

Grainger Trust Limited ('GT') Void Management and Standards Policy

February 2025

1. Introduction and rationale to policy

Grainger Trust is a Registered Provider of Social Housing. This document clarifies Grainger Trust's policy for the management of their void units. A clear minimum standard of what customers can expect from Grainger Trust in providing housing is set out within the Appendix. This ensures that Grainger Trust Limited manages its resources in an efficient and effective way.

2. Definitions

The term void is used to describe a property that is currently empty and either available for letting or being prepared for letting.

3. Policy Statement (scope and aims)

The overall aim of the Void Management and Standards Policy is to achieve and maintain high standards in the management of our empty homes and to provide our new customers with affordable homes that are modern, clean, safe and in good repair.

The policy will contribute to the efficient and effective maintenance of Grainger Trust's housing stock by maximising rental income through reduction of void periods and allowing our customers to understand what they can expect from us.

This policy will also be part of the mechanism by which Grainger Trust ensures it is compliant with the Home Standard and all relevant Health and Safety legislation. The specific objectives of the policy are:

- To recognise the need to act swiftly upon receipt of notice of tenancy termination and to act efficiently and effectively in letting our quality accommodation.
- To minimise rent loss through property voids.
- To ensure that repairs needed to get a property up to the Minimum Reletting Standard are completed as quickly as possible without impacting on the quality of the work or health and safety obligations.
- To maintain Grainger Trust housing stock and preserve its asset value.
- To comply with all our legal duties, regulatory requirements and good practice standards for void management.

Scope

The policy covers all void properties being re-let within the Grainger Trust Limited Housing Portfolio.

4. Policy

This policy has been written to improve the service provided to our customers and to ensure that we are providing the best possible Value for Money.

To ensure that Grainger Trust will deliver this, we will monitor this policy by:

- The void turnaround time for our re-lettings against our Key Performance Indicator for the same.
- We are always looking to improve our back-to-back lettings and reduce the average time taken to re-let properties with major works.
- The average cost of void works carried out.
- The amount of decoration vouchers or incentives given to new customers
- The percentage of our voids let to internal transfers.
- Performance against these targets will be monitored by the Property Management Team and reported to the Head of Asset each month.

5. Communication of Policy

All employees must read, understand and comply with this policy.

6. References

The following legislation underpins this policy:

- Housing Act 1996/2004
- Housing Act 1988
- Equality Act 2006/2010
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- RSH Consumer Standards 2024
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023

7. Responsibilities

GT has overall responsibility for general oversight of this policy. Monitoring will be undertaken by the Portfolio Asset Manager to provide policy assurance.

GT property managers are responsible for ensuring those reporting to them are made aware, understand and adhere to this policy.

8. Associated policies.

- Allocations
- Asset Management strategy

9. Review

This policy shall be reviewed after 3 years or sooner, subject to changes in any relevant legislation. A major change in the operating environment may trigger an earlier review.

Our performance management framework aims to deliver continual improvements and may also lead to a review of this policy as and when required.

Document Owner and Approval

The Head of Grainger Trust is the owner of this document and is responsible for ensuring that this procedure is reviewed in line with the review requirements of Data Protection.

A current version of this document is available to all members of staff on the corporate intranet.

Document History

Policy Owner	Head of Grainger Trust
Date of last review	February 2025
Date of next review	February 2028
Version control	Version 2

APPENDIX – GRAINGER TRUST’S VOID STANDARD

• Void Re-Let Standards

The aim is to ensure that when the property is let it is safe, secure and clean for the incoming tenant.

Incoming tenants will always be given copies of the Electrical Safety Test and the Gas Safety Check (if gas is supplied to the property).

A valid EPC certificate will also be included in their tenancy documentation.

Electrical:

- White goods will not be provided
- A fitted cooker hob may be provided
- An assessment is to be made by the Property Management Team as to the suitability of any non-standard fittings to be tested as part of the void works and left in place if safe. If not considered to be safe to be reverted back to standard.
- Any consumer unit that needs upgrading to conform with current building regulations will have the necessary works carried out.

Gas:

- Gas supplies will be switched off on all long-term voids, with arrangements to be made for the gas supply to be capped off.
- Any disused outlets will be capped off and made safe.
- The property will have a modern boiler (2013+) and a valid gas safety certificate.
- Where properties require new boilers that have been identified on a planned programme of works, this will be undertaken during the void period to minimise future disruption to the incoming tenant.
- Gas cookers will be disconnected, made safe and removed.
- Hard wired Carbon Monoxide Detectors will be installed if the property has a gas boiler or solid fuel burning appliance.

Smoke and Heat Detectors

- Existing hard-wired detectors will be checked and repaired or replaced if necessary. If there is no hard-wired detector already in place, one will be installed on each floor of the property.

Kitchens

- Units should not be above cooker space, and cooker space should be available to floor level.
- If the property is on the planned maintenance list for a new kitchen within the next year this work will be carried out at void stage.
- All damaged or missing units will be replaced on a like for like basis. If the colour / style is no longer available, a close matching replacement should be fitted.
- Kitchen fans will be cleaned if dirty.
- An assessment is to be made by the Property Management Team as to the suitability of any kitchen appliances left in the property to receive a visual safety check and PAT testing. High quality items that are considered safe can be gifted to incoming tenants as appropriate.
- A sufficient number of units will be fitted in the kitchen depending on the number of persons the property is designed for.
- Kitchens must have a certain number of cupboards dependent on size, in order to comply with HHSRS. Where the number of cupboards falls short of this guidance additional units will be fitted.

Externals

- Pathways, steps/ramps must be in safe condition.
- All boundary fencing should be complete and in a safe condition.
- Gates are to be in working order.
- Sheds will be left in place if in good condition or easily repairable. Sheds in a poor or unsafe condition will be removed but not replaced.
- If a garden is so overgrown that it would not be reasonable to expect the incoming tenant to cultivate it using normal garden tools, we will arrange for it to be cleared.
- Garden ponds should be filled. Sheds, lean to, conservatory or out buildings could be gifted to incoming tenants if the Property Management Team considers them to be in good condition and do not cause any health and safety concerns.
- The external walls, roofs, soffits, facias and the structure will be checked to ensure it is safe and in good condition.

Bathrooms

- A vapour proof light (IP55 rated) will be fitted if not currently installed.
- If the property is on the planned maintenance list for a new bathroom within the next year this work will be carried out at void stage.
- Any replacement bathroom furniture will be white only.
- A minimum of 4 rows of tiling to be above the bath and 2 above the wash hand basin. If a shower is fitted that is to remain in situ the walls should be fully tiled as appropriate.
- Electric showers will form part of the electric test and will be removed if faulty.
- Air vents and extractor fans will be cleaned if dirty.
- All bathroom furniture will be well sealed with waterproof sealant.

- Both bath and sink must have plugs and chains and these should be replaced where necessary.
- The toilet flushing system should be fully functional.
- An extraction fan should be fitted if there is not one already in place.

Windows/Doors

- All windows from 1st floor will have restrictors fitted.
- Any cracked glazing or blown sealed units will be replaced.
- Any glass below 0.8m must be kite marked British safety glass.
- Ensure that the tenants have at least one key to the windows.
- All doors to the property must open/close with ease.
- All door furniture to be in good working order.
- Curtain batons to remain in place.

Walls

- At the discretion of the Property Management Team, where there are fitted wardrobes, book shelves or fitted cupboards in place these can be gifted if found to be in good condition.
- Any mould (mildew) to walls will be treated and cleaned with antifungal solution.
- Any holes or cracks to walls will be filled leaving a reasonable prepared surface for the incoming tenant to paint.

Ceilings

- If any evidence of water ingress is present, the cause must be rectified.
- Treat any mould (mildew) as above.
- Any holes or damage will be repaired to match the rest of the ceiling.
- Coving to remain if in good condition.

Floors

- Kitchen, bathroom and toilet flooring should be non-slip vinyl unless the previous tenant has tiled the floor, and the Property Management Team agree that the existing floor can be gifted over to the new tenant.
- Solid wood or laminate flooring can be gifted over in houses and ground floor flats if in good condition but must be removed in any upper floor flats.
- Carpets only to remain by prior agreement. If they are not to be gifted, they must be fully removed as well as any underlay and grippers.
- Incoming tenants must sign a disclaimer on any floor covering left to say that they are aware the coverings are not Hightown's responsibility to maintain.
- Concrete flooring or bare floorboards are considered acceptable in any rooms where carpet/floor covering has been lifted.

Plumbing

- All taps will be checked and must be in good working order and free from leaks.
- Wheel valves to the hot water cylinder will be checked and must be in good working order.
- Stop cocks will be checked to ensure free operation.
- Any dead legs within the plumbing system will be removed.

Loft Spaces

- If a property has access to its own loft space, the Property Management Team will inspect this to ensure no items have been left by the previous tenant. Any items remaining will be cleared and the outgoing tenant recharged.
- Insulation will also be checked to ensure it meets Decent Homes Standard requirements. Any properties found to have insulation less than 300mm in depth will have the appropriate amount of insulation added.
- None of our properties have water tanks.
- All pipes will be flushed through prior to letting.

Additional Furnishings

- Consideration to be given by the Property Management Team as to whether any furnishings such as blinds, curtain poles, curtains, nets, lampshades, coat hooks, bed frames, washing lines to be in good condition can remain within the property and be gifted to the incoming tenant. Sofas, beds, soft furnishings are always to be removed.

Decoration Standards

- It is presumed that Grainger Trust will NOT normally redecorate, and that the incoming tenant will be responsible for redecoration unless the property is in exceptionally poor condition or if making good is required from damage/water ingress/previous works. Unsound areas of plaster will be repaired by Grainger Trust.
- If the decorations are clean but shabby then the incoming tenant can be offered a redecoration allowance to purchase materials.
- If the incoming tenant is physically disabled, Grainger Trust will, if necessary, offer to redecorate – 2 coats of emulsion to walls and ceilings only unless woodwork badly damaged or discoloured. If the incoming tenant is known they will be offered a choice of colour.
- In rare circumstances a 'hard to let' property may be decorated in order to present well to prospective tenants.