

Void Management Policy (Temporary Accommodation (TA))

1. Introduction

The Voids Management Policy outlines the Council's approach to managing and repairing empty (void) properties in order to meet statutory requirements, minimise void times and lost income and to manage tenant expectations when moving into or out of temporary accommodation.

This policy covers Temporary Accommodation (TA) stock and emergency accommodation.

Voids are properties which are currently empty either because a tenancy has ended and a new tenancy has not yet started, or a property has been acquired and not yet let. Voids arise due to formal termination of a tenancy, abandonment of a tenancy, the tenant transferring to another tenancy, eviction of the tenant or the tenant's death, or a property purchased from the open market to be made available for letting.

Because rent is not realised on a void, it represents a loss and the Council aims to keep this loss to a minimum whilst ensuring that a property is repaired to an agreed standard and then let to a suitable applicant on the Housing Register as quickly as possible.

2. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out the key principles of the void management service.
- Outline how the team will meet the demand for temporary accommodation by turning around an empty property quickly.
- Show how continuous improvement will be met through the efficient management and repair of a void.

3. Scope

This Policy outlines how the council will undertake the management of a void from the notification of a tenancy ending to the property being ready to relet, including:

- End of license management, including inspections.
- Works to void properties
- Management of major works
- Management of unauthorised alterations/rechargeable repairs

- Repair or planned works post move in

4. Key Principles

This policy aims to ensure that a property is properly managed when it becomes vacant, is brought up to the council's relet standard before a new licensee moves in, and that the rent loss is minimised within the whole process. This policy will ensure the most effective use of the housing stock in order to help meet the demand for temporary accommodation in South Norfolk.

The policy will ensure that a strategic approach is adopted to void management by:

- Ensuring that outgoing tenants are aware of their responsibilities prior to leaving the property, in order to keep repair costs to a minimum.
- Ensuring that tenants who are found to have deliberately damaged the property are recharged for repairs.
- Reducing rent and council tax loss by minimising the length of time during which properties are being repaired.
- Ensuring properties are available as quickly as possible for people in housing need.

5. Void Standard

South Norfolk Council will give priority to repairing and letting of empty properties to a high standard and will comply with all relevant health and safety legislation, particularly the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

The property will be structurally stable, complies with HHSRS, free from serious disrepair, free from damp prejudicial to health, have adequate provision for lighting, heating and ventilation, have satisfactory facilities for the storage preparation and safe provision for cooking of food, clean and serviceable and any broken items will be replaced before re-letting. Generally all fixtures and fittings left in the property will be safe, functional and fit for purpose.

6. Background

The Council uses a range of different types of temporary accommodation; chosen to cover the range of customers, likely length of occupation and overall numbers in need at that time. This means that some accommodation will be provided directly by the Council, whilst other accommodation will be owned and/or managed by external providers.

For the purpose of this Policy, only properties where the council has responsibility for the repairs and maintenance of the property are in scope.

These are:

- Separate and self-contained premises owned by the Council used as temporary accommodation.
- Self-contained, leased accommodation (Leased accommodation means privately owned separate and self-contained premises (flats, maisonettes and houses) which the Council has leased for the purpose of providing temporary accommodation and is responsible for all repairs and maintenance
- Hostel Accommodation, which the Council either owns or has leased for the purpose of providing temporary accommodation and is responsible for all repairs and maintenance.

7. Rechargeable Repairs

The Council will recharge any outgoing tenant for the costs of making good or renewing any damage caused to the property (outside of normal wear and tear), undertaking repairs to poorly fitted tenant improvement works and for clearing any rubbish and/or belongings that have been left at the property.

Recharges may also be applied for the cost of deep cleaning and/or de-infesting the property.

Photographic evidence will be obtained before the void works are carried out to formally record and prove the need for the recharge.

The Council will make every reasonable effort to contact the previous tenant to inform them of any outstanding items for which they will be recharged and the available means of payment.

All recharges will be added to the outgoing tenant's account and may affect any future application for re-housing if they are not cleared.

8. Legislative Requirements

This Void Management Policy and the way in which services are delivered comply with the requirements of the following standards and legislation:

Localism Act 2011.

The Housing Act 1985.

Housing Act 1996 (Part 6).

Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR) as amended 2018. Approved Code of Practice and guidance.
British Standard 7671 As Amended (Electrical Installations)
Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.
Equalities Act 2010

9. General

The Decent Homes Standard will be adhered to when replacing elements when either the property is empty or post move in.

All void properties will be cleaned, including any mould removed, prior to relet.

To combat condensation and mould, gutters, downpipes, airbricks and extractors will be cleared of debris during the void period and windows will be checked and serviced where required.

10. Responsibility and Monitoring of the Policy

Responsibility for monitoring of this policy lies with the Housing & Benefits Manager responsible for managing the temporary accommodation and reporting to the Head of Housing and Benefits.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed if there are significant changes required in the light of best practice and any changes to legislation and Government guidance.