



# Empty Homes Policy

Approved by Board:  
Next Review:

24<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
January 2027

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Turnover of housing stock is an inevitable aspect of the management of social housing. This turnover can result in periods when properties are empty. This policy sets out the ways in which Homes for Life Housing Partnership (HfL) will manage turnover in stock and seek to maximise rental income and provide a quality service to outgoing and new tenants throughout the empty homes process.

1.2 Empty home activity covers a number of related activities. These include:

- tenancy termination;
- property inspections;
- identifying rechargeable works and other tenant responsibilities;
- ordering and supervising repair work;
- offering tenancies and arranging viewing, and;
- creating tenancies, signing tenancy agreements etc.

## 2.0 AIMS

2.1 **The aims of the Policy are to:**

- Minimise the amount of rent lost to HfL due to properties being empty;
- Comply with legal duties, regulatory requirements, and good practice standards;
- Minimise expenditure on vacant stock whilst ensuring properties are reinstated to a satisfactory minimum lettable standard;
- Promote an efficient re-letting process;
- Reduce refusal rates by providing a quality product;
- Promote tenancy sustainment through appropriate selections and pro-active new tenant procedures;
- Ensure that outgoing tenants are aware of their responsibilities prior to a termination date in order to keep repair costs to a minimum;
- Ensure that empty homes are let as quickly as possible to meet the demand for HfL's properties and make best use of the housing stock, and;
- To mitigate risk.

2.2 **To achieve these aims HfL will:**

- Provide a clear statement of the level of service and standards to which HfL will work;
- Have procedures and agreed practices that are applied uniformly across the service;
- Re-let vacant properties as quickly as possible;
- Undertake repairs of vacant properties in accordance with HfL's lettable standard and statutory responsibilities;
- Ensure that the condition of the property is of a standard that will not normally lead to an offer of accommodation being refused;
- Ensure that all offers of accommodation are consistent with HfL's allocation and

- nomination policies;
- Record any action taken at each stage in the empty home management process;
- Provide training to ensure that staff are equipped to carry out the roles expected of them, and;
- Keep tenants and service users informed during the empty homes process.

### 3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 HfL adopts the definition of an empty home property as “any rented property that has no tenant for a period of time”. HfL identifies that there are different ways in which a property can become empty home, and these are given below:

- Formal termination – where the tenant gives 28 days written notice as per the terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy, Short Scottish Secure Tenancy or occupancy agreement of their intention to leave the property or is the tenancy comes to its end point.
- Death – where HfL is notified of the death of a tenant and there is no successor.
- Abandonment – where HfL issues statutory notice to a tenant who has vacated the property without notice and repossesses the property.
- Eviction – where HfL follows due procedure through the court and evicts a tenant.
- Transfers – where the tenant is re-housed in another HfL property.
- New empty homes – where a new property is handed over from Development as complete and is untenanted.

3.2 Mutual Exchanges do not allow for a property to be empty and are dealt with under a separate policy and procedure.

### 4.0 LEGAL AND REGULATORY WORK

4.1 In approving and implementing the Empty home Policy and associated procedures HfL aims to adhere to following legislation and contractual obligations.

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001; The policy adheres to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, in particular in relation to the termination of a tenancy (notified or abandoned), compensation for improvements and access rights for inspections.
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010; The introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 requires HfL to report to the Scottish Housing Regulator annually on the achievement of the Charter Outcomes. This includes performance in the management of empty homes.
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014; includes changes to the allocation of social housing
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation; HfL must hold information provided by a tenant / applicant for housing securely and confidentially and only retain when it is relevant for the management of void properties. Individuals have the right to see their personal information.
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981;
- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998; HfL will ensure that it allocates void properties that have benefited from an inspection of gas appliances

and fittings.

- Construction, Design and Management (CDM) Regulations 2015; require that HfL meets the health and safety requirements in how contractual works are organised and undertaken, throughout the time the property is void.
- The Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2008; HfL will ensure that it allocates void properties that have a valid Energy Performance Certificate.
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999: consider the health and safety of all employees, sub-contractors and members of the public in all aspects of work by carrying out risk assessments and providing relevant training
- Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as amended by the Climate Change Bill 2018 aims to see the Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (EESH) contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from housing stock across Scotland.
- Scottish Secure Tenants (Compensation for Improvements) Regulations 2002;
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 20012;
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard, and;
- Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (SST)
- Scottish Short Secure Tenancy Agreement (SSST)

4.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into effect in April 2012, and this sets the standards and outcomes that all registered social landlords (RSL) should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. Social landlords are responsible for meeting the standards and outcomes set out in the Charter. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords, individually and collectively, achieve the outcomes.

The SHR's approach to monitoring landlords' achievement of the outcomes and standards in the Charter will be based on the landlord's performance information and their own assessment of their performance. For each year ending on 31 March, RSLs will be expected to:

- Measure and assess their performance in progressing towards or achieving the Charter outcomes and standards;
- Providing the SHR with key performance information on how their achievement of Charter outcomes and standards, and;
- Report their performance to tenants and other service users.
- RSLs must report annually through an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) on the number of empty home properties falling vacant in the year, the length of time taken to re-let these empty home properties and the extent of rent loss during the empty home process.

*The following Charter outcomes are directly relevant to this policy:*

1. *Equalities – social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:*

- *they support the right to adequate housing*

- *every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services”.*

2. *Communication: social landlords manage their businesses so that*

- *tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.*

11. *Tenancy sustainment: social landlords ensure that:*

- *tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.*

13. *Value for Money: Social landlords manage all aspects of their business so that:*

- *tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.*

HfL will review each element of the Charter with its tenants and agree locally based standards designed to demonstrate the achievement of outcomes.

## 5.0 APPROACH AND METHOD

The Board of HfL in its formal approval of the policy acknowledges that it accepts full responsibility for its implementation.

Managers have a responsibility to supervise and provide clear guidance to staff team members on individual cases.

### 5.1 Termination of Tenancies HfL will:

- Request twenty-eight days’ notice (in writing) from tenants who wish to end their tenancy;
- Provide a termination of tenancy form for tenants to complete which records all relevant information;
- Put in motion our empty home management procedures as soon as the notice of tenancy termination is received in order to make best use of this period to minimise rent loss once the property is vacated;
- Have guidelines covering the circumstances in which the notice period may be waived, such as death of tenant, hospitalisation /permanent care or internal transfer. Such waiving of the notice period will be at the discretion of the CEO;
- Provide the outgoing tenant with advice explaining the procedure for terminating the tenancy and the tenant’s responsibilities, with regard to condition of property and any outstanding rent.

Where a written notification is not obtained, the HfL's Abandonment Policy and procedures will be implemented. HfL has clear procedures for dealing with properties that appear, or are reported, to have been abandoned. We will ensure that contact is made with the tenant or next of kin wherever possible and carry out an exhaustive and auditable process of reasonable enquiries.

Where an abandoned tenancy notice under Section 18 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 has been served, and access has been forced to secure the property from vandalism, the pre termination inspection of the property will take place. Any repairs noted will be instructed provided safe access can be taken and any personal belongings can be secured. Where necessary notice will be served on the tenant of the intention to carry out these repairs during the twenty-eight-day period between serving the initial abandoned tenancy notice and the potential tenancy termination date. This procedure will be followed wherever HfL has access to the property during the 28- day notice period.

## 5.2 **Pre-Termination**

Where notification of an end of tenancy is received, a pre-termination inspection will be conducted by the Community Housing Officer (CHO) and Maintenance Officer (MO).

During the inspection the tenant will be advised of any repairs for which they will be held liable in order to provide them with an opportunity to arrange for these to be carried out. Failure to do so will result in rechargeable repairs being issued.

The number of keys to be returned will be verified and confirmed with the tenant and an agreement made when these should be returned or if a visit to pick the keys up is required.

The Maintenance Officer will identify works, which need to be carried out prior to letting a property and those which can be done once the tenant is living in the property. These works can then be ordered as early as possible to avoid empty home rent loss. In considering the nature and extent of work to be carried out cognisance will be taken of the SHQS and HfL's lettable standard.

The CHO will also take this opportunity to select prospective tenants and pre-allocate. This minimises delays in taking up occupation, where the applicant accepts the offer and enables applicants to pursue any benefit claims timeously, especially grants for assistance with moving in. This also enables refusals to be processed and a subsequent offer made to another applicant quickly. Accompanied viewings will take place only where the property is safe and secure and there is no danger in doing so.

### 5.3 **Post-Termination Inspection**

A full inspection will enable HfL to ensure the property has been left in a satisfactory condition. Inspections will be undertaken within target timescales.

The inspection will identify the repairs required and will allow HfL to bring the property up to statutory requirements, and HfL's own lettable standard. (See [Appendix 1](#))

The CHO/MO will identify any outstanding rechargeable repairs and note any remedial work resulting from tenant damage.

Appropriate cost-effective empty home security will be put in place as necessary.

Where a property is found to be in a poor condition, photographic evidence will be recorded.

HfL recognises that outgoing tenants may be entitled to financial recompense under the Right to Compensation for Improvements scheme and will identify any such items and advise the tenant of their rights and the process to be followed in any such claim.

### 5.4 **Property Repairs**

The agreed repairs will be notified to HfL's maintenance contractor, and a joint visit will be undertaken with MO and the contractor on return of the property. The property will be returned from the contractor meeting HfL's lettable standard. The MO and contractor will agree an appropriate return date for the property based on the amount of repair work required and other empty home properties being dealt with at the same time. In all cases for standard empty homes the maximum time allowed will not exceed 10 working days – although the categories will be more specifically, 5 working days and 10 working days. For excessive empty homes requiring significant component replacements and modernisation, this will be extended to 20 working days – these timescales will be monitored and reviewed by the Maintenance team and contractors will receive guidelines as to what constitutes each category.

The contractor will also be issued with instructions on repairs to be carried out post occupation and dates for these will be agreed and fed into HfL's Repairs system.

A post inspection will be carried out following the completion of repairs in all properties before re-letting, to ensure the contractor has completed all works to a satisfactory standard.

HfL will take the opportunity during the empty home period to undertake where necessary programmed major and cyclical repairs but only where this can be arranged without incurring additional empty home rent loss. The MO will consult with the Maintenance and Asset Manager (MAM) to confirm whether any works can be added at this stage.

Appropriate electrical and gas safety checks will be undertaken prior to the property being re-let and the resultant safety certificates will be provided to the incoming tenant at the time of signing their tenancy agreement. Any asbestos identified in the property will be dealt with under the HfL Asbestos Policy and the new tenant notified of any asbestos remaining and its location. A schedule for each property will be prepared which is linked to the minimum HfL re-let standard. This is signed off by the MO and the empty home contractor. A copy of this schedule will be provided to the tenant. An Energy Performance Assessment will be carried out if required and a current Energy Performance Certificate made available.

Any repairs arising from 'not to current standard' items on the gas safety check will be carried out as part of the re-let process.

Internal decoration is the responsibility of the tenant. However, it is recognised that there may be circumstances where HfL will require to undertake internal redecoration works or provide a decoration allowance to the incoming tenant to comply with targets for re-letting properties.

The need for decoration may be recommended by the CHO/MO with the decision ratified by the Housing Manager / Maintenance and Asset Manager. Partial or full decoration may be recommended or the payment of a decoration allowance which will be in the form of vouchers.

Levels of allowance will be in accordance with HfL policy and the property will be inspected after a reasonable period to ensure the decoration allowance has been used.

#### 5.4.1 *Insurance*

Where an empty home occurs during winter months, arrangements are made either to drain down, to prevent frozen pipes, or for heating to be left on at a low level.

Where an empty home is vacant for 30 days, we will adhere to the terms of our insurance policy. ([Appendix 3](#)).

#### 5.4.2 *Trickel Transfer properties.*

As part of our empty homes Property Inspection we will assess the value of the works required and senior management will make a decision on whether the property is retained or disposed of.

#### 5.5 **Selection and Allocation**

As set out at section 7.5 of this policy, HfL will commence the allocation process as soon as we have received formal notification of an empty home. The selection of potential tenants and allocation of properties will be carried out strictly in accordance with the HfL Allocation Policy.

Where possible HfL will pre-allocate empty homes. Where we have identified an



interested applicant, we will notify them by telephone as soon as keys are available for viewing. A viewing and sign-up appointment will be arranged, and applicants will be advised that if they sign for the property at viewing their tenancy will start from that date.

Where an offer of tenancy is accepted, a tenancy agreement will be signed. As well as the date of entry, this includes details of tenant and landlord responsibilities. We will provide tenancy advice for new tenants and seek to answer queries at the point of tenancy sign up. Every new tenant will be given access to the HfL Tenants Handbook and a settling in visit will be conducted within eight weeks of the tenancy start date.

In the case of new homes, our target is to ensure that dates of handover and dates of entry match. We recognise that contractor handover times may vary from those originally envisaged. For practical purposes, we will ensure an early identification of prospective tenants.

## 6.0 LINKS WITH OTHER HFL POLICIES

HfL recognises that empty home management is dependent on policies and performance in a variety of service areas, including:

- Allocations
- Abandonment
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Rechargeable Repairs
- Compensation for Improvements

## 7.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

In applying the Empty Homes Policy, HfL will ensure it complies with the Equality Act 2010. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against, harass or victimise a person because they have one or more of the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (Appendix 3) has been carried out in relation to this policy to assess the positive and negative Equality Impacts of this Policy.

## 8.0 DATA PROTECTION

HfL will treat all personal data in line with our obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the HfL Data Protection Policy. Information regarding how HfL process personal data.

## 9.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SATISFACTION

HfL is committed to achieving high levels of customer satisfaction in the delivery of this Policy.

In accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter we will carry out satisfaction surveys for all new tenants as part of our settling in procedure. The new tenant visit takes place within eight weeks of the tenancy commencing and is arranged at the outset of the tenancy. This will include satisfaction with the condition of their home on moving in. The new tenant visit is designed to address any issues with the tenancy at the earliest possible stage, and to gather tenant feedback on the empty home and allocation process.

The feedback and information received in this way will be used to inform any policy review with a view to improving the services we deliver and the overall HfL customer experience. The survey results will be reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator through our annual return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter and in our HfL Annual Report.

## 10.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

The management of empty home properties represents risk to HfL in the following ways:

- A high level of empty homes will result in rental loss and high level of repair costs;
- Empty properties have a detrimental effect on the public appearance and perception of an area;
- Unattended health and safety issues may pose a danger to tenants and other residents, and;
- The danger of deterioration in the condition of an empty home, resulting in increased repair costs

In consideration the importance of these risks the effective management of this policy is vital.

## 11.0 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCESS

If anyone feels that they are dissatisfied with the service they have received as a result of this policy they have the right to complain and should use the HfL Complaints Handling Procedure to do so. Further information on how to make a complaint is available from the HfL website. Complaints can be made via the website, in person in writing or by email, or by telephoning the HfL office.

HfL will attempt to resolve complaints quickly through front line resolution by staff who receive the complaint. Where this is not successful or where the complaint has been categorised as constituting a serious service failure, we will carry out a full complaint investigation.

Beyond HfL's two stage internal procedure, complainants have a right to refer their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for an independent external review. HfL's Complaints Handling Procedure details the way in which

complaints can be made to the SPSO, and the timescales for responding.

There is a separate appeals process in relation to dissatisfaction with allocations decisions made by HfL. The process for appealing an allocations decision is set out at section 9 of the HfL's Allocations Policy.

## 12.0 MONITORING OF THE POLICY

The Maintenance and Asset Manager is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy and supporting procedures by staff, and for the maintenance of all the necessary records on the HfL customer management system to enable the development of regular reports on performance.

Performance Indicators will be set for monitoring performance for each aspect of dealing with empty properties. Performance Indicators will be reported to the Board quarterly and monitored operationally on an ongoing basis by the Housing Manager and Maintenance and Asset Manager. These reports will include:

- Total number of empty homes.
- Total number of empty home days.
- Average empty home days.
- Banded analysis in line with ARC returns.
- Average rent loss.
- Total rent loss

## 13.0 REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed at every 3 years or where there has been new legislation, or a change in regulatory requirements or policy guidance.

## APPENDIX ONE: FULL LETTABLE STANDARD 2024

### FULL LETTABLE STANDARD 2024

This standard explains what you can expect from us when you move into your home. It is designed to complement our Tenants' Handbook and as a minimum ensure that we meet our requirements under the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and the Social Housing Charter which requires that:

- tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.
- the standard covers the repairs that we will do prior to a tenant moving in and explains what we are responsible for.

We have produced a tenant friendly version that can be issued as a leaflet and will be included in our Tenants Handbook.

#### **Decoration and Cleanliness**

*Properties will be provided in good decorative order. The property will be clean and clear of the previous tenants belongings.*

- Ceilings and walls will be ready for decoration (i.e., holes filled & smoothed) but may require wallpaper to be stripped. On completion of the repair works the property will be given a clean.
- By good decorative order we mean:
  - Walls, ceilings and other surfaces shall be in a good state of repair ready for decoration. Any minor indentations, hairline cracks or small areas of torn wallpaper will be considered as acceptable.
  - Skirtings, facings or other exposed surfaces will be in a good state of repair
- A decoration voucher may be given to the incoming tenant to assist them in meeting the costs of decorating the property. Any allowance offered will be at the discretion of HfL and is intended to be a contribution towards the cost of redecoration, not to cover all the costs.

#### **Floor coverings**

*The floor coverings of the previous of the previous tenant will be left unless they are in poor condition. In that case, we may provide floor coverings.*

- Loose or missing floorboards will be repaired.
- Floor coverings to all areas will be left for the incoming tenant unless:
  - they are damaged, stained or in otherwise poor condition; or
  - if laminate flooring is installed in an upper flat without adequate underlay (e.g., not installed correctly). In this case it will usually be removed.

In all cases, the incoming tenant takes on responsibility for any future maintenance or replacement, and removal at the end of their tenancy if they are in a poor condition.

## **Electrical, Heating and Water**

*The location of meters and isolation valves will be demonstrated at sign-up. All fittings will be safe. We will provide details of how to access any instruction manuals or provide a demonstration.*

*Cooker and washing machine points will be provided and where there is a bath, we will fit a shower over it.*

We will leave details of how to access the instruction manuals will be provided. with operating instructions for your heating system in the property.

For gas heating:

- Gas appliances will be checked by a Gas Safe Registered installer. An annual service will be carried out and a copy of the Landlords Gas Safety Record (or CP12) will be provided at the start of the tenancy within 28 days of the service being completed.
- The gas supply pipe work to the cooker will be capped and the bayonet removed. The incoming tenant will be required to employ a Gas Safe registered installer to connect their cooker.
- All heating controls, radiator valves will be checked. We will replace any damaged controls or thermostatic radiator valves.
- Carbon Monoxide Detectors (where fitted) will be in good working order and will meet the current legislative standards.
- Radiators will be clean.

*For electric heating:*

- Any damaged storage heater panels or controls will be replaced.
- Storage radiators will be clean.

*Electrical:*

- A full electrical safety check will be carried out on the property, which includes all fixtures and fittings. A copy of the paperwork will be provided at the start of the tenancy.
- Smoke and heat detectors will be in good working order and will meet the current legislative standards.
- All light sockets will be fitted with an energy efficient lightbulb.

*Water:*

- We will clean and disinfect or replace shower heads.

*General:*

- Sockets, switches, and electrical fittings will be safe and securely fixed.
- Stair handrails and balustrades will be secure and stair treads will be free from any trip hazards.
- Woodwork such as skirtings, facings, sills, ledges, and pass doors will be clean.

## Windows/Doors

- Internal doors and ironmongery will be secure, in good condition and good working order.
- Windows, handles and mechanisms will be checked
- Locks and locking mechanisms to front and rear doors will be tested for correct operation to ensure that the property is secure and safe.
- As a minimum we will ensure that any external door has a 5-lever mortice lock (unless multipoint locking system).
- A minimum of 2 keys for each main access door will be provided.

## Kitchens and Bathrooms

*We will meet or exceed the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). All kitchens and bathrooms will be in a good, usable condition.*

- Kitchen units will be empty and will be clean inside and out.
- Units will be secure, in good condition.
- Worktops will be good clean condition.
- We will always ensure there is a mains cooking connection (gas or electric).
- Baths, wash hand basins and WC's will be clean and in good condition
- Baths and wash hand basins will have a plug and taps will not drip. The toilet seat will also be replaced.
- Extractor fans will be cleaned and will be in good working order.

## Outside

*Gardens will be tidy, and in a manageable condition at sign-up. Paths, fences, and boundary walls will be safe and secure. Any sheds or outhouses in good condition will be emptied and left.*

- All outbuildings or sheds provided by HfL will be cleared and free from rubbish. Any existing shed or outbuilding becomes the tenant's responsibility.
- Gardens will be cleared of any rubbish
- Grass will be cut or trimmed once whilst the property is empty. This will depend on season as it is not suitable to do so in colder weather.
- Paths will be checked to ensure they are level and safe with no trip hazards.
- Front and rear boundary fences will be in good order and free from disrepair (i.e., no missing slats or rails).

## Communal areas

*Communal areas will be clean and tidy. Handrails, banisters, footpaths, and steps will be safe and in a good condition.*

- Where the property has the right of access over paths that pass through the garden of another HfL property, we will ensure these are clear for access.

## **Tenant responsibilities**

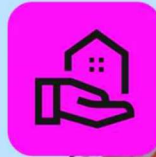
*As a tenant you are expected to:*

- *Keep your property clean*
- *Keep rooms well ventilated*
- *Report repairs when they arise*
- *Ensure grass and greenery are cut and rubbish is not left in your garden*
- *Communal areas are kept clear*
- *Take responsibility for floor coverings*
- *Take care of external cupboards, sheds, outhouses, or any other items you take on from the previous tenant*

## LETTABLE STANDARD



Properties will be provided in good decorative order. The property will be clean and clear of the previous tenants belongings.



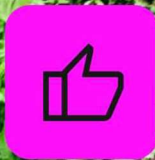
The floor coverings of the previous of the previous tenant will be left unless they are in poor condition. In that case, we may provide floor coverings.



The location of meters and isolation valves will be demonstrated at sign-up. All fittings will be safe. We will provide details of how to access any instruction manuals or provide a demonstration.



Cooker and washing machine points will be provided and where there is a bath we will fit a shower over it.



We will meet or exceed the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). All kitchens and bathrooms will be in a good, usable condition.



As a tenant you are expected to:

- Keep your property clean
- Keep rooms well ventilated
- Report repairs when they arise
- Ensure grass and greenery are cut and rubbish is not left in your garden
- Communal areas are kept clear
- Take responsibility for floor coverings
- Take care of external cupboards, sheds, outhouses or any other items you take on from the previous tenant



Communal areas will be clean and tidy. Handrails, banisters, footpaths and steps will be safe and in a good condition.



## APPENDIX THREE: INSURANCE POLICY TERMS AS AT 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2024

### Unoccupied Premises

If in relation to any claim for Damage while The Premises are Unoccupied, You have failed to fulfil any of the following conditions, You will lose Your right to indemnity or payment for that claim.

You must

- (1) carry out internal and external inspections of the buildings at least every seven days and
  - (a) maintain a weekly log of such inspections
  - (b) immediately repair, or arrange to repair, any damage or defects found
    - in the buildings, including the removal of graffiti.
    - in security or alarm or fire protection installations.
- (2) remove all waste, unfixed combustible materials, and gas bottles either within or outside buildings, from The Premises.
- (3) securely lock all external doors, close and secure all windows, and secure and seal all letter boxes and openings.
- (4) Wherever possible
  - (a) turn off all sources of power, fuel and water at the mains,
  - (b) chain and padlock the isolation valves,
  - (c) drain all water and fuel supply tanks, apparatus and pipes.

However, where the buildings are protected by

(i) an Intruder Alarm, CCTV or Fire Detection System You must provide sufficient power for their effective operation.

(ii) a sprinkler installation, You must provide sufficient power or water supplies for its effective operation and sufficient heat to prevent it freezing.

- (5) Advise us immediately if the buildings are to be occupied by contractors for renovation, alteration or conversion purposes or if the buildings are to become occupied or used.

However, notwithstanding the above

- (1) where only a Portion of the Building insured is untenanted condition (3) will read as follows

(3) securely lock all exit and entry doors, close and secure all windows and secure and seal all letter boxes and openings to the untenanted Portion of a Building or Residential Unit.

(2) where The Premises are empty, vacant or disused but are tenanted conditions (1), (2), (3) and (4) above apply only to the extent that they may be reasonably and practically implemented without frustrating or invalidating the lease.

<b>Homes for Life Housing Partnership (HfL)</b>			
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Tool</b>			
Name of the policy proposal to be assessed	<b>Empty Homes Policy</b>	Is this a new policy proposal or a revision	<b>New policy</b>
Person (s) responsible for the assessment		Donna Dougal	
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy / proposal		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise empty home period and rental loss;</li> <li>• Effectively assist in meeting housing need through allocating properties to an appropriate applicant within the shortest possible timescale;</li> <li>• Ensure properties are brought up to a lettable standard in a cost effective manner;</li> <li>• Ensure that tenants are aware of their end of tenancy obligations, including the requirement to provide 28 days' notice, to carry out repairs as identified at the end of tenancy inspections and to hand in keys no later than the termination date;</li> <li>• Monitor performance in respect of the management of our empty homes to establish day to day control, measure and compare performance over a period of time and compare performance against appropriate benchmarks;</li> <li>• Comply with legislative requirements, regulatory requirements and best practice guidance as they apply to the management of empty home properties.</li> </ul>	
2. Who is intended to benefit from the policy / proposal? (e.g. applicants, tenants, staff, contractors)		To provide staff with a framework for the effective, efficient control and management of HfL's empty homes, in addition to meeting our legislative, contractual and regulatory requirements.	

3. What outcomes are wanted from this policy / proposal ? (e.g. the benefits to customers)

- To ensure empty properties are maintained to a high standard and comply with our legislative and health and safety requirements as a social landlord
- To minimise the time taken to re-let an empty property and maximise rental income to HfL, thus retaining income for maintenance and management of the properties.

4. Which protected characteristics could be affected by the proposal? (tick all that apply)

Age  Disability  Marriage and Civil Partnership  Pregnancy/Maternity   
 Religion or Belief  Gender  Gender Reassignment  Race X  
 Sexual Orientation

5. If the policy / proposal is not relevant to any of the protected characteristics listed in part 4, state why and end the process here.

The policy is concerned with the re-let of empty properties so will not directly impact any of the protected characteristics, apart from possibly issues with English not being a first language when communicating with tenants at the pre-termination of tenancy stage. We overcome this by applying the principles in our Equalities and Diversity Policy.

6. Describe the likely positive or negative impact(s) the policy / proposal could have on the groups identified in part 4

Positive Impact	Negative Impact
<p>It is likely to have a positive impact by improving consistency across all areas of empty home management and deliver efficiencies to new or transferring tenants. This fits with our wider policy initiatives to improve and maintain the quality of our housing stock and improve levels of tenant satisfaction in the quality of the housing we provide</p>	

**7.** What actions are required to address the impacts arising from this assessment? (*This might include; collecting additional data, putting monitoring in place, specific actions to mitigate negative impacts*).