



## CARE HOUSING ASSOCIATION VOID MANAGEMENT & EMPTY HOMES POLICY

<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Combined void management and empty homes policies</b>
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<b>Last Review Date</b>	<b>November 2022</b>
<b>Next Review Date</b>	<b>November 2025</b>

### 1. Purpose

Care Housing Association (Care) strives to offer sustainable homes for our tenants, however there are inevitably occasions when tenancies come to an end earlier than we would hope. 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 void management and empty homes.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Care's Tenancy Termination Policy & Procedure and Tenancy Nomination Policy & Procedure.

### 2. Policy Statement

The key aims of the policy are:

- To effectively monitor and report on void performance
- To ensure effective communication with partner agencies (e.g. local authorities and support providers) and to ensure invoicing of voids is swift and efficient to reduce void loss
- To minimise voids and work with partner agencies to identify suitable tenants, ensuring that any allocation of voids takes into account the needs of existing tenants
- To set out how Care will manage properties during periods of inoccupation to ensure they are safe and comply with external requirements, such as insurance

### 3. Void income

Rent at Care's void properties is often underwritten by partner agencies, but it is Care's responsibility to inform and invoice the relevant partner. This income is crucial to ensure Care can continue to improve and offer value for money in the services it provides. Where there are agreements in place regarding payment of voids by partner agencies, the relevant parties will be invoiced on a monthly basis in line with the terms of these agreements.

As a responsible Registered Provider of social housing, we want to ensure void times are minimised and, where appropriate to do so, voids are filled promptly. However, regardless of any financial impact to Care or our partners, the tenants and potential tenants are the priority in consideration of

this policy. Care will ensure that no decision to award a tenancy is made for reasons other than the promotion of the tenant's interests, rights and choices.

#### **4. Communication and Monitoring**

A report will be provided to the Board on a quarterly basis which outlines the number of voids across all of Care's properties, progress towards the re-letting of these voids and any immediate financial impact of the existing and upcoming voids.

Communication with other agencies, tenants and their representatives is crucial. This includes, but is not limited to, tenants, support providers, statutory bodies and tenant representatives, where appropriate. As a minimum, partner agencies who hold nomination rights and/or who will be assessing potential future tenants will be contacted when a property becomes void and on a quarterly basis regarding properties with void units ready to let. This will ensure Care has sufficient time to carry out the necessary preparations for new tenants and prevent avoidable delays in signing tenancy agreements, applying for housing benefit or carrying out any necessary works/adaptations to the property.

#### **5. Empty Homes**

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 shared 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)

##### **5.1 Visiting Requirements**

If a property is not tenanted for any period of time, Care will carry out regular inspections in line with individual insurance terms. In general inspections should be at least (but not limited to):

- Fortnightly from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March
- 4-weekly from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September

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. Inspections will generally be carried out by the Housing Officer but could be conducted by another competent staff member or an agent acting on behalf of Care. In the case of Category 3 homes, for example, it is possible for a support worker to carry out the inspection and confirm that the property is safe and secure and there have been no incidences 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 incidences 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 inspection period should commence from this date.

## 5.2 Winter requirements

The Operations Manager will check the individual insurance terms and advise the Housing Officer if any different. In general for empty homes, between 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> March:

- Water supplies to the relevant flat/building should be switched off and the system drained
- If capable, the heating system must be set to operate **continuously** for 24 hours a day at not less than 12 degrees Celsius (this should also be encouraged for tenanted properties where the tenant is away for periods of 24 hours or more)
- If electric or no ability to set a temperature throughout, the heating system should be switched off

During the months of November, December and January any loft hatches should be propped open by at least 12 inches or 30 centimetres.

## 5.3 Lettable Condition

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

## 5.4 Void Periods in Excess of 60 Days

Where a property has been empty (i.e. not tenanted) for a period greater than 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.

## 5.5 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, such as a security alarm or boarded windows.

## 6. Responsibility

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

## 7. Equality and Diversity

Care is committed to respecting diversity in all aspects of our work and we will not tolerate any form of discrimination.

We recognise that there is the potential for impact across the characteristics of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex or Sexual Orientation.

Where we are made aware of or identify customers with specific needs, we will be proactive in targeting our communication and support appropriately and consider any specific needs individually.

#### **8. 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.