



Richmondshire District Council

Housing Maintenance

Void Lettable Standard



VOID LETTABLE STANDARD

The following notes are provided for Maintenance Managers and Contractors as guidance to enable them to meet the agreed standard when surveying works in void properties. Its primary purpose is to ensure that all void properties are of an equal standard when re-let. It is not intended to get in the way of common sense or prevent Surveyors or Contractors from preparing voids for re-letting in such a way as to meet the requirements of the tenant and Allocations Managers.

1 KITCHENS

The kitchen will include a food preparation area, fully plumbed in sink, hygienic and easily cleaned worktops, space and connections for a cooker and a fridge or fridge freezer, with a minimum number of four double sockets to Electrical Safety Regulations and the size of the kitchen.

Kitchen fittings will be sound and in good working order.

Floor coverings to kitchens will be hygienic, easy to clean and in sound condition.

Wall tiling will be checked and any cracked or defective tiling replaced. Any discoloured or defective grouting will be renewed. Wherever possible, wall tiling will be of a uniform colour.

The kitchen sink outlet will be checked to ensure adequate drainage is achieved.

Plumbing for a washing machine will be provided. Where there is no existing space for a washing machine space will be made in the kitchen wherever possible, unless there is space in another part of the property such as a utility room.

Where a new kitchen is to be installed, the number of units/work tops will be the same as existing, with improvements made where possible, using the most popular colour scheme of cupboard doors and worktops in line with the Council's Kitchen Design Standards.

When it is known who the incoming tenant is to be, contact will be made and a choice of kitchen style and colour will be offered from the range available.

***In properties where no extractor fan is currently installed in the kitchen an appropriate extractor fan will be fitted.**

2 BATHROOM / SANITARY WARE

The property will include a fully plumbed in WC, wash hand basin and a bath or shower.

If taps are replaced in older person's accommodation, lever taps will be installed.

WC seat and cover will be replaced. The replacement colour will be white, unless an exact colour match can be achieved.

Sanitary fittings will be replaced if they are in a poor condition, e.g. if they are cracked or beyond economical repair. The replacement colour will be white, unless an exact colour match can be achieved.

When it is known who the incoming tenant is to be, contact will be made and a choice of bathroom style and colour will be offered from the range available.

If a new bathroom is installed and the property has a combi-type boiler an electric shower will be fitted over the bath.

Shower hoses and heads will be cleaned.

**In properties where no extractor fan is currently fitted in bathrooms an appropriate extractor fan will be fitted.*

3 METERS

All meters (gas, electric and water) will be read and recorded on the Void Condition Report Form. Photos of the reading (meter) will be stored on the Shared Housing File.

4 GAS INSTALLATIONS AND GAS CENTRAL HEATING

All properties with gas installations will be subject to a gas safety check and a landlord's gas safety certificate will be issued to the new tenant. On completion of the gas check and prior to occupation, the gas supply will be disabled. The gas supply will be reinstated when the new tenant has moved into the property and has arranged their gas and electric supplier. The engineer will explain the correct and efficient operation of the heating system.

Any repairs to the gas central heating system will be completed prior to the tenant moving in and checked on completion.

Any central heating system found to be beyond economical repair will be identified and renewed, wherever possible. Renewal will be in accordance with the specifications for the Gas Maintenance Contract and be undertaken by a Gas Maintenance Contractor whilst the property is vacant.

For properties that lack any form of controllable central heating system, consideration will be given to fitting a new central heating system whilst the property is vacant.

Wherever possible, properties will also have an additional focal point fire within the main living room. This can be fuelled by gas, electric or solid fuel.

Where combination boilers have been installed a thermostatically controlled electric shower will be fitted over the bath.

Immersion heaters will be checked to ensure they have a suitable thermostat and tested to ensure they are set at an appropriate temperature.

5 ELECTRIC HEATING

Storage radiators will be checked for adequate and secure fixings to the wall and / or floor.

Storage radiators should be visually checked and arrangements made for the internal mechanisms vacuum cleaned to remove built up deposits of dust etc.

Storage radiators will be checked to ensure they are positioned in an appropriate and safe position.

Wherever possible, electric hot water systems should be provided with normal tariff and off peak immersion heaters (or dual immersion heater). Any existing immersion heaters will be checked to ensure they have an adequate thermostat. The energy supplier is the responsibility of the tenant to arrange.

Electric heating systems will be checked and certified as part of the checking and testing of the rest of the electrical installation. Where an electric heating system is identified as being beyond economic repair, a replacement central heating system will be designed and installed, with a preference to a mains gas system where the area has a gas supply.

6 SOLID FUEL HEATING APPLIANCES

If a solid fuel system is to be retained or installed, the chimney will be swept.

Cold water header tanks will be checked to ensure they have adequate support, are of sound construction and have overflows, ball valves and floats.

Any redundant back boilers will be removed in accordance with HSE guidance and fully decommissioned to ensure a fire cannot be re-lit with a sealed back boiler in situ.

Solid fuel appliances will be subject to safety checks to ensure adequate ventilation and draw on the flue.

Where a solid fuel system is identified as being beyond economic repair, a replacement central heating system will be designed and installed, with a preference to a mains gas system where the property has a gas supply or other greener alternatives such as air source heat pumps.

Adequate provision for fuel storage will be provided either in the form of a coal bunker or other dry fuel store. External fuel stores accessed via a door will have a suitable lock.

7 OIL STORAGE AND OIL FIRED HEATING SYSTEMS

Where a property has oil-fired central heating, a visual check of the oil tank should be undertaken to ensure it is sound and adequately protected.

The oil fired central heating system should be checked by a suitably qualified engineer and disabled prior to occupation. When the new tenant takes up occupation and sufficient oil and an electrical supply has been established, the engineer will return and activate the system and instruct the tenant on the safe and economic use.

Where an oil fired heating system is identified as being beyond economic repair, a replacement central heating system should be designed and installed, with a preference to a mains gas system where the property has a gas supply or other greener alternatives such as air source heat pumps.

8 HEATING GENERALLY

Heating systems will be selected and designed in consultation with the prospective tenant where possible.

Heating provision will be combined with appropriate levels of ventilation and insulation. (See also 11.0 - Ventilation)

Hot water cylinders will be provided with adequate insulation.

Heating appliances will be arranged in such a way as to maximise energy efficiency within each room.

LPG systems should be treated as mains gas systems for the purpose of this document.

Ground Source Heat Pumps should be serviced in accordance with the specification. Particular attention should be paid to glycol levels and recorded flow and return temperatures.

9 ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS

A competent and suitably qualified engineer will undertake a full and comprehensive check of the electrical installation. On completion of the check the engineer will issue a certificate to the Council, a copy of which will be passed to the tenant, if requested, prior to occupation, by Housing Management.

Where the electrical supply has been suspended, the engineer will undertake as much of the safety check as possible and return via appointment once the electrical supply has been restored by the tenant to complete the check.

The installation will be checked to ensure an adequate number and layout of electrical outlets and lighting points. Any light fittings or dimmer switches fitted by the previous tenant will be removed and replaced with a standard fitting. Any damaged or discoloured light fittings and switches will be replaced.

The installation will be checked to ensure an adequate number and layout of electrical sockets. Any discoloured sockets or painted sockets will be replaced. Any sockets face plates fitted by the previous tenant will be removed and replaced with standard fittings.

Artificial lighting will be adequate to ensure a safe living environment. Provision for external lighting should be made wherever possible with fittings over or near external doors. In the case of older person's accommodation, consideration should be given to passive infrared controls.

Rewiring - A decision on whether or not to rewire an empty property will be taken following the electrical test. If the property requires rewiring, this work will be undertaken whilst the property is vacant.

CO and Smoke Detectors - CO and Smoke detectors will be tested and/or fitted whilst the property is vacant as part of the electrical installation check. New batteries will be fitted. Single storey dwellings will have one smoke detector whilst dwellings of two or more stories will have a further smoke detector fitted on each landing. Detectors will be fitted in appropriate place as per manufacturer's instructions.

10 APPLIANCES

No built-in electrical cookers, fridges freezers or dishwashers etc. will be left in an empty property.

In cases where built-in appliances have been purchased from the outgoing tenant by the incoming tenant, or where the incoming tenant otherwise wishes to keep the appliances, they will be left in the property. The new tenant will be responsible for ensuring the safety of the appliance and for maintaining it. No liability will be accepted by the Council.

No freestanding electrical appliances will be left in an empty property.

In cases where freestanding electrical appliances have been purchased from the outgoing tenant by the incoming tenant by private arrangement, these should be clearly marked by the outgoing tenant. Precautions will be taken to ensure that these are protected during void works. The new tenant will be responsible for ensuring the safety of these items, and for maintaining them. No liability will be accepted by the Council.

11 VENTILATION

Appropriate ventilation will be provided by a combination of open-able windows and background ventilation (e.g. by way of air bricks or vents in window frames). Existing ventilation will be checked to ensure correct operation.

Extraction fans will be provided for rooms such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Where a dampness or condensation problem is identified, remedial measures will be taken to remedy the cause and any mould growth, defective plaster, etc. removed.

12 AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS

Existing adaptations will be left in the property unless removal has been previously agreed. Any adaptations left will be checked for safety. Any substantial adaptations should be identified and notified to the Allocation Managers so that an informed decision can be made regarding nominations.

If major adaptations have been agreed with Social Services and the incoming tenant, these works will be done prior to occupation wherever possible, particularly if required for safe occupation.

13 WARDEN CALL SYSTEMS

Where warden call systems are provided in older person's accommodation, a visual inspection will be undertaken to ensure all the call points are in place and not damaged.

14 FLOORS

Floors will be level and suitable for normal domestic coverings.

Floors will be checked to ensure that there are no loose or damaged floorboards and no nail heads sticking up.

All floor coverings and gripper rods left by the previous tenant will be removed.

In cases where floor coverings have been purchased from the outgoing tenant by the incoming tenant by private arrangement, these must be clearly marked so precautions can be taken to ensure that these are protected during void works.

Properties will be visually checked for insect infestations and the appropriate action taken. If woodworm treatment is required, water based treatments will be specified. In all cases, treatment will be compliant with health and safety practices.

In properties where rooms have floor tiles in need of repair, these will be replaced and the floors screeded if necessary.

15 INTERNAL DECORATION

All internal walls, woodwork and metalwork will be in a clean and sound condition, ready for re-decoration if required. Any sound existing decorations will be left regardless of previous tenants taste or colour choices.

Properties in poor decorative order will have any unsatisfactory wall coverings or ceiling covering including polystyrene tiles stripped off and left ready for redecoration. Kitchens and bathrooms will be re-decorated so as to leave the rooms in a sanitary condition. All other woodwork and / or metal work will be washed ready for re-decoration.

16 CLEANING

We will clean empty properties ensuring they are left ready for occupation, the cleaning will include:

- Sweeping walls and ceilings
- Wash walls and ceilings if needed
- Wipe windows
- Wipe all woodwork
- Wipe all electric fittings
- Clean all sanitary ware
- Clean kitchen units inside and out, work tops and sink
- Leave 3 air fresheners within the property

We will leave a welcome pack for the new tenant which includes:

- Bucket
- Roll of bin bags (10)
- General purpose cleaner
- Cloth
- Sponge and a pair of rubber gloves

17 SECURITY

External doors to all dwellings will have new locks fitted which meet Insurance requirements.

Where doors are provided with multi point locking systems, these will be checked, lubricated and adjusted.

Door entry systems will be checked to ensure proper operation.

Keys will be provided to the new tenant at the start of the tenancy. A minimum of two sets of keys will be issued at the beginning of the tenancy.

18 WINDOWS AND GLAZING

All windows will be inspected and repaired as necessary.

Any damaged glazing will be boarded up if insecure and replacement glazing ordered.

All window glazing less 800mm from floor level and all internal and external glazed doors/side screens will be checked to ensure that it complies with current safety standards. Where the existing glazing does not meet the required standard, it will be replaced.

Non fixed windows will be lubricated, eased and adjusted.

Where restrictors are fitted these will be checked to ensure that they are in a serviceable condition.

Keys will be provided for windows where locks are fitted.

19 STAIRS (internal and external, including communal approach)

Stairs and staircases will be well lit with safe and secure balustrades / handrails along the whole length where possible.

The fixings of the balustrades and handrails will be checked and the gaps between the railings will be checked and consideration given to upgrading any balustrade which does not meet current safety standards.

The floor surface in communal entrances and stairs will be slip resistant.

Tripping hazards will be removed and stairs checked for loose or damaged treads, nosing and risers.

Lighting levels will be appropriate to the location and use.

20 BALCONIES (individual or common access)

Balconies will provide protection against falling by young children or other vulnerable occupants. Any railings or panels will be checked.

Safety glazing will be provided for window glass below 800mm and glazed doors.

All glazing below 800mm will be checked to ensure that it complies with the current safety standards. Where the existing glazing does not meet current standards, it will be replaced.

The floor surface will be slip resistant and there will be adequate drainage.

Fungal wash will be used on floors where required.

Tripping hazards will be removed.

21 INTERNAL DOORS AND CUPBOARD DOORS

All internal doors to rooms will be checked for correct operation and provided with a suitable mortice latch and lever handles.

Any doors fitted by the previous tenant will be assessed and, if in good order, will be left.

All internal doors to cupboards (including kitchen) will be checked for correct operation and provided with a suitable cupboard latch.

22 LOFTS

Lofts will be checked for insect and animal infestation.

Checks will be made to ensure that the location, size and construction of the loft access are safe.

Where loft insulation is found to be less than 200mm or is in poor condition, new insulation will be provided or topped up to a minimum depth of 300mm.

Heating systems, pipework and water tanks in lofts will be checked and where insulation is lacking or substandard, new insulation will be provided.

Cold water tanks and header tanks will be checked to ensure they comply with current water byelaws.

Any loft boarding or artificial lighting will be removed as tenants are not encouraged to enter the loft other than for light storage that can be reached without entering the loft.

All rubbish left by the previous tenant in the loft area will be removed whilst the property is vacant.

23 MATERIALS CONTAINING ASBESTOS

Any asbestos-containing materials which are identified as being unsafe and likely to cause harm to tenants in everyday living will be removed and disposed of according to current Health & Safety procedures and in line with the Control of Asbestos at Work Act 2002.

Any floor tiling, which is likely to contain asbestos, will be removed and the floor levelled with a latex screed, and retiled.

Any materials which contain asbestos and which do not pose a risk will be notified to the tenant at commencement of the tenancy.

24 OUTHOUSES AND EXTERNAL WCS

If the property has an outhouse and/or an external WCs these will have a suitable door with a suitable lock.

Any water supply will be adequately insulated and isolation valves fitted to enable draining down during winter months.

25 GARDENS

Rubbish and debris will be cleared from gardens.

Ponds will be removed/filled in for health and safety reasons.

Sheds and lean-tos will be removed except when they are in a good, serviceable and safe condition. In these circumstances, the incoming tenant will be given the option to keep them however, they will be asked to sign a form stating they will be taking on responsibility for the maintenance of the structure. If the incoming tenant decides not to keep the structure, then we will arrange for disposal before the tenancy commences.

Green houses will be removed for health and safety reasons.

Paths and steps will be checked for safety. Any defective paving will be identified and remedial work logged for completion after the tenancy commences unless an immediate danger is identified. Any paving laid by the previous tenant will be assessed on the same basis and, if it is in poor condition or inappropriate, identified for removal with the garden made good.

Where a garden has been left in an overgrown and unsatisfactory condition, consideration will be given to carry out a one-off maintenance or reinstatement.

26 DRYING FACILITIES

Pole(s) or, in some cases, rotary dryers will be provided. Communal drying areas will be checked for uneven or defective surfaces.

27 FENCING AND GATES

Boundary fencing will be checked and any urgent repairs carried out, all other repairs will be programmed for completion after commencement of the tenancy.

Where fencing is renewed, the height of the fence will not exceed 1m high where the fence is in front of the house or adjacent to a highway. Fences behind the front of the house will not exceed 1.8m high.

In all cases, only the fencing that is on a boundary identified as being the responsibility of Housing will be replaced.

Any existing external gates will be checked to ensure they can be closed securely with a latch.

28 EXTERNAL REPAIRS

Any external repairs to the fabric of the building will be identified and ordered. On completion, the property should be in a sound, weather tight condition and not in need of further immediate routine maintenance.

29 PREVIOUS TENANT'S ALTERATIONS AND DAMAGE

Any alterations or improvements undertaken by previous tenants will be inspected and if appropriate retained or repaired.

30 IMPROVEMENT WORKS

All new tenants will be informed of any improvement works due in the next 12 months. Further information will be made available via the council web site.

31 PRIORITISATION OF WORK

The minimum amount of work required to bring the property into a safe and let-able condition will be undertaken. In all cases, a gas and electric check must be completed where these services exist.

When making a decision as to what work should be included whilst the property is vacant, consideration should be given to:

- (i) the incoming tenant's needs where known
- (ii) known problems of poor demand
- (iii) current budget restraints

Where only safety checks are required prior to re-letting, any minor internal repairs should be ordered on separate orders and prioritised as normal. Details of the work to be undertaken after the tenant takes up occupation will be detailed on the void sheet and made available to the Housing Management Team who will advise new tenants accordingly.

Where substantial work is required which is likely to take longer than 5 days (minor works) all internal repairs and improvements which can be completed within this priority should be ordered so as not to inconvenience in-coming tenants.

Any external repairs, which are not required prior to re-letting, should be ordered on separate orders and prioritised as normal repairs. Tenants should be advised prior to occupation that the repairs have been ordered.

32 ENERGY EFFICIENCY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

All new tenants will receive an Energy Performance Certificate based upon a survey carried out on the property in the last 10years advising them of the likely running costs associated with their new home.

*** LOCAL OFFERS 2011/12**

Following tenant feedback as part of the development of the Lettable Standard the items identified by * are being offered as Local Offers to new tenants.

The Lettable Standard was developed following consultation with members of the Tenant Panel, Tenant Monitoring Group, Tenant Sounding Board and 100 of the most recently accommodated tenants. The application of the Standard will be monitored through satisfaction surveys with new tenants.

The Standard will be reviewed on an annual basis to check it is still fit for purpose.

Many thanks to all tenants who have participated in helping develop this standard.

If you would like a copy of the Lettable Standard in large print or an alternative language please contact the Housing Management Team on 01748 829100.



Richmondshire District Council

Swale House, Frenchgate
Richmond, North Yorksahre DL10 4JE

Tel: 01748 829100

Email: enquiries@richmondshire.gov.uk