

Empty Homes Policy

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1	Policy information.....	2
2	Policy Statement	3
3	Policy aims.....	3
4	Empty Homes Policy.....	3
4.1	Empty Homes Categories	3
4.2	Empty Homes Security.....	4
4.3	Safety Checks.....	4
4.4	Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)	4
4.5	Chargeable Repairs	4
5	Performance	4
6	Policy Review Considerations.....	5
6.1	Equality Analysis (EA).....	5
6.2	Customer Influence	5
7	Statutory and Legislative Framework.....	5
8	Links to other Policies	5

1 Policy information

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Responsible Director	Executive Director of Assets and Development
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2 Policy Statement

Whilst wanting to ensure that our neighbourhoods are sustainable we accept that tenancies end and that an effective response is required to ensure that homes that are empty do not become issues within our neighbourhoods. This policy sets out how South Liverpool Homes (SLH) will control and manage empty homes and what decisions may be taken when homes are empty.

We will ensure that homes are protected and secure whilst empty and works required are completed efficiently and effectively to enable homes to be let to an agreed standard.

3 Policy aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure that SLH provide good quality homes which meet the needs and aspirations of future tenants
- Adopt an approach to ensure that empty homes do not detract from the neighbourhoods appearance
- Minimise rent loss through reducing the length of time a home is empty

4 Empty Homes Policy

An empty home is when a tenancy ends (always a Sunday) and a new tenancy begins which can be on any day of the week. This policy will only apply in this period.

4.1 Empty Homes Categories

We will carry out a pre-termination visit to all homes where notice has been given to identify works to be carried out. Where notice has not been given an inspection will be carried out within one working day of keys being received.

The SLH Empty Homes Standard exists to provide a consistent approach to empty home management, this is issued to all prospective tenants and details the minimum standard of works that will be completed including all safety checks. Throughout the empty homes process tenants will be included in making choices in relation to the type of works being carried out in their new home.

SLH empty homes are categorised in three ways:

Category 1 – a category one home is one that:

- Only requires health and safety checks and energy performance certification
- Requires general repairs only
- Is a newly built home

We will on occasion in agreement with the prospective tenant carry out minor works when the tenant has moved into their home. The majority of homes that become empty are category 1 homes.

Category 2 – a category two home is where the works are extensive and would require a tenant to be decanted if still tenanted. We will undertake an optional appraisal where necessary to determine the cost of the works to be completed.

Only the following work types will determine that an empty home is a category 2:

- Replacement kitchen
- Full central heating
- Full electrical re-wire
- Structural works
- Environmental works (such as asbestos removal and infestations)
- Is being illegally occupied

Decommissioned Homes – Homes that are either awaiting demolition or a decision on their long term future. SLH will ensure that any homes in this category are safe and secure with 6 monthly inspections carried out.

4.2 Investment Decision

All empty homes are subject to a survey to assess the level of works required to make it 'lettable'. Any empty homes that require major component replacement are checked against the SLH investment programme at the survey stage. This ensures a more effective decision making process as to whether to complete component updates ahead of the schedule whilst the home is empty which minimises both the impact on the future tenant and SLH's cost.

4.2 Empty Homes Security

Where required empty homes will have an alarm fitted within 24 hours of it becoming empty. In certain circumstances SLH will install security screens to all external doors and windows.

4.3 Safety Checks

SLH will ensure that within 24 hours, the gas supply of an empty home, is capped at the gas meter and a lock change completed to the front and rear doors.

During empty homes works an electrical safety check will be carried out, the new tenant will be provided with a copy of the certificate. SLH will also ensure the gas meter is uncapped and a gas safety check carried out once a new tenant has arranged with their service provider for gas to be supplied to their home. The tenant will receive a copy of the Landlords Gas Safety Record.

4.4 Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

SLH will provide a valid EPC on all empty homes, a copy of the certification will be issued to the prospective tenant that will enable them to understand the energy performance of their home. All new homes should achieve an energy performance rating of Band C. Where a home does not meet this rating an appraisal will be undertaken.

4.5 Chargeable Repairs

Any repairs to an empty home that are a result of negligence or damage from the outgoing tenant will be repaired with the costs being charged back to the previous tenant and pursued in line with the SLH Chargeable Repairs Policy.

5 Performance

SLH will monitor and measure performance through a comprehensive set of key performance indicators including:

- % Homes vacant and available to let
- % Homes vacant and not available to let
- % Overall satisfaction with new home
- Average number of days to relet empty homes
- Average days to repair an empty home
- Rent lost due to empty homes

Performance of empty homes is monitored on a daily basis with weekly void meetings taking place including representatives from the relevant teams and partnering contractor staff who will review current performance against internal targets.

Whilst the policy becomes applicable when a home becomes empty, a proactive approach to analysing tenancy terminations and supporting those whose tenancies are at risk of failure is undertaken.

6 Policy Review Considerations

Risks assessment review completed and outcomes recorded in covalent. This policy will be reviewed every three years.

6.1 Equality Analysis (EA)

An EA was completed for this policy with issues identified and addressed through the policy and procedure.

6.2 Customer Influence

Customers have influenced this policy through the scrutiny panels empty homes standard review.

7 Statutory and Legislative Framework

SLH has developed this policy in line with the regulatory and legislative framework, which includes:

- Building Safety Act 2022
- Landlord & Resident Act 1985
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 2012
- Housing Health & Safety Rating System 2006 (HHSRS)
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

8 Links to other Policies

- Tenancy Management
- Health & Safety
- Repairs & Maintenance
- Chargeable Repairs
- Allocations and Tenure
- Health & Safety