

Policy title	Empty Homes Policy
Summary	The policy covers how MSV manages its empty homes and details the property condition upon letting to a customer.
Scope	The policy refers to all properties that become vacant as part of the tenancy termination process.
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Directorate	Assets
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Ratified	Customer & Communities Committee
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Impact Assessments:	Attached as Appendix 2
Date EIA completed	22 nd December 2023
Date other IAs completed	
Consultation	Consultation undertaken with customers, senior leadership team and repairs and lettings colleagues.

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1. Introduction/Policy Purpose

- 1.1 The empty homes policy details how MSV delivers its void property service to all MSV owned and managed homes. The policy provides detail on what is classed as an empty home and provides information on how we will provide an efficient empty home service. As part of our commitment to our customers we want them to feel safe in their new home and for them to live in good quality affordable homes.
- 1.2 The core principles of the policy is the delivery of an efficient service that reduces void times, maintains rental income and ensure our homes are of a high standard when we let to new customers.
- 1.3 The policy supports the regulatory requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and is set out within the Homes Standard.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The empty homes policy provides the framework of how MSV will deliver its void property service. The scope includes the delivery of void repairs by our in-house maintenance service and any associated specialist sub-contractors.
- 2.2 The aims of the empty homes policy are detailed below:
 - Achieve high standards of customer care in empty homes delivery.
 - Ensure all MSV homes are let at a high standard and that our customers live in safety, comfort and warmth.
 - Reduce loss of rental income by ensuring properties remain empty at a minimum.
 - Be open with customers and listen to them through customer feedback and involvement as part of service improvements.
 - Ensure all homes meet the MSV New Home Lettable Standard at the point of tenancy sign up.
 - Meet the standards set out in our tenancy agreements.
 - To achieve VfM in the delivery of the empty homes service.

3. Definitions

- Empty Home (Void) – an empty property that has been left by a customer by tenancy termination and includes the period prior to reletting the property to a new customer.
- New Home Lettable Standard - the standard (condition) we commit to a customer's home at point of customer sign up.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Executive Director of Assets is responsible for the execution of the empty homes policy and ensure that MSV complies with regulatory and legislative requirements in this area.
- 4.2 The Head of Repairs is responsible for the implementation and delivery of the empty homes policy.
- 4.3 Colleagues, including Area Repairs Managers and Field Operatives are responsible for ensuring the delivery of the empty homes service in line with policy.
- 4.4 Colleagues in Lettings, Neighbourhoods, Supported and Later Living support the operational delivery of the empty homes policy.
- 4.5 Colleagues in Lettings, Neighbourhoods, Later Living and Supported will liaise with applicants/ new customers and other MSV's teams when lettings empty homes.

5. Monitoring, Review & Evaluation

- 5.1 A number of measures are in place and regularly reviewed in order to ensure that agreed performance targets are met, these include:
 - New Customer Satisfaction Survey
 - Empty Homes Turnaround Time (in line with category detailed below)
 - Average Void Cost
 - Number of Empty Homes
 - Turnover (% of stock)
- 5.2 Each void will be categorised for measurement purposes as follows:
 - Same Day Void (complete within 24 hours)
 - Standard Void (up to a value of £5000)
 - Major Void (over £5,000)
 - Asset Voids – where major works and/or component replacement etc required, for example a kitchen replacement

6. Related Documents

6.1 Detailed below are the related strategies and policies that support the effective delivery of the empty homes service.

- Asset Management Strategy
- Lettings Policy
- Customer Own Improvement Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Gas Safety Policy
- Electrical Safety Policy
- Lift Management Policy
- Adaptations Policy
- Recharge Policy
- New Home Lettable Standard
- Disposals Policy

7. Version History

7.1 Version control of each iteration of the document and the reason for change.

Version	Date	Description/Summary	Status	Author
V1.0	Nov 23	Review of policy and draft update	Draft	JC
V1.1	Jan 24	Updated post internal consultation/review	Final	JC
V1.2	Feb 24	Approved document via C&CC	Final Approved	JC

8. Delivering the Policy

8.1 MSV is committed to providing excellent customer services and an excellent customer experience. A large part of the customer experience for existing tenants and housing applicants is through the delivery of a good standard of housing, and in most cases, this is achieved by delivering to our empty homes standards.

8.2 It is our Policy to provide good quality homes in neighbourhoods where people choose to live, work, volunteer, raise families and look after dependants. MSV will work to ensure that all voids are brought up to our required standard, and that they remain empty for as short a time as possible, but enough time to complete all necessary works that fall within the empty homes standard.

8.3 When a property becomes vacant, MSV will consider how it can be best used to support the organisation in delivering more homes to help people in housing need and we will work to reduce loss of rental income.

8.4 We will meet MSV's responsibilities with regard to health and safety and related legislation which includes:

- RSH Home Standard

- Section 11 Landlords and Tenant Act 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Gas Safety (Regulations and Use) 1998
- Electrical Safety Regulations
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System
- The Energy Performance of Building Regulations

8.5 To achieve the specific objectives detailed above MSV will ensure that:

- We provide a detailed standard to which MSV will work to, known as the New Home Lettable Standard.
- We will plan and carry out void works in a timely and efficient manner and in accordance with MSV's New Home Lettable Standard.

8.6 We will have clear definitions around empty homes including:

- Identification of rechargeable works and other tenant responsibilities.
- Identification of major component replacement works.
- Identification of void incentive works.

8.7 Damp and Mould - we understand that damp and mould could create a potential hazard for new customers, and we treat these instances as a priority. Our approach to damp and mould may include repairs to your home or major works. We provide detailed guidance, advice, and support to help you address damp and mould. MSV have a dedicated team that deals with damp and mould enquiries.

8.8 Major or Planned Repairs - sometimes replacing rather than repairing is better and this means a responsive repair becomes major works. We may choose to carry these out as part of the empty homes process or once the new customer has moved into their home. This will be clearly communicated to the customer with timescales at the time of tenancy sign up. We will ensure no health and safety risks in your home if we choose to undertake and major works post occupation.

8.9 Decoration of the Home - customers are responsible for decorating inside the property and keeping it in good order, however as part of our lettings process, we may provide new customers with decorating vouchers to assist with the initial cost of redecoration.

8.10 Health and Safety – we will ensure your home is safe when a customer moves in. This includes undertaking essential gas safety and electrical checks prior to customer occupation. We deliver works in line with our code of conduct and ensure safety throughout the empty homes process.

8.11 Value for Money - We promote VfM in a range of ways.

- Comparing cost and performance information of our service.
- Testing our empty service against other social housing providers.
- Reviewing how we deliver our services and systems.

- Carefully considering our sub-contractor arrangements to ensure we deliver a as per our standards.

8.12 Equality & Diversity - We are committed to promoting fair and equal access to services and equal opportunities in employment, the procurement of goods and as a community leading organisation. The Group's policies, procedures and day to day practices have been established to promote an environment which is free from unlawful and unfair discrimination, while valuing the diversity of all people.

8.13 New Home Lettable Standard – Attached as Appendix 1 is the New Home Lettable Standard. This details the standards we commit to a customer's home at point of customer sign up. Alongside this we will measure our success and the new customers satisfaction against this standard.

8.14 New Tenancy Support – MSV offers a Customer Support Service which includes Money Management advice, Wellbeing Support and energy advice/ information for the duration of the tenancy.

8.15 Adaptations in Homes – we will review adaptation requirements on a case by case basis with the new customer. In relations to recycling existing equipment/adaptions at void stage further reference is included within the adaptions policy.

8.16 Option Appraisal Process – voids will be reviewed in line with the options appraisal process when it meets the triggers met in the policy. This will be undertaken via the Asset Team with a decision made in terms of retention, disposal etc.

9. Appendices

9.1 MSV New Home Lettable Standard

9.2 Equality Impact Assessment – January 2024