

VOID PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE



MONITORING INFORMATION:

POLICY/PROCEDURE/STRATEGY:	VOID PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE
DATE APPROVED:	JULY 2022
EXPIRY DATE:	JULY 2025
OWNER:	HEAD OF ASSET INVESTMENT
APPROVAL ROUTE:	EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Void Property Management Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Teign Housing will manage the process of letting and repairing empty properties in line with the Void Property Management Policy and Void Re let Standard (See Appendix 1).
- 1.2. When notice is given, we will inspect properties during the notice period to check for disrepair and any alterations or improvements carried out without Teign Housing's consent. Tenants will be informed of their liability to make good any disrepair or rectify the alterations at their own expense and will be issued with recharges if they fail to complete these before vacating the property.
- 1.3. This procedure will include:
 - how to manage standard cases where the tenant gives notice and hands in the keys on or before the agreed date or where properties are abandoned.
 - how to deal with rubbish and personal effects left in or outside the property.
 - how to deal with non-standard voids e.g. hard to let, properties with damp and mould problem or other defects;
 - how to deal with squatters or unauthorised occupation.

2. Implementation

- 2.1. It is the responsibility of all of Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild employees and its contractors, to ensure that their work is carried out in accordance with this procedure.
- 2.2. Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild will provide relevant training for employees, contractors and tenant representatives, dealing with empty property management, to ensure this procedure is followed correctly.

3. Monitoring

- 3.1. Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild will monitor its performance on void management, repairs and re-letting properties against agreed performance targets.

- 3.2. Contractor performance is monitored weekly at the void meeting with year-to-date performance discussed.
- 3.3. Average repair and re-let times are monitored on a monthly basis. These are collated and published as part of the corporate scorecard.

4. Guidance for the management of standard voids

- 4.1. Where the tenant gives notice and hands in the keys on or before the agreed date or where properties are abandoned the process as detailed in Appendix 2 should be followed.
- 4.2. In some cases, it may be not possible to carry out a pre-void inspection, for example, where a tenant has passed away or where access is not provided by the outgoing tenant.

5. How to deal with rubbish and personal effects left at the property

- 5.1. Our tenancy agreement states that the property should be left in a clean and tidy condition and any items or rubbish removed, including from gardens and any garage. Tenants must not leave any belongings behind, and they agree that any belongings left at their home after the tenancy has ended can be disposed of by us and any costs incurred in removing items will be recharged.

6. Non-standard voids e.g. hard to let properties

- 6.1. In some instances, it may be considered that a property should not be dealt with according to standard protocols. For example, the property may be suffering from Damp and Mould, structural defects or the inspection may reveal that the cost of making the property fit may not make good business sense. In these instances, an Options Appraisal may be undertaken.
- 6.2. Similarly, properties identified as being difficult to let will be subject to evaluation by the Templer HomeBuild, Housing Services and Asset Investment as necessary to determine if there are measures which may be undertaken to minimise void periods. For example: remodelling to suit a different client group, carrying out additional works.

7. Squatters or unauthorised occupants

- 7.1 Where a tenant terminates their tenancy and does not give vacant possession the Housing Services Team will take the necessary legal routes to gain possession of the home and inform the Voids Team of likely timescales

8. Pre-Void Inspections

- 8.1 Pre void inspections will be completed during the notice period. Tenants will be advised during the inspection what condition the property needs to be left in before they return the keys, and that they will be recharged if this has not been complied with.
- 8.2 Any repairs identified due to misuse or deliberate damage will need to be rectified prior to the tenant moving out. If not completed, any outstanding repairs will be carried out by Teign Housing, the costs of which will be recharged to the tenant.

9. Recharges

- 9.1 Recharges may be identified during the pre-void or once the keys have been returned. These will be clearly marked on the void survey form and the outgoing tenant advised in writing.
- 9.2 The voids team will raise invoice requests for any recharges in accordance with the re-charge procedure and accompanying photos will be sent with the invoice as appropriate.

10. Viewings

- 10.1 Prospective tenants will initially be offered a virtual viewing, in person viewings will be offered where circumstances dictate that being necessary. These will take place during void works to assist in letting the properties in a timely manner. In some circumstances it may not be appropriate for a prospective tenant to view a property before works have been completed. These could be because the condition of the property is particularly poor, or it would be unsafe to do so. Templer HomeBuild will advise the Housing Services Team of any properties that are not suitable for viewing.

- 10.2 Where necessary, viewings will be arranged by the Housing Services Team; 24 hours' notice will be given to the contractor undertaking the void works and void surveyor. The Housing Services Team will advise prospective tenants to wear closed toed shoes and to accompany children at all times, additional PPE may be provided upon arrival on site as necessary.
- 10.3 Templer HomeBuild's contract supervisor will issue advance notice to the workforce of the viewing. Operatives working in void properties are responsible for highlighting any health and safety issues and for advising of rooms that cannot be viewed due to works.
- 10.4 Teign Housing staff accompanying prospective tenants on viewings are responsible for providing a safety briefing, this will include any rooms that cannot be accessed any potential trip and slip hazards.

11. Review

- 11.1 Teign Housing will undertake regular reviews of the void policy and procedures, to ensure that we continue to follow best practice within the sector and benchmark our performance against peer groups locally and nationally through 'Housemark' and other forums.
- 11.2 The policy and procedures will be reviewed whenever there is a change in Government policy or any other relevant legislative body. It will also be reviewed when other good practice guidance or observation becomes available, or new information that will impact on the policy, such as the outcome of Best Value or Service reviews.
- 11.3 As a minimum requirement, reviews will take place at intervals of not more than 3 years.
- 11.4 The Head of Asset Investment will be responsible for ensuring that reviews of this policy are undertaken

Appendix 1 - Teign Housing Void Re-Let Standard

Our Standard

Teign Housing will provide a property which is in a good standard of repair, decoration and cleanliness at each new letting.

We will ensure our properties provide a home which is safe, secure, clean and free of rubbish including the garden, outbuildings and attic and is ready to move into.

We will do this in a timely and cost-effective way making the best use of resources to provide a home which we and our customers can be proud of.

This standard has been agreed in consultation with our Staff, Tenants and other stakeholders.

When you move in to a Teign Housing property, this is the standard you can expect:

Your Health and Safety

- ✓ Smoke detectors will be provided and tested prior to your occupation. There will be a minimum of one smoke or heat detector per floor covering escape routes and high risk areas – hallways and landings, the kitchen and Living Room.
- ✓ Carbon Monoxide detectors installed in all homes (excluding homes where the heating source is electric).
- ✓ Gas boilers will be serviced, and safety tested to ensure they are in a safe working condition; where possible a copy of the Gas Safety Certificate will be issued to you on the day of your tenancy commencement in your Welcome Pack.
- ✓ An Electrical Safety inspection will be carried out to ensure the installation is in a safe working condition; where possible a copy of the certificate will be included in your Welcome Pack.

***where it is not possible to provide certificates within Welcome Pack's these will be provided within 10 working days**

- ✓ An asbestos survey will have been carried out on your property if it was built before the year 2000. We hold records of the full survey and will provide you with a summary of the report in your Welcome Pack.
- ✓ There will be an accessible water main stopcock, easily accessible in properties designated for older customers or where a customer's disability has been established.
- ✓ Open fires will be blocked up and vented.

Your Kitchen

We will provide the following:

- ✓ A sink and drainer , floor and wall units (the number will vary according to property size and number of bedrooms) ensuring adequate space is provided for cooking, food storage, preparation and cleaning.
- ✓ A standard cooker space, and fridge or fridge freezer space will be provided.
- ✓ Cold water feed and waste pipe connection for a washing machine (space allowing) will be provided.
- ✓ Work tops will be provided adjacent to either side of the cooker space.
- ✓ In addition to the electric cooker point, at least 2 Double plug sockets.
- ✓ An extractor fan
- ✓ Wall tiles will be provided to form splash backs for full length of work surfaces, appliance spaces and sink positions. Cooker spaces will be tiled down to floor level or top of skirting board.
- ✓ Flooring will be slip resistant vinyl.

Appliances and White Goods

We do not routinely provide appliances or white goods in our properties, however there may be specific circumstances where the provision of some appliances or white goods may be considered. Referral to Teign Housing's Headstart service could provide assistance for very low-income customers

Your Bathroom

We will provide the following:

- ✓ New toilet seats and shower curtain (if applicable) will be provided.
- ✓ All sealant around the wash hand basin, bath and / or shower will be clean and free of mould or discoloration.

- ✓ Full height splash backs to the full perimeter of walls enclosing a bath and minimum 300mm high splash backs above washbasins, any cracked tiles will be replaced, to match existing where possible.
- ✓ Showers will be cleaned disinfected and tested and left in full working order.
- ✓ Bathroom privacy locks will be provided on bathroom doors.
- ✓ Flooring will be slip resistant sheet vinyl.
- ✓ An extractor fan.
- ✓ A low energy water resistant light fitting.

Decoration

- ✓ All pins, nails and screws will be removed from walls, ceilings and stair treads.
- ✓ Walls to be painted White or Magnolia
- ✓ Ceilings to be painted White
- ✓ All woodwork (including internal face of doors) will be painted white

Floors and Floor Coverings

Slip resistant floor coverings will be provided in all kitchens, bathrooms and shower rooms.

Carpets and underlay in Houses and Bungalows – Carpets and underlay are not normally provided in houses and bungalows, however there may be specific circumstances where the provision of carpets may be considered. Referral to Teign Housing's Head Start service may provide assistance for low income customers.

In Flats – Carpets and underlay will be provided in all flats (excluding kitchens, bathrooms and shower rooms).

Where underlay and carpets are provided the customer is responsible for the care and upkeep of these, including cleaning and any treatment required, and should remain in the property.

Excessive wear and tear or damage, or the replacement of missing carpets will be charged for in accordance with the Rechargeable Works Policy. Replacement of carpets at any time is at the discretion of the tenant however any replacements should also remain in the property.

Any carpets that are in the property on the commencement of a new tenancy and are not new will have been professionally cleaned and flea treated.

Assistive Equipment and Disabled Adaptations

We will only allocate properties that are suitable to meet the needs of the incoming customer or suitable with only minor adaptations.

If you have disabilities, we will arrange a visit to the property with you and our Occupational Therapist to assess the suitability of the property and your need for specialist equipment or adaptations and decide if the property is suitable for you.

We will consider a property suitable if it only requires minor adaptations, such as grab rails, or if you are an existing tenant of Teign Housing. We are unable to provide major adaptations to new Teign Housing tenants within the first twelve months of their tenancy with us.

Security

- ✓ As a minimum any external doors will have new multi-point or 5 lever locks, with two keys provided for each lock
- ✓ All windows to the main dwelling will be checked, serviced and left in good working order and keys provided for window locks.
- ✓ Any cracked, misted units or broken glazing will be replaced.
- ✓ Two Fob keys will be provided where there is a communal door. *Additional fobs can be provided at additional cost.
- ✓ In homes where support services and equipment are provided all pull cords, intercom controls and alarms will be tested to ensure they are in working order prior to the property being occupied.

Energy Efficiency

- ✓ There will be a minimum of 250mm of loft insulation provided in all properties with a loft space.
- ✓ Low energy light bulbs will be supplied for all rooms.

- ✓ There will be a heating source provided to all habitable rooms (habitable rooms are rooms that are used for living, bathing, cooking, eating or sleeping), corridors and hallways may not be provided with separate heating appliances.

An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) will be provided with your Welcome Pack.

This provides you with information about the energy efficiency of your home including advice on how to manage and reduce your energy costs.

Once you have moved into your new home, with your permission we will pass your details to our Energy Switch provider who if possible will move to an individual utility provider for the relevant gas and electricity supplies. You may be eligible for a cheaper tariff for your electricity and gas.

We can also arrange for you to meet a representative of our contractors at the property.

They will show you how to use your heating/hot water system. Details of how to arrange this are in your Welcome Pack.

General

- ✓ All doors and door furniture (handles, etc) will be checked and left in good working order.
- ✓ All taps, pipes and wastes will be checked to ensure they operate correctly.
- ✓ Electrical installations will be checked, and switches, light fittings and sockets will be undamaged.
- ✓ The number of switched socket outlets will be no less than detailed below:

Kitchen	2 Double Sockets 2 Single un-switched sockets to serve kitchen appliances
Living Room	4 Double Sockets
Dining Room (if applicable)	3 Double Sockets
Bedroom	3 Double Sockets
Hallway	1 Double Socket
Landing	1 Double Socket
Internal Storage Cupboard	1 Double Socket
Externally (houses and bungalows only)	1 IP65 RCD protected single socket

- ✓ The property will be cleaned internally.
- ✓ Curtain battens will be provided to all windows.
- ✓ Gutters and down pipes will be clear and keep the property free from water ingress.
- ✓ If existing timber sheds are left, these will be offered to you and if wanted these will be 'gifted' to you and you will become responsible for their future maintenance or replacement.
- ✓ Boundary fencing - existing hedges or fences if safe, will remain. Existing fences will be repaired or replaced like for like. If fencing or hedging does not exist, the boundary will be marked with posts and wire. In some circumstances an alternative will be provided if required.
- ✓ Access paths and steps will be safe.
- ✓ Gardens will have significant overgrowth cut back, be left safe and cleared of any rubbish and debris.
- ✓

Void standard for garden and external areas.

General

All rubbish and debris to be cleared, overgrown foliage to be cut back and the grass is to be cut. The person conducting the PVI /Voids surveyor is to inspect the garden and risk assess for trips slips and falls, and eliminate hazards as required and ensure remedial works are included in void works schedule.

Fencing

The boundaries to the property are to be checked and where required due to failure, repairs will be carried out on a like for like basis. Where an entire boundary is missing or requires complete replacement this is to be undertaken using chain link fencing between properties or with fence panels where boundaries adjoin a highway or footpath.

Front gates and side gates are to be checked and where required due to failure, repairs will be carried out on a like for like basis.

Paths, Parking / Patio's / Hard-standings

Any existing paths are to be inspected and where it is felt that there is a tripping hazard (i.e. 25mm protrusion or more) they are to be repaired as part of the void works schedule.

Path's should also be checked to ensure the level does not bridge any Damp Proof Course (DPC).

Any parking space / drives are to be inspected and where it is felt that there is a tripping hazard (i.e. 25mm protrusion or more) they are to be repaired as part of the void works schedule.

Patio's are to be inspected and where it is felt that there is a tripping hazard (i.e. 25mm protrusion or more) they are to be repaired as part of the void works schedule, patio's should also be checked to ensure the level does not bridge any Damp Proof Course (DPC).

If the DPC is bridged or there is a gap of less than 75mm from DPC to paving, then a French drain must be inserted between the patio and the wall of the property. This should be a minimum of 150mm wide by 150mm deep and filled with 15 to 20mm pea shingle. In any other case the patio should be removed and garden reinstated.

Trees and large shrubs

Where small trees up to 4m) or large shrubs (usually self-seeded) are found within 2 to 3m of the property typically covering windows, they should be removed ensuring that no tripping hazard is left. Larger trees where the spread of the tree is close to, or overhanging the roof should be cut back and referred to Estate Services for further inspection and inclusion on a tree register or removal.

Sheds, lean-to's

Any proprietary shed in good condition is to be retained with minor repairs as necessary and 'gifted' to the incoming tenant. Any home built shed or lean of poor quality should be demolished, any services disconnected and the garden reinstated.

Lean-to's and DIY extensions (including porches) if built to a poor standard are to be removed and the property returned to its original foot print. If well constructed using proprietary systems and in sound condition and comply with the Building Regulations / Planning at the time they were built, these may be retained provided that the new tenant, signs a waiver accepting the maintenance liability for them.

Washing lines

Where existing washing line posts are present but in poor condition they are to be removed. Existing concrete posts can be retained if in good condition. No washing lines, bases or new posts will be provided.

High ground levels

Where high ground levels are found (usually flower beds) to be close to or bridging the DPC these must be reduced to 150mm below the level of the DPC.

Ponds

Garden ponds are to be removed, any concrete surround is to be broken down below ground level the base is to be broken to allow drainage and the garden reinstated.

Handyperson Service

- ✓ All new tenants will be able to book, free of charge, 1 x 2 hour 'handyperson' service (provided by our contractor partners) or a cooker re-connection. This must be booked within the first month. For example, the handyperson could fit washing machines, curtain poles, assemble furniture, fit stair gates and adjust doors after carpet laying or complete other minor repairs. Alternatively, a qualified electrician or gas engineer will be able to connect your cooker for you.

- ✓ If you would like more assistance from the handyperson service, you can book extra time by contacting Customer Services on 01626 322722. This is charged at £25 per hour, this does include travel time.

Planned Improvements

Any imminent planned maintenance works such as replacement kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors, roofs and external painting will be confirmed to you on sign up at the property.

In the future planned maintenance dates will be available via your tenant account along with lots of other information that is already available, visit <https://www.teignhousing.co.uk/> and select 'I want to' 'Login to my Teign Account'