

Void Management Policy

Responsible Officer	Executive Director of Customer Services
This policy is applicable to	Karbon Homes
Approved by	KMT
Date approved	August 2022
Frequency of review	Every 5 years
Date of next review	August 2027
Implementation date	April 2018
Key related documents (policy, procedure, customer literature)	Customer Service Standards Allocations and Lettings Policy Tenancy Agreements
Sources of best practice or guidance used in developing this policy	Neighbourhood Standard

Version control			
Version number	1	Author of Policy	Carol Kay Housing Manager
Equality Impact Analysis	Initial	Equality Analysis Date	complete
Privacy Impact Analysis	Initial	Privacy Analysis Date	complete

Document change history		
Version	Date	Changed sections
2	July 2022	3.8 & 3.9

Consultation	
Consultation Group (if applicable)	Date of Consultation (if applicable)
Staff	February and March 2018
Union(s)	Not applicable.
Customers	Not applicable.
Human Resources / Organisation Development	Not applicable.
Health and Safety Working Group	Not applicable.
Other stakeholder (please state)	Not applicable.

Policy statement

Karbon Homes recognises that managing empty properties effectively is key to developing sustainable communities, sustaining tenancies and reducing a loss of rental income to the association.

This policy applies to all properties owned or managed by Karbon Homes.

This policy complies with the Regulator of Social Housing Standard which states that: *Registered providers must consult with tenants in developing a published policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes. This applies where the registered provider has a responsibility (either exclusively or in part) for the condition of that neighbourhood. The policy shall include any communal areas associated with the registered provider's homes.*

Risk policy is designed to control

This policy is designed to control a number of reputational and financial risks considered to be minor.

Key performance measures

Average cost of void works per property.
Void inspection average working days.
Void works average days – Standard.
Void works average days – Structural

Definitions

A void is a property for which there is a current rent account but no current tenancy exists.

Abbreviations

Not applicable.

1.0 Purpose of policy

- 1.1 The effective management of empty properties is crucial in meeting housing need and maximising the use and occupation of Karbon's homes, whilst ensuring that the surrounding communities retain their sustainability.
- 1.2 This policy explains how Karbon will deal with properties that have been vacated by the previous tenant in order to ensure that the vacant property is brought up to Karbon's agreed standard of repair before the new tenant moves in.

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Karbon Homes is committed to:

- a) Providing a high quality, efficient and cost effective void management service.
- b) Letting all its properties as quickly as possible and ensuring the smooth and timely transition from one tenancy to the next.
- c) Adopting a prudent, planned approach to re-letting empty properties which will ensure there is sustainability in provision, management and maintenance of housing stock.
- d) Ensuring that outgoing tenants are communicated with effectively to make sure they understand their responsibilities prior to terminating a tenancy and with the incoming tenant to keep them informed throughout the void management process.
- e) Working in partnership with tenants and applicants to agree and publish any changes to the lettable standard.
- f) Ensuring this policy is implemented in line with Karbon's Equality and Diversity Policy and associated legislation. Consideration will be given to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, ensuring this policy and associated documents are available in different languages and alternative formats such as large print, audio type etc.

2.0 Policy detail

- 3.1 Karbon's Void Policy aims to ensure that empty properties are re-let promptly in order to meet demand and benefit new customers whilst also ensuring that both void rent loss and turnaround times are minimised.
- 3.2 This policy and associated lettable standard will ensure that all Karbon properties are offered to a high and consistent standard both internally and externally to all customers.

Ending Tenancies

- 3.3 Karbon will work closely with tenants ensuring that all possible support is provided to enable the tenancy to be sustained and reduce unnecessary terminations wherever possible.
- 3.4 All tenants are required to give written notice to vacate their property. Tenancies end on a Sunday. The standard notice period is four weeks. Karbon may however, in certain exceptional circumstance, accept a shorter notice period.

Lettable Standard

- 3.5 Karbon aims to create high quality, sustainable tenancies and achieve a high level of customer satisfaction.

- 3.6 In circumstances where the decorative condition of a void property is considered by Karbon to be poor, a decoration pack will be offered to the incoming tenant. The pack offered will reflect the extent of the decoration required and the property size to bring the property to a decent standard throughout. Where decoration is particularly bad, Karbon may also arrange for rooms to be decorated during the void period in order to encourage acceptance of properties identified as difficult to let.
- 3.7 The need to take action to protect void properties in the winter varies between property types. At the void inspection, decisions will be made as to whether the property will require frost precautions to be taken. Frost precautions include draining down of water supply pipes and water filled heating systems and conducting regular inspections.

Creating new tenancies

- 3.8 We will contact successful applicants as soon as practicable after the advert closes whether we have advertised the property via Choice Based Lettings, via a Nomination from the local authority or by an advert placed in a property listing site. Applicants will be asked to provide further information before a formal offer is made and will be given a reasonable amount of time to return this information before we move onto the next person...
- 3.9 After an offer is made the prospective tenant will be invited to attend a viewing of the property as soon as practicable. At the viewing stage, all prospective tenants are provided with information about the property. Applicants will be given a reasonable amount of time to decide whether they want to accept the property, this will be agreed at the time of the viewing.
- 3.10 When a prospective tenant has indicated their acceptance of a vacant property, the tenancy will commence as soon as possible after all essential repairs are completed. Tenancies can start on any day of the week. Rent is payable from the day the tenancy commences.
- 3.11 The sign up process and the post letting visit have a significant impact on the sustainability of tenancies. Karbon has a number of supporting procedures in place to ensure each new tenant is provided with all the assistance they require in order to sustain that tenancy.
- 3.12 A representative sample of new tenants are asked to provide feedback regarding their satisfaction with the void management process and standard of their new home.

4.0 Customer Vulnerabilities

- 4.1 This policy is applied in line with Our Approach To Vulnerability Policy. Everyone matters. We want people to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect, and access to our services. We will offer support, reasonable adjustments, and adaptations to remove barriers. We will discuss with our customers what is reasonable and appropriate. In delivering this service we may need to escalate a particular case – if we do then customer vulnerabilities will be considered as part of the decision-making process.

- 4.2 We will support people with vulnerabilities to deliver this service. We will work alongside external agencies such as social services, the police and fire services and other appropriate agencies to help and support people with vulnerabilities in the delivery of our services but also to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory requirements as a social landlord. Details are provided in the appropriate areas in this policy. All our customer policies are available on the website.

5.0 Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 The policy will be reviewed every three years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to best practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.

6.0 Equality and Diversity

- 6.1 This policy is applied in line with Karbon's Equality and Diversity Policy and the associated legislation including the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010. At Karbon we aim to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and define the nine protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- 6.2 However, we like to go even further. Beyond these protected characteristics we also take into consideration additional factors such as socio-economic status and language barriers which may also play a part. Our vision is for everyone to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect and access to our services.
- 6.3 To help us achieve this, we will work to improve accessibility for all, offering reasonable adjustments, adaptations and discussing ways that we can work to remove any barriers. A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things.
- 6.4 All of our customer policies and key information are made available on the Karbon Homes website. Reasonable adjustments that can help for example to make our information and services more accessible are sign language and language interpreters. We will work to improve accessibility for everybody that we deal with offering reasonable adjustments, adaptations and discussing ways that we can work to remove barriers that you may experience. A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things.
- 6.5 We work together to look at options and agree what adjustments would be reasonable in your individual circumstances. If you would like to find out more please get in touch with the team.

7.0 Data Protection and Privacy

- 7.1 We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the

Data Protection Act 2018 and other associated legislation. This is clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for the Karbon Homes Group which, along with its associated procedures, must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.