

## **THE VOID LETTABLE STANDARD**

North West Leicestershire District Council is responsible for allocating empty Council owned homes. The Lettable standard has been agreed in consultation with the tenants of North West Leicestershire District Council.

The purpose of this document is to ensure that a consistent minimum lettable standard is achieved and that all our properties are offered in a reasonable state of repair subject to the appropriate funding being available. In addition this standard is designed to ensure that no unnecessary expenditure is incurred.

This guide is directed toward all officers who may carry out void inspections and sets out the standard to which voids should be inspected and repaired.

The purpose of the standard is to allow officers to provide properties for incoming tenants, which are suitable and also have an understanding for both the costs of works required and the timescales that the repairs may take.

The guide allows flexibility in how it is achieved and therefore does not require that all works have to be completed before the new tenant moves in. The new tenant will be advised of any outstanding work during viewing and/or during sign-up.

The guide does not cover voids where major repairs are required to be undertaken. Major repairs are best defined as those, which, if the property were occupied, would require the Tenant to be decanted

These works include;

- Structural works to include floors, walls and roofs.
- Site works to ensure the safety and security of the Tenant such as asbestos removal.
- Works to basic amenities such as heating, gas and electricity, where these are lacking.
- Consequential works as a result of major repairs.
- Works as a result of fire and flood.

### **Vandalism**

Any acts of vandalism are to be reported to the Police, whilst aware of difficulties in pursuing the perpetrators of these acts notifying the Police will allow accurate monitoring of these types of offences.

## **Gas and electric checks**

### **Gas:**

Due to difficulties in obtaining utility supplies the following procedure is followed for any works to gas heating systems:

### **Gas in voids procedure**

- The inspecting Officer identifies the void that has gas connected and location of the meter.
- Void Officer informs Gas Officer and Gas Service Contractor and Allocations Officer via email, this will include whether standard meters or quantum/card meters.
- Gas Contractor attends property and discs meter, access to internal meter via key safe fitted by Void Contractor.
- Gas Service Contractor informs Void/Gas and Allocations officer via email and follows up with CP1 that meter is capped off with a disc.

All non-gas work is carried out in the property and on completion keys are passed to Housing Management. Where credit meters are fitted Housing Management pre-lets the property and informs incoming tenant of the need to obtain credit for meters before the Gas Contractor is able to service the appliances.

### **Where gas and electric supplies are live, the following applies: -**

When the incoming tenant signs for the tenancy of the property, the Housing Management Officer informs the Gas Officer of the tenancy start date (where possible at least 48hrs notice of intended tenancy commencement date) During the sign-up, the incoming tenant is advised that they must have credit on the Gas and Electrical meters and have registered for the provision of the utility to allow for appliance commissioning.

Gas Officer arranges for Gas Contractor to visit the property and service/commission appliances and issue a CP12 Certificate, a copy of this is to be left with the new customer and a copy is to be passed onto the Gas Officer for updating records and filing (the Gas Service Contractor is to attend within 2 working days of tenancy commencement). A full heat test of the heating and hot water system is then carried out and is left fully operational. The incoming tenant is then instructed of its use and, where possible, identification of potentially live outlet points.

### **Where gas/electric supplies are not live, the Service Contractor will visit within 2 working days of the supplies being turned on when informed to do so.**

Properties fitted with back boilers will receive a visual inspection whilst void and a decision to be made at this point if it is deemed the boiler may fail a full service check, with regard boiler replacement. This is because of the high levels of dust that can build up over a short period of time, and the greater likelihood of flue failure with this type of boiler.

***Electricity:***

A full periodic inspection of the property is to be ordered and carried out, all necessary forms completed and works are carried out to the property to bring electrical components in line with latest regulations, if after the inspection it becomes apparent the electrical installation is in a poor condition a decision is made by the Inspecting Officer along with the Electrical surveyor as to whether it may be more economical to have the property fully rewired. All Certificates issued and received for Gas and Electrical work, shall be passed to the relevant Surveyor and filed for future reference.

**Services:**

During cold periods ensure water service is switched off and systems are drained down; make note of meter types for gas and electricity supplies.

**Solid fuel appliances:**

A general check is to be carried out to include doors, seals and bars. The flue should also be checked for blockages and swept as appropriate.

**The following are general guidelines for the inspection**

The lettable standard is based around the criteria of

- Cleanliness**
- A reasonable state of repair**
- Security**
- Health and Safety**

The inspecting officer is to look at the exterior and interior of the property and carry out repairs as needed to bring the property up to a satisfactory standard of repair, certain works may be identified that can be carried out once the property is tenanted (follow on work), and these items are to be noted on the inspection form and where possible orders raised so incoming tenant can be made aware of these works and a likely completion date given, when signing for the tenancy

During the course of the inspection certain items may be identified that require attention but are soon likely to be part of a larger improvement works contract (Decent Homes Work), the inspecting officer is to be aware of any upcoming works of this nature and where possible arrange for their completion whilst the property is void. Wherever possible, the incoming tenant should be consulted before these work are carried out for any possible layout, colour choices etc. If the works cannot be arranged during the Void period, subject to basic Health and Hygiene, the Officer is to make a judgement on replacing/repairing items

and to note on inspection form when the incoming tenant can expect this work to be carried out.

The removal of existing unwanted goods is always a rechargeable repair to the outgoing Tenant. It is at the discretion of the inspecting officer to decide whether or not to leave floor coverings in the property, depending upon their condition.

### **The Interior**

Front and rear doors to the property (excluding communal areas) are to have their locks changed. Outbuildings not attached to the property will not have locks changed. Locks are to be recycled for use on other properties.

All internal doors and door furniture should operate smoothly and latches engage properly. Small holes are unlikely to have damaged the integrity of the door and can be filled; bigger holes will necessitate door replacement.

Windows should open and close properly, broken glazing is to be replaced. Replacement of misted double glazed units will not be undertaken at void stage but the details will be noted with the works added to the deferred work list for completion at a later date, subject to appropriate funding being available.

Walls and ceilings- the property is to be free from all signs of rising damp, ensure surfaces are in fair condition for the age of the property, with no large patches missing/damaged.

Floors- All floor boards to be fixed and level any broken boards to be replaced, concrete floors to be clean and dust free, vinyl tiling to floors to be patched where possible but rooms with large areas of broken tiles to have tiles removed and floor sealed in order that a floor covering may be applied by the incoming Tenant.

Stairs /Landings- Treads and Risers to be in sound condition, free from splits and rot, Banisters and Handrails are to be securely fixed and free from damage.

Polystyrene ceiling tiles will be removed from any room.

Smoke detectors- NWLDC fits 1 smoke detector in a flat, and 2 in a house.

Any visible infestations, with the exception of ants, will have treatment commenced during the period that the property is void.

## **The Kitchen**

A minimum of 1 x double kitchen sink unit + 1 x double base unit + 1 x single wall unit (or combination of) will be provided, unless the property has a pantry which will reduce the minimum number of units to 1 x double KSU + 1 x double base unit (or combination of)

Kitchen units should have doors that open and close and be of a serviceable condition

Stainless steel sink-tops will only be replaced if there is significant damage.

Kitchen taps should be serviceable and be free from leaks. Where taps are renewed in supported properties, these will be replaced with lever type taps.

A sink plug and chain should also be in place.

There should be minimum of 300mm of worktop space either side of the cooker area.

There should be a minimum of two (2) rows of tiled splash back fitted to worktops.

Provision is to be made for a utility supply of either gas or electricity within the kitchen; this will depend upon the amount of space in the kitchen.

Internal/external doors should open and close easily (subject to weather conditions)

## **Washing Machines**

Washing machine connections will not be provided unless a new sink unit is installed and space allows. The sink unit will then be fitted with washing machine taps and waste connection.

Existing connections previously fitted are to be left if serviceable or removed if beyond economic repair.

Certain kitchens will currently not allow provision for a washing machine due to their size/layout

No washing machine connection will be supplied if there is a laundry room facility provided

## **The Bathroom**

NWLDC does not provide new toilet seats for each new Tenant. This will only be replaced if it is damaged.

The WC pan should be clean and free from cracks or chips either in the pan or around the rim. The WC cistern should flush and the WC pan be adequately secured to the floor and be level.

Bath and basin taps should be serviceable, with acceptable pressure and be free from leaks. Where taps are renewed in supported properties, these will be replaced with lever type taps.

The bath and basin should have a plug and chain installed and should be free from cracks or large chips. Small enamel chips in baths can be repaired at the discretion of the voids Supervisor.

There should be at least two (2) rows of tiled splash back to the bath and basin. Mastic seals should be in good condition

If a shower is fitted, the shower components including riser, hose, head and screen should be in good condition. Any tiling that is installed should be adequate for shower use.

## **Internal decoration**

Existing decoration should be intact and clean although it may not be to the incoming tenants taste. All wallpaper should be attached to the wall, peeling paper will be removed. Decorating vouchers may be made available to the incoming tenants; however, this allowance is not an automatic right and should not apply in every case or for every part of the home. The allowance is awarded on a room by room basis depending on the condition of the decoration, up to the maximum allowance stated in the Decorating Allowance Procedure. In extreme circumstances the Inspecting Officer will arrange for some or all of the property to be redecorated during the void period.

The Allocations Officer will discuss and agree the allowance for each property with the incoming Tenant during the accompanied viewing.

## **Cleaning**

On completion of all works the property is to be cleaned and made ready for incoming tenant as per the following cleaning schedule;

- Skirting boards to be wiped and dusted
- Doors and frames to be wiped and dusted
- Window frames and sills to be wiped and dusted

- Window glass to be cleaned inside and out
- Plug/light sockets and light fittings to be wiped and dusted
- Air vents to be wiped and dusted.
- All cobwebs to be removed
- Fireplaces to be wiped and dusted.
- All floors to be swept and vinyl flooring mopped.
- All glazed tiling surfaces to be wiped down.
- All kitchen units to be wiped down.
- All sanitary units to be wiped down (i.e. bath, sink, shower, toilet).

### **The Exterior**

The roof should be watertight with no missing ridge tiles, missing flashing, slipped or missing roof tiles, damaged gutters, missing stop ends and cracked down pipes. Due to the external nature of the types of work mentioned, repairs can be recorded and work arranged (this may be once the property is occupied).

Any council owned gates and fences should be in a sound condition.

Gardens should be cleared of all rubbish and unwanted possessions, but under normal circumstances no landscaping will be carried out, except for areas required for access such as pathways and around external doors. The property is accepted as seen and any remedial works to the garden are the responsibility of the Tenant, unless the garden is left in an exceptionally poor state.

The void officer will decide whether or not any garden tidy is to take place based on the condition of the garden and the ability of the incoming Tenant to undertake the required works themselves. If the incoming Tenant is not known by the end of the void period, this decision is to be made by the Officer completing the accompanied viewing.

Before handing the keys to Housing Management, the Inspecting Officer is to view the property to ensure all works have been completed to a satisfactory standard and that details of any further work required are noted and raised accordingly.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is important to ensure that the standard is consistently adhered to and that it is, and remains, acceptable for the majority of our tenants. Therefore a survey form will be issued to all new tenants in order to obtain feedback on the standard of repair and cleanliness of the property when it is let.

In addition to this, a percentage of the properties will be inspected by our tenant void inspectors as a way of further monitoring the performance.

The void lettable standard will be reviewed on a regular basis and the feedback from the surveys and the tenant void inspectors will be considered as part of the review process.

NWLDC Void Standard version 6 amended November 2010.