



Empty Homes and Lettings

Void Management Policy

Regulation and Legislation	This policy links to the Regulator of Social Housing Homes Standard; The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985; The Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1983; The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998; Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002, Homes (Fitness for human Habitation) Act 2018, The Charter for Social Housing Residents
Supporting documents	Letting of Homes Policy, Allocations and Lettings Procedure, Responsive Repairs, Lettable Standard, Asset Management Strategy, Asbestos Management Policy, Delivery of Capital Investment Programmes, Electrical Safety Management Plan, Orbit Technical Protocol, Responsive Repairs Policy, Temperature Control Plan, Fire Safety Management Policy, Lifting Management Equipment Policy, Strength System Management Plan and Water Safety Plan, Lettable Standard, Deceased Customer and Succession procedure, Disposal of Goods Procedure, Rechargeable Repairs Procedure, Gifting Procedure
Scope	This policy sets, out the way Orbit will repair and manage our void properties for our general needs, independent living and intermediate homes.
Reference to “Orbit” means Orbit Group which consists of Orbit Group Limited, Orbit Housing Association Limited, Orbit Homes (2020) Limited, Orbit Treasury Limited and Orbit Capital Plc.	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The management of voids is one of Orbit’s key service areas. Void repairs must be clearly defined, and adhere to Orbit’s Lettable Standard, progress documented, and performance reviewed to ensure our obligations are being met. The service must minimise void loss and thus financial loss and to maximise customer satisfaction

2. Aims

- 2.1 Orbit aims to deliver a high quality voids management service that both meets the needs and expectations of customers (internal and external) and represents value for money. We look to achieve these aims through a comprehensive suite of procedures and monitoring mechanisms.
- 2.2 This policy sets out the core principles to be adopted by Orbit to achieve the following outcomes;

- Comply with legal duties and regulatory requirements.
- Customers in housing need can be housed with the minimum of delay
- Reduce the time taken to re-let homes and maximise rental income
- Ensure customers are allocated homes that meet Orbit's Lettable Standard and maximises customer satisfaction
- Ensure outgoing customers are aware of their responsibilities prior to termination, to minimise void costs and rechargeable repairs
- Contribute to the development of sustainable, thriving communities by reducing the impact of empty homes on the community
- Adheres to our Asset Management Strategy.

3. Health & safety and regulatory requirements

- 3.1 Orbit carries out repairs in line with legal and statutory obligations, to safeguard the health, safety and security of customers, other occupants or visitors and to safeguard the building and environment. These obligations are outlined in Orbit's Responsive Repairs Policy and aforementioned Lettable Standard which includes gas, electric, asbestos, water, lifting equipment and fire prevention compliance management.
- 3.2 Orbit ensures that it meets the Construction, Design and Management Regulations (CDM) 2015 in the management of voids relating to repairs undertaken by Orbit's appointed contractors and their subcontractors.
- 3.3 Orbit classifies void properties as 'closed sites' for the works duration and will ensure that all inspections and work undertaken at properties is carried out in accordance with Health & Safety guidance and regulation.
- 3.4 Orbit will ensure that staff will work in accordance with the Lone Working Policy when inspecting properties, carrying out accompanied viewings or applicant assessments as necessary.

4. Definition

- 4.1 A property is void when the tenancy has been ended and the property is unoccupied. The keys are available, either by return from the customer or agreed change of locks with the relevant Lettings or Independent Living team. During this period no rental income is received.

5. Principles

5.1 Orbit

Teams within Orbit will work together in an open co-ordinated way to ensure effective voids management, with a strong focus on compliance and customer service.

- 5.2 Lettings staff are responsible for the key-to-key management of the process, from notice through to sign up.
- 5.3 Voids Delivery staff are responsible for managing the performance of the contractors and

for meeting the lettable standard.

5.4 Detailed procedures and systems are in place and underpin the delivery of this Policy and the steps to be taken to ensure the outcomes in 1.1 are achieved.

5.5 Standards

5.6 Orbit has a [Lettable Standard](#) in place supported by procedures which set out how we administer the management of voids awaiting letting and disposal.

5.7 All elements relating to safety compliance are contained within the relevant policy and management plan owned and published by the Responsive Repairs and Property Safety team. These include Fire, Gas, Electrical, Asbestos, Water and Lifting Equipment.

5.8 Orbit ensures a valid Energy Performance Certificate and EICR is available and issued to the customer as well as a legionella certificate, Asbestos survey and valid gas safety certificate where appropriate.

5.9 Customers

5.10 Customer responsibility and obligations for maintaining their home in line with the tenancy conditions is made clear within the terms of the tenancy agreement. Expectations are set out as part of the Tenancy sign up and as part of any review / support visits and tenancy audits carried out for existing customers.

5.11 Orbit recognises the cost to the customer and the organisation arising from tenancy failure. As part of the allocation process a sustainability assessment is carried out to minimise the risk of tenancy failure and subsequent void costs.

5.12 We aim to carry out pre-termination inspections, to clarify and confirm with the customer their responsibilities regarding the ending of their tenancy and to inform the management of void works.

5.13 Gas and Electric supplies are transferred to our partner provider. This ensures utility supplies to allow compliance checks and a better customer experience with regard to the taking on of utilities and clearance of any debts left by previous customers.

5.14 Photographs of the void are taken at completion inspection by the Area Inspector for voids. The sign up process for new customers includes a "sign up checklist" which confirms the condition of the property at the start of the tenancy and is signed and agreed by both customer and staff.

5.15 The Customer Handbook provides clarity on Landlord / customer responsibility. This is issued to the customers at the start of their tenancy and is available as an electronic document on the website.

5.16 We will seek the views of customers on the standard to which empty homes have been let to them through customer feedback and will seek insight of the customer experience through service review groups and other customer involved activities, including surveys

5.17 These results will influence improvements to the service offered where these have been identified and are reasonable and achievable within operational constraints and legal requirements.

5.18 We will give consideration to the issue of security of empty homes and to the community and environmental impact of options such as security screening.

5.19 Adaptations to Properties

5.20 Where a property has had major adaptations, these adaptations will remain and the allocations process will be used to identify a customer who has relevant needs. Major adaptations will only be removed where they are having a significant and detrimental impact on the letting of the property.

5.21 Damage and disposal of goods

5.22 Where damage has been caused to the property by the outgoing tenant, or is due to lack of due care and attention, consideration will be given to recovery of these costs in accordance with the Orbit policy on rechargeable repairs.

5.23 Where goods are left in a property at the end of a tenancy Orbit will either dispose of, or store the items in line with its Disposal of Goods Procedure, and recharge in line with our policy on rechargeable repairs. Or will gift carpets and curtains where suitable and in line with procedure. White goods, including cookers, will be removed to ensure safety, with the exception to any goods that form part of the tenancy e.g. intermediate rented properties.

5.24 Appraisal of voids

6.1 Where a property is scheduled for planned maintenance works, consideration will be given to bringing these forward, where it is practical and feasible, to enable these to be completed whilst the property is empty to minimise the impact of such works on future customers.

6.2 Orbit will dispose of properties in line with its Asset Management Strategy.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

- The Head of Empty Homes and Lettings is responsible for the delivery and monitoring of the policy.
- The Voids Delivery team is responsible for day- to- day service delivery.
- The Contracts Operation Manager is responsible for overseeing day-to day service delivery, performance and budget expenditure.
- The Head of Empty Homes and Lettings is responsible for overall performance and internal control of the policy

8. Performance Controls and Business Risk

8.1 Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Head of Empty Homes and Lettings

- 8.2 Void performance is monitored by the Head of Empty Homes and Lettings across all categories (minor, major and specialist) with each having their own target completion time. This reporting is used to drive contractor performance. In addition the Head of Empty Homes and Lettings monitors re-let times, void loss and expenditure against void repair budgets. These KPI's are reported monthly to CS SMT.
- 8.3 The effectiveness of the policy and associated procedures will be monitored by key performance indicators, reported to CS SMT monthly.
- 8.4 Orbit will carry out a fundamental review of this policy every three years subject to legal, regulatory changes or in accordance with the agreed Policy Review programme.

9. Essential information

- 9.1 All Orbit policies and procedures are developed in line with our approach to the following, data protection statement, equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) approach, complaints policy and our regulatory and legal obligations to ensure we deliver services in a lawful manner and treat people equally and fairly. Details of these are found on the declaration document for strategy policy and procedure summary and have been an integral part of the formulation of this document. Orbit's privacy policy can be accessed on our website www.orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/publications/policies/

EA	Equality Analysis was reviewed in September and is available to view.
DPIA	A DPIA was reviewed in September and is available to view.
Consultation	Internal: n/a as this was a desktop review with minor changes to team names and providing clarity to statements External:
Applies to	Empty Homes and Lettings, Responsive Repairs, Property Improvements, Property Safety, Health & Safety, CSC, Policy and Standards, Orbit Independent Living, Tenancy Services

Document control

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Next review		Quarter 2 2025

Extension date	Extension reason	Approved by

Revision History

Version Number Date Comments / Reason for revision

Version Number	Date	Comments / Reason for revision
V2.1	Sept 2022	Amendments made to team names and clarity to sentences made