

East Devon District Council

Housing Void Management Policy

Version 1

Officer Responsible: Housing Enabling and Allocations Manager

Authorised by the Housing Solutions Manager on January 8th 2020

1 Previous Policies/Strategies

[Click here to add information on old polices/strategies being superseded.](#)

2 Why has the council introduced this policy?

- 2.1 This policy is to ensure that East Devon District Council (EDDC) has effective procedures in place to manage its empty stock quickly and efficiently.
- 2.2 As the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is funded from the income generated by the rental of its stock, the Void Management Policy focuses on the requirement to reduce the length of time a property is empty.
- 2.3 The policy will ensure a forward looking and strategic approach to void management that will help to:
 - Minimise rent loss through reducing the length of the void period and repair costs
 - Set out EDDC's Housing Service Standard of Repair for Empty Properties ensuring that all staff, contractors and tenants are aware of exactly what condition the council expects of its empty properties
 - Put in place systems for monitoring the standards of void properties and customer satisfaction with their new home
- 2.4 The policy, together with EDDC's Housing Service Management and Repair policies will guide staff in ensuring that tenants are aware of their repair responsibilities and end of tenancy obligations.
- 2.5 It should be used in conjunction with the most recent allocations policy, to ensure that the stock is well used in a way that meets local demand in a fair and equitable way.

3 What is the council's policy?

3.1 Ending tenancies

- 3.1.1 All tenants are required to give four week's written notice terminating their tenancy which is effective from 12 o'clock the Monday after the termination notice is received. In the event of a death of a tenant EDDC will also require four weeks' notice from the date that we are informed of the death. As well as providing details of the next of kin, a copy of the Death Certificate or Tell us Once notification will be required. <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/housing/living-in-your-council-home/succeeding-to-a-tenancy-when-someone-dies/>

- 3.1.2 Tenancies always finish on a Sunday and keys must be returned to East Devon District Council at either Exmouth Town Hall or Blackdown House in Honiton. If a key-safe has been fitted by EDDC or our contractors, keys can be placed within on vacating the property, providing the tenant has had prior agreement from a Housing Allocations Officer.
- 3.1.3 Where the keys are not returned at all, the cost of changing locks will be recharged to the outgoing tenant.
- 3.1.4 As part of the end of tenancy process the tenant will allow EDDC and/or their Asset Management contractor to carry out a pre-void inspection if requested.
- 3.1.5 The Council actively encourages tenants to leave the property and external areas in a clean and tidy condition as laid out in the tenancy agreement. When a valid notice of termination is received, all outgoing tenants will be reminded of their rights and responsibilities in relation to ending the tenancy. The Council will then arrange inspection of the property before the tenant moves out. This will enable the Housing Service to:-
- Identify any required repairs and to determine if the cost of repairing should be recharged to the tenant.
 - Identify and notify maintenance contractors of expected volumes of work to assist with forecasting and capacity planning
 - Identify any factors which will be considered as part of offering the property for re-let, such as special adaptations
- 3.1.6 The outgoing tenant will be responsible for the full costs for clearing out the property and any other rechargeable repairs identified.
- 3.1.7 The tenant will be made aware of any rechargeable repairs identified where possible during the pre-void inspection. The outgoing tenant will be asked to sign the list of rechargeable repairs and this will be used as a checklist to ensure that their responsibilities have been met. The Council reserve the right to recharge the outgoing tenant for any rechargeable works that occurred after or that were not visible during, the pre-void inspection.
- 3.1.8 The tenant will also be informed about the status of their rent account and any sub accounts and required to make payments to clear any outstanding debt before the end of the tenancy. If the tenant is in arrears but is unable to clear them in full before the end of the tenancy, they will be required to make an affordable payment agreement to clear the debt. Failure to do so will mean that the tenant will be pursued for any monies owing in accordance with the EDDC Income Management Policy. The outgoing tenant will be required to provide a forwarding address, as specified in their tenancy agreement.
- 3.1.9 Where it is suspected a property is abandoned the statutory procedures will be followed as detailed in our tenancy management procedures.

3.1.10 On becoming available for letting, the property will be offered to a potential new tenant with minimal delay in accordance with policies relating to the Devon Home Choice scheme and our own allocations policies.

3.2 Vacating Tenants

3.2.1 The vacating tenants are required to fulfil the following conditions when they wish to end their tenancy:

3.3 General Conditions

- Provide a minimum of four weeks' notice of intention to move out
- Allow staff access to pre-inspect the property following an appointment
- Allow staff to show prospective tenants to view the property before it becomes void
- Have a clear rent account
- Return all the keys to the property as stated in paragraph 3.1.2 above
- Have all utility meters read before moving out. If key meters are fitted, leave the keys in the meters with no debts. If a debt is discovered EDDC will forward your contact details to the utility companies
- Provide a forwarding address
- Allow access to carry out minor repairs if reported or identified in the pre-void inspection before you vacate the property
- To put in place a postal redirection service

3.4 Cleaning and Clearing:

- Make sure that the garden is tidy and free of rubbish
- Remove all furniture, belongings and any rubbish from the property including the loft, the garden, and sheds
- Leave the property in a clean condition – windows, floors, cupboards, worktops and all sanitary ware

3.5 Decorations / Fixtures and fittings:

- Make sure the property is in good decorative order
- Repair any damage caused by moving fittings and fixtures
- Repair everything that has been damaged
- Agree with staff and clearly mark any items they wish to leave behind for the next incoming tenant

3.6 Pre-Void Inspection

3.6.1 Any adaptations to the property, such as a flush-floor shower, wheelchair height kitchen cupboards and handrails etc. will be noted at this time. This information will be shared with both the Housing Allocations team and the Adaptations Officer, so that they are able to offer the property to an appropriate prospective tenant.

3.6.2 The outgoing tenant should put any disputes regarding rechargeable repairs raised during the void period to the Senior Technical Officer – Day to Day Repairs via the complaints procedure.

3.7 Void Inspection

3.7.1 As soon as the property becomes void it will be re-inspected to confirm if the former tenant has complied with all their end of tenancy obligations.

3.7.2 It will also enable the inspecting officer to identify any repairs that may have been missed or hidden by furniture during the pre-void inspection that need to be recharged.

3.7.3 Photographs will be taken of items left in, or damage inflicted on the property.

3.8 Repairs to Void Properties

3.8.1 The Council aims to identify and complete all necessary repairs to enable a property to be re-let as soon as possible.

3.8.2 All works undertaken in the property will be completed to the Void Standard (Appendix A).

3.8.3 In exceptional circumstances, minor or non-essential repairs will be undertaken once the tenancy has commenced. These repairs and the timescales for their completion will be agreed with the new tenant. In all cases, these will be charged to the voids budget.

3.8.4 All properties will be issued with electrical and gas safety certificates in compliance with legal requirements.

3.8.5 The Council will ensure that properties are checked against the planned works programme to make the most cost effective use of resources. If a property falls into a geographical area where planned maintenance work is being undertaken, the property will be moved to the top of the planned maintenance list for these works to be completed as soon as possible.

3.8.6 Major repairs and any necessary Health and Safety works that would cause a high level of disruption to tenants or put their safety at risk, such as the removal of asbestos, and any damp or rot treatments will be completed prior to the start of the new tenancy.

3.8.7 All void properties must have had a gas and electrical check and have the necessary certificates in place before they can be deemed as ready to let. Copies of these are given to the new tenant as part of the sign up process.

3.9 Internal Decoration

- 3.9.1 The Council will undertake basic redecoration where required before being let. We will ensure that all sheltered properties are in good internal decorative order throughout, including woodwork, walls, and ceilings.
- 3.9.2 General Needs properties will be left in a suitable condition so that normal internal decoration can take place. As an example walls, ceiling and woodwork filled and made good ready to accept standard decoration, but will not be painted
- 3.9.3 Where the vacating tenant has left the property with bold or hard to cover colours, or there is significant smoke staining, consideration will be given to the need to apply one coat of obliterating emulsion prior to re-letting.

3.10 Monitoring and Customer Involvement

- 3.10.1 Satisfaction with the service provided will be monitored through “new tenancy” visits and repairs satisfaction forms. Feedback received from these surveys may be used to inform amendments to the policy and thus improve the Service provided.

4 Equality impact considerations – the policy is high relevance to equality if it has a big impact on residents and users of the service High

- 4.1 The Council is committed to providing a fair and equitable service to its tenants and leaseholders. Through the management of our empty properties the council aims to treat all customers fairly, with dignity, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.

5 Appendices and other relevant information

Appendix A Our Standard of Repair for Empty Properties

6 Who authorised the policy/strategy and date of authorisation.

The policy was reviewed and authorised by the Allocations and Enabling Manager on 8th January 2020

7 Related Policies/Strategies, Procedures and Legislation

- Recharge Policy
- Housing Allocations Policy
- Income Management Policy

8 Policy date for review and responsible officer

- 8.1 It is intended that this policy will be reviewed every three years or in response to a change in current legislation and the latest examples of best practice.

8.2 Next Review date: January 2023