



Voids Policy

Introduction

Irwell Valley Homes (IVH) aims to provide the right homes to the right people to enable them to sustain their tenancies, enjoy life and realise their potential. It is, therefore, important that when our homes become empty, we identify the right customer for the property and re-let our properties as effectively and efficiently as we can. This not only helps us to maximise our rental income but also ensures that we are housing as many people in housing need as possible. This policy outlines how we will achieve this and is in accordance with our Allocations and Empty Homes Policy.

Aims and Objectives

This objective of the voids policy is to operate an effective void management process.

- Ensure the policy contributes towards sustainable tenancies and communities
- Meet all legislative, contractual, and regulatory obligations
- Ensure customers are allocated a property which meets the re-let standard
- Minimise rent loss and time taken to complete repairs and improve IVH void properties

Policy

- A “void” is a property for where no current tenancy exists.
- Lettings Team is defined as any colleague in IVH letting the property.
- In order that we will be able to re-let any void properties as quickly as possible and maximise our rental income, IVH will:
- Ensure that all properties meet a minimum lettable standard and comply with all relevant legal health and safety requirements.
- Minimise the length of time properties remain empty, with performance targets being set for both the letting and maintenance sides of the void process.
- Ensure efficiency and focus on value for money in the management of void properties.
- Ensure that any new build or acquired properties are tenanted with minimal delay and meet our minimum lettable standard.

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- Where a notice of termination is received, the property will be inspected once the property has become void to assess the condition of the property and to identify any repairs required in advance of reletting the property.
- Where a tenancy has been properly ended, with the tenant(s) providing the appropriate notice and upon receipt of the keys, the property will be promptly inspected by a member of the Voids Team.
- The Property Inspector will ensure that all necessary statutory safety checks are carried out and documented using the appropriate certifications, ensuring they are recorded appropriately on our systems, prior to re-let.

The property will be checked to ensure that it is free from structural defects. Where essential works are necessary before the property can be re-let, the Property Inspector will ensure that relevant works orders are raised and that the works are completed to a satisfactory standard within an agreed timescale.

Following inspection, the property will be classified as a “major”, “minor” or “strategic” void or “available to let”. This classification will be recorded on our systems, to allow us to monitor progress and ensure that any work is carried out in line with our Void Procedure and to allow our Lettings Team to effectively manage the lettings process for the property.

We will carry out necessary works in line with our lettable standard that ensures our properties are let in a clean, safe and clear condition.

Where it is considered reasonable and practical (e.g. for minor repairs), work will be undertaken after the new tenants take up occupation. All tenants will be provided with a schedule of works to be completed once they move in.

For security reasons, a lock change to all doors connected to a property will be undertaken on all void properties. Where there is considered to be a high risk of squatting, break-in or vandalism, appropriate shuttering and/or door-clamping will be ordered which will be removed post letting and on making suitable access arrangements with the in-coming tenant.

All properties will be safe and secure at the point of letting and will meet the approved IVH lettable standard once pre and post ordered void works have been carried out.

The Lettings Team will be advised of estimated completion dates to allow new tenant(s) to prepare for their move. As soon as a handover date is identified, the Lettings Team will be notified by the Property Inspector / Void Manager to ensure the new tenant(s) are signed up at the earliest opportunity.

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Decorative standards

In our General Needs properties, we will ensure that our void properties are repaired and re-let in accordance with our lettable standard.

In Independent Living schemes where internal decoration is below the lettable standard, the necessary works will be undertaken before the property is offered to a potential new tenant.

In Intermediate Market Rent and Market Rent internal decoration may be considered where the investment is expected to generate a return, for example a more efficient re-let of the property or an increased rent.

In exceptional circumstances, IVH may consider carrying out additional works or decoration to enhance the standard, where this investment is expected to generate a benefit, for example, letting the property more quickly.

Short term Supported Housing Schemes

Due to the nature of this accommodation, additional urgency will be applied to the void procedures where these units are concerned.

These units will be safe and secure at the point of letting and will meet the approved IVH lettable standard once pre and post ordered void works have been carried out.

Garages

Where a garage tenancy has been properly ended, with the tenant(s) providing the appropriate notice and upon receipt of the keys, the garage will be promptly inspected by the voids inspector prior to re-letting.

Performance Reporting

Voids Manager and Lettings Manager will monitor performance on a weekly basis.

The Executive Customer Services Director and Head of Operations will monitor performance monthly.

Key performance indicators, including the number of empty homes and re-let times (general needs), will be monitored, and discussed by the Leadership team monthly.

The number of empty homes and re-let times will be monitored and discussed by the Board on a quarterly basis as part of the Operational Performance report.

The Executive Customer Services Director and Head of Operations are responsible for identifying remedial action where performance is deteriorating.

100% of properties will conform to our minimum lettable standard and will have received a full

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post inspection sign off, of works, which will be monitored by the Voids Manager and Lettings Manager.

Feedback on the standard of our void properties and the effectiveness of our lettings service will be sought from customers. In addition, our Resident Scrutiny Panel may conduct reviews of our void process and standard as well as our letting processes to identify areas for improvement.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Director of Customer Services is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

The Voids Manager is responsible for the training of new colleagues in the Voids Team and continued review of this policy and associated procedures.

The Lettings Manager is responsible for the training of new colleagues in the Lettings Team and continued review of this policy and associated procedures.

Refresher training will also be provided to any colleagues who are deemed not to be following the procedure.

Associated Documents and Good Practice

- IVH Voids Procedure
- IVH Lettable Standard
- IVH Allocations & Empty Homes Policy
- Code of Practice for Management of Electrotechnical Care in Social Housing

The Home and Tenancy Standards in the current Regulatory Framework have been considered in this policy.

This policy also ensures that IVH complies with the following legislation: –

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985,
- Housing Act 1995 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- Localism Act 2012
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) (Amendment) Regulations 2018.

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Version Control	
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Approval Date:	February 2023
Approval Body	IVH – Communities
Implementation Date:	February 2023
Policy Author:	Shaban Talib – Communities
Policy Owner:	Ceris Esplen – Executive Director (Customers)
Frequency of Review	Every 3 years
Planned Review Date	January 2026
EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) Date and Link to EIA	N/A
Safeguarding Impact	N/A
Lead Team	Communities Team

The latest version of this policy should be viewed online from The Hub area of the IVH intranet, and any printed version cannot be relied on as the most current version.

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