



EMPTY HOMES POLICY

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This document sets out our approach to managing the empty homes we own. The empty homes process includes finding a suitable new resident for the home, preparing the home so that it is ready for letting and completing any asset renewals that are required to the appropriate standard whilst the home is empty.
- 1.2 The policy aims to support our Empty Homes process to:
- Provide good quality homes for the community
 - Make homes available for letting to the community as soon as practical
 - Ensure homes are let to a safe and secure standard and to the agreed quality standards
 - Minimise rent loss to us and our landlord customers
 - Minimise void costs for us and our landlord customers
 - Enforce resident recharges for damage and neglect
 - Ensure residents understand the termination process including their responsibilities
 - Ensure nominations agreements are followed and correctly applied
 - Report on empty homes enabling identification of hard to let homes and development of strategies to minimise them
 - Comply with legislation with regards to gas, electric, asbestos and fire regulations

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Head of Commercial will be responsible for the following, delegating responsibility to the Empty Homes Team leader where appropriate.
- Ensuring that the period a home is empty is kept to a minimum by owning the complete process from tenancy termination to reletting to a new resident
 - Ensuring that staff understand their responsibility for delivering empty home management processes with regard to rent setting, managing the home return standards and the allocations and letting procedures and they are adequately trained to implement the procedures
 - The Health and Safety of staff and applicant visiting an empty home
 - Effective key management and security of empty homes
- 2.2 The Property Pod will be responsible for
- Managing the performance of contractors engaged in working in empty properties

- Ensuring property meets the lettable standard
- Ensuring gas and electrical tests are completed
- Undertaking other compliance checks as necessary i.e. water testing where required
- Draining down systems during inclement weather
- Ensuring the Health and Safety of contractors and staff visiting an empty home.

3. Legal framework

3.1 There are a number of pieces of legislation and regulations relating to our empty homes process including

- Defective Premises Act 1972
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/35/contents>
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/70/contents>
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents>
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/632/contents>
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1998/2451/contents/made>
- Construction Design Management Regulations 2015
- IET Guidance Note 3 – Inspection and Testing
- Homes Standard – Regulator of Social Housing

4. Definitions

4.1 An empty home is a property owned or managed by Red Kite which does not have a resident. Empty Homes are often referred to as a “void” property.

4.2 Empty homes management is the process of managing a property from the start of the notice to quit period to the date a resident moves into their new home and after care check ins. The process mainly involves identifying the right applicant to become the resident of the empty home and completing necessary repair works ready for their occupation.

4.3 A home may become empty for a variety of reasons. These include:

- It is a new or improved home awaiting a new resident following hand-over
- The previous resident has given notice and vacated the home

- The tenancy period has come to an end and the resident or landlord has decided not to renew the tenancy
- The death of a resident
- The landlord has a court order for possession of the home and has carried out an eviction
- The home is suspected as having being abandoned and the correct notice has been served and expired
- The home has been badly damaged by fire or flood, or is any other way defective and unsafe and the extent of repair work requires the resident to be moved in order for the repairs to be made
- The home has been categorised as awaiting demolition/regeneration

5. Policy statement

5.1 We are committed to keeping the number of empty homes and the length of time they are empty, to a minimum for the following reasons:

- The regulatory requirement to make best use of our assets
- The aim to provide homes to meet the needs of the local community
- The loss of rent and security costs incurred use resources that could be better spent on improving our homes
- Empty Homes have a negative impact on the time waited by households registered on Choice Based Lettings
- They can be targets for vandalism and squatting and can result in increased costs in terms of repair damage
- They can have an adverse effect on the local community of increased fears of crime, higher incidences of fly-tipping and vermin and undermining community regeneration
- We will be liable for Council Tax

6. Empty Homes Process

6.1 When we are made aware that a home is to become empty a visit will be carried out to inspect the condition of the home as soon as possible (pre-termination visit). Repairs will be identified as the resident's responsibility and recharged appropriately or the responsibility of Red Kite.

6.2 The work that needs to be carried out will be clearly explained to the resident before their tenancy ends in order to meet the [Home Return Standard](#). Should the resident not carry out the work expected or damage is later identified as a result of misuse or neglect once the home is empty, the resident will be recharged the cost of repairing the damage in accordance with the tenancy terms and conditions and our [Recharge Policy](#).

- 6.3 If the resident is moving to another Red Kite home then the offer may be withdrawn if they do not carry out the work expected in order to meet the [Home Return Standard](#) or pay for recharged work.
- 6.4 Necessary repair and asset replacement to bring our homes up to our [Empty Homes Lettable Standard](#) will be carried out. This could be work whilst the current resident is still in occupation or after the resident has moved out.
- 6.5 All statutory safety works and checks will be completed before any home is let. Some non-urgent work may be completed after the new resident has moved in. If asset replacement work is needed, such as the programmed installation of a new bathroom, and that renewal will cause a delay to the void turnaround, then where possible, it will be carried out once the new resident has moved in and this will be explained clearly. The resident of a Red Kite home will be offered a choice of materials and styles of components where possible.

7. Allocation of empty homes

- 7.1 Our Red Kite Allocations Policy sets out how Red Kite will let our empty homes.
- 7.2 When letting social and affordable rented homes Red Kite works in partnership with the appropriate Council to house those in greatest need of housing. In line with the nominations agreement with the Council, most homes are let through the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings system. Eligibility for a home is assessed by the Council which applies the criteria of reasonable preference contained in the Housing Act 1996.
- 7.3 As permitted by the nominations agreement with the Council, Red Kite may allocate some empty homes to Red Kite existing customers who have a need to move. We also partner other agencies to provide homes to applicants who meet our allocations criteria.
- 7.4 Where we are managing market rent homes, lettings will be to suitable customers looking for a new home and not just applicants assessed as in need of a social or affordable rented home.

8. Monitoring Performance

- 8.1 All key stage completion information in our empty homes process will be recorded and evaluated in order to ensure that the service is delivered in the most efficient and effective way.
- 8.2 Performance information will be used to identify trends that will help to improve the empty homes process. For example, by capturing trends in hard to let homes solutions can be identified to stimulate demand in these homes.
- 8.3 RK will work with our contractors to ensure that they embrace our Empty Homes Policy and contribute to us minimising the length of time a home is empty.
- 8.4 Empty homes performance information will be reported to the senior leadership team and the Board.

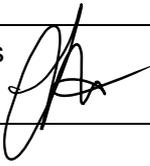
9. Related policies/information

- 9.1 The following policies and strategies are related:
- Red Kite Allocations Policy

- Twenty11 Allocations Policy
- Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy
- Sheltered Transfer Policy
- Priority Moves Policy
- Decant Policy
- Empty Homes Lettable Standard
- Home Return Standard
- Asset Management Strategy
- Development Strategy
- Recharge Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Electrical Safety Policy
- Gas Safety Policy
- Repairs Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Feedback Policy

Staff roles listed in the **Competency Standards section** must be acquainted with contents of this document and have had documented instructions and training on its use. Authority to amend can only be undertaken by the **Process owner** with the relevant **Delegated approvals**.

For information on interpretations and instructions staff should contact the **Subject Matter expert** or **Process owner** and under no circumstances should any deviation be permitted without prior approval as above.

Document Controls			
Version:	5	Effective date:	December 2020
Subject Matter expert drafter:	Head of Commercial	Process owner:	Head of Commercial
Related Pods	Relationship & Property	Related Policy	Allocations Policy Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy
Review period	24 months	Next review due by:	December 2022
Delegated approvals			
<i>The 3 lines of defence have been checked within the framework and are valid</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Approved by AD	N/A	Approved Date:	N/A
Approved by EMT	Alan Keers 	Approved Date:	11/03/2021
Approved by Board/ Committee/RRT	N/A	Approved Date:	N/A