rear garden if they form part of the boundary.
- Front gates if in good order leave and new tenants to take responsibility; otherwise remove
- Any rear dividing fences on new developments will be repaired or renewed to the development specification
- Chain link fence to be installed to front of property where garden is likely to be used for parking, where there is no dropped kerbs.

1.5 Gardens

Guidelines:

To include front, rear, side and separate gardens.

Instructions:

- Grass to be at maintainable height.
- All brambles and nettles are to be removed to ground
- level
- All shrubs/bushes and hedgerows to be cut to max 6ft high.
- If a tree represents a risk to either persons or property, instruct the Grounds Maintenance Team who will carry out a survey and if necessary, instruct a specialist contractor for removal (ensuring TPOs are checked). (may be carried out in tenancy).
- Presence of invasive plants e.g. Japanese knotweed or Hogweed to be referred to Ground maintenance team, for further action
- All ponds to be removed and filled in.
- Existing clothes line posts, rotary lines or similar shall be left if safe and in condition, removed if not.

1.6 Drainage Systems

Guidelines:

Includes manholes, covers, drains, gutters, gullies and rainwater systems on

the grounds of the property	
Instructions:	 Visual inspection to be carried out on the guttering, checking for leaks and blockages. Clear blocked drains, gutters and gullies if necessary. Manhole covers, gulley surrounds to be secure and in good condition

1.7 External Doors

Guidelines:

If replacement external door required, refer to investment works standard. Flat doors which exit to a communal area to be a fire door. Check for any outstanding Fire Risk Assessment actions

 One lock to every external door to be replaced Provide a minimum of 3x working keys for each lock (to include post box) Provide 2x Fobs or keys for communal entrance door Letter box/plate in working order (provide key if applicable). Ensure there is ability to receive mail. External doors to be in working order. (This includes communal doors where applicable. Please refer to PHG repairs standard). Cat flaps to be removed If doorbell is in working order leave, otherwise removed All closures to be in working order If fire door and/or frame damaged or breached replace with FD30s standard including suitable furniture — which requires sign-off by qualified TRADA recognise operatives
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1.8 Communal Areas	
Instructions:	 All common/communal areas both internal and external should be free from any defects/repairs. Major repairs that are deemed to be a Cat 1 hazard under The Housing Health and Safety Rating System or Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018 must be

- carried out as an emergency and in all cases before the property is re-let.
- Rotary lines shall be provided for sheltered schemes.

2.0 System Testing and Compliance

2.1 General Gas Information

Guidelines:

Property Services Gas safe technicians or approved Gas Safe subcontractor partner to carry out gas safety check and issue LGSR.

Gas supply will be tested and/or capped when the previous tenant vacates the property. A new LGSR will be carried out just prior to or on the day that the new resident moves in. The officer arranging the new tenancy will ensure that a Landlords Gas Safety Check has already been completed and a record issued within 28 days. In limited circumstances, where no intrusive void maintenance works are to be undertaken during the void period; for example, an electrical inspection and gas check only are required, it will not be necessary to undertake a two-stage gas void safety process as described above.

2.2 Gas Safety Check, LGSR and appliances Landlords Gas Safe Record carried out as a minimum. Gas Engineer to refer for new boiler if fails LGSR. All non-standard gas appliances are to be removed, and gas supply capped off. If back boiler, refer to Investment works team to add to Planned Maintenance Team to remove and replace with new fan flued combi boiler. If a back boiler in situ, remove and replace with new fan flued combination boiler

2.3 Gas Heating Systems	
Instructions:	 Heating systems to be in good working order (including thermostats) Ensure all heating appliances are functional Independent Gas fires (not back boiler) to be removed

•	All habitable rooms to have a source of heating
	air sourced heat pumps

2.4 Carbon Monoxide

Instructions:

- Working CO detector to be provided for any open flue appliances in use
- Supply CO alarm in room that contains any gas or fuel burning appliance
- Carbon monoxide detector to be installed by the boiler.

2.5 General Electrical Installation Information

Guidelines:

Electrical tests are to be carried out in a 2 part procedure, the 1st test is to be a visual inspection where any issue are to be highlighted to the Electrical team leader. Remedial works are to be carried out to ensure a satisfactory outcome at 2nd stage where Code 1 or 2 'unsatisfactory' observations must be corrected. Certificate to then be issued upon completion. If property tested within a 2 year period then the engineer is to decide if an advanced visual can be completed. All Electrical is carried out by NICEIC approved Electricians.

Electric will be live when the Final Void Inspection is completed.

2.6 Electrical, Oil & Solid Fuel Heating Systems

- All hard-wired equipment i.e. storage heaters, immersions to be in working order.
- Clean /replace filters to heat recovery units.
- Replace immersion thermostat to thermal cut-out type if not already in place
- Electric bar element type heaters to be removed.
- Electrical storage Heaters, electric boilers and any remaining warm air heating systems will be removed and replaced with a low carbon renewable heating system.
- Air Source Heat Pump systems will receive full service check. Any resultant remedial identified during the service will be rectified by a suitably qualified engineer.

- Oil heating systems will be accessed for the suitability of replacement with a new low carbon heating system.
- Where an oil heating system is old or in poor condition it will be replaced with a low Carbon renewable technology such as an air source heat pump.
- Properties that are let with Oil heating systems will receive full service check. Any resultant remedial works identified will be rectified by a suitably qualified engineer.
- All solid fuel appliances will be removed during the void period and any associated chimney opening made good.

2.7 Extractors

Instructions:

- Remove built in cooker hoods (unless no other form of extraction/ventilation)
- Provide new filter for existing cooker hoods (for incoming tenant to fit)
- Kitchen and bathroom to have an extractor fan where possible
- Please note: if mechanical extractor fans cannot be fitted a whole house ventilation system may be specified.

2.8 Smoke Alarms

Instructions:

- Mains operated, linked smoke alarms with battery back up to be present and in working order
- A wired heat sensor to be present and in working order in the kitchen.
- At least 1 smoke alarm on each storey of the property where there is a room used as living accommodation.
- Test and silence control switch to be provided for co and smoke alarms.
- All detectors to be in good condition and have at least
 5 Years until replacement date.

2.9 General Asbestos Information

Guidelines:

For any property built before the year 2000, an asbestos management report will be provided. If investment or intrusive works are required, instruct for an intrusive survey and carry out appropriate actions. No investment or intrusive works to be carried out until survey is received.

2.10 Asbestos Survey/Testing	
Instructions:	 If there is no existing asbestos survey available, STAR Housing will instruct an approved asbestos surveying subcontractor to carry out a management survey to the dwelling. If any works identified entail disturbing any suspected ACMs, instruct a refurbishment survey to these targeted areas (e.g. kitchen, bathroom, artex ceilings etc.) prior to works commencing.

2.11 Asbestos Removal	
Instructions:	 Follow recommendations from asbestos survey Instruct approved asbestos removal subcontractor to remove or encapsulate where required

2.12 Energy Performance Certificate	
Instructions:	 An EPC certificate to be made available for the viewing of the property and issued to the new tenant. If there is no record of an EPC on the national register, instruct approved Energy Performance Officer to provide an EPC certificate.

3.0 General Building Works

3.1 Internal Doors

Guidelines:

To include kitchen cupboard doors and fitted wardrobe doors

Instructions:

- Doors and furniture to be fully operational
- Holes in doors to be made good to a smooth finish and repainted
- If replacement necessary, to be replaced with a painted ply flush door or painted fire door if required.
- Ensure all ironmongery and door closers are fitted where necessary
- All bathrooms and WCs to have working privacy lock
- Any glass panelled doors to be replaced with ply flush door, unless glass safety kite mark is present.
- If evidence of previous closures and are missing, replace with new to match.

3.2 Windows

Instructions:

- Windows to be secure and water tight with method of secure closure.
- All windows above ground floor to have a working restrictor
- For locking window handles, a key to be provided. If no key, replace with push button handles only.

3.3 Stairs

Instructions:

- Staircase, balustrades, handrails, treads and risers to be in safe condition.
- Minimum of 1x handrail
- Gaps between spindles/ balustrades/ steps not to exceed 100mm
- Horizontal balustrades to be boarded to restrict climbing.

3.4 Flooring

- All floors to be free from trip hazards
- Carpet grippers and threshold strips to be removed if exposed.
- Existing carpets/laminate in good condition and presentable may be left at void inspector's discretion.
 To be offered as a gift to the incoming tenant.
 Otherwise remove and dispose.
- Remove laminate/wooden flooring if flat is above ground floor
- Remove carpet gripper where possible but leave where fixed on possible asbestos containing tiles

3.5 Decoration

Guidelines:

Walls to be free of any major defects. No decorating to be carried out.

Tenants may be offered a decorating voucher to assist with the aesthetics of the interior. Internal decoration including wallpaper is tenant responsibility.

If property requires full redecoration, please refer to Voids and Lettings Manager Tenants moving into Sheltered Schemes may have their home decorated, at the discretion of the Voids and Lettings manager.

Tenants moving into general Voids, with disabilities, may have their home decorated, at the discretion of the Voids and Lettings manager.

Instructions:

- Inspector decides the appropriate decorating voucher to issue.
- Stain block over any offensive graffiti and smoke damage
- All polystyrene tiles and coving to be removed and made good ready to decorate
- Nails and picture hooks to be removed
- Patch repair to damaged plaster above 25mm diameter (50p)
- All cracks above 5mm to be filled
- Decoration pack to be issued if wall paper is ripped or torn
- No mould growth to be present. If there are signs of mould growth, please refer to Repairs Team leaders to carry out before re-let.

3.6 Non-Standard Fittings

Instructions:	 Mirrors, toilet roll holders, towel rails, shower screens etc. to be left if in good condition and no further maintenance carried out. Toilet seats and shower curtains to be replaced
	I oliet seats and snower curtains to be replaced

3.7 Aids and Adaptations

Guidelines:

In certain circumstances it may be deemed beneficial that adaptations remain in situ e.g. when the property has been designed and built for a wheelchair user. The Team Leader should liaise with lettings about the suitability of the property for applicants.

Instructions:	Check record of last service. If outstanding, arrange to service to be carried out (may be done in tenancy)

3.8 Loft Insulation		
Instructions:	 Ensure loft insulation is present to the current standard. Loft insulation to be laid flat and tidy 	

3.9 Miscellaneous		
Instructions:	 Where the fireplace is not the only means of heating, fireplaces to be clear of debris, blocked up, plastered, skimmed and vented All windows to have a curtain batten 	

3.10 Current building regulations		
Instructions:	 Internal layout must comply with current building regulations and not be deemed unsafe and result in a cat 1 hazard as defined by The Housing Health and 	

Rating System or The Fitness for Human Habitation
Act. I.e. means of access and natural light.

3.11 Clearance		
Instructions:	 Property, loft space and garden (including sheds and outbuildings) to be clear of all previous tenants' personal belongings. 	

3.12 Environmental Clean and Pest Control		
Instructions:	 Environmental cleans, biohazard cleans, needle sweeps and pests or rodents to be referred to voids and lettings manager and specialist contractor instructed. 	

4.0 Kitchen Works

4.1 Kitchen Re	epairs and Replacements
4.1 Kitchen Re	 Kitchen units and sink to be in sound and operable condition All worktops/surface to be free from defects and able to be kept clean. If replacements required, closet match possible Cooker space to have minimum of 150mm worktop either side of cooker. To ensure 600mm to 620mm spaces provided for cooker, under-counter fridge and washing machine (where possible). If possible, allow a minimum 500mm of work surface on each side of the sink top Minimum of cold feed only for washing machine space Supply and fit sure stop where possible Fit secondary stop tap where access to existing main stop tap could be an issue.
	 Kitchen layout must comply with criterion C of the Decent Homes Standard and must not be deemed

unsafe and result in a cat 1 hazard as defined by The Housing Health and Rating System. Where identified alterations should be made in order to comply.

Note: HHSRS Category 1 defects to be immediately resolved by repair or reconfiguration of kitchen.

Please see attached criteria that we work to as the size of the kitchen will dictate the maximum units we can install is usually dictated by the size of the kitchen.

If kitchen requires replacing in near future, refer and add to future investment works programme to be completed in tenancy.

4.2 Kitchen Appliances

Instructions:

- For general needs properties remove built in cookers and hobs and leave cooker space (see. 4.1). Unless they were fitted as part of a project or new development in which case they would need to be gifted to the incoming resident.
- Provide either gas or electric cooker point.

4.3 Kitchen Flooring

Instructions:

Provide a non-slip floor covering.

4.4 Kitchen Tiling and Sealant

- Replace any broken or cracked tiles
- Ensure a minimum of 150mm minimum splash-back fitted to all work surfaces, sanitary appliances with closest match
- Tiling behind cooker space
- Renew sealant where required

5.0 Bathroom and Plumbing Works

5.1 Bathroom	
Instructions:	 To have a minimum of one safe and working wash hand basin, bath or shower and toilet. Replace toilet seat if not in working order or in poor condition. Replace any cracked/broken sanitary ware Plugs fitted where required Bath panels to be secured and fit for purpose Telescopic pole and shower curtain to be provided for incoming tenant to fit (except where not suitable and permanent shower rail fitting required, fit curtain) Ensure a fully operational ventilation system is in place. Category 1 defects to be immediately resolved by repair

5.2 Showers (i	ncluding over bath)
Instructions:	 Existing shower to remain if working with adequate pressure and compliant (remove shower if non-thermostatic to reduce scalding risk) Fit new shower head and hose If shower is missing/requires replacement fit thermostatic mixer or electric shower including full height hose and bracket. If water pressure inadequate Void and Lettings Manager to use discretion to provide alternative. Remove all shower screens and replace shower curtain.

5.3 Bathroom Tiling and Sealant		
Instructions:	 Replace any broken or cracked tiles with closest match Ensure a minimum of 300mm splash-back fitted to all sanitary appliances with closest match (excluding WC) Renew sealant where required 	

•	Full height tiles around shower or wall tile boards (Geo panels)

5.4 Bathroom Flooring

Instructions:

• Floor to be non-slip, water resistant and clean.

5.5 Cloakroom/Separate WC

Instructions:

- All WC's in outbuilding to be removed and capped.
- Separate downstairs WC's without a wash hand basin will be removed and capped.
- Replace toilet seat.

5.6 Plumbing Checks and Water Safety

Guidelines:

All outlets should be flushed periodically to ensure safety against legionella (min every 7 days).

Once a date for re-letting has been agreed the most recent flush should not exceed 7 days or a further flush should be arranged prior to sign up

- Cold water tank to be free from debris and in sound condition with a lid.
- Mains stop tap to be checked for seizure and lubricated where necessary to ensure smooth operation
- All pipework to be free from leaks
- Check for dead legs and remove
- Outlets to be flushed on a weekly basis while void
- Ensure all taps are operational, if require replacement change with standard lever action tap
- Outside taps to remain if in good condition, otherwise cap off.
- Outside taps should have a non-return valve fitted.

6.0 Cleaning Standard

6.1 Instruction

General:

- Wash down all woodwork and doors throughout the property to remove all dirt, grease and heavy staining including wiping door handles
- Wipe down all walls to remove dirt, grease and heavy staining including walls to stairwells and cupboards.
- Remove all cobwebs including those at high level in stairwells
- Sweep all floors within the property and outbuildings, including all cupboards, sheds external stores and stair treads
- Mop and disinfect all floors within the property to remove dirt, grease and heavy staining including any vinyl floor coverings and stair treads
- Carpets cleaned if required
- Carefully wipe all electrical outlet points, light switches and switched fused spurs to remove dirt grease and heavy staining
- Carefully wipe down radiators, storage heater and boiler casings to remove dirt, grease and heavy staining
- Clean all window panes and wash down window frames inside (and outside, if on ground floor)
- Wash down all external doors and frames to remove dirt, grease and heavy staining, including wiping door handles

Kitchen:

- Wash and disinfect all kitchen cupboards, inside and out including all door handles to remove all dirt, grease and heavy staining
- Wipe down and disinfect all worktop surfaces and wall tiles to remove dirt, grease and staining
- Wash and disinfect sink top and drainer including taps, plug and waste outlet to remove all dirt, grease, lime scale and heavy staining.
- Where fitted clean and disinfect cooker and oven to remove all dirt grease and heavy staining

Bathroom:

 Thoroughly clean and disinfect all sanitary ware and fittings to remove all dirt, grease, lime scale and heavy staining, including taps, plugs, w/c seat and waste outlets.

7.0 Major Works

7.1 Definition

For purposes of void performance reporting (HouseMark) and distinguishing between types of repairs, please see below definition of Major Works on void. A void property that requires extensive works, which could not reasonably be carried out with a tenant in situ and need to be carried out while it is vacant, is classified as a 'Major Works Void'. The major/investment works include structural works, site works, service installations and investment works. They are works that have prevented the letting of the property due to their scale and extent.

Built in major repair works include:

- Structural repairs these are works that are essential to maintain stability and weather resistance in the main structural elements of a dwelling, i.e. floors, walls and roofs. Major works to these elements will involve replacement or substantial reconstruction of the component or element.
- Site works this is work to the area around, and specific to, the dwellings involved and is essential to the safety, security and protection of tenants (e.g. Asbestos removal, or the replacement or substantial reconstruction of unstable boundary walls, footpaths etc.)
- Services installations this is work to building services, where deterioration is such that the basic amenities in a dwelling could be seriously impaired.
 For example: renewal of installations such as gas, electricity and water supplies; heating and ventilation; and lifts.
- Consequential and other works these are works required as a consequence of major repairs such as reinstatement or making good finishes and fittings.
- Any works that significantly improve the dwellings (i.e. capitalised repairs) should be classified as major repairs. Examples of such works are kitchens, bathrooms, central heating systems, roofs, windows and structure

Appendix 1: Kitchen Unit Schedule

Minimum Standards for Kitchen Storage Units and Appliance Spaces											
	Sink	Cooker	Fridge/	Washing	500	500	1000	500	1000	500 Tall	Min. Length
	Unit		Freezer	Machine	Dra	Base	Base	Wall	Wall	Unit /	of Work
					wer	Unit	Unit	Unit	Unit	Brooms	Surface
					Pack						(excluding
		4-3	4-1			4 - 1		4-3	4-1	4>	sink & cooker)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	
1 Person	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	2000
2 Person	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	2000
3 Person	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2500
4 Person	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2500
5 Person	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	3000
6 Person	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	3500

7 Person	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	4000
	Depth x Length									Depth x	
	(mm)									Length (mm)	
(1)	Sink top/ with cup storage (board	600	x 1000	(6)	Single base unit					600 x 500
(2)	Cooker S	pace	600	x 600	(7)	Alternatively, this may be provided as a 500 base unit and 500 larder unit					
(3)	Fridge/Freezer 600 x 600 Space				(8)	600 mm high level single wall unit					300 x 500
(4)	Washing 600 x 600 Machine Space unless provided elsewhere				(9)	600 mm high level double wall unit					300 x 1000
(5)	Four Drawer 600 x 500 (10 Unit					provision is made elsewhere					
Note: The base units can be provided by a useable corner space storage unit.											