

Document Title	Void Management Policy
Version	Final v2.0
Release Date	March 2019
Review Date	March 2022
Extension Reason(s)	
Extension date approved	
Approver details	Caroline Davies / Louise Palese
Document Type	Policy
Sponsor	Caroline Davies / Louise Palese
Author	Tracey Savory



ORBIT

VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

Executive Summary	<p>This document outlines Orbit's policy for management of our empty homes (voids) and supports our mission of building and investing in our communities.</p> <p>It takes into account Orbit's statutory and regulatory responsibilities.</p>
Approved by	Louise Palese and Caroline Davies as joint sponsors. This document contains minor changes.
EA completed	An EA was completed on 18 March and was assessed as no risk as this is a high level document where the impact on equality would be within the supporting and linked procedures.
DPIA completed	A DPIA was completed on 18 March and considered to be no risk.
Explain how customers have been involved.	This is not applicable as the changes were minor.
Consultation	Customers, Orbit Academy, Health & Safety, Property Investment, Property Services, Tenancy Services, CSC, Policy & Standards, Orbit Independent Living
Applies to	All staff, Property Services, Lettings Services, Tenancy Services, Property Investment Health & Safety, CSC, Policy and Standards, Orbit Independent Living.

SCOPE:

This policy relates to all empty rented homes that are awaiting letting, or identified for disposal whilst identified repair works are carried out.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents: *Letting of Homes Policy, Allocations and Lettings Procedure, Responsive Repairs, Lettable Standard, Asset Management Strategy, Asbestos Management Policy, Delivery of Capital Investment Programmes, Electrical Safety Management Plan, Responsive Repairs Policy, Temperature Control Plan, Fire Safety Management Policy, Lifting Management Equipment Policy, Strength System Management Plan and Water Safety Plan, Lettable Standard, Deceased Customer and Succession procedure,, Disposal of Goods Procedure, Rechargeable Repairs Procedure, Gifting of Carpet and Curtains Procedure*

Reference to “Orbit” means Orbit Group which consists of Orbit Group Limited, Heart of England Housing Association Limited, Orbit South Housing Association Limited, Orbit Homes (2020) Limited, Orbit Treasury Limited and Orbit Capital Limited.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The management of voids is one of Orbit’s key service areas. Void repairs must be clearly defined, and adhere to Orbit’s Lettable Standard, progress documented and performance reviewed to ensure our obligations are being met. The service must minimise void loss and thus financial loss and to maximise customer satisfaction

2. AIMS

- 2.1 Orbit aims to deliver a high quality voids management service that both meets the needs and expectations of customers (internal and external) and represents value for money. We look to achieve these aims through a comprehensive suite of procedures and monitoring mechanisms.
- 2.2 This policy sets out the core principles to be adopted by Orbit to achieve the following outcomes;
- Comply with legal duties and regulatory requirements.
 - Customers in housing need can be housed with the minimum of delay
 - Reduce the time taken to re-let homes and maximise rental income
 - Ensure customers are allocated homes that meet Orbit’s Lettable Standard and maximises customer satisfaction
 - Ensure outgoing customers are aware of their responsibilities prior to termination, to minimise void costs and rechargeable repairs
 - Contribute to the development of sustainable, thriving communities by reducing the impact of empty homes on the community
 - Supports the delivery of Orbit’s Asset Management Strategy by appraisal of all voids against criteria for retention, disposal,

remodelling or redevelopment of stock

3. LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1 Orbit carries out repairs in line with legal and statutory obligations, to safeguard the health, safety and security of customers, other occupants or visitors and to safeguard the building and environment. These obligations are outlined in Orbit's Responsive Repairs Policy.

4. HEALTH & SAFETY AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 Orbit carries out repairs in line with legal and statutory obligations, to safeguard the health, safety and security of customers, other occupants or visitors and to safeguard the building and environment. These obligations are outlined in Orbit's Responsive Repairs Policy and aforementioned Lettable Standard which includes gas, electric, asbestos, water, lifting equipment and fire prevention compliance management.
- 4.2 Orbit ensures that it meets the Construction, Design and Management Regulations (CDM) 2015 in the management of voids relating to repairs undertaken by Orbit's appointed contractors and their subcontractors.
- 4.3 Orbit classifies void properties as 'closed sites' for the works duration and will ensure that all inspections and work undertaken at properties is carried out in accordance with Health & Safety guidance and regulation.
- 4.4 Orbit will ensure that staff will work in accordance with the Lone Working Policy when inspecting properties, carrying out accompanied viewings or applicant assessments as necessary.

5. DEFINITION

- 5.1 A property is void when the tenancy has been ended and the property is unoccupied. The keys are available, either by return from the customer or agreed change of locks with the relevant Lettings or Independent Living team. During this period no rental income is received.

6. PRINCIPLES

6.1 Orbit

- 6.2 Teams within Orbit will work together in an open co-ordinated way to ensure effective voids management, with a strong focus on compliance and customer service.
- 6.3 Lettings staff are responsible for the key to key management of the process, from notice through to sign up.
- 6.4 Responsive Repair staff are responsible for managing the performance of the contractors and for meeting the lettable standard.
- 6.5 Detailed procedures and systems are in place and underpin the delivery of this

Policy and the steps to be taken to ensure the outcomes in 1.1 are achieved.

6.6 Standards

- 6.7** Orbit has a [Lettable Standard](#) in place supported by procedures which set out how we administer the management of voids awaiting letting and disposal.
- 6.8** All elements relating to safety compliance are contained within the relevant policy and management plan owned and published by the Property Compliance team. These include Fire, Gas, Electrical, Asbestos, Water and Lifting Equipment.
- 6.9** Orbit ensures a valid Energy Performance Certificate is available and issued to the customer and a valid gas safety certificate (where appropriate).

6.10 Customers

- 6.11** Customer responsibility and obligations for maintaining their home in line with the tenancy conditions is made clear within the terms of the tenancy agreement. Expectations are set out as part of the Tenancy sign up and as part of regular review visits and tenancy audits carried out for existing customers.
- 6.12** Orbit recognises the cost to the customer and the organisation arising from tenancy failure. As part of the allocation process a sustainability assessment is carried out to minimise the risk of tenancy failure and subsequent void costs.
- 6.13** The sign up process for new customers includes a “sign up checklist” which confirms the condition of the property at the start of the tenancy and is signed and agreed by both customer and staff.
- 6.14** We aim to carry out pre-termination inspections, to clarify and confirm with the customer their responsibilities regarding the ending of their tenancy and to inform the management of void works.
- 6.15** Gas and Electric supplies are transferred to our partner provider. This ensures utility supplies to allow compliance checks and a better customer experience with regard to the taking on of utilities and clearance of any debts left by previous customers.
- 6.16** The Lettable standard is clear on Landlord / customer responsibility and will be reviewed and agreed with customers, and clearly publicised.
- 6.17** We will seek the views of customers on the standard to which empty homes have been let to them through customer feedback and will seek insight of the customer experience through service review groups and other customer involved activities, including surveys
- 6.18** These results will influence improvements to the service offered where these have been identified and are achievable.
- 6.19** We will give consideration to the issue of security of empty homes and to the community and environmental impact of options such as security screening.

6.20 Adaptations to Properties

6.21 Where a property has had major adaptations, these adaptations will remain and the allocations process will be used to identify a customer who has relevant needs. Major adaptations will only be removed where they are having a significant and detrimental impact on the letting of the property.

6.22 Damage and disposal of goods

6.23 Where damage has been caused to the property by the outgoing tenant, or is due to lack of due care and attention, consideration will be given to recovery of these costs in accordance with the Orbit policy on rechargeable repairs.

6.24 Where goods are left in a property at the end of a tenancy Orbit will either dispose of, or store the items in line with its Disposal of Goods Procedure, and recharge in line with our policy on rechargeable repairs. Or will gift carpets and curtains where suitable and in line with procedure. White goods, including cookers, will be removed to ensure safety.

6.25 Appraisal of voids

6.26 Where a property is scheduled for planned maintenance works, consideration will be given to bringing these forward, where it is practical and feasible, to enable these to be completed whilst the property is empty to minimise the impact of such works on future customers.

6.27 Orbit disposes its properties in line with its Asset Management Strategy.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

7.1 Orbit policies are developed in line with our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy** approach. An Equality Analysis has been conducted and if you would like to see a copy please contact the Policy and Standards team.

8. PRIVACY STATEMENT

8.1 Orbit collect information ('personal data') so that we can manage and support our relationship with our customers, staff, contractors and 3rd parties to comply with legal obligations, improve our services and achieve our legitimate business aims. We are committed to complying with data protection legislation when handling personal data. Everyone has rights around their data, including the right to access their data, and to object to the way it is processed. For more information on how and why we process customers' data, and how customers can exercise their rights, please see our full Privacy Policy on our website at www.orbit.org.uk/privacy-policy/. For more information on how and why we process employee's data and how employees can exercise their rights, please contact HR.

9. MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

9.1 Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Head of Lettings and Head of Responsive Repairs.

9.2 Void performance is monitored by the Head of Responsive Repairs across all categories (minor, major and specialist) with each having their own target completion time. This reporting is used to drive contractor performance. In addition the Head of Lettings monitors re-let times and void loss and these KPI's are reported monthly to CS SMT.

9.3 The effectiveness of the policy and associated procedures will be monitored by key performance indicators, reported to CS SMT monthly.

10. REVIEW

10.1 We will carry out a fundamental review of this policy every three years or sooner subject to legal, regulatory changes or if internal changes require.