



Black Country Housing Group

Void Property Procedure

Date Reviewed	August 2023	Next Review Date	August 2024
Reviewed By	Tom Cannon	Approval By	Jay Gill
Equality Impact Assessment	Completed with policy	Responsible Officer	ACRM
Distribution	Website/Extranet/Teams/Schemes	Version No.	02

Purpose

The purpose of the procedure is to minimise the time that properties are empty (void loss). This maximises our revenue so that we can provide affordable housing for new customers.

Scope

This procedure is for the use of the Operations Team. Other Stakeholder which may refer to the procedure will include:

- Customers
- Applicants
- Local Authorities
- Contractors

Other related Policy and Procedures:

- Lettings Policy and Procedure
 - Asbestos Policy
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- Electrical Testing policy
- Gas policy

Responsibility

The responsibility for the approval, delivery and implementation of this procedure will be the shared responsibility of the Head of Assets and Investment and Head of Housing. The day-to-day delivery will be the responsibility of the individual Customer Relations Manager (CRM), Scheme Managers (SM) with the support from Customer Relations Officers and Contract Officers.

Data Processing

Personal Data: BCHG will obtain personal data such as names, forwarding address and reason for termination within this procedure, to improve our services and achieve our legitimate business aims. Notice to Quits will contain this data, these are stored on Sharepoint. Data will be removed in line with our retention policy.

Data Protection: All personal data will be stored in Sharepoint and Open Housing

Data Integrity: We will not keep any paper copies and ensure that files are removed in line with BCHG Retention Schedule.

Compliance, Monitoring & Reporting

If any personal data is not securely saved, or is leaked to the public domain – the matter will be investigated as per the Data Breach Procedure and addressed through disciplinary procedures where necessary.

Any hard copies of documents will be scanned and saved to secure locations. All hard copies will be destroyed. Once a customer leaves BCHG, any documents will be destroyed in line with the respective retention period.

The ACRM (Voids and Lettings) will monitor performance on the Lettings Log. The Head of Assets and Investment will monitor voids performance through the Voids Dashboard. Weekly updates are provided to Operations Management, Finance & Compliance by the ACRM.

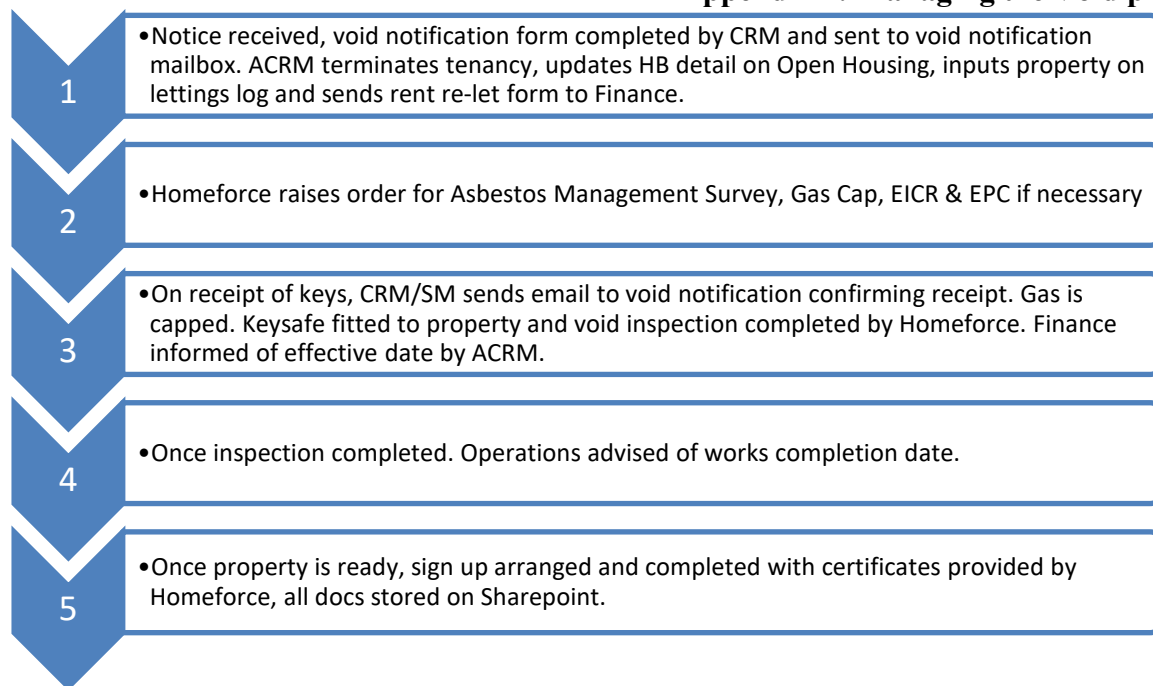
Stage	Activity/Outputs	Responsibility	Timescales	Reference Documents
1	Management of the Void Property			
	<p>When a property becomes void, both the administration of closing the tenancy and getting an incoming customer ready for the re-let should work in parallel with managing the property (Appendix 1).</p> <p>We are generally notified by the customer prior to a written notice being handed in, we will ask the customer to complete Appendix 2</p> <p>On receipt of written notice from a customer to end their tenancy, a void notification form will be obtained from Open Housing (Appendix 3) and completed by CRM/SM and emailed to the void notification inbox. The written notice must be saved onto SharePoint. This form highlights important information about the property for any contractor and gives an indication of how we wish the property to be re-let (nomination, direct). The final section of the void notification will be completed by the ACRM and sent to the CRO to be filed onto Sharepoint.</p> <p>On receipt of the void notification, a Rent Re-Let Form (Appendix 5) must be completed by the ACRM and sent to the Finance Business Partner.</p> <p>The CRM/SM, accompanied by the voids supervisor will complete a home visit to each property prior to becoming void, so we are able to deliver key messages to the customer, using Appendix 4. We will also take this opportunity to complete the exit survey, when an exit survey is sent out, a note is placed on the lettings log in the appropriate column (Exit Survey sent out). The form used by assets can be found here: https://forms.office.com/e/HWnZwZMnzs.</p> <p>Appendix Six gives a comprehensive guide on the administration of a void including what steps are completed on Open Housing.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>CRM/SM</p> <p>CRM/SM</p> <p>ACRM</p> <p>ACRM</p> <p>CRM/SM</p>		<p>Appendix 1</p> <p>Appendix 2</p> <p>Appendix 3</p> <p>Appendix 5</p> <p>Appendix 4</p> <p>Exit Survey</p> <p>Appendix 6</p>

	If keys are not handed in on time (12pm on Monday following void date), we will revise the end date on Open Housing to the following Sunday and place a note on Open Housing.			
2	Void Inspection Upon Return of Keys			
	<p>Upon receipt of keys, the CRM/SM will send an email to the Void Notification inbox advising this, Sure Maintenance will take this as instruction to cap the gas where applicable. The keys are handed over to Homeforce to carry out a void inspection and to give an indicative timescale to the Operations Team working to a 5, 10 or 20 day timescale. Homeforce and Operations will ensure regular contact on the progress of voids.</p> <p>Once the keys are handed in, ACRM will send a message to Finance through Teams to apply an effective start date for the new rent figure, ready for re-let.</p> <p>Where the cost of a Void is likely to be over £5k, this should prompt a discussion to evaluate what we do with this property, such as disposal.</p> <p>There are circumstances where voids will fall into major works, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asbestos Removal • Work that requires scaffold or other such assess equipment • Work that requires a 'drying out' period, i.e the installation of chemical damp proof and associated works • Major structural repairs/insurance works • Capital replacements (kitchens, bathrooms) • Arson <p>Homeforce inputs all work directly onto a tablet and allocates a job number, taking photographs where necessary which is stored on the cloud. They also record essential inform, e.g meter readings (provided to CRO for input into Energy Angels portal – gas, electric & water). Work is allocated to a Multi Trade and Electrical Operative;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EICR – Electrical Inspection and Condition Report 	<p>CRM/SM</p> <p>ACRM</p> <p>Homeforce</p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drain down water supply (where properties will be vacant for a period of over 3 weeks) • Organise an asbestos check (if not already completed) • Organise for energy assessment (if not completed in the last 10 years) • An assessment should be made at this time as to whether any further increased security measures are needed for example Sitex or alarms. • Any concerns with the property such as damp, neglect, poor condition, hoarding etc • H&S tasks in which the Operative complete at every property • Drain down property if it is a long term void and it is the autumn/winter period <p>During the void inspection a key safe is fitted to ensure that access is available for follow on visits and there can be no delay through mislaid keys. Operations have access to Voids Dashboard that shows whether it is a standard or major works void, and any estimated completion dates.</p>			
3	Re-let Stage			
	<p>At the letting of the property, a turn on and test of the gas supply will be arranged through Sure Maintenance and the customer. At the sign up, the CRM must ensure that the customer is made aware of the contact details that they need to do this, this is also included in the sign up pack provided. On completion of this, a copy of the LGSR certificate will be left with the new customer and a further copy will be issued to BCHG.</p> <p>On satisfactory completion of the void, Homeforce will provide the following information to the Operations team via Sharepoint;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EICR • Gas Safety Certificate (if applicable) (from Sure) • EPC • Asbestos Surveys (if applicable) 	<p>CRM</p> <p>Homeforce</p>		

	<p>All works will be completed as defined in the lettable standard (Refer to Appendix 7). Performance of Homeforce is monitored through the Voids Dashboard and overseen by Head of Assets. In exceptional circumstances, this standard may be carried with the authority of the asset manager.</p> <p>Performance in Operations is monitored by the ACRM and Head of Housing through the Lettings Log on Sharepoint, whilst the Voids Dashboard is proactively monitored by the ACRM to check on progress of voids alongside weekly meetings with Assets. Weekly updates are sent by the ACRM to Finance and the Operations Management Team.</p>			Appendix 7
Diversity and Equality				
	<p>BCHG have a number of properties that have been designed for use by vulnerable residents. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people • Young people • People suffering from DV • People with disabilities <p>Many of these properties have additional security features or adaptations, if a property becomes empty, it is necessary to consider the client group that it will be let out to. Where a property has been adapted, this will remain for the benefit of the incoming customer should they require it.</p>			

Appendix 1: Managing the Void property



**Appendix 2: NTQ
MOVING OUT FORM**

Please fill out and return to your Customer Relations Manager or Scheme Manager Your notice must begin from a Monday.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

We/I wish to give 28 days notice that we/I will end our/my tenancy on the property mentioned above.

We/I will be leaving the property on (date):.....

*Please make sure that you tell us if this date changes. We will charge you the total week's rent until we receive the keys.

We are leaving for the following reasons

You must understand to hand in the keys by midday on the Monday after your tenancy ends. The keys should be handed in to 134 High St, Blackheath, B65 OEE unless arranged otherwise with your Customer Relations Manager or Scheme Manager.

Our/my new address will be:

.....
.....

Our/my telephone number will be:.....

We will not be responsible for any belongings left in the property after you have handed in the keys.

You must leave the property empty, and carry out any outstanding repairs which are your responsibility. Failure to do so could result in us re-charging you for the cost of such work.

You must also pay off any outstanding rent or rent arrears before leaving the property.

Your signature(s):

Date:

You must tell the Council Tax and water rates departments at your local council offices that you have moved within 21 days. Don't forget to have your meters read so that you avoid paying the gas or electricity used by the next tenant. Remember to tell Housing Benefit or the Department of Work and Pensions for Universal Credit claims the date your tenancy will end.

Appendix 3: Void notification

VOID NOTIFICATION -

Sure Maintenance; Please take this as your instruction to arrange to cap the gas at this property following the expected hand in of keys. The keys will be at the property in a keysafe coded 5014, they will be on site within 2 days of hand in.

Customer Details

Name: «T1Title» «T2Inits» «T1Surn»

Address: «PAddr1», «PAddr2», «PAddr3», «PPC»

Date that notice has been received:

Ensure notice is filed on sharepoint, tick box when this is done:

Reason for Void: Death/Purchased Own Property/Moved closer to family/Fleeing from DV/Eviction/Financial Reasons/Harassment (what type)/Medical Reasons/Transfer to Larger property/Transfer to smaller property/Move for support/Overcrowding/Relationship breakdown/Surrender/Under occupation

Is customer transferring to another BCHG property? Yes No

Date of Void (Sunday - allow 4 weeks for notice to expire):

Date keys expected (Monday):

Is rent account clear? Yes No (if no, please give details below to clear account):

Property Details

Property Type:

Floor Level (if flat):

Will major work be needed?: Yes No

Reason for major work and work needed:

Neighbourhood or Property issues to be considered when letting/consider for disposal/major work:

Current Adaptations (include any gifted items):

Re-let details:

PLEASE PROPOSE Preferred Re-let type: Nomination Direct List Transfer

Reason:

Moving out Visit Date by CRM/SM:

Compliance/Health and Safety checks:

Sharepoint link (search for property through top bar):

<https://bchgcouk.sharepoint.com/sites/Assets/Assets/Forms/Property%20Documents.aspx>

EPC register:

<https://find-energy-certificate.service.gov.uk/find-a-certificate/type-of-property>

EPC required? (valid for 10 years): Yes No

Gas Cap required? Yes No

Last Gas Safety Cert on file ready for sign up pack? Yes No

Emergency Alarm Call Centre notified of void
(if applicable – schemes, Advent and Mews only) Yes No

Tenancy Details:

Current Tenancy Type: Assured/Starter/Secure/Affordable/
Fixed Term/Rent to Buy

Tenancy to be granted upon letting: Assured (please specify otherwise)

Certification

Certified by CRM or SM: (Sign)

Date:

ACRM use only:

If secure, has end date been entered on OH? Yes N/A

If secure, have VOA been notified to de-register rent? Yes N/A

If an internal transfer of a secure tenant, has application to VOA been made for the rent? Yes N/A

If an internal transfer, has HB reference moved to new tenancy? (please ensure the HB ref for previous tenancy is ended) Yes N/A

If Affordable, has a valuation been requested? Yes N/A

Finance informed of void for SP purpose: Yes N/A

Decision on how we will relet:

Approved by ACRM: (Sign)

Date:

Appendix 4: Moving out Form

Moving out visit Date:

Tenant Name:	Address:
Phone Number:	Tenancy end date:
Email:	
<u>Rent Account Review</u>	
Are there any rent arrears?	
If yes, what is the outstanding balance:	
Balance by end of tenancy:	
Arrangement to clear rent arrears:	
<u>Forwarding address</u>	
<u>Property condition:</u>	
<u>Any damage (ensure agreement is made to make good):</u>	
<u>Repairs outstanding (ensure they are reported):</u>	

Exit survey:

Remind customer (tick when complete):

Remind customer of exit survey to be sent by text:

Any alarms that have been fitted? What's the code?

Ensure all gas and electric keys are left in property

To hand in keys before 12pm on the hand in date (Monday)

To report all repairs

Ensure all belongings are cleared of property including in the loft, any belongings left will be recharged to customer

Unless there are any items that can be left which are in a very good/like new condition (carpets, light fittings, window dressings)

Appendix 5: Rent Re-let Form

[Rent Re-Let and Adjustments Form 2022.23.xlsx](#)

Appendix 6: Admin Guide

What	Who
Finalise details on ending tenancy with customer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Confirm tenancy end date and return of keys in accordance with tenancy agreement. Tenancy should end on a Sunday and keys to be handed in no later than 12pm the following Monday to avoid further rent being charged ✓ Rent account – balance should be clear before tenancy end date or arrangement in place by direct debit to clear. Refer to Former Tenancy Arrears Procedure ✓ Obtain forwarding address ✓ In cases of death, refer to Former Tenancy Arrears Procedure 	CRM/SM
Complete a Void Notification form and email to voidnotification@bchg.co.uk (Homeforec/ CRO/Liberty/compliance)File on sharepoint	CRM/SM
Terminate tenancy on Open Housing and close HB field on system	ACRM
Inform HB/UC and council tax department of tenancy end date and Finance if SP grant in place	CRO/ACRM
Input property on lettings log	ACRM
Send re-let form to Finance	ACRM
Refer to Energy Angels and record referral on lettings log spreadsheet	CRO
Whilst on notice ask CRO to request nomination or run list for a direct applicant in keeping with L/A agreements. If nominations requested contact by phone or email in first instance to arrange pre offer checks	CRM/SM & CRO

When keys returned, send e mail to voidnotification@bchg.co.uk advising gas to be capped off if gas in property. Send message via Teams to Rent box for Finance Check on open housing if tenancy end date needs revising (keys late etc) – update diary and void status	CRM
Visit property to complete inspection and provide meter readings to CRO	Homeforce
Once applicant approved, arrange sign up. Before sign up, take one week/one month rent and set up a direct debit for full rent if working or on UC.	CRM

Appendix 7: Void Standard

Introduction

The aim of this standard is to ensure the consistent quality of properties offered for letting by BCHG. All properties must be warm, dry, secure and free from disrepair.

All properties must comply with current legislation including:

- The Housing Acts
- The Landlord and Customer Act
- The Environment Protection Act

1. Checks to be carried out prior to void inspection

When is cyclical maintenance next due?

When was the last gas service?

Are any planned maintenance works proposed?

All repairs for the property should be cleared from the maintenance systems and check any outstanding day to day repairs. After the void inspection, Homeforce should identify any circumstances which may require planned programmes of work to be altered.

Arrangements should be made to complete the following:

- Cap off gas supply at meter
 - Turn off electricity supply
 - Drain down water supply from 1/10-31/3 or where property empty for over 21 days
 - Ensure appropriate property security measures are in place
 - Ensure valid EPC on property/arrange to update if necessary
 - Complete asbestos survey if not already completed
-

2. External and Environmental

- ☐ All Rubbish to be removed from the garden
- ☐ All outstanding, stores, bin stores and meter cupboards to be cleared of rubbish, made safe, secure and watertight
- ☐ All paths, steps, handrails, ramps etc to be safe and secure
- ☐ All boundaries to be clearly defined and have adequate fencing
- ☐ All gates to be secure and fully functional
- ☐ The garden to be left in a maintainable condition
- ☐ All boundary walls to be safe and secure
- ☐ All gardens to be provided with clothes drying facilities

3. External Elevation and Structure

The following components relating to the external envelope of the void unit must be checked by the surveyor. All components must be capable of a 5-year life.

Chimneys – Structurally Sound

Flashings – Good condition and adequately secured

Pitched Roofs – Free from leaks and broken or slipped slates or tiles

Flat Roofs – Free from leaks, blisters, cracks or pooling

Fascias – Adequately secured and free from rot or decay

Bargeboards – Adequately secured and free from rot or decay

Soffits – Adequately secured and free from rot or decay

Gutters – Adequately clipped and free from leaks

Rainwater pipes – Adequately clipped and free from leaks

Brickwork – Sound, Watertight and free from cracks and spalling bricks with an effective damp proof course

Pointing – sound and watertight

Windows – sound and free from rot or decay

Door Frames – Sound and free from rot or decay

Doors – Sound and free from rot or decay

Paths – Sound and free from trip hazards

External Gulley's – clear and free running

If 2 or more windows in any elevation are beyond economic repair, or if any components are in a state of serious disrepair the surveyor should refer to the Planned Maintenance Programme.

4. Kitchen/Utilities

The minimum kitchen provision will be:

1 Bedroom Property:

- 1 Wall Unit
- 1 Sink Base Unit
- 1 Base Unit

2 Bedroom Property:

- 1 Wall Unit
- 1 Sink Base Unit
- 1 Base Unit

3 Bedroom Property:

- 3 Wall Units
- 1 Base Unit
- 1 Sink Base Unit

- All kitchens to contain at least 2 drawers ?
 - All units to be clean and secure
 - All doors and drawers to match and to open and close securely ?
 - All worktops to match and to be clean and secure
 - All worktops and sinks to be surrounded by a minimum 150mm high ceramic tile splash back, with silicon sealed abutment ?
 - All sinks to be clean and serviceable, with plugs attached ?
 - All wastes to be adequately clipped and free from leaks or blockages ?
 - All floors to have a serviceable vinyl floor covering
 - An adequate means of providing natural ventilation should be available within easy reach of an average sized person. ?
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5. Bathrooms

- ☐ All fittings to be clean and free from stains and cracks, with plugs attached
- ☐ WC seats should be replaced
- ☐ Bath and basin to be surrounded by a minimum 150mm high ceramic tile splash back, with silicon sealed abutment
- ☐ Where showers are provided, adjoining walls must be adequately tiled
- ☐ All wastes to be adequately clipped and free from leaks
- ☐ All toilets will be fitted with a new sealed white toilet seat

6. Doors

- All front and rear entrance doors to be provided with at least a mortice lock and bolt with a minimum of 2 keys for each lock. ☐
- All doors and frames to be free from rot, adequately fixed and secure, with redundant lock or hinge housings made good ☐
- All door furniture to be fully functional ☐
- All doors to open and close correctly
- All fire doors to be sound and close correctly on self-closing devices and to comply with regulations ☐
- All front doors to houses to be fitted with numerals and a letter plate
- All bathrooms and WC doors to be fitted with a bolt. ☐

7. Windows

- ☐ All windows to be free from rot and adequately fixed and secure
- ☐ All windows to be secure and to open and close correctly
- ☐ All glazing to be secure from cracks
- ☐ All windows above ground floor level to be fitted with opening restrictors where appropriate
- ☐ Where locks are installed on windows new residents will be issued with keys, where these are not available new handles will be fitted

All sanitary sealants to be clear from cracks, defects and mould.

8. Walls and ceilings

- ☐ Surfaces should be free from major defects and suitable for normal filling and stripping prior to decoration
- ☐ All loose and old crumbling plaster or plasterboards to be made good and ready for decoration
- ☐ All walls and ceiling surfaces to be free from mould growth and dampness
- ☐ All polystyrene ceiling tiles to be removed.
- ☐ Where decorative works are required and the resident is disabled or vulnerable and unable to undertake works themselves they are to be given the option of a BCHG contractor to undertake decoration of the unacceptable wall in a neutral colour to be designed by BCHG instead of receiving decoration vouchers
- ☐ All ceilings should either be white or cream in colour
- ☐ Where any major plaster repairs are undertaken the walls will be stripped and prepared for redecoration
- ☐ Where decoration is considered under the circumstances outlined above priority will be given to the decoration of the kitchen, bathroom and hall, stairs & landing. If a new kitchen or bathroom has been installed it will be redecorated as part of this improvement work.
- ☐

9. Floors and stairs

- ☐ All split and creaking floors to be repaired where deemed necessary.
- ☐ All defective or loose threads, risers, balustrades, handrails and newel posts to be fixed, repaired or renewed.
- ☐ All hardboards/plywood floor coverings to be adequately secured
- ☐ All visible timbers to be checked for evidence of decay or infestation.

Non slip vinyl floor covering (vinyl) to be installed and in good condition in the following rooms:

- WC
 - Bathroom/Shower Room/Wet Room
 - Ensuite
 - Kitchen
-

10. Services

- ☐ All extract fans, cooker hoods and air handling units to be cleaned and serviced
 - ☐ All rooms to have adequate power supplies and socket outlets
 - ☐ All properties to have a NICEIC certificate
 - ☐ All properties to have a Landlords Gas Safety Certificate where appropriate
 - ☐ All gas appliances to have been recently serviced or checked
 - ☐ All mechanical adaptations to be serviced
 - ☐ All water services to be free from leaks, water hammer and discharging overflows
 - ☐ All heat emitters to be secure, fully functional and free from significant defects
-