



EMPTY HOMES POLICY

REVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 2025



1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Community Gateway Association (CGA) recognise the value that the provision of a high standard home has on the quality of our tenants lives and their health and well-being, and we are committed to managing our empty homes efficiently to maximise the number of applicants who can gain access to housing when they need it, minimise rent loss and ensure new tenants are provided with a home that is safe, warm, secure and well-maintained.

1.2 By adopting this policy, we aim to deliver on these commitments and ensure:

- We meet the high standards expected of us by our tenants
- We comply with all legal requirements
- We make best use of our housing stock to meet housing need in the local areas
- We protect the value of our assets and they continue to be fit for the future
- We achieve value for money for our tenants

2.0 Receiving notice from outgoing tenant

2.1 All tenants are required to give four weeks written notice to vacate their property as detailed in the tenancy agreement.

2.2 CGA will accept verbal notice in the first instance however will require the tenant to sign the relevant termination paperwork to end their tenancy.

2.3 In exceptional circumstances CGA may accept a shorter notice period for example, where we have agreed an internal transfer, or where the tenant is moving to one of our Choice Based Lettings partners, in line with the SelectMove Policy.

- 2.4 Once notice has been received, CGA will arrange for an exit interview to be carried out with the outgoing tenant to understand the reasons why the tenant is leaving.
- 2.5 The interview will also identify if any damage to the property has been caused by neglect, accident, or deliberate act. Where such damage is identified, the tenant will be advised of the repairs required, their approximate value and the need for these to be completed before the tenancy is ended. Should any issues not be rectified before the tenancy ends, CGA may recharge the tenant for the cost of any outstanding repairs. CGA reserves the right not to charge in some circumstances.
- 2.6 Tenants will be advised of their responsibility for ensuring the property is clear of all belongings, and is left clean and tidy, including external and common areas and for the keys to be returned on or before the notice expiry date. The outgoing tenant may become responsible for the full cost of any subsequent clearing or cleaning.

3.0 Ending the Tenancy

- 3.1 Where a tenant hands back the keys and has completed the relevant termination paperwork earlier than the given expiry of the notice, CGA will accept this as a surrender of tenancy by mutual agreement.
- 3.2 If the keys are received by noon on Monday (with the exception of bank holidays), the tenancy will be terminated from the preceding Sunday. Where keys are returned after noon on Monday the tenancy should be terminated from the following Sunday.
- 3.3 Where a bank holiday falls on a Monday, CGA will extend the timeframe to return keys until noon on Tuesday.

3.4 Where termination paperwork is received without the keys, CGA may change the locks to gain access. CGA reserves the right to charge for the lock change in these cases.

3.5 Where CGA suspects a property has been abandoned, the Abandoned Tenancy Procedure will be followed.

4.0 Securing the property

4.1 CGA will take appropriate measures to minimise the risk to security of empty properties. Security will be maintained by such methods as:

- Ensuring the quickest re-let times possible
- Maintaining the appearance of occupation
- Clear signs that the property is protected by security systems
- Maintaining the external appearance of the property
- Regular inspections to quickly identify any potential risks

4.2 Alarms will occasionally be installed in properties where a security risk has been identified.

4.3 The use of shutters will be minimal and only installed for insurance purposes on those properties where there is evidence to demonstrate that failing to shutter the property would result in damage or unauthorised occupation whilst empty.

5.0 Completing necessary works

5.1 CGA will fully inspect the empty property as soon as possible and any required works will be identified. All properties will consistently meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard and CGA's own minimum empty home standard.

- 5.2 CGA's empty home standard has been agreed with tenants and a copy of this standard is attached at Appendix A.
- 5.3 All properties will have compliance checks carried out as part of the empty home process including gas, electric, asbestos and fire safety checks.
- 5.4 CGA may undertake decoration works to the property if it is required in line with its void standard. In other cases, it may be more appropriate to offer decoration vouchers to the incoming tenant. We will take into account the tenants' individual circumstances when making this decision.
- 5.5 Where properties have been identified as difficult to let CGA may offer incentives such as carpets, enhanced decoration of some rooms or other market incentives as deemed appropriate.
- 5.6 CGA may use the period the property is empty to bring forward any work that may cause major disruption to the incoming tenant, or may be difficult to undertake once the property is occupied, such as major or programmed improvement works.
- 5.7 Where extensive works are identified, CGA will undertake an options appraisal to consider whether completion of the works required provides value for money, or whether an alternative such as sale/disposal is a more viable option.
- 5.8 CGA recognises that in some cases adaptations to the property may be required to support the tenants needs and changing circumstances. In order to make the most efficient use of existing facilities, CGA will not routinely remove adaptations from empty properties and will, where possible, aim to re-let adapted properties to applicants who need them, in line with our Adaptations Policy.

5.9 All work to the empty property will be undertaken by CGA's Gateway PropertyCare Team or its sub-contractors and post inspected to ensure work is completed to a satisfactory standard in relation to time, quality, and value for money.

6.0 Handing over of the new property

6.1 Once all works are completed, Gateway PropertyCare will ensure the water supply/system within each property is flushed and a record will be kept of the preventative action undertaken in accordance with the Keeping Your Home Safe Policy.

6.2 CGA will also ensure there is no evidence of damp and mould having occurred while the property has been empty, and where evidence is identified the damp and/or mould will be treated before the property is handed over to the new tenant, in line with our Damp and Mould Policy and Procedure.

7.0 Letting the New Home

7.1 The process of letting an empty property will commence as soon as CGA is aware that the property is or is about to become empty, in order to minimise the amount of time that property remains empty.

7.2 When advertising a property, CGA provides all prospective tenants with information about the property attributes and local neighbourhood facilities.

7.3 When a prospective tenant has indicated their acceptance of a vacant property the tenancy will commence as soon as possible after all works have been completed and the property has passed its quality checks. The tenancy will commence on the day the new tenant receives the keys for the property unless it

has been an internal transfer, in which case we will agree with the tenant the start date of the new tenancy based on their individual needs.

- 7.4 Tenants will be provided with a welcome pack in their new home which will include a copy of the Welcome to Your New Home leaflet which sets out the standards that their new home should meet. This will also include what safety checks have be made to their new home.
- 7.5 Tenants will be provided with copies of the gas and electrical certificates as well as a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate when they sign up as part of their information pack. The pack will contain the locations of their stop tap and utility meters.
- 7.6 CGA will contact the new tenant within 4 weeks of the tenancy start date to ensure that they have settled in, and to discuss any questions or queries the tenants may have in relation to their tenancy.

8.0 Complaints

- 8.1 This policy sets out our decision-making criteria for empty homes. If you are unhappy with a decision we have made in relation to this policy, you can appeal that decision by contacting us and we will respond in line with our complaints policy and procedure.
- 8.2 We recognise that sometimes our standards fall below those we, and our tenants expect and when this happens CGA welcomes complaints as an opportunity to continually improve our services.
- 8.3 If a tenant wishes to make a complaint about any of the services covered within this policy, they are encouraged do so by using CGA's complaints process. Complaints can be made via telephone on 0800 953 0213 (option 6), via email at

complaints@communitygateway.co.uk, in writing or in person to our Head Office or by completing the online form on our website.

- 8.4 A copy of our Complaints Policy can be found on our website or can be provided upon request.

9.0 Responsibilities

- 9.1 The Head of Asset Management is responsible for ensuring this Policy complies with all legislative requirements.

- 9.2 The Operations Manager (Delivery) and Voids Manager are responsible for the delivery of all empty homes works identified and undertaken. This will be supported by the Voids Surveyor, the Works Productivity Supervisor, and the Allocations team in relation to letting the homes.

11.0 Data Protection

- 11.1 The tenancy provides the legal basis for processing of information aligned to this policy. The retention of information will be the length of the tenancy plus six years.

12.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 12.1 This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis, with a full review taking place every 2 years, to ensure accuracy and that CGA complies with relevant legislation.

- 12.2 Internal oversight will be delivered through the monitoring of our operational KPI's and routine internal audits will take place as part of our internal controls.

**APPENDIX A:
VOID STANDARD**

AREA OF THE HOME	MINIMUM STANDARD
External (Property)	<p>Roof will be watertight Gutters and rainwater pipes will be functional and free of leaks Drainage systems will be free flowing and functional Windows and doors will be secure and fully operational External doors will be cleaned Windows will be cleaned internally Fire escape windows will be easily identifiable The property, including any outhouses/canopies will be structurally safe with pointing and rendering intact</p>
External (Garden)	<p>Paths will be safe, firmly bedded, and free of trip hazards External handrails and steps will be safe and secure Existing fencing will be secure and free of any health and safety hazards Missing or damaged fencing to the front elevation will be repaired or replaced as appropriate * Grass will be cut, and hedges trimmed * Free of rubbish Surfaces will be free from graffiti Refuse bin will be available and left empty</p>
Roof Space	<p>Clear of all items and debris Minimum of 270mm of loft insulation (where relevant)</p>
External Doors	<p>3 keys for each entrance to the property Doors intact and operating correctly</p>
Internal Doors	<p>All doors intact and operating correctly Good condition – no cracks or holes Privacy lock in place on bathroom/WC doors</p>
Skirting & Architraves	<p>Secure to the wall and in good condition Complete throughout</p>
Floors	<p>Sound, secure, and free from major defects and suitable for flooring to be laid Loose/missing floorboards to be repaired/replaced Carpets and laminate to be uplifted unless otherwise agreed Non slip flooring (where applicable) to be clean and in good condition</p>
	<p>Bathroom suite free from defects and in working order All fittings thoroughly cleaned ensuring lime scale is removed</p>

Bathrooms	<p>New toilet seat fitted Shower provided, and new shower curtain fitted Extractor fan to be cleaned and in full working order Tiles and splash backs fitted where appropriate Silicone to the shower area, bath, and basin free of mould growth Bathroom floor cleaned and disinfected</p>
Kitchens	<p>Fitted modern kitchen, including space for washer, cooker and fridge/freezer Electric cooker point and a gas cooker point (where there is a gas supply to the property) Kitchen units cleaned inside and out Work surfaces and tiled areas thoroughly cleaned, including the cooker space Kitchen floor cleaned and disinfected Silicone to sink and worktop to be free from mould growth Extractor fan to be cleaned and in full working order</p>
Decoration	<p>No sign of nicotine damage All rooms in good decorative order and prepared for redecoration (decoration voucher may be offered)</p>
General	<p>Clean and tidy condition throughout, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radiators cleaned front and back • All surfaces wiped down • Internal woodwork, including doors, door casings, and skirting boards • Storage cupboards swept and cleaned • Stairways and steps swept and cleaned • Electrical sockets, light fittings, switches, and extractor fans thoroughly cleaned <p>Low energy light bulbs fitted throughout Curtain battens fitted to all windows</p>
Communal Areas	<p>Clean and tidy condition throughout, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surfaces will be free from graffiti* • All surfaces wiped down • Internal woodwork, including doors, door casings, and skirting boards • Storage cupboards swept and cleaned (where applicable) • Stairways and steps swept and cleaned
Welcome Pack/Safety Information	<p>Welcome Pack and safety information to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas Servicing information • Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) • Asbestos information (where applicable) • Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) • Fire Safety information (where applicable) • Locations of stop tap • Boiler location • Gas and electric meter locations

*This work may be completed on tenancy