

INTRODUCTION

Herefordshire Housing Ltd (HHL) will provide its tenants with affordable homes that are safe, comfortable, well maintained and located in environments that are pleasant for all users.

The repair and management of empty properties is a key service area and one on which HHL will be judged, particularly in terms of tenant satisfaction with the quality of services provided.

POLICY STATEMENT

Herefordshire Housing's aims and objectives are as follows:

1. To let good quality, safe and secure accommodation to our customers.
2. To maximise the occupancy of its properties through effective and efficient lettings and void repairs and property improvement services.
3. To meet our statutory, regulatory and contractual repairs and maintenance obligations, monitoring performance and standards, and ensuring probity and value for money.
4. To engage with our customers in a participative and empowering manner so that they have the opportunity to contribute to, and influence, the future direction of the empty property service.
5. To fulfil our commitment to equality and diversity while delivering housing management and maintenance services to our residents.
6. To respond to pressing local housing need whilst minimising loss of revenue by repairing and letting properties within challenging targets which will be reviewed annually.
7. To maintain the Company's housing stock and preserve its asset value.

IMPLEMENTATION

In order to meet the aims that this policy sets, Herefordshire Housing will:

1. Continuously develop the Company's empty property management procedures to ensure that empty property services are efficiently and effectively delivered.
2. Aim to visit all out-going tenant's homes before the end of their tenancy to ensure that they clearly understand that the conditions of their tenancy requires them to remove all furniture, personal possessions and rubbish from the property and to leave it in good repair, decorative order and in a clean and safe condition.
3. Aim to recover any rechargeable repair costs from the out-going tenant when they leave the property in an unsafe or poor condition.
4. Check our stock condition database and our property appraisal system before we complete a property survey and invest in an empty property.

5. Publicise Herefordshire Housing empty property service standards for new and transferring residents.
6. Take reasonable steps to ensure that adequate funding is available to meet the Company's empty property standards for new and transferring residents, a copy of which is attached as **Appendix 1**.
7. Employ sufficient and qualified staff, consultants and contractors to enable us to effectively deliver the Company's void management service.
8. Adopt a systematic approach to performance management in the void management service; reporting outcomes to Herefordshire Housing's Board in accordance with the company's performance framework.
9. Carry out a detailed survey of all void properties and complete such works of repairs and maintenance as are necessary to meet the Company's Property Standards for new and transferring tenants. Minor works may well be undertaken after letting when the new tenant is in occupation.
10. Properties designated for older persons will be decorated to a good standard. General needs properties will instead attract a contribution towards the cost of decorating by way of a voucher redeemed at local DIY outlets, the value of which will be determined on a property-by-property basis.
11. Seek the views of new tenants on a range of issues relating to the lettings process and the condition of their new home.
12. Let the property in accordance to the Company's Lettings Policy.
13. In relation to arrangements in respect of the termination and commencement of tenancies, the following principles will apply:

Ending the Tenancy:

- Four weeks notice to quit is required from the outgoing tenant in all but the following circumstances: where the tenant is entering residential care or has passed away, two weeks notice is required; where the tenant is transferring to another HHL property no notice period is required.
- The outgoing tenant will be liable for a further week's rental in the event that all keys to the property are not returned to HHL by close of business on the Monday following the due date (Tuesday, in the event of the Monday being a Bank Holiday), and on an ongoing basis until such time as the keys are returned to HHL.

Tenancy Commencement

- Tenancies signed on a Monday will generally commence on that day. Tenancies signed for from Tuesday onwards will commence on the Monday of the following week. For transferring tenants who are signing for their new tenancy on a Monday, then providing that all keys are returned by 12.00 noon on the Wednesday of that week, the tenancy end date of their previous tenancy will be back-dated to the previous Sunday. In this way, a transferring tenant is guaranteed at least two days to effect removals without incurring additional rent liability.

MONITORING AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Herefordshire Housing is committed to continuous improvement in service delivery. It is the responsibility of the Director of Operations to ensure that:

- all relevant staff are aware of the Void Policy
- all relevant staff are trained on the Void Policy and any other relevant legislation/regulatory requirements
- customers are aware of the Void Policy

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that this policy is applied.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Tenancy Agreements

Lettings Policy

Repairs and Maintenance Policy

Rechargeable Repairs Policy

Communication Strategy

Asset Management, Procurement and Value for Money Strategies

Diversity Strategy

POLICY ISSUE DATE

30th April 2007

EXPECTED POLICY REVIEW DATE

April 2010