

VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

Responsible Officer

Director of Property & New Business

Aim of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a consistent approach is taken when dealing with void dwellings and that the dwelling is safe and in a good condition when let.

The standard incorporates key principles of security, safety, cleanliness, repair and comfort.

Pre Inspections

All void dwellings should be pre-inspected to identify any repairs or renewals required. The works should be specified by the contractor and approved by PCH in line with the agreed Schedule of Delegated Authority.

A pre inspection should include an assessment of all internal and external elements of the property and the inspector should identify areas where the energy efficiency of the dwelling could be improved.

Where works to dwellings are likely to cost more than £20,000 the Director of Property and New Business should be consulted prior to the commencement of works.

Individual components should only be replaced when a repair is not considered viable or value for money.

Where component replacements or major works are required, the Asset Management team should be informed and a provisional programmed works date agreed. Where there are sufficient funds to carry out the works required at void stage, this should be undertaken prior to the property being let.

Inspections

Work in progress inspections should be carried out throughout the duration of works and documented. A post inspection should be carried out by a supervisor to ensure works have been completed to a quality standard within 1 working day of completion. Evidence to be added to void pack.

Stock condition survey

A stock condition survey and Energy Performance Certificate assessment should be carried out within 1 working day once the void is ready for handover. Evidence to be added to void pack.

Asbestos

Asbestos management survey to be carried out before any works are undertaken on site. All asbestos removals/encapsulation must be fully completed and certified before any further works are undertaken. Evidence to be added to void pack.

Electrical Compliance

The electrical installation will be isolated and locked off within 24 hours of scope, before any works are undertaken.

A Satisfactory Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) will be carried out and issued. Testing will also be carried out to smoke, heat and CO alarms within the dwelling. A Fire detection certificate will be issued as required covering all alarm replacement/testing.

Any further works will have a Domestic Electrical Installation Certificate (DEIC) or Minor Electrical Installation Works certificate (MEIW) issued as appropriate.

Any C1 and C2s issues are found at the time of the inspection will be carried out as part of the void works.

Any C3s found at the time of the inspection these will be added to the inspection report unless relating to fire clips requiring installation to escape routes which will be carried out during void works.

Electrical work will be carried out in line with the PCH Electrical work standard and all other regulations including BS 7671.

Evidence to be added to void pack.

Gas Compliance

The gas supply will be capped off within 24 hours of scope, before any works are undertaken and recommissioned before the resident has moved in. A Gas Safety assessment will be carried out and satisfactory certificate issued before the new resident moves in. Contractor to resolve any utility meter issues ie faulty meters and work with utility supplier to resolve. Evidence to be added to void pack.

Water

Suitable certified operative to attend within 2 working days, property hot and cold water system are flushed, ensure cold water tanks are fitted with a tight fitting lid. Set hot water cylinder (calorifier) to ensure water is stored at 60 degrees centigrade. Evidence to be added to void pack.

Fire Safety

Type 4 risk assessment (as applicable) to be completed for buildings in scope of the Building Safety and Fire Safety Acts within 2 working days. Evidence to be added to void pack.

Heating

The property must be provided with one form of central heating. This will normally be gas, where gas fires are installed or there are redundant secondary heating systems these are to be removed and any openings blocked up and vented. Heating instructions are to be attached to side of the boiler.

Where storage heaters are installed, these will have an electrical check carried out as part of the normal electrical test and inspection. Instructions on how to operate the heaters will be left within the property. Because the heaters run off peak some defects may not be identified until the heaters are fully charged and working – any such defect will be rectified through the repairs team on an appointment basis with the new tenant.

Damp

The dwelling should be free of damp and mould. It will be inspected for damp (both internally and externally) and any damp that is detected should be addressed as part of void works. Any signs of damp and mould will be cured, and plasterwork treated or renewed.

In serious cases of damp and condensation steps will be taken to resolve the problem, for example fitting trickle vents where heavy condensation is occurring, non-closable air vents to be fitted to external walls to increase airflow.

Any damp remedial works exceeding £20,000 should be approved by Director of Property and New Business and works undertaken prior to a resident moving in or before their belongings are moved in. Evidence to be added to void pack.

Fencing

Fencing should be safe and secure, including the rear/side gate.

If new fencing is required to the front or rear of the property, it should be installed in line with PCH fencing policy and specification.

Doors and Windows

All windows and doors should be assessed for ease of operation and security. Existing doors and windows that are in a good condition and meet fire safety requirements will not be replaced.

PCH will only fit **internal** FD30 fire resistant doors in houses where a property adjoins a garage where the door leads onto the dwelling and where a loft conversion has been carried out to form a protective route from loft rooms to the exit on the ground floor.

Any single-glazed or old sash windows should be replaced prior to the property being let to improve energy efficiency (Subject to Building Control guidelines ie listed building status)

2 sets of keys should be provided for the front door and rear door to the dwelling. Window keys should also be provided as well as outside storage cupboards keys where applicable. All doors and windows should be provided with suitable locks, fasteners or restrictors for their location.

Any complete windows or external doors sets must be installed by certified operative or contractor (FENSA, BSI or CERTASS approved installers. Inspected for compliance Building Control compliant or Competent Persons Scheme).

Halls, Stairs, and Landings

Stairs, handrails and banisters, spindles, balusters, risers and treads (both internal and external) should be secure and stable. If a banister/rail is not present, one should be installed.

Walls

All walls should be checked to ensure that plaster is in a sound condition. Any blown or missing plaster should be carefully cut out and re-plastered using renovating plaster or hard wall plaster, mist coated and left for resident to decorate.

Decoration

If found, polystyrene ceiling / wall tiles should be removed, and the ceiling or walls made good.

Walls and ceiling plaster should be made good and left in a suitable condition for decoration.

If existing wallpaper is old and in a bad condition, this should be removed, and walls prepared for decoration. If following the removal of wallpaper there is significant cracking and crumbling to the plaster underneath, this should be made good (re-plastered or filled and sanded down).

Internals

The property must be checked for any structural defects which are likely to be a threat to health or safety or may result in a decant of the new tenant in the short to medium term.

The property must be free from rising or penetrating damp.

Where it is apparent that the property has suffered from high levels of condensation and humidity, humidistat-controlled extract fans are to be fitted to both the kitchen and the bathroom and other measures as required.

In general terms the property should retain its original floor plan. Where walls have been removed or arches have been formed checks should be made to ensure that the structural integrity has not been affected. Where additional walls have been erected i.e., bedrooms have been subdivided; these should be carefully checked to ensure compliance with current Building Regulations and where required returned to its original layout. If only minor works would be needed to ensure compliance with current standards and the alteration is felt to be a benefit the required works can be undertaken at the void surveyor's discretion.

Flooring, Halls, Stairs, and Landings

All floors should be checked to ensure they are sound, any floor board found to be loose or defective should be replaced. Balustrades and hand rails to stairs should be well secured and comply with current Building Regulations i.e. a 100mm sphere should not be able to pass through them. Stair nosing should be intact and well secured and any defective nosings replaced. Wooden flooring should be inspected for dry rot and woodworm infestations and treated accordingly if found. Floorboards and other fixed floor coverings should be free from trip hazards.

Kitchen repairs

Where repairs are required, these must be on a like for like basis to match as close as possible and fit with the existing units.

Kitchen replacement

Where the kitchen is beyond economic repair the kitchen will be replaced. A referral will be sent to the Planned Maintenance Team at the time of the void inspection to see if the kitchen can be replaced under the programme. This will enable the Planned Team to arrange the survey with kitchen contractor. This survey will be carried out whilst the property is void. Residents will be advised at viewings that the new kitchen will be completed within the planned programme and an expected date given. Any void requiring a replacement kitchen, will have the work carried out post-void if practicable. In exceptional circumstances a kitchen may be replaced at void stage. This will be referred to the Head of Planned Maintenance to approve.

Bathroom

A fixed bath or shower will be available, together with a wash hand basin each with hot and cold running water. Where existing-coloured suites are installed and are in good condition, these will be retained although the tenant must be advised that they will only be replaced in future in white. Where a shower has been fitted as well as a bath and is in good condition this may be retained.

Where baths are to be replaced these are to be of white pressed steel. The bath panel where required should be replaced with a proprietary white panel.

Both the WC and the cistern are to be white. WC seat must be replaced.

All wastewaters must be effectively drained to the foul water drainage system.

Grab-rails are to be removed and made good unless the property is a disabled adapted unit.

Tiling

All tiled splash backs are to be in 150mm x 150mm white glazed tiles 2 courses above wash hand basin, 2 courses above kitchen work surface and 2 courses above any bath. A neat mastic seal is to finish the bottom edge of all tiling.

Nonstandard tiles are to be left if found to be in fair / good condition, resident must be made aware any replacements in the future will be standard white tiles.

Externals / Gardens/ Parking / Patio / Hardstandings

All rubbish to be removed from gardens, yards or balconies. Overgrown gardens will be left in a maintainable state, overgrown foliage to be cut back and grass cut. Pathways, ramps, steps and patio areas should be inspected hazards and made good. Voids surveyor to inspect the garden and risk assess for slips trips and falls, and eliminate hazards as required.

Any parking space / drive can be retained provided it is in sound condition and will not cause a hazard and has a formal dropped crossing. Hardstanding (including rear gardens) will be left in most cases providing they are safe and free from trip hazards. Where they are deemed to be unsafe, they will be removed accordingly and garden re-instated with topsoil.

Any patio can be retained provided it is in sound condition, free from tripping hazards and it 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.

Sheds, lean-tos.

Any proprietary shed, any home built shed or lean to must be demolished, any services disconnected, and hard standing removed and the garden reinstated.

Lean-tos and DIY extensions (including porches) are to be removed and the property returned to its original footprint.

Loft Space

Where the current loft hatch is old, a new hatch should be installed to include draught excluders to assist with achieving adequate insulation levels. All rubbish to be removed.

The insulation in the loft space should be enhanced if below 270mm to increase energy performance

Lighting

Any resident installed light fittings are to be removed and a drop pendant installed. Low energy lightbulbs should be installed in all fixed light fittings. External lighting to be checked to make sure it has been installed in accordance with NICEIC guidelines or removed and areas made good.

Gutters and down pipes

Gutters and down pipes should be checked to ensure there is no obvious signs of leaks. If debris or plant growth can be seen this must be cleaned out and the gutters tested.

Roofs

Roofs should be watertight and inspected for missing or slipped tiles or slates, vertical tile hanging should be checked for missing tiles and repaired as required.

Aids and Adaptations

If property has a lift or hoist in the property the PRS voids team must arrange within 2 working days of scoping for any decommission/recommission to take place

Cleaning and Clearing

The property must be free of any needles or other sharp objects, effluent or contaminated material and all rubbish (however bulky). All sanitary fittings including wash hand basins and kitchen sink must be clean.

Paintwork especially around doors and frames should be wiped down to remove dirt and grease. Any grease or fat deposits on kitchen walls and ceilings should be cleaned off and where required the surface sealed to allow decoration.

Light switches and power points should be cleaned or replaced where required.

In general terms the property should be clean and ready for redecoration.

All properties should be checked for signs of infestation and treated accordingly

Monitoring and review

The policy will be monitored through several aspects. Key performance indicators, Pre, Work in progress and post inspections (including detailed pictures) resident feedback and resident scrutiny. This policy should be reviewed yearly to make sure it complied with changes in legislation and governance.

Legislation

Including:

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Provisions and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 2002
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System – Housing Act 2004
- The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulation 2005
- The Control of Asbestos Regulation 2012
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013
- The Construction Design and Management Regulation 2015
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Building Regulations Part P
- British Standard 7671 – 18th Edition Wiring Regulations
- HSG 264 Asbestos: The Survey Guide
- ACoP L8, Legionnaires' disease; The control of Legionella bacteria in water systems, Approved Code of Practice and guidance.

- Legionnaires’ disease: Technical guidance; HSG274 Part 2: The control of legionella bacteria in hot and cold-water systems.
- Legionnaires’ disease: Technical guidance; HSG274 Part 3: The control of legionella bacteria in other systems.

Reference to other documents and associated policies and procedures

Including:

- Allocations & Lettings Policy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Contractor, Supplier and Service Provider Charter
- Complaints Policy
- Equality & Diversity Charter
- Group Data Protection Policy
- Group Asbestos Management Policy
- Group Electrical Safety Policy
- Group Fire Safety Policy
- Group Gas Safety Policy
- Group Legionella Management Policy
- Health & Safety Statement of Intent
- Phoenix Electrical Works Standard
- Phoenix Standards
- Moving In: Lettings Standard
- Responsive Repairs Policy
- Rechargeable Repairs Policy
- Sustainability Strategy
- Value for Money Strategy
- Void Technical Specification
- Void Process Maps

Definitions

Term/acronym	Description
Resident	Includes tenants, freeholders and leaseholders.
PCH	Phoenix Community Housing.
Void	A property that is empty

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Equalities Impact Assessment:	No
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