

Voids Management Policy



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Target audience	Voids & Lettings, Neighbourhoods
Document Number	CO-VMPol-01
Document Owner	Head of Voids & Lettings
Authorised by	Director of Customer Operations
Frequency of Review	One year
Next Review Date	31 March 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.2 Voids are properties which are currently empty because a tenancy has ended, and a new tenancy has not yet started. Voids may arise due to formal termination of a tenancy, abandonment of a tenancy, the tenant transferring to another tenancy, eviction of the tenant or the tenant's death.
- 1.3 Because rent is not due on a void, it represents a financial loss and Moat aims to keep this loss to a minimum whilst ensuring that a property is let to the right applicant as quickly as possible.
- 1.4 The purpose of this document is to set out our policy for managing void properties to ensure we provide an efficient and customer focused service

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the way in which Moat will control and manage empty (void) properties within its stock.
- 2.2 This policy will ensure a forward looking and strategic approach to void management that will:
- minimise rent loss through reducing the length of the void period and void repair costs.
 - make clear our expectations of the quality of our homes for incoming customers, and that this is clear to our staff, contractors and customers.
 - set in place systems for monitoring the standards of void properties and customer satisfaction within their new home.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy, together with the Termination of Tenancy Policy will guide staff in ensuring that customers are aware of their repair responsibilities and end of tenancy obligations.
- 3.2 It should be used in conjunction with the Lettings Policy to ensure that the stock is well used in a way that meets local demand in a fair and equitable way.
- 3.3 The policy also outlines our expectations from our voids contractor and should be read in line with our Lettable Standard.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. Void - any lettable property that has no tenant for a period of time.
- 4.2. Void period - the time, measured in calendar days, between the date of termination of the previous tenancy and the start of the new tenancy.
- 4.3. Super void – properties where void works are likely to exceed £20,000
- 4.4. “Us” “We” “Our” – Refers to Moat.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Who is responsible for implementation? Which employees are expected to carry out the procedures required? Who is responsible for ensuring actions are undertaken? This may include organograms.

6. Approach to Void Properties

6.1 Commencing Void Works

- 6.1.1 Upon notification of a tenancy termination (full details of the way in which a customer must terminate their tenancy can be found in the Termination of Tenancy Policy), Moat will appoint a main contractor to undertake the void remedial works on our behalf. Specialist contractors may also be appointed for asbestos surveys and removal, gas safety certification, water testing (for legionella) or the production of Energy Performance Certificates. Is it our aim that in the longer term, a ‘one contractor’ approach will be taken so that Moat’s main void contractor will solely complete all of these specialist roles.
- 6.1.2 Our voids contractor will install a key safe in advance of the tenancy termination date. Most of our tenancies end on a Sunday, with the keys being available from the Monday after the tenancy end date. Customers will be advised to leave their keys in the key safe or return them to a Moat office.

6.1.3 In cases where we cannot contact the outgoing customer regarding their keys, our appointed voids contractor will arrange for a force entry and lock change, the cost of which will be recharged to the outgoing tenant. Every effort will be made to contact the customer before this is carried out.

6.1.4 Where a tenant hands in their keys prior to the termination of the notice period, void works will only commence with explicit permission from the outgoing tenant. In these instances, the outgoing customer's tenancy end date remains the same and the customer is still expected to pay rent up until this date.

6.1.5 In exceptional circumstances. Moat may accept a shorter notice period, but this is to be agreed by the Voids and Lettings Team Leader.

6.1.6 In accordance with their tenancy, customers must leave their property, garage and garden areas in a clean and tidy condition. We will remind customers of these obligations during their notice period.

6.1.7 We may carry out a pre-void inspection to assess the condition, this will be conducted by either our voids contractor or Moat's local Neighbourhood Services Manager. This will be to:

- agree any improvements which are eligible for compensation.
- identify any rechargeable repairs.
- identify (and/or notify void contractors of) expected works to assist with forecasting and capacity planning.
- identify any factors which will be considered as part of offering the property for relet, such as special adaptations.

6.1.8 Moat's Rechargeable Repairs Policy will be applied where the outgoing customer fails to clear the home or leaves excessive damage.

6.2 Lettable Standard

6.2.1 We aim to identify and complete all necessary repairs to enable a property to be relet as soon as possible. All repairs will be completed in line with our Employers Requirements and Lettable Standard (appendix one – note this Standard applies for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022; we are undergoing a procurement process to appoint a new contractor for 1 April 2022, this will include an alternative Lettable Standard). These works will be carried out to a high standard.

6.2.2 The role our Voids Contractor plays is therefore vital to ensuring our homes are:

- to the agreed standard
- secure
- health and safety compliant
- clean
- free of defects

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- 6.2.3 Our voids contractor will attend the property at the earliest opportunity to produce a specification of works required.
- 6.2.4 If a void property falls into an area where planned maintenance is being undertaken, such as boiler or window replacements, the void property will be prioritised for these works to be completed, wherever possible.
- 6.2.5 Major and health and safety works that would cause a high level of disruption to tenants or put their safety at risk, such as removal of asbestos, damp and rot treatments will be completed prior to the start of a new tenancy.
- 6.2.6 All properties will be issued with an Energy Performance Certificate and electrical and gas safety certificates a copy of which will be provided to the incoming customer in compliance with our legal requirements.
- 6.2.7 Prospective customers may be taken to view the property whilst works are being carried out, subject to health and safety.

6.3 Additional Works

- 6.3.1 Our Lettable Standard outlines our requirements to ensure our home is ready for a new customer.
- 6.3.2 Our voids contractor will make us aware at the earliest opportunity if a property requires additional works that fall outside of the Lettable Standard, and quote accordingly.
- 6.3.3 A property will generally be classified as a 'minor' void. Even where additional works are required, the void contractor will be allocated 7 days to complete all works.
- 6.3.4 A property may be classified a major void in the following instances:
- Full kitchen and/or bathroom replacement
 - Minor structural works (to include walls and roof)
 - Rectification of significant malicious damage
 - Multiple visit pest control clearance
 - Full room re-plasters
- 6.3.5 The voids contractor will be granted an additional 7 days (7 + 7 = 14 days) to complete these works pending a suitable quote.
- 6.3.6 Where the voids contractor believes extensive works will be required, they will ask a member of Moat's Technical and Building Safety team to inspect and scope out the works. As these are likely to be of a higher value, at least three quotes will be obtained. It will then be assessed whether, due to the complexity of these works, the project will be overseen by Moat's Technical and Building Safety team. These will generally be where works are likely to exceed £20,000

and these will be classified as 'super voids'. These properties will be appraised to assess whether it is more appropriate to adapt, invest or dispose of the property. Any such decision will be assessed with due consideration of Moat's charitable objectives and will be considered by Moat's Asset Management Group and Executive Team.

6.4 Hard to Let Properties

- 6.4.1 An individual property will be defined as hard to let when it has been offered and refused 3 times or when it has been advertised twice and no expressions of interest have been made.
- 6.4.2 The Voids & Lettings Officer will recommend whether additional incentives should be applied, such as the provision of carpets and white goods, support for removal costs or redecoration vouchers. It may also be appropriate to appoint a private letting agent to support with the identification of suitable candidates. In these instances, it will only be undertaken unless the local authority's nomination agreement prohibits it.
- 6.4.3 Where properties are known to be hard to let (for example based on historic challenges of letting the home) this process will be expedited, with incentives, or additional support from a private letting agent being utilised at an earlier stage.

6.5 Monitoring

- 6.5.1. The Head of Voids and Lettings will monitor this policy by:
 - ✦ void turnaround time against the annual performance target.
 - ✦ the value of decorating materials issued.
 - ✦ number of refusals and reasons for refusal.
 - ✦ percentage of tenancies vacated within one year of the commencement of the tenancy and the reason why.
 - ✦ the amount of money issued and broken down by incentive criteria.
 - ✦ void rent loss.
 - ✦ number of properties vacant as a percentage of stock.

7. Training

- 7.1. We will ensure necessary training is in place to ensure our voids contractor is clear of their expectations as outlined in this policy as well as Moat's Lettable Standard.
- 7.2. In addition, training needs will be addressed for staff, including ensuring that all new starters to Voids & Lettings and Neighbourhoods receive this training as part of their induction.

8. Impact Assessments

- 8.1. Equality – Moat is committed to providing a fair and equitable service to its customers. Through the management of our empty properties, we aim to treat all customers fairly, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.
- 8.2. An equality impact assessment has been conducted and there is no adverse impact identified. This document promotes equality of opportunity and/or good relations between different groups.

Data Protection Impact – Yes. An impact assessment been carried out.

9. Review

- 9.1 One year. The Head of Voids and Lettings will review this policy on an annual basis to ensure its contents reflect current legislation and the latest examples of best practice in the field.
- 9.2 This document will be reviewed more frequently if changes in legislation, regulation or the service requires it.

10. References

10.1. Legal & Regulatory Framework:

- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Housing Act 2006
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005

10.2. Related Moat Policies and documents

- Lettings Policy
- Income Collection Policy
- Lettable Standard
- Termination of Tenancy Policy - Rechargeable Repairs Policy

11. Appendices

- Equality Impact Assessment (*appended as a separate document*) -
- Data Protection Impact (*appended as a separate document*)