

Voids Performance

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Why is voids performance important?

The Regulator of Social Housing has a range of Standards which we must meet:

- These fall into two categories:
 - Economic Standard
 - Consumer Standard
- Economic Standard is split into a sub-set of Standards, including the Value for Money Standard and Code of Practice with a Required Outcome
 - Registered Providers must *‘ensure that optimal benefit is derived from resources and assets and optimise economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of their strategic objectives’*
- The Consumer Standard is also split into a sub-set of Standards, including the Safety and Quality Standard with a Required Outcome
 - Registered Providers must *‘provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible’*

What are the current issues?

- Costs
 - Benchmarking against peer groups indicates a higher average cost per void to meet out Lettable Standard
 - Year-end forecasts indicate a likely overspend against revenue budgets
 - Accurate void repair costs difficult to ascertain for different void types and for revenue / capital budget allocation
- Time to relet
 - Longer void times than some peer groups
 - Benchmarking against peer groups indicates generally median performance
 - Equates to higher rent loss and social impact of people unable to access social housing

Why are we in this position?

Challenges facing the service, including:

- Disruption to service following Unitary and bedding-in of new organisation
- High turnover of staff, particularly managers (e.g. Maintenance Manager, Assets Manager and Lettings Manager)
- Difficulty in recruitment
- Need to review processes and capacity requirements
- An ageing stock which requires more investment
- Inflationary pressures on costs of contractors and materials
- Historical under-investment in our stock (leading to more work required when void)
- Trades workforce capacity (recruitment, and diluted by range of void activities)

Why are we in this position?

- Temporary accommodation units for the Homelessness team
- Properties purchased via grant on open market, e.g. for Displaced Persons team and Rough Sleeper Initiatives team
- Reinstatement of North Taunton properties designated for demolition as temporary accommodation
- Trades team reassigned onto other projects, e.g. repair of fire damaged properties and managing flooding incidents
- Bringing 'buy-backs' (using monies from right to buy) to Lettable Standard
- Poorly performing or non-existent software tools (e.g. scheduling tool to optimise allocation of trades teams)
- Properties returned in a poor state (increased level of tenants with complex needs)

Proposals to improve

Develop an Action Plan to:

- Implement a 'Lean' approach to managing lettings and voids
- Review staff capacity and 'Invest to save' if needed
- Work with Finance colleagues to analyse costs and seek to capitalise where appropriate
- Consider undertaking capital works following new tenancy
- Undertake new procurement of external contractors to support in-house voids trades team
- Revisit arrangement with Homeless Service to reduce homeless void times and costs

Proposals to improve

- Procure and introduce an appropriate trades scheduling tool
- Work with Adults Social Care to increase referrals into Extra Care accommodation
- Implement prompt Asset Management Option Appraisal process
- Review impact of ancillary work on voids performance and produce clear reports split by workstreams
- Review use of IT systems and implement processes to ensure timely and accurate data available to enable effective void management
- Apply 'Leaving Well' process to encourage tenants to leave properties in good condition
- Enforce Lettings Policy - withhold an internal transfer if a property does not meet our Moving Out standard

**Thank you,
any questions?**

