

Stirling Tenants Project

# Review of Void Policy and Procedure

Spring 2012



## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report has been compiled for Stirling Council Housing Services by a Tenant Led Inspection Team. The report provides feedback and makes recommendations to improve the void process and procedure.
- 1.2 Stirling Tenants Project supported the inspection. Stirling Council gave permission for and provided funding for the inspection.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 This is the 6<sup>th</sup> Tenant Led Inspection that has been completed since the inspections started up in 2003.
- 2.2 Tenant Led Inspections are a way of getting tenants involved in the review and development of the service. Small groups of tenants (inspection teams) select an area of service and inspect that service to find out what works well and what could be done better.
- 2.3 The purpose of the inspection is to see whether the service is running as intended. Inspections aim to identify whether practice reflects policy and also to identify where aspects of the service could be improved. Findings are fed back to housing management staff as part of the formal consultation.
- 2.4 Tenant Inspectors were recruited on the back of the April Open day in 2011 and from an advert for Inspectors in autumn 2011 edition of the Open Door.

## **3.0 Structure of the report**

- 3.1 The report outlines the inspection methods used by the tenant inspector teams and sets out their findings. The report establishes whether the void policy and procedure is working well, and whether the process runs in line with the appropriate policy. It identifies areas for improvement, makes recommendations and highlights further information that tenant inspectors feel they would like.

## **3.2 The Inspection**

The Inspection team were: Maria Balfour (Raploch), Cathy Traynor (Top of the Town), Alexander Lamb (Riverside), Philomena McClung (Braehead), Meg Amasi (Raploch), Jean Cuthbert( Braehead), Janet Parneil( Braehead),John Graham( Bannockburn), Alan Brown( Cultenhove) and Alex Walker( Callender)

The inspectors were support by: Emma Meldrum from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)

Stirling Council staff directly involved with this inspection were: Lindsay Rae (Technical Supervisor), Tom Howden (Repairs Manager), John McGill Supervisor), Neil Newlands (Area Housing Manager)

#### **4.0 How the void process works in practice**

In general the Allocations team will receive an end of tenancy form from the tenant who is giving up their council tenancy. The end of tenancy form gives the council 28 days notice that the tenant intends to relinquish their tenancy. As soon as the Council receives the end of tenancy form, they must allocate the property within 24 hours.

Once a property has been allocated, the officer will carry out checks on the applicant to ensure that the points that the applicant has been awarded are correct. The applicant will then receive a formal offer of the property. Prior to the keys being returned from technical services the Allocations Officer will contact the applicant to ensure that they are interested in the property.

Once Allocations receive the keys of the empty property, they are sent the same day down to technical services, so that technical services can start carrying out the repairs to the void property.

Once keys are available the applicant is contacted and within 3\* days the applicant must arrange a viewing of the property and make a decision either way on whether they are taking the property. Once a tenant signs up, the tenancy commences 3 working days after the viewing.

\* reduced from 5 days to 3 days on back of recent allocations policy review

#### **5.0 Methods used in this inspection**

5.1 The methods used in this inspection were as follows:

- Tenant questionnaires
- Staff questionnaires
- Information sharing sessions with specific staff members with question and answer sessions
- Session on explanation of current policy and procedures
- Session on lettable and standards with inspectors
- Visits to void properties before and after
- Meeting with Void Supervisor and staff

5.2 In preparation for carrying out the inspection, Tenant Inspectors also:

- Reviewed relevant void policy and procedures

5.3 All comments have been treated in the strictest confidence. Feedback is not attributable to individual tenants or staff members. Instead the information gained from this review will demonstrate whether practice relates to actual policies and procedures. All Inspectors have signed a code of conduct and confidentiality agreement and have undergone training sessions on the background of past inspections

## **Methods and Results of Inspection**

### **6.0 Tenant Questionnaires**

6.1 The Tenant Inspectors decided upon the questionnaire that would be issues to tenants.

6.2 The questions that were chosen allowed tenants to add in additional information if they wanted and the questions picked also covered off all different aspects of the void process and procedure: condition of the property, timescales of the process, overall service and suggestions for improvements.

6.3 Data was collated from Northgate, which provided a list of all tenants who had moved into a property in the last 12 months, which gave a list of 312 tenants.

6.4 The group decided that we would go out for 2 - 2-hour sessions in May, splitting up into groups and visiting different local areas. One group visited Raploch, the other Cornton and the last group visited Cultenhove.

6.5 However on the day the weather was atrocious that hindered the group's progress somewhat. Not many people were in and out of 4 hours of walking about; the group only got 5 tenants in.

6.6 As a back up to face-to-face visits, each tenant also received a letter and a questionnaire, with a pre paid envelope asking them to return it. On writing the report we have received 45 responses (22.05.12)

6.7 Responses were varied and highlighted that the level of service varied significantly. The comments noted below are written word for word and contain a variety of positive and negative responses.

## 6.8 Summary of Responses

Question 1	Responses	Comments
Were you happy with the condition of the property when you moved in	21 not happy with the condition at all (47%)	
Question 2		
Were you happy with the timescales from first viewing the house till getting your keys and moving in	29 happy with the timescales 6 would have liked longer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would to have had more time to inspect property and organise repair schedule</li> <li>• No not enough time to pack. Clear and sort things out</li> <li>• Absolutely- process went very smoothly indeed- excellent service</li> </ul>
Question 3		
Do you think that 5 days is sufficient enough time for tenants to agree to accept a particular property after receiving the offer letter	13 would have liked longer to accept the property after receiving the letter (however I think some tenants misconstrued the question and thought it was asking about the moving in time opposed to the time scale that tenants are given from offer letter to accepting the property	
Question 4		
Were you happy with the overall service that you received	29 happy with the overall service 4 were not happy 7 did not answer question	
Question 5		
Can you suggest areas for improvements		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, was happy with everything</li> <li>• The workings of the house was not explained to me- it was a struggle to find</li> </ul>

		<p>out about rubbish collections and how heating worked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give people more time to move in</li> </ul>
Question 6	Do you have any other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promised first grass cut by Council and also to be shown how to use heating- neither happened</li> <li>• Council fixed issues in a timely manner</li> <li>• The work men were great</li> <li>• Still waiting for repairs to be carried out</li> <li>• Repairs to slow</li> <li>• Better communication</li> <li>• Walls should be papered, woodwork painted so that you can move in straight away</li> <li>• Gardens should be in a fit state- cut grass- paving moss free and hedges/trees cut back to a manageable level</li> </ul>

### 6.9 Positive Comments

- Absolutely- process went very smoothly indeed- excellent service
- Yes at time but soon after discovered various faults- some of which have still not been fixed
- Yes very happy with property when moved in

## 6.10 Negative Comments

- It was very dirty
- Garden was really bad
- Looked okay at first, but now rotten with damp and not sure when it is getting sorted out
- Not a single room was in a liveable standard

## 6.11 Summary of tenant's responses

It is apparent from these responses that some have had a better experience than others, which should not be the case, as all tenants should receive the same level of service. However it should be highlighted that Housing and Customer Service had carried out a significant amount of work recently to identify gaps in the void process and procedure, and on the back of this scrutiny, a new void process has been implemented, which going forward should ensure that all tenants receive the same level of service.

## 7.0 Staff Interviews

7.1 Another part of the Inspection was asking various staff within Customer and Housing Service their own views and thoughts on the void process and procedure. The tenants all worked together in designing the questions, they ensured that the staff were given the opportunity to discuss all aspects of the process and were able to comment anonymously. Comments varied from staff, dependent on what area they worked in.

7.2 All responses were treated as confidential

### 7.3 Feedback from Staff

7.4 Below highlights some of the comments that staff made about the void process and procedure

<p>Question 1</p> <p>Do you think that there are any gaps in the void process/procedure?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing officers should liaise with technical services when they are going to property with tenants to ensure that the commissioning of boiler takes place in a timely manner, opposed to it being left up to the tenant who will call to report it, which it is then classed as 24 emergency, which results in often repairs being missed as tenants is fleeing between 2 properties</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also housing officer to show tenant how to use heating- or get trades man to show then when they are there commissioning boiler</li> <li>• Lengthy delay between keys being sent to technical services and being returned to allocations</li> <li>• Confusion with where ending your tenancy forms can be handed in (local offices, view forth or customer first) Forms mean to be checked by local team and are received without being checked by staff- training is required to ensure that Housing</li> <li>• Officers aware of allocations process</li> <li>• More could be done to creating a better basic standard for lets</li> <li>• Skimming rough walls and better thought on lay out of sockets in properties</li> <li>• More attention to clearing the garden prior to reletting and viewings</li> <li>• Properties not always completed to a very high standard sometimes very obvious repairs missed (pressure on building service to meet 28 days deadline)</li> <li>• Closer monitoring of repairs</li> <li>• Administration support to control the energy company change over- this would free up a lot of time</li> </ul>
<p>Question 2 What difficulties do you face during the handover process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some properties not fit to let, with may properties have obvious repairs that are not picked up</li> <li>• Often fobs( door entry keys) are not given to either service (whether allocations of technical services)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring of keys and you don't get an expected date of when property will be finished</li> <li>• Better lines of communication between housing and technical services- particular when keys are expected back and at what stage is the property is at</li> <li>• New décor allowance is causing delays due to new admin process, meaning that sometimes allowance not received till well after tenancy started</li> <li>• Repairs are an issue</li> <li>• Fobs are a big problem- confusion regarding who is actually responsible, it would make sense for Inspectors to be able to order up fobs if required</li> </ul>
<p>Question 3 Are you aware of any voids policies and procedures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff aware of policies and procedures</li> </ul>
<p>Question 4 What do you think Housing Services do well regarding the void process and procedure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a décor allowance</li> <li>• Provide comprehensive info at sign up</li> <li>• Settling in officer will attend 4 weeks after tenancy has started</li> <li>• Pre tenancy visit organised to ensure tenant knows what they need</li> <li>• We provide a lot of information relating to the tenancy and support</li> <li>• Early inspection of the property</li> <li>• Liaise with utility companies to ensure dates end dates and meter readings are accurate</li> <li>• EPC 's issued when property void</li> <li>• Replacement of kitchens /bathrooms /heating will be carried out if void property due for its investments works within 1</li> </ul>

	<p>year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of pay point machine at Springkerse</li> <li>• We get the properties processed quickly considering the resources that are available</li> </ul>
<p>Question 5 What improvements could be made</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decorate and freshen up properties to make it more attractive for prospective tenants which would reduce refusal rate</li> <li>• Faster turnaround time</li> <li>• Better working relationship</li> <li>• Key monitoring system</li> <li>• Better communication between the 2 departments</li> <li>• Heating manual in every void property</li> <li>• More emphasis on getting a place in a state of repair prior to getting let</li> <li>• All properties should be checked prior to reletting- many repairs are outstanding</li> <li>• Remove the 28 day turn around</li> <li>• SC need to manage tenants expectations by advertising rights and responsibilities, lettable standard and tenant responsibilities</li> </ul>
<p>Question 6 Do you have any other relevant comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All tenants should have same standard of property in relation to state of repair and readiness</li> <li>• Void process has improved greatly over last few months due to change in procedure and workforce allocation- this will in turn improve turn around of properties</li> </ul>

## 7.5 Summary

These comments substantiate that the standard of properties do vary and there are communication issues; relating to keys, progress of repairs, arranging times for commissioning of boilers and ownership of fobs. Staff also mentioned that tenant's expectations need to be managed; this will be discussed later in the report. It was also suggested that housing officers or heating engineers should show tenants how to operate the heating system, so that tenants are fully aware of how to use their heating systems efficiently. As mentioned earlier, changes to the void team/process has been implemented and some of the staff issues raised will be mitigated by these recent changes.

## 8.0 The Current Void Process

8.1 The group looked at the current void process and compared it to the previous process.

- Tenancy is ended
- Void Supervisor picks up keys from allocations team
- Void Supervisor visits property and completes walk round sheet
- Void Supervisor returns to Springkerse Yard and walk round sheets are copied and job recorded on Void board and specific repair jobs inserted into each void specific trade's docket.
- Trades Supervisor then checks if the void property is due any capital investment works within the next year: if so this info will be displayed on board and spread sheet updated on the data base. (It is hoped that this work will be completed within 3 weeks)
- When trades complete their jobs within the void property, they tick off their box on the whiteboard.
- Void Supervisor goes back out to the void property to check that all the work has been carried out. If any works are still outstanding the voids trades will be sent back in ASAP to complete.
- Copies of the walk in sheets are attached in Appendix 3, each room will be viewed and repairs and issues picked up and noted on the form. The attached form indicates a typical void property.
- When the property becomes empty one of the Allocations administrators will; call the existing utility company to let them know that the tenant has left and for the next few weeks Stirling Council will be paying for any power that is used. The meters are read by technical services as soon as they enter the property, prior to any repairs being carried out, once the repairs are completed the meters are read again and number duly noted and passed to Allocations. Once the new tenancy starts, allocations will contact the utility company to tell them who the new tenant is, and provide the utility company

with the meter reading. The Council will then settle any outstanding balance that the Council are due.

## **8.2 Summary**

It can be seen that the new process is more effective and a better use of resource, due to the dedicated voids trades team now being established. Also with the recruitment of Trades Supervisor, this means that there will be close monitoring of each void property, with the void board and spread sheet being updated in a timely manner. The visibility of the void white board also will act as an incentive for the voids team as they can visually see their progress on a daily basis. This board and spreadsheet also means that any other member of staff can access the progress of any void property. Trades supervisor mentioned that he is happy for staff to call or e-mail to establish the progress of each void and will also mention the reasoning behind any delay in handover (e.g. installation of capital investments). The group were very pleased to hear that capital investments are now being installed into empty properties, if they are due to be done within the next 12 months, however they did note that they only issue with this was that the incoming tenant will not get an opportunity to pick their kitchen, however the general consensus was that tenants would rather move into a newly fitted kitchen, bathroom etc, rather than getting to pick one of the 4 kitchen choice and face the upheaval of getting capital works installed 6 months or so after moving in.

## **9.0 Lettable Standard and Acceptable Standard**

9.1 The group spent time looking at the lettable standard and the acceptable standard. The Lettable standard being the standard that a property MUST be in prior to it being handed over to the tenant. The Council sets the lettable standard. The acceptable standard applies to properties, if a tenant gives up their property, which does not happen on a regular basis.

### 9.2 Lettable Standard

All properties let will:

- Be wind and water tight.
- Have functioning space heating as originally installed.
- Have painted surfaces including all woodwork, doors and window cills which have been cleaned. All floors, cupboards and kitchen units will be clean and cleared.
- Have gas, electric and solid fuel installations that meet relevant regulation. All gas installations will be supplied with a current service certificate.
- Have as a minimum 2 one metre base units (including the sink unit) and two wall units, **OR** built in cupboards. A built in cupboard is equivalent to either one base unit or both wall units. Every kitchen will have a minimum of 1 metre of worktop.
- Have internal pass doors which are operable and whole. Where part or wholly glazed these will be fitted with clearly marked or proven safety glass.
- Have switches and electrical fittings, which are free from paint and are fully operation.

- Be provided with a decoration allowance where wallpaper is torn, falling off or seriously discoloured or where painted surfaces are scraped or heavily soiled.
- Have disused pipes, wiring, etc. removed and the surfaces repaired.
- Have functioning windows and doors.
- Have bathing facilities appropriate to the needs of the tenant.
- Have sanitary ware that is clean, free from major cracks and holes that may cause injury or water leakage.

### **9.3 'Clean'**

The standard mentions that surfaces and cupboards will be clean; the group discussed what the clean standard is, as it was apparent from the questionnaires that the standard of cleanliness varies. Clarity is required on what clean means, is it just a wipe down, or are surfaces dusted and properly cleaned with cleaning products. **A review of the cleaning service would be advisable, to ensure that all houses are actually clean and ready to move into.**

### **9.4 'Kitchen Storage'**

The minimum standard of minimum of 2 metre base unit (including sink) and 2 wall units OR built in cupboards. Minimum of 1 metre of worktop, seems rather meagre, as realistically 2 one meter base units, which includes your sink unit and 2 wall units, will not provide adequate storage say for a family of 4. This would have an initial impact on most families who would move into a property, which has inadequate storage in the kitchen, which in most houses is the heart of the home. This is an area that the Inspectors would like Housing to look into for future developments.

### **9.5 'Internal doors' 'Functioning doors and windows'**

The group asked if all the doors were checked before being handed over- e.g. that the handles worked and that the doors shut properly. They suggested that if this was not the case, then going forward, each door should be checked and a pro forma completed. All windows should be checked to see if they close properly and are in good working order. Again it was suggested that a window pro forma highlighting whether windows close/lock etc should be completed and signed off, leading to a better service and less responsive repairs being carried out in the future.

### **9.6 'Electric Sockets'**

They raised the point here, are all sockets checked prior to handover? It should be that all sockets are checked with an appliance prior to handover, which would reduce inconvenience to tenants and minimise future responsive call outs relating to faulty sockets. The group suggested that a socket pro forma is completed and signed off.

### **9.7 'Decoration Allowance'**

The group were in great debate over this, they indicated that the provision of a decoration allowance provided a service that many tenants in other local authorities do not get and tenants were appreciative of this. However the grant, albeit provides

value for money, often will not stretch to decorate a family house to a standard that allows tenancy sustainment, if you are allocated a house that has basic décor. It was decided that if the walls could be stripped, plastered if required and emulsioned with magnolia paint and that all woodwork painted with white gloss, it would mean that tenants could move into a clean and atheistically pleasing property. It was also noted that the majority of responsive repairs that are carried out soon after moving in are based on repairs that come out of tenants stripping walls down and finding issues with their walls.

They also discussed the possibility of the Council providing a decorating service at cost to tenants who were unable to decorate due to ill health. The group suggested that perhaps the Criminal Justice Team could get involved with providing this service: which will provide a service to customers and also give the Criminal Justice team additional transferable skills. However the group were aware that providing a decorating service does come with issues- such as insurance purposes/acceptable standards etc.

The group also thought if budget allowed that specific staff could be recruited by Housing to purley focus on decorating void properties( it could even be open to apprentices, which would help younger people perhaps gain a trade in the difficult economic climate.)

### **9.9'Bathing facilities suitable to tenant'**

It is key that tenants have suitable bathing facilities- provision of wet floor showers or removal of wet floor if a bath is required. It was noted in some tenant's responses that upon entry into their new home that the bathroom did not have a working shower and that they were without washing facilities for 2 weeks.

### **9.10 Outside Areas**

The group also focused on the importance of having a garden fit for purpose-, which would mean grass/hedges/trees, and scrubs would be cut to a manageable level. Paths or slabbed areas free from moss which limit possible slips or falls. All rubbish and other items to be uplifted from garden areas. Fencing/gates and walls should also be of a suitable standard. It was suggested that Housing should carry out the first cut and clean any paved areas as a matter of course.

### **9.11 Recommendations for Lettable Standards**

- Pro forma for doors/windows and sockets to ensure that they all function correctly
- First cut to be done to garden, including trees/hedges and paths and slabs to be moss free
- External lighting to be checked
- Door entry systems to be checked
- Attics to be cleared from previous tenants belongings
- Widening of doors if new tenant ambulant disabled

- Provision of suitable bathing facilities- wet room provided or removed to ensure adequate facilities provided (communication with internal services need to commence in a timely manner if tenant requires a wet room)
- Provision of decorating service at cost to tenant if unable to carry out own décor due to ill /mental health
- Review of cleaning service to ensure that all properties are actually clean
- Review minimum amount of kitchen cupboards allowed to meet lettable standard
- All properties to be stripped of wall coverings, wall repairs carried out, all walls painted with magnolia and wood work painted with white gloss

### **9.12 Acceptable Standard**

Before a Stirling Council tenant can be made an offer of housing their property must be: -

- Be wind and watertight.
- Have functioning space heating as originally installed.
- All electrical, gas and solid fuel installations will be sound and meet current regulations.
- No focal fires, fire casings, gas fire surrounds or storage heaters will be varnished or painted other than the original finish.
- All component parts of solid fuel fires must be fully operational and hearths should be intact with all tiles whole and in reasonable condition.
- Kitchen cupboards and/or units as installed, with operational doors and drawers.
- Work surfaces will be free from damage.
- All units and work surfaces will be securely fastened to the walls.
- Switches and electrical fittings will be paint and crack free and operational.
- All internal pass doors must be operable and whole and where part or wholly glazed must be clearly fitted with marked or proven safety glass.
- Will be clean and cleared and free from vermin.
- All tenant installations must have Housing Services permission.
- Walls must be to a decodable standard (can be painted or papered) with any disused pipes, wiring etc removed and the surface repaired to a decodable standard.
- Any polystyrene tiles or coving must be removed and the ceiling repaired to a decodable standard.

The group discussed the Acceptable Standard but not in much detail as the inspection is purely focusing on void properties, but it was mentioned that surely let table standard should also be 'clean, cleared and free of vermin' In a few responses, properties were relet with woodworm and ant infestations. The group also discussed that permissions should also be in place for any alterations, however it widely known that not every alteration carried out by the tenant has permission and going forward how can the Council ensure that permissions are given. This is another area for much debate.

### **9.13 Viewing of void properties**

The tenants went to look at 2 different properties, one in Dunblane and one in Fallin. The flat in Dunblane was in a terrible state, with the tenant leaving behind all his belongings and mess. The group were horrified at the state the house had been left in. In this instance the house was emptied, deep cleaned, repairs rectified and decoration carried out in the living area. The group re visited the property approx 2 weeks after the initial visit and were amazed at the difference, the property was totally cleaned up and emptied of all belongings. The group were impressed with the quick turn around of the property.

The property in Fallin was left in a very good state of repair from the previous tenant, with minimum repairs needed. The group were advised that the house would get a clean up and repairs completed and relet.

### **9.14 Summary**

The group were very impressed with how quickly the properties were turned around. They were shocked to hear that many properties are left in a very bad state of repair, which is costly to the service and impacts on the turn around of the properties.

### **10.0 Analysis and Reflection**

On completion of the inspection, the inspection team met as a whole to discuss their findings and the recommendations to be made based on these findings. The group discussed their impressions of the service as a whole and their experience of carrying out the inspection. The inspectors identified the common and recurrent themes from the inspection findings.

### **11.0 General Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1**

That all void properties are stripped and walls repaired, painted white and woodwork glossed with white gloss. This would mean that any hidden problems would be highlighted and reduce any future responsive repairs, for example when a tenant goes to strip off wallpaper and discovers holes or cracks in the walls.

The provision of this would also provide an aesthetically pleasing home to all, and in time tenants could decorate at their own leisure and not feel pressurised into perhaps getting into debt in order to make their property look like a home. Tenants are more likely to sustain a tenancy if they are happy and comfortable in their surroundings.

The provision of this service would have a cost impact and this would have to be weighed up against cost and time of future hidden responsive repairs and also the inconvenience that tenants will suffer whilst these repairs are made

good. Ultimately the provision of standard wall coverings in all void properties would ensure that all tenants are provided with the same blank canvas which would provide them with a home opposed to just some where to live; this would hopefully have an impact on tenancy sustainment and have an affect on the refusal rate of properties.

However providing this service will have a knock on effect to void turn around times, but if there is sufficient resource to carry out this minimum decoration the 28 day turn around should not be adversely affected.

It is recommended that costs are looked at in recruiting void decorating staff in order to accommodate this, these roles could be filled by apprentices, which would offer employment opportunities for younger people living in the local area.

#### Recommendation 2

The provision to tenants of access to discounted carpets with a local carpet provider who could accept payments made on an ongoing basis, which would mean that tenants with low incomes could purchase carpets of floor coverings which again allows their house to become a home. A contract is all ready in place with Youth services who provide grant funding for younger vulnerable tenants through a local carpet provider- perhaps Housing and Customer Service could piggy back on this. The Tenant Participation Officer can research into this contract to see if this is a viable option.

#### Recommendation 3

First cut to be done to garden, including trees/hedges and paths and slabs to be moss free. This would ensure that tenants have a good starting point in order to maintain their tenancies, if gardens are unmanageable at the outset, it is highly likely that ongoing maintenance of gardens will be problematic.

#### Recommendation 4

An annual void tenancy survey should be carried out (similar to the one carried out) this can be carried out by TPAS officer as it will also provide an additional opportunity for tenant participation with new tenants. This survey will monitor how well the service is performing. It might also be beneficial to carry out these surveys every 3 months, opposed to an annual survey.

#### Recommendation 5

The new void process needs to be communicated to all Customer and Housing Services. Information should also be on intranet (internal staff website) and also information should go on the staff noticeboard.

#### Recommendation 6

Further research into how the utilities process operates- could possibly mean that there is a dedicated administrative person for administering of utility transfers etc

#### Recommendation 7

Monitoring of repairs carried out after void properties needs to be carried out to ensure that all repairs are being picked up during the void process. Repairs should be monitored 6 months after tenants move in; this information can be used to ascertain if all void repairs are being picked up at initial survey of the void property.

Recommendation 8

Access to progress of voids sheets made known to Allocations team, so that they can monitor the progress of properties

Recommendation 9

Ensure that fobs are passed from service to service or to communicate that Fobs are required if missing

Recommendation 10

Housing Officers should contact heating trades to organise a time when HO viewing property with tenant so that heating can be commissioned, which will ensure tenants do not have to wait for a 24 hour appointment. This often means that appointments are missed as the tenant is in between 2 properties.

Recommendation 11

Easy to read heating manual should be in every property

Recommendation 12

Housing Officers or heating trades should show the tenant how to properly use the system. This could be done at time tenant's first move in and 2 weeks after to ensure that the tenant is fully aware of how to work the system. Tenants are information over loaded when they move in and may forget how to use the system

Recommendation 13

It is also recognised the Housing and Customer Service must also make it known what tenants should expect from a void property, as it may be the case that some think that they will get x when in fact they will only ever get y.

Articles to run in Open Door/facebook and info passed out to applicants on waiting list in form a bi-annual/annual newsletter/review. This will ensure that illusions are never shattered, as tenants will know what to expect. Training to applicants on the waiting list could also be provided, in order to let applicants know what to expect of their new home and also how to sustain their tenancy.

## 11.1 Recommendations for Lettable Standard

Recommendation 1
Pro forma for doors/windows and sockets to ensure that they all function correctly
Recommendation 2
First cut to be done to garden, including trees/hedges and paths and slabs to be moss free
Recommendation 3
External lighting to be checked
Recommendation 4
Door entry systems to be checked
Recommendation 5
Attics to be cleared from previous tenants belongings
Recommendation 6
Provision of suitable bathing facilities- wet room provided or removed to ensure adequate facilities provided (communication with internal services need to commence in a timely manner if tenant requires a wet room)
Recommendation 7
Provision of decorating service at cost to tenant if unable to carry out own décor due to ill health
Recommendation 8
Review of cleaning service to ensure that all properties are actually clean
Recommendation 9
Review minimum amount of kitchen cupboards allowed to meet lettable standard
Recommendation 10
All properties to be stripped of wall coverings, wall repairs carried out, all walls painted with magnolia and wood work painted with white gloss

## 12.1 Review

Once recommendations have been agreed by the Housing and Customer Service a work plan will be established within 3 months and a review of the void process and procedure will be undertaken by the TLI Inspectors within 12 months from the formal handover of the initial report.

## 12.2 Thanks

The Tenant Inspectors would like to record their thanks to all tenants and staff that gave up their time, staff were open and welcoming and assisted greatly with this the inspection.

