



EMPTY PROPERTY (VOIDS) PROCEDURE

Procedure date:	Sept 2017
Version Number:	2
Procedure review date:	Sept 2019

CONTENTS

No.	Title	Page No.
1	Purpose	3
2	Definition	3
3	Departments and Staff Involved	3
4	Risk Factors	4
5	Staff Procedure and Guidance: Key Processes	4
	5.1 Notice of a Void	4
	5.2 Pre-Void Inspection	5
	5.3 Date of Tenancy Termination	6
	5.4 Void Period	6
	5.5 Ready to Let	6
	Appendix 1: Procedure Flow Chart	7
	Appendix 2: List and Location of Controlled Forms	8

1. Purpose

This document is designed to provide Leeds Jewish Housing Association (LJHA) staff with operational guidance ('the procedure') for delivering work on empty properties ('voids') to ensure quality standards are achieved and rent loss is minimised.

It should be read in conjunction with the Empty Property (Voids) Policy document, available on the shared drive (L:/shared/current policies).

2. Definition

Work associated with empty properties (voids) can be defined as any repairs, renewals, reinstatement, replacement, internal decorations or cleaning and clearing out that has been ordered in accordance with the provisions of the contract, arising as a result of a change of tenancy (not including of mutual exchanges).

It is vital that Leeds Jewish Housing Associations views void repairs as an integral part of the end-to-end lettings process from notice of termination through to the re-let of the property and beyond.

3. Departments and Staff Involved

The following post holders have a role to play in this particular procedure:

- Housing Officer;
- Housing Manager;
- Director of Operations;
- Ford Property Maintenance (Main Contractor);
- Environtec (Asbestos surveying company);
- Natural Gas Services.

Appropriate awareness and operational training should be provided for these roles.

4. Risk Factors

The following risk factors relating to this procedure have been identified:

Risk	Category	Action
Keys not returned	Medium to high	Liz to confirm in writing when notice given and remind on pre-void inspection
Unforeseen works required	Medium to high	Pre-void inspection, post void inspection ASAP turnaround. Cap immediately followed by CP12. Visual inspection on pre and post void.
Lone working (when viewing property)	Medium to high	Refer to LJHA's Lone Working Policy
Death of tenant	Low to medium	Close liaison with family to ensure up-to-date/accurate information
Abandonment	Low to medium	Housing Officer estate visits/updates from tenants followed up/housing support workers know to report
Property left in damaged/poor condition	Low to medium	Visits by Housing Officer/Housing Manager pre-void.
Unauthorised persons gain access to property (squatting)	Low to medium	Change of locks speeds turnaround
Unauthorised persons gain access to property (theft or vandalism)	Low to medium	Change of locks speeds turnaround
Unauthorised persons gain access to property (personal injury/ Occupiers Liability)	Low to medium	Change of locks speeds turnaround

5. Staff Procedure and Guidance: Key Processes

The following bullet points outline the key processes for staff managing voids. An abbreviated visual version in the form of a flow chart is also seen in Appendix 1.

5.1 Notice of a Void

- In the majority of cases, the empty property (voids) procedure commences when the existing tenant gives notice of termination. In some cases however, such as with abandonments or the death of a tenant, notice may be provided from other sources. Depending upon the nature of the situation, LJHA staff may need to investigate the situation further, updating the Operations Director as necessary.

- As soon as LJHA staff are aware of a termination, the tenant is advised that 4 weeks' notice is required and a termination of tenancy form is sent to the tenant for completion and return to the Housing Manager.
 - In cases where the tenant is deceased, 4 weeks' notice is not required, however the keys may be returned, prior to the notice date.
- Once a completed termination of tenancy form is received by the Housing Manager, the Housing Manager adds the termination date onto LJHA's CRM (Customer Relationship Management) computer system known as 'SASSHA'.
 - In cases where the tenant is deceased, the termination form is completed by the next of kin, and the Housing Manager has authority to vary (either increase or decrease) the tenancy termination. Once the termination date is confirmed then the Housing Manager books the post void inspection for the date of the termination, which is conducted by the Director of Operations and Contractor.

5.2 Pre-Void Inspection

- The pre-void inspection is arranged by the Housing Manager (or Housing Officer in their absence) and is undertaken during the notice period. Immediately a termination of tenancy form has been received advising that a property will become void, the Housing Manager, sends out an email informing LJHA staff and contractors of the void date. Upon receipt of the email the relevant contractor checks the asbestos register and informs Environtec if an asbestos survey is required. If an asbestos survey is required, an appointment is made with the existing tenant to attend whilst the property is still tenanted.
- Depending upon what is identified during the inspection, a letter is sent to the existing tenant/s advising what has been found. For instance, re-charges are stated here. The letter also includes guidance for tenants handing back the keys to the property when vacating. A pre-void form is also completed by the existing tenant at this stage (see Appendix 2).
- Potential changes to major components are identified at this stage.
- The Energy Performance Certificate ('EPC') register is checked to ensure a valid EPC is available for the incoming tenant. If required, the EPC is ordered and scheduled as part of the void works with the contractor.

5.3 Date of Tenancy Termination

On the agreed date of tenancy termination, the keys are handed back to LJHA by the tenant no later than 9.00am. Where the keys are not returned a force entry lock change is carried out and the costs of this are added to the previous tenant. The Housing Manager logs this on the SASSHA computer system, and the contractor is immediately contacted via telephone and email to conduct a lock change and cap the gas). The Housing Officer reads the meters, and notifies the utility companies of tenancy termination.

5.4 Void Period

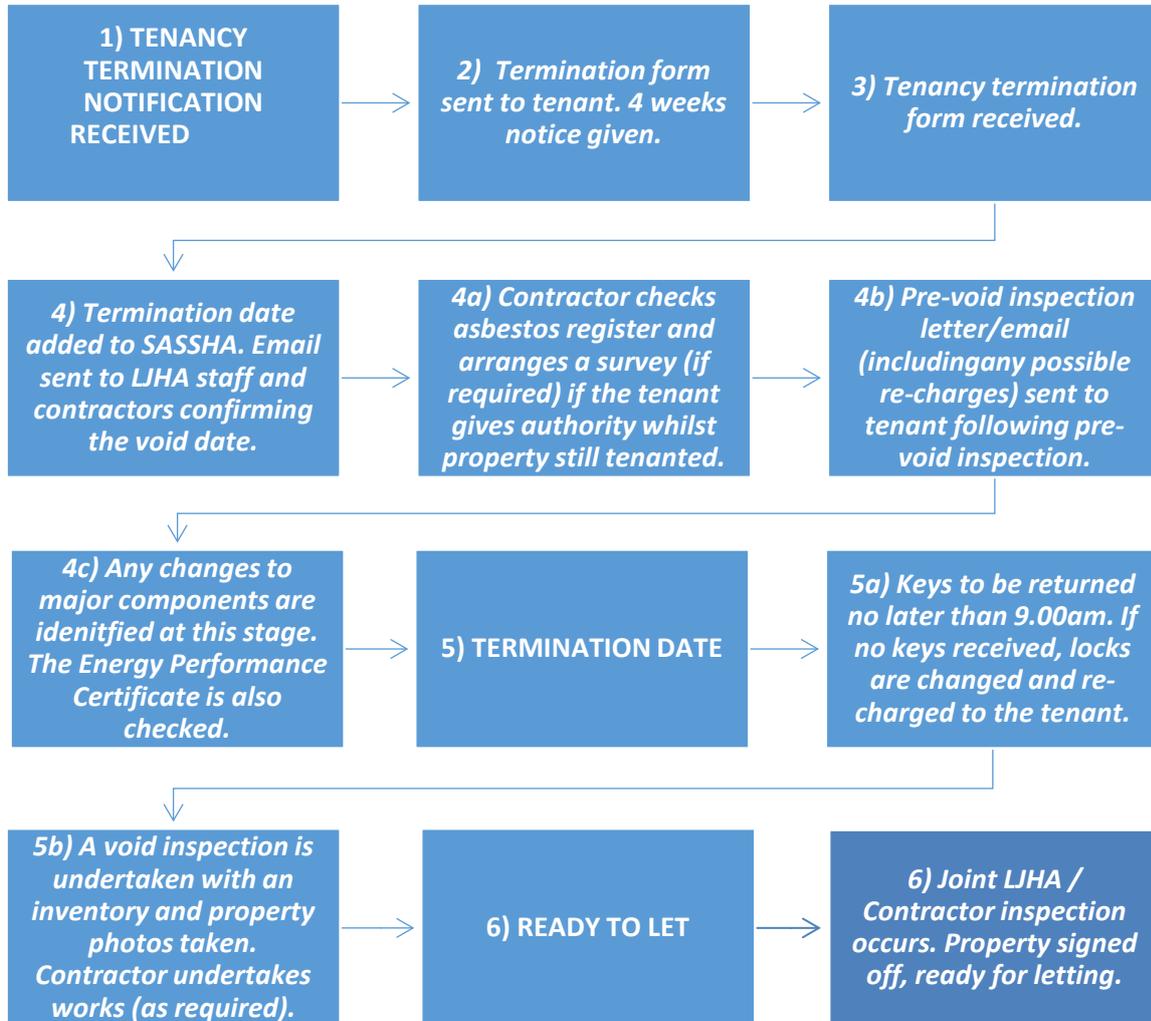
- Prior to letting to the next tenant, a void inspection of the void property is undertaken by the Director of Operations and contractor. An inventory and photographs of the property is undertaken by the Housing Officer. The findings of the void inspection is updated on the SASSHA computer system, and all regulatory works are completed by the contractor.
- The contractor sends an electronic copy of all documents with regulatory requirements to the LJHA's Repairs Co-ordinator who then updates the SASSHA computer system. This then automatically updates LJHA's stock condition computer system.
- A work schedule is then produced by the contractor, in conjunction with LHJA items decided as rechargeable or allocated to the correct budget. Works are then ordered.

5.5 Ready to Let

- The contractor then confirms an estimated ready-to-let date with the Housing Manager within 1 working day of the void inspection.
- A joint post inspection is undertaken with the Director of Operations and Contractors' representative to ensure that the works have been completed and that the property meets the lettable standard.
- Once ready to let date is given by the contractor a CP12 and gas check is arranged just prior to actual let.
- Regulatory works are carried out during the void period (Energy Performance Certificate if required, electrical testing, smoke testing, etc.) whilst non-regulatory works (if appropriate) can be conducted after the new tenant has moved in. A list of all works that will be undertaken is given to the new tenant prior to commencement of their tenancy.

Appendix 1: Procedure Flow Chart

The procedure flow chart below provides an abbreviated indicative summary of the steps involved in the Empty Property (Voids) procedure. Whilst providing a useful summary, staff should follow the processes in the section '**Staff Procedure and Guidance: Key Processes**' shown on Page 4 of this document as the main source of guidance.



Appendix 2: List and Location of Controlled Forms

A list of controlled forms associated with LJHA's Empty Property (Voids) procedure can be seen below. *Where forms are managed by external organisations, hyperlinks are provided.*

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Document Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Pre-Void Inspection	Pre-Void Form	Housing Services, Admin, Current forms and templates