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Policy:	Void Management Policy
Legal Requirements:	There are no legal requirements applicable to this policy.
Regulatory Standards:	<p>The Scottish Housing Regulator has set out Regulatory Standards for all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to ensure that RSLs deliver good outcomes and services for its tenants and service users through good governance and financial management.</p> <p>This policy evidences that the following Regulatory Standards are being met:</p> <p>Standard 1. The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.</p> <p>Standard 2. The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.</p> <p>Standard 5. The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.</p>
Notifiable Events Guidance:	In compiling this policy, consideration has been given to the Notifiable Events Guidance issued by the Scottish Housing Regulator and the impact of that guidance on the policy.
Equality and Diversity:	<p>The Association is committed to Equal Opportunities and will endeavour to ensure that all services are carried out in an undiscriminating manner in line with the Association's Equality and Diversity Policy.</p> <p>In particular, the Association will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment or sexual orientation.</p>
Human Rights:	<p>In compiling this policy, consideration has been given to "The Right to Adequate Housing" (Fact Sheet No. 21/Rev.1) published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the impact of that guidance on the policy.</p> <p>In particular, the Association is satisfied that this policy promotes the key aspects of the right to adequate housing – that it contains freedoms; entitlements; provides more than four walls and a roof; and protects against forced evictions.</p>
Complaints:	Although the Association is committed to providing high levels of service, we accept that there may be occasions where customers may not be satisfied with the service they have received. The Association values all complaints and uses this information to improve the services that it provides. The Association's Complaints Policy describes our complaints handling procedure and how to make a complaint.
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):	The Association will treat all customers' personal data in line with its obligations under the current data protection regulations and our Privacy Policy. Information regarding how data will be used and the basis for processing data is provided in the Association's Fair Processing Notice.
Policy Author:	Kevin Freeman



Policy Review:	In order to ensure that any change in circumstances is accommodated this policy will be subject to review every three years in the month of August.
Policy Approval:	This policy was last reviewed / approved by the Management Committee of Yoker Housing Association Limited at its meeting held on Thursday the 25th of August 2022.



Statement of Policy Aims / Principles

Effective void management is essential to the financial viability of the Association and is also a key indicator for the Housing Regulator. The policy aims to comply with current legislation, the Scottish Housing Charter (SSHC), statutory instruments and good practice. The guidance should be read in conjunction with relevant policies and procedures including void management, allocations, the prevention and control of rent loss.

To ensure the most efficient and effective use of the Association's housing stock, Housing Management and Maintenance Services will aim to manage property voids in accordance with this policy, related policies and within specified targets. The Void Management Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Void Management Procedures. The overall aim and keys objectives of the policy are:

- Comply with legislation, statutory requirements, internal related policies and good practice;
- Ensure effective, efficient and accountable management of properties;
- Minimise void rental loss, void periods and void repair costs;
- Ensure efficient and effective communication between tenants and departments involved;
- Prevent end of tenancy generated debt wherever possible;
- Ensure that tenants are aware of their tenancy end obligations; and
- Assisting in meeting housing needs as soon as possible.

Policy Details

Ending the Tenancy

In accordance with the terms of tenancy, a tenant must provide the Association with twenty-eight days written notice. A Tenancy Agreement can be ended and a void property can arise from one of the following reasons:

- Formal termination of tenancy by the tenant;
- Death of a tenant where there is no successor to the tenancy;
- Abandonment of the tenancy;
- Recovery of possession after the Association has completed court action to evict a tenant;
- Transfers where a tenant is re-housed by the Association in another property; and
- Development voids where a property is not allocated on the date of handover.

Before returning the keys the tenant should do the following:

- Give the Association twenty-eight days written notice of their termination and provide a forwarding address;
- Allow access for Housing Management and Maintenance Services to carry out a pre-termination visit;
- Where possible, allow access for new tenancy viewings during the tenancy end period;
- Where possible, allow access to carry out repair works during the tenancy end period;
- Remove any fixtures or fittings that have been installed without written permission and repair any damage caused;
- Reinstall any fixtures or fittings that have been removed without written permission and repair any damage caused;
- Ensure that all outstanding tenancy payments are paid to the Association;
- Ensure that any lodgers or sub-tenants leave the property; and
- Remove all personal belongings, leave the house clean and tidy and in good decorative condition.

To minimise void periods Housing Management and Maintenance Services will provide tenants or their representatives with clear information and guidance on tenancy end procedures and responsibilities.

Ending the Tenancy

When written notification of a termination of tenancy is received, Housing Management and Maintenance Services will initiate the termination of tenancy procedures. Where no notice of a termination is received or a pre-termination inspection is not carried out, Maintenance Services will initiate post termination procedures upon return of the keys.

**Policy Details** (continued)Re-let of Property

5 As soon as a notification to terminate a tenancy is received, Housing Management should identify a suitable applicant from the waiting list and an offer of housing should be issued in accordance with the Lettings Policy. Where possible, a viewing will be arranged prior to tenancy end. Maintenance Services will advise Housing Management if a viewing is possible during the period of any maintenance works.

Pre-Termination Management

10 When notice has been provided to terminate the tenancy then pre-termination procedures will be initiated. Housing Management / Maintenance Services will arrange a joint visit to discuss housing and maintenance tenancy end procedures and assess the condition of the property. During the inspection Housing Management will ensure that the termination of tenancy documentation is complete, review tenancy accounts and confirm the return of key procedures. Maintenance Services will carry out an initial inspection of the property and advise the tenant of any visible rechargeable repairs / replacements requiring attention. Where possible, Maintenance Services will carry out any repair works during the notice period.

Unsatisfactory Inspection and Rechargeable Works

15 The Association has the right to recharge outgoing tenants for any repairs or replacement works which are due to wilful damage, neglect, unauthorised alterations and property clearance in accordance with the Association's Rechargeable Repairs Policy and Alterations and Improvements Policy. During inspections and communications, outgoing tenants or their representatives will be made fully aware of their end of tenancy responsibilities and the consequences of an unsatisfactory inspection once the property becomes void.

Post Termination and Void Management

20 When a property becomes void then post termination procedures will be initiated. Maintenance Services will carry out a full survey of the house and arrange the necessary repairs, replacements, checks and the disposal of personal effects / unwanted furnishings. Maintenance Services will ensure that all properties comply with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) and the Association's Minimum Lettable Standards Policy. Maintenance Services should liaise with Housing Management on approximate timescales of maintenance works for letting purposes. When keys are returned or entry is gained to a property, the following procedures will apply:

- 25 • **Notice Provided:** Where the keys are returned before the end of the date of termination then the Association will continue to apply twenty-eight days' notice and the tenancy brought to an end on that date. Where possible, Housing Management will endeavour to re-let the property within the notice period in order to terminate the tenancy at the earliest opportunity. Should the keys not be returned on the date of termination then Housing Management will use available contact methods to determine when the keys will be returned. The tenancy will be brought to an end on the date all keys are returned to the Association's office. Where the tenant fails to respond to communications then Housing Management will seek to enforce the notice and the tenancy will be brought to an end on date of entry. Where personal belongings have been left or rechargeable repairs / replacements are required then Maintenance Services will arrange for the necessary works and recharge the former tenant.
- 30 • **No Formal Notice:** Where no written notice is provided and the keys are returned by the tenant then the Association will apply the twenty-eight day notice period from the date the keys are received. Where the keys are returned by third party or by post and a signed letter is provided with the keys providing notice then the Association will apply the twenty-eight day notice period from the date the keys are received. Where the keys are returned by a third party or by post and no letter is provided by the tenant then the Association will initiate abandonment procedures. In all cases Housing Management will attempt to contact the outgoing tenant to get a termination notice signed and to advise them of any tenancy debts. Where personal belongings have been left then abandonment procedures will apply. Where rechargeable repairs / replacements are required then Maintenance Services will arrange for the necessary works to be carried out and recharge the former tenant.
- 35 • **Death of a Tenant:** In the event that the Association has been given notice of the death of a tenant then this will be dealt with in accordance with the Association's Death of a Tenant Policy and procedures.
- 40 • **Abandonment:** In the event that the Association has to initiate abandonment procedures then this will be dealt with in accordance with the Association's Abandonment Policy and procedures.
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Policy Details (continued)

- **Recovery of Possession:** The tenancy will be brought to an end on the date the decree is enforced. Where personal items belonging to the tenant are found in the repossessed property Housing Management and Maintenance Services will arrange for the storage or disposal of the items and recharge the former tenant. Where rechargeable repairs / replacements are required then Maintenance Services will arrange for the necessary works to be carried out and recharge the former tenant.

The Right to Compensation for Alterations and Improvements

Maintenance Services may compensate outgoing tenants who have carried out certain improvement or alterations in accordance with the Alterations and Improvements Policy and procedures and current legislation.

Low Demand Initiatives

If Housing Management recognises that some properties are difficult to let, or in low demand, a number of initiatives may be introduced to assist in their allocation to reduce void periods and void rent loss. Where appropriate, the Association may consider the following initiatives:

- Make physical and environmental improvements in areas of difficult to let housing;
- Carry out improvements to difficult to let properties (e.g. decorate properties, kitchen replacement, bathroom replacement); or
- Introduce a Special Lettings Initiative.

Property Standards and Decoration Allowance

Maintenance Services will ensure that properties being presented for letting will be in accordance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standards and the Scottish Social Housing Charter. It is recognised that in order to assist in the allocation of void properties it may, in certain circumstances, be helpful for the Association to carry out decoration to the property or provide an allowance to the incoming tenant towards the cost of redecoration. Any decoration allowance will be paid in accordance with the Association's Decoration Allowance for Void Properties Policy.

Security and Vandalism

Where it is judged necessary, Maintenance Services will make arrangements to take appropriate security measures at the earliest opportunity where a void property is vulnerable to vandalism, squatting or theft of components. Such measures may be necessary where a property was previously sub-let, not all keys were returned to the Association, or the property was recovered following abandonment or court proceedings.

Winter Periods

To ensure that properties are protected during the winter Maintenance Services will advise tenants of measures that should be taken to prevent frost and / or flood damage. Basic information advice is provided through the Association's website, resident's handbook and newsletters.

Where a property becomes void during the winter, Maintenance Services will take the necessary precautions to prevent frost and / or flood damage.

Monitoring and Reporting

Housing Management will present quarterly Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to the Management Committee giving details of void performance. The following information will be presented to Management Committee:

- Void rent loss;
- Average re-let times measured in calendar days.