

EMPTY HOMES STANDARD

FEBRUARY 2023 (Approved)

This document describes the standard to be achieved for all empty homes before they are re-let to incoming customers

Overview

All empty homes will be brought back to a standard that Alliance Homes is proud to let and new customers are happy to live in as their long-term home.

All empty homes, including any outside spaces and communal areas (where appropriate), will be made safe, secure, and free from any obvious defects or disrepair.

Decisions about the inclusion of any 'programmed' replacement work (eg new kitchen) will be made in the 28-day Notice to Vacate period. The decision will be informed by the incoming customer's wishes (where the incoming customer is known).

On occasions where programmed replacement works are deferred until after a new customer has moved in, the customer will be kept fully informed about when those works are scheduled to complete.

On completion of all works the property will be cleaned throughout in accordance with the cleaning standards set out in the current cleaning contract.

1 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Every empty home will comply with the following requirements before it is let:

- **Electrical Test Safety Certificate** – we will ensure that all Empty homes have a valid Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) or Electrical Installation Certificate (EIC) in place
- **The Gas Safety (Installations and Use) Regulations 1994** – we will ensure that all Empty Homes have benefited from an inspection of gas installations, appliances and associated components. In all cases a gas safety check will be carried out prior to handover of keys.
- **Asbestos** – we will carry out an asbestos survey on all empty homes where asbestos is present or suspected. All high-risk asbestos will be removed. Low-risk forms (for example, artex surface coverings) will only be removed if disturbance is required to those surfaces as part of the void works.
- **Legionella** – we will carry out a 5-minute flush of all water outlets (including WC's, showers, and all taps including outside taps) and bring hot water tanks up to temperature (minimum 60 degrees for 5 minutes) at the start of the void period and just before handover when the property is ready for letting
- **Fire doors** – all fire doors will be checked to ensure they comply fully with all regulatory requirements

- **Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)** – a valid EPC will be provided to new customers. See 'Energy Performance' below:

2 ENERGY PERFORMANCE

Where practical, each home will meet at least a category 'C' on the Energy Performance Certificate. Where this is not possible, assets colleagues will provide guidance on the most appropriate course of action to follow.

3 EMPTY HOMES CATEGORIES

We will adopt the following empty home categories to distinguish the investment that will be required for each empty property in terms of overall cost.

The target turnaround time for each void will be determined with reference to the Schedule of Rates Standard Minute Values.

- **Category A <£5k**

Homes which require minimal work to meet the void standard. Work includes fixing all broken elements to match existing materials in the home.

Examples of work: Change locks, ease and adjust doors, realign kitchen doors/drawers, fix dripping taps, re silicone, plastering repairs, tidy a well-maintained garden and make good decorations / provide a paint pack.

- **Category B £5-20k**

Homes that require additional work to meet the void standard. Examples of extra work required may include replastering walls / rooms, replacing internal doors, linings, architraves, skirtings, replacing kitchen/ bathroom items, fully re decorating rooms. Minor work to meet EPC rating C (eg Increasing loft insulation).

- **Category C >£20k**

Homes that require full refurbishment work, including remodelling and more significant work to meet EPC rating C. Examples include replacing floors, replacing ceilings, replastering throughout, replacing all timber work, re-landscaping gardens, installing patios, complete fence replacement, replacing/ demolishing outbuildings. In these cases properties may be taken out of management - refer to out of management guidelines

4 DAMP AND MOULD

Any signs of damp and mould will be fully investigated to rule out any underlying buildings related causes eg faulty guttering, internal / external leaks, inadequate levels of insulation, inadequate levels of ventilation. Where there are significant indications of damp and mould the Empty Homes Manager should be consulted to

determine whether a full damp and mould survey needs to be completed BEFORE any work is carried out at the property.

5 GENERAL WORKS STANDARDS

Roofs, guttering and drainpipes

- Roofs, guttering and drainpipes will be clear, secure, working correctly and watertight prior to the home being relet.
- If a new roof is required, the surveyor will provide photographic evidence and a short written summary of why the roof needs replacing to assetdata@alliancehomes.org.uk and they will confirm whether the roof needs to be added to the roofing programme.
- If the roof requires patch repair, please refer to ACT so they can arrange for a repair to be undertaken

Internal Flooring and Staircases

- Floorboards/ sheet flooring will be fixed securely and not standing proud
- Loose floor tiles will be removed and replaced, or latex filled, or new carpet / vinyl provided if more cost effective
- Staircases, including treads, will be secure and defect free
- Balusters will be spaced no more than 100mm apart, centres or horizontal rails that can be used for climbing will be fully boxed in and a handrail securely fitted to one side of stairs
- Any homes with a spiral staircase will be referred to the Empty Homes Manager for a decision to be made on whether it should be replaced
- Inadequate levels of noise insulation will be improved (for example by removing hard flooring installed by previous occupants) where there have been complaints of noise transference in relation to neighbouring properties

Carpeting Standards

- Existing carpets that are in good condition will be left in situ – and cleaned if necessary – unless requested otherwise by the incoming tenant
- In first floor flats and above with timber floors, we will fit either a sound proofing flooring material and/or carpets wherever possible to assist with minimising noise transfer
- New carpeting may be fitted at some properties, to be agreed by the Empty Homes Manager and Tenancy Services Manager– for example, where an empty property is ‘hard to let’ and fitting carpeting or another flooring solution will improve letting turnaround times. The budget for carpeting will be held separately from the void budget and be controlled by the Tenancy Services Manager

Curtains and curtain poles

- Good condition curtain poles will be left in situ
- Curtain battens will be fitted throughout with overhang per side of reveal

Cabling, electric sockets, light bulbs

- LED Lightbulbs will be provided throughout
- Telephone and TV ariel cabling will be clipped and not left trailing or loose
- An electric socket with USB connection will be installed in the lounge and kitchen
- Electrical sockets and switches will be replaced (to include USB sockets) if they cannot be satisfactorily cleaned to match freshly decorated surfaces

Fireplaces

- Open fireplaces will be blocked-in and vented

Rubbish and infestations

- All rubbish will be removed
- Infestations (eg fleas) will be treated whilst the property is empty
- The property will be left clean and tidy

6 WATER SERVICES STANDARDS

- Mains stop tap and gate valves will be fully operational.
- Sure stops will be fitted where feasible.
- Taps to bathroom/kitchen will be fully operational, free from corrosion and turned with ease
- Waste drainage will be free from corrosion and working correctly
- Spigot wastes to kitchen sinks will be capped with a spigot cap
- Where an opening for a washing machine is available, connections will be in place and working correctly and an anti-vibration mat will be supplied

7 EXTERNAL DOORS STANDARDS

- Locks will be changed with 3 keys/fobs supplied for each lock
- Front doors will be fitted with a door chain where possible
- Door closers (where required) will be fully operational and to current standards
- Door frames will be sound and secure

8 INTERNAL DOORS STANDARDS

- Doors will be fully operational (ease where necessary, ensure handles and latch works correctly)

- All internal doors will match
- Split doors will be repaired or replaced
- Holed doors will be to be repaired with 2pac filer or replaced
- Door frames will be sound and secure

9 WINDOW AND VENTILATION STANDARDS

- All holed or cracked glazing will be replaced
- Main window panes will be replaced if 'misted'. (NB This might be scheduled for completion after the property has been let. Any misted 'fan light' windows will be replaced on a programme)
- Windows that can be opened will have appropriate latches and catches that operate fully and correctly
- Lockable window handles will be fitted throughout with keys supplied
- All trickle vents will be functioning correctly
- All windows above ground floor will have window restrictors which are operating correctly
- Silicone to window trims will be in good clean condition
- NB Ventilation standards for properties used for temporary accommodation will be to a higher specification (for example, providing additional powered extraction units) to counter the higher density occupation levels

10 INTERNAL DECORATIONS STANDARDS

- Walls and ceilings will be made good, and skimmed where required
- All surfaces that require it will be decorated in a neutral colour throughout (to create a blank canvas) unless the incoming customer agrees otherwise or the existing décor is in good order and of contemporary design
- If needed, woodwork will be decorated throughout, and woodwork will be replaced where required
- If needed, radiators will be painted

11 KITCHENS STANDARDS

- Vinyl flooring will be fitted correctly with no tears/trip hazards
- Worktops will be free from scratches, un-scorched and not blown. Replace all if unable to match
- New worktops will be joined using jointing strips
- Missing end trims to worktops will be replaced
- Wall and base units will be defect free and secure including fully operational unit doors and drawers. Replace all if unable to match
- Wall tiles will be sound and secure. (Cracked tiles will be replaced, grout will be clean with gaps filled, silicone will be replaced if mouldy or peeling).

Replace all if unable to match – and consider installing splash back for a more contemporary look

- The 'insert' edge of the worktop will be sealed before a sink is fitted.
- The sink will be free from corrosion, impact damage and will drain correctly
- The sink plug and chain will be in place and secure
- Kitchen taps will be clean and easy to operate
- All plumbing will be defect free
- An electric cooker point will be installed
- An extractor fan will be fitted and operational
- Fused spurs will be clearly labelled.

12 BATHROOM STANDARDS

- Vinyl flooring will be fitted correctly with no tears/trip hazards
- Wall tiles will be sound and secure, cracked tiles will be replaced with matching tiles, grout to be clean and sound, Silicone to be replaced if mouldy or peeling). If unable to match, replace all or consider using splashback panels for a more contemporary finish
- An over-bath shower will be provided and functioning correctly
- A new shower curtain will be fitted unless the bathroom is being completely renewed in which case a half shower screen will be fitted with correct size curtain (depending on over bath / walk in shower)
- Shower heads and hose to be replaced with new
- WC seats will be replaced
- The WC will be fully functioning, with a clean and stain free bowl
- Any enamel chips to the bath will be repaired
- The wash hand basin will be free from corrosion, damage and will drain correctly
- Splashback tiles/ panels will be in place behind the washbasin
- The sink plug and chain will be in place and secure
- Taps will be clean and easy to operate
- An extractor fan will be fitted and fully operational
- The bathroom door will be lockable

13 ROOF SPACE STANDARDS

- The loft space will be cleared of all effects and rubbish
- A storage platform (approximate size 1m²) will be in place at the attic hatch
- Roof insulation will be in place to a minimum depth of 300mm and evenly spread (NB work required to upgrade the roof insulation will be added to the insulation programme)

14 GARDEN STANDARDS

- Garden boundaries will be in place and clearly identified (consult with Assets colleagues if the boundary line is unclear)
- Gardens will be in a manageable and tidy condition.
- Turf or seed will be laid to grassed areas (depending on the season)
- Paths, paving, tarmac, and concrete will be solid, safe and free from trip hazards
- Fencing, walls & gates will be safe, secure and erected correctly
- A clothes line/ rotary line will be supplied and in good working order
- All rubbish will be removed
- Any garden ponds will be removed and filled in
- Where practical, we will install an outside tap and isolator for properties with adjacent gardens
- Where practical, we will provide an external socket and isolator for properties with adjacent gardens

15 SHEDS/OUTHOUSES STANDARDS

- Mortice locks/rim locks will be supplied with 2 keys per lock
- Doors will be fully operational (ease where necessary, ensure handles and latch work correctly)
- Sheds / outhouses will be correctly numbered
- If a shed installed by a previous customer is in good condition, it will be cleared of any rubbish and gifted to the incoming tenant
- All potentially dangerous stand-alone sheds, outbuildings, and lean to covered walkways will be removed

16 COMMUNAL AREAS STANDARDS

- Decorating of communal area will be flagged for future 'programmed' works
- Any repairs required in communal areas will be reported and addressed through the responsive repairs service
- All redundant key safes will be removed
- If needed, cleaning will be completed in communal areas prior to relet

17 COMMUNAL DOORS STANDARDS

- All broken or boarded glass will be reported and addressed via the responsive repairs service
- 3 keys/ fobs will be provided for all communal doors
- If fitted, door entry systems will be fully operational

18 CLEANING STANDARDS

- All properties will be professionally cleaned before the property is handed back for letting - to include cleaning windows, wiping down surfaces and cupboards, wiping skirting boards, cleaning bathrooms, cleaning front and back doors, cleaning toilets and hoovering throughout.

19 BALCONIES STANDARDS

- Where present, all balconies must be structurally sound, with safe and secure balustrades / barriers in place that comply with the appropriate building regulations