



CARE HOUSING ASSOCIATION EMPTY HOMES POLICY

1. Purpose

Care Housing Association (Care) aims to keep voids and empty properties to an absolute minimum. However, there are occasions where we may have empty properties for a period of time. This policy outlines the internal and external requirements in relation to empty properties.

2. Policy Statement

An empty home will fit one of the following categories:

- Category 1 - A property owned or managed by Care with the intention on providing a home for a single person with no shared facilities or entrances (e.g. a house or bungalow not within a block)
- Category 2 – A property owned or managed by Care with the intention of providing a home for group of people who may share common space (e.g. a share multi-bedroom property)
- Category 3 – A property for occupation by a single person within a larger block of properties (e.g. an apartment within a block of apartments)

This policy sets out how Care will manage properties in the event of a period during which the property is not tenanted to ensure they are safe and to ensure that they comply with external requirements, e.g. insurance.

3. Requirements

3.1 If a property is not tenanted for any period of time the Housing Officer must carry out regular inspections:

- Fortnightly from 1st November to 28/9th February
- 4-weekly from 1st March to 31st October

The purpose of the inspection is to ensure the property is safe and secure and there have been no incidents of damage or disrepair.

This is also a requirement for insurance purposes and applies to all categories of empty homes and must be carried out by the Housing Officer, or an agent acting on behalf of Care. For example, in the case of Category 3 homes, it is possible for a support worker to carry out the visual inspection and confirm that the property is safe and secure and there have been no incidents of damage.

The property inspections should be recorded within the housing management system and should confirm the following:

- Date and time of inspection

- Name and job title of person carrying out inspection
- Confirmation, or otherwise, that the property is secure and there are no incidents of damage or repairs required.
- That all water outlets have been flushed (if this is the case)

In properties where a contractor is undertaking works, the date of completion of the works should be noted, and the 14 day inspection period should commence from this date.

3.2 Heating requirements

Between 1st November – 28/29th February:

- the water supplies must be switched off and the system drained
- the heating system must be set to operate **continuously** for 24 hours a day at not less than 12 degrees Celsius

In relation to Category 3 homes, the water supply to the individual unoccupied flat will need to be switched off and drained, and the heating systems switched off. If the heating system at the Category 3 home is electric, the water supply to the individual unoccupied flat will need to be switched off and drained.

3.3 Lettable condition

Upon vacation of a property, the Housing Officer must inspect the property and follow the Tenancy Termination Policy.

3.4 Void Periods in excess of 60 days

Where a property has been empty (i.e. not tenanted) for a period in excess of 60 days, the Housing Officer must inform the relevant insurance company in order to meet the insurance requirements. In the case of Category 3 properties, if other properties within the block are occupied, there is no requirement to inform the insurance provider.

3.5 Consideration of ad-hoc security arrangements

In situations where a property's security is in question, e.g. due to a break-in in the locality, the Housing Officer should consult with their manager and consider whether it is appropriate to implement additional security measures, e.g. security alarm, boarded windows.

4. Responsibility

The designated officer responsible for implementation and monitoring of this policy will be the Chief Executive.

5. Commitment and Review

Care will formally review this policy every three years. Care will consult with residents if material changes to this policy are proposed.