



Bristol City Council Housing and Landlord Services

Voids and Relets Policy

Version 2

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History of most recent policy changes			
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September 2026	Whole Document	Minor changes to content and template	Cyclical Review

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Definitions

Accessible Home	A property that has features or adaptations to make it suitable for people with disabilities or reduced mobility.
Allocation	The process used to decide who will be offered a council property.
Decent Homes Standard	A standard that helps ensure homes are safe, in good repair and have reasonably modern facilities and services.
Hazard	A risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of people living in a property. Hazards are assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)	A system used to identify and assess health and safety risks in residential homes.
Lettable Standard	The minimum standard a property must meet before it can be offered to a new tenant.
Local Lettings Plan	An approved arrangement that allows specific criteria to be applied when letting certain homes or developments.
Major Void	A property that requires extensive repairs or refurbishment before it can be relet.
Property Adaptation	A change made to a home to meet the needs of a disabled or vulnerable resident, such as a stairlift, ramp or level access shower.
Rechargeable Repair	A repair that a former tenant may be charged for because the damage or work required is their responsibility under the tenancy agreement.
Relet	The process of preparing and letting a property to a new tenant after the previous tenancy has ended.
Sensitive Let	A letting where additional consideration is given to the needs of the applicant, property or local area.
Standard Void	A property that requires routine inspections, safety checks and minor repairs before it can be relet.
Temporary Accommodation	Accommodation provided on a temporary basis while a household's longer-term housing needs are being resolved.
Void Period	The period between one tenancy ending and the start of the next tenancy.
Void Property	A council property that is empty and has no active tenancy.

1. Purpose

This policy sets out Bristol City Council's approach to managing empty council homes and preparing them for relet following the end of a tenancy.

We are committed to ensuring that homes are safe, secure and suitable for occupation, while reducing the time properties remain empty and making the best use of available housing stock. The policy establishes the principles for managing homes through the void period, undertaking necessary repairs and improvements, and supporting the timely commencement of new tenancies.

Through the delivery of this policy, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Homes are safe, compliant and ready for occupation
- Void periods are minimised, enabling homes to be relet as quickly as possible
- Housing stock is used effectively to meet housing need
- Residents receive a fair, positive and consistent customer experience
- Resources are used efficiently and value for money is achieved

This policy should be read alongside the procedures and guidance documents listed in Appendix B.

2. Scope

This policy applies to residential homes owned and managed by Bristol City Council, including:

- General Needs housing;
- New build homes entering management; and
- Temporary Accommodation managed by Housing and Landlord Services.

It covers the management of homes from the end of a tenancy until the commencement of a new tenancy, including inspection, repair, preparation and reletting activities.

The policy applies to all employees, contractors and partners involved in delivering these services and should be read alongside the Home Choice Bristol Allocations Policy where relevant.

3. Aims and objectives

The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide a clear framework for the management of council homes that become vacant.
- Set out the principles, standards and responsibilities that apply during the void period.
- Ensure a consistent and transparent approach to preparing homes for relet.
- Support compliance with relevant legal, regulatory and safety requirements.
- Promote the effective use of housing stock and public resources.

4. Roles and Responsibilities and Authority

The Director of Housing and Landlord Services is accountable for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to support the effective implementation of this policy.

The Head of Repairs and Maintenance, the Head of Tenancy Management and Estates, and the Head of Private Housing are responsible for ensuring that services relating to void homes, reletting activities, and accessible homes are delivered in accordance with this policy and associated procedures.

All employees, contractors and partners involved in the management, repair, preparation and reletting of council homes are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy. Detailed roles and responsibilities are set out in Appendix A.

5. The Policy

5.1 Legal Context and Consumer Standards

This policy operates within a framework of legislation and regulatory requirements that govern the management, repair and letting of social housing.

Relevant legislation includes:

- The Housing Act 1985, which sets out the Council's responsibilities as a social landlord.
- The Housing Act 2004, including the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which provides the framework for identifying and addressing hazards within residential homes.
- The Localism Act 2011 and Housing Act 1996, which support the allocation and letting of social housing.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which places duties on local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which strengthens consumer regulation and expectations relating to the safety and quality of social housing.
- The Building Safety Act 2022, together with other health and safety legislation, which establishes requirements for ensuring homes are safe and suitable for occupation.
- The Equality Act 2010, which requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

The Council will also have regard to applicable regulatory standards issued by the Regulator of Social Housing and any other relevant statutory guidance.

5.2 Tenants Rights

Prospective and new tenants have the right to receive a home that is safe and suitable for occupation.

This includes the right to occupy a home that complies with relevant legal and regulatory requirements relating to health and safety and is free from Category 1 hazards identified through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Prospective and new tenants also have the right to be treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

5.3 Managing Void Homes

A void property is a council home that has no current tenant.

Bristol City Council is committed to reducing the length of time that homes remain empty and making the best use of available housing to meet local housing need.

When a property becomes empty, the Council will assess the work needed to prepare it for reletting. Homes may be managed differently depending on the type and extent of work required.

The Council will take a planned and proportionate approach to managing void homes, taking account of the condition of the home, any repairs or improvements needed, and relevant legal and safety requirements.

The Council will seek to return homes to occupation as quickly as reasonably practicable while ensuring that homes are safe, compliant and suitable for their next tenant.

The Council aims to achieve an average turnaround time of 19 calendar days for Minor Voids and 50 calendar days for Major Voids. Major Voids include homes requiring significant repairs, refurbishment, structural works, specialist adaptations or other substantial investment before they can be relet. Performance against these targets will be monitored and reported through the Housing and Landlord Services Performance Framework.

5.4 Property Standards

Before a property is offered to a new tenant, it must meet the Council's Lettable Standard.

Homes will be:

- Safe, secure, clean and suitable for occupation.
- Free from Category 1 hazards identified through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- Compliant with relevant legal, regulatory and safety requirements.
- Maintained to a standard that supports sustainable tenancies and positive outcomes for residents.

The Council will ensure that homes are assessed during the void period to identify any repairs, maintenance, safety works or other improvements required before reletting.

Where appropriate, the Council may use the void period to carry out improvements, replace key components or undertake other works that support the long-term condition, safety and sustainability of the property.

Where white goods, flooring or other items left by a previous tenant are retained in the property, they will be assessed to ensure they are in a satisfactory and safe condition. Such items are provided on a discretionary basis for the incoming tenant's use and do not form part of the Council's repair, maintenance or replacement responsibilities.

5.5 Repairs and Recharges

The Council will assess void homes to identify any repairs, maintenance, cleaning or clearance work required before they are relet.

Works required to ensure that a property meets the Council's Lettable Standard and is suitable for occupation may be completed during the void period.

Former tenants may be responsible for the cost of repairs, cleaning, clearance or other works where these are required as a result of damage, neglect, unauthorised alterations or breaches of tenancy conditions and are not attributable to fair wear and tear.

Where appropriate, the Council may seek to recover these costs from the former tenant in accordance with the tenancy agreement and the Housing Recharge Policy.

5.6 Allocations and Lettings

The Council will allocate and let homes in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

Homes will be allocated in accordance with the Home Choice Bristol Allocations Policy and any other relevant housing policies, procedures or approved local arrangements.

The Council will seek to make best use of available housing stock and, where reasonably practicable, match homes to the needs of applicants to support sustainable tenancies.

Where appropriate, the Council may apply Local Lettings Plans or Sensitive Let arrangements in accordance with relevant policies and procedures.

Prospective tenants will be provided with information about the property, tenancy and available support to enable them to make informed decisions and successfully settle into their new home.

The standards residents can expect throughout the allocations and lettings process are set out in the Allocations and Lettings Service Standard.

5.7 Equality and Diversity

Bristol City Council is committed to providing services that are fair, inclusive and accessible to all residents.

In delivering this policy, the Council will have due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will not unlawfully discriminate on the grounds of a protected characteristic.

The Council will take account of individual circumstances and, where appropriate, make reasonable adjustments to ensure that residents can access services fairly and equitably.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy.

5.8 Complaints

If residents are unhappy with the services provided by BCC or how their concerns have been handled, they're encouraged to use the official complaints procedure. [Complaints and feedback](#)

6. Quality Assurance

6.1 Publishing

This policy will be published on the BCC Website and communicated to relevant operational teams via policy briefings and other appropriate communications.

6.2 Review

This policy will be reviewed in 3 years or sooner if there is a change to legal or regulatory requirements, in accordance with our procedures.

6.3 Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

Service delivery and performance is measured through the Housing and Landlord Services Performance Framework. Bristol City Council uses performance management to improve service standards, maximise the use of available housing stock and enhance the customer experience.

In relation to this policy, the Council will monitor:

- Average turnaround time for void homes.
- The number of council homes that are vacant and awaiting letting.
- Resident satisfaction with the allocations and lettings process.
- Relevant Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).
- Complaints relating to voids, allocations and lettings services.

The Voids and Lettings teams will undertake regular performance monitoring and review performance against agreed service targets and regulatory requirements.

Performance reporting will distinguish between standard void cases and those affected by exceptional circumstances outside the Council's control. Homes subject to legal, enforcement or other external delays, such as unauthorised occupation (squatting), police investigations, court proceedings, major utility issues or access restrictions, may be excluded from end-to-end void turnaround time reporting where this provides a more accurate reflection of service performance.

Performance information will be used to identify trends, drive service improvements and support compliance with reporting requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing and other relevant bodies.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Roles and Responsibilities

Director – Homes and Landlord Services	• Responsible for ensuring that all staff within the directorate are aware of health and safety considerations for BCC homes and the steps that should be taken to meet those requirements.
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Head of Service – Repairs and Maintenance	• Ensure compliance with all relevant housing legislation and regulations. • Manage budgets and resources effectively to optimise the use of funds for void property repairs and maintenance. • Responsible for reporting on KPIs at a corporate level
Head of Service – Tenancy Management	• Manage budgets and resources effectively within the relets process. • Responsible for reporting on KPIs at a corporate level
Service Manager – Voids	• Engage with stakeholders, including tenants, contractors, and local authorities, to address issues and improve services. • Ensure health and safety standards are maintained in all void homes. • Drive continuous improvement in void management processes and practices. • Oversee the overall management and performance of void homes, ensuring efficient turnaround times. • Develop and implement policies and strategies to improve void management and reduce void periods.
Service Manager – Lettings	• Oversee the overall management of the Relet process for council homes. • Engage with stakeholders, including tenants, contractors, and local authorities, to address issues and improve services. • Drive continuous improvement in void management processes and practices. • Produce reports on performance.
Service Manager – Accessible Homes	• Work collaboratively with Lettings, Tenancy Management, Repairs and Maintenance, Occupational Therapists, and other stakeholders to maximise the use of accessible housing stock. • Coordinate and support the assessment, specification, and delivery of property adaptations required to meet the needs of incoming tenants, working with relevant services and partner organisations to minimise delays in letting homes.

	• Produce reports on performance.
Team Managers	• Oversee day to day management of teams involved in the wider Voids process. • Support staff to complete tasks efficiently and implement solutions to blockers in process. • Provide a good service to all residents and stakeholders
Surveyors	• Conduct thorough surveys of void homes to identify any serious or complex repair or structural issues. • Diagnose problems and devise plans of work, including obtaining specialist reports and arranging necessary testing. • Ensure all health and safety standards are met and that the property complies with relevant regulations. • Oversee and manage all voids and repair works, ensuring quality control and adherence to the Decent Homes Standard. • Maintain clear and timely communication with the voids manager and other relevant stakeholders about the progress of works
Trade Operatives	• Carry out works to homes. • Raise new work orders where repairs are identified. • Work with the surveyor to update on works • Raise recharges where appropriate.
Lettings Officers	• Manage the allocation and letting of empty homes to minimize turnaround times. • Coordinate the administration of transfer and under-occupancy moves. • Ensure homes are let in accordance with allocation agreements and local lettings plans. • Verify applicant eligibility and ensure all necessary documentation is completed. • Work with void surveyors to ensure timely re-lets are achieved. • Maintain accurate records of all lettings activities.

	• Provide information, advice, and support to housing applicants and tenants. • Provide a good service to all residents and stakeholders
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Appendix B – Legal and Policy Context

- Equalities Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Housing Act 1996(IT's)
- Localism Act 2011
- The Housing Act 1985
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982.
- Housing Act 1996 (Part 6)
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR) as amended 2018
- Approved Code of Practice and guidance
- British Standard 7671 As Amended (Electrical Installations)
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- Building Safety Act 2022

Internal Policy

- HomeChoice Bristol Allocations Policy
- Sensitive Allocations Polic
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Damp and Mould and Housing Hazards Policy
- Tenancy Changes Policy
- Building Safety Policy
- Gas Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Fire and Carbon Monoxide Detection Policy
- Electrical Safety Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Lifts and Maintenance Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments policy
- Home Adaptations Policy
- Making Best Use of Stock Policy