Empty Homes Policy

1 Purpose

This policy sets out our approach to managing individual empty homes, in line with our **MTVH Lettable Standard**. The effective management and quick turnaround of properties when they become empty is a key priority for Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH).

Homes may become empty due to

- formal termination of a tenancy
- abandonment of a tenancy
- tenant transferring to another tenancy
- eviction of the tenancy
- death of a tenant (where succession has not been applied)

2 Scope

This policy and accompanying procedures apply to the management of empty homes across the following tenures:

- General Needs
- Later Living
- Supported Housing
- Intermediate Market Rent (IMR)
- Market Rent (MR)

This policy, together with the Tenancy or Licence Agreement, sets out the respective responsibilities of MTVH and residents in relation to the management of empty homes and end of tenancy obligations.

3 Our Approach

3.1 Our Commitment

MTVH will operate an effective approach to managing empty homes where we will

- meet all legislative, contractual and regulatory obligations
- ensure value for money in repairing empty homes and achieving the **MTVH Lettable standard**
- maximise and monitor resident satisfaction with MTVH homes and gather refusal data to analyse and inform process, budgets, and future actions
- ensure that residents are aware of their obligations and that end of tenancy arrears and rechargeable repairs are prevented
- minimise rent loss and time taken to complete repairs and prepare MTVH homes for new residents
- ensure productive interdepartmental working essential for an efficient and cost-effective void management process
- ensure that MTVH rehousing applicants are allocated a home which meets the defined relet standard
- have robust procedures for the recovery of abandoned properties

- continually improve the service by monitoring the performance in empty home turnaround time and resident satisfaction with their new home
- demonstrate a strategic approach to letting homes that are deemed 'hard to let'
- set out a clear approach as to the rights and responsibilities that residents have in respect of their new homes
- foster a culture of accountability and ownership for the management of empty homes
- ensure that our Empty Homes Policy and procedures contribute to sustainable tenancies and sustainable communities in accordance with the **Allocations Policy**

3.2 Definitions

Term	Definition
MTVH Lettable Standard	Outlines the standards that prospective residents can expect in their new home.
Void	An empty property caused by the ending of a tenancy.
Void Path	Classification assigned to each empty property, determined by required works, strategic decisions, and/or operational constraints.
Routine (Minor Voids)	Properties that require routine void works only. This includes properties that fall into the below categories: • Routine 10 • Quick Turnaround
Non-Routine (Major Voids)	Properties that require significant works to meet the MTVH **Lettable Standard**. This also includes properties that fall into the below void paths: • Business Case • Business Case (Housing) • Business Case (Property) • Decant • Demolition Sale Stock Transfer • Major Works Insurance • Major Works Non-Tender • Major Works Tender • Management Void • Regeneration • Safer Building • Squatted/Illegal Occupier Definitions for all void paths are set out in the **Void Path Definitions** document.
Ready to Lets (RTLs)	Properties that are ready to be let to a new resident.
Hard to Let (HTL)	A property that we have been unable to re-let within our target re-let period, or which has experienced repeated refusals, extended void periods, or recurring vacancies when compared with similar properties.

4 Void Management Framework and Requirements

4.1 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

MTVH have established a range of KPIs which are reviewed annually. These include measurements of the following:

- The average number of days it takes us to let a home for the first time. (Applies to routine General Needs new homes only.)
- The average number of days it takes us to relet a home, from the end of the previous tenancy to the start of the new one. (Applies to routine General Needs relets only.)
- The percentage of homes we have that are empty. (Applies to routine General Needs and MTVH Support relets).
- Resident satisfaction with the moving in process.

These indicators are monitored internally by the Senior Leadership Team and Executive Team. The information is also used to highlight areas of concern and, if appropriate, to inform discussions with teams and contractors who can contribute to the overall performance.

The Board receives assurance through regular reporting to the Customer Services Committee and Property Committee, which provide oversight, scrutiny and challenge of performance and compliance.

4.2 Performance Monitoring and Operational Oversight

MTVH operates a structured performance management framework to support the effective management of empty homes and minimise the time properties remain vacant.

Weekly cross-functional meetings are held to review the progress of work on empty homes, monitor performance, and facilitate collaborative working across relevant teams. These meetings provide operational oversight of empty homes activity, support timely decision-making, help resolve operational issues, and identify matters that require escalation for senior management consideration.

Empty properties assigned to a non-routine void path are reviewed by Senior Managers on a monthly basis at the Asset Review Group (ARG).

Performance information reviewed through this framework is used to monitor delivery against key performance indicators, drive continuous improvement, and support the efficient re-letting of homes in line with the **MTVH Lettable Standard.**

4.3 Inspections and Repairs

Where notice to terminate a tenancy is received, an initial Pre-Termination Visit (PTV) of the property will, where possible, be carried out prior to the resident leaving by a Housing Services colleague.

The purpose of this inspection is to ascertain the general condition of the property and to advise the resident what is required to end the tenancy satisfactorily.

During the visit, we will discuss any responsibilities that need to be met before the tenancy ends, including outstanding resident repairs and any matters relating to the rent account.

Residents will be reminded of their tenancy obligations and advised that MTVH may recharge the cost of works required as a result of damage, neglect, or other tenancy breaches, excluding deterioration caused by fair wear and tear. We will provide clear information on how residents can meet their obligations and avoid unexpected charges.

Examples of work we may recharge for:

- Clearance / Removal of an existing residents' belongings
- Removing any alterations or non-standard fixtures and returning the property to its original state, such as removing stick on tiles
- Gaining access to properties where keys are not returned

Once the resident has left the property and the tenancy has ended, we will conduct a thorough inspection to identify any work needed to bring the property in line with the **MTVH Lettable Standard** and any relevant statutory and regulatory requirements, including the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law.

During the inspection we will assess properties for signs of damp and mould, leaks, condensation, disrepair and other hazards that may impact the safety or wellbeing of future residents. Identified hazards or safety issues are remedied, controlled or otherwise managed prior to re-letting the property.

MTVH will ensure that all repairs are carried out promptly to agreed timescales. Occasionally, MTVH will take the opportunity to carry out major repairs and/or major component replacement, and planned maintenance works while a property is vacant.

In accordance with the **MTVH Lettable Standard**, homes are provided to new residents in a condition that is ready to receive decoration.

In exceptional circumstances, MTVH may carry out decoration works to a property while it is empty where this is considered necessary to improve the property's appeal to prospective residents and support a successful re-let. Such works may be undertaken in addition to the requirements of the **MTVH Lettable Standard**.

4.4 Contract Management & Quality Assurance

Contractor performance and the quality of completed works are monitored through a robust contract management framework. Compliance with contract requirements, including the quality of completed work, adherence to the **MTVH Lettable Standard** and achievement of target turnaround times is reviewed through regular performance monitoring and weekly cross-functional meetings.

Any risks, concerns or instances of underperformance are escalated to the relevant contract manager for investigation and resolution through monthly contract management meetings with suppliers. Where issues cannot be resolved at this level, or where they indicate wider systemic or recurring concerns, they may be escalated to the Strategic Core Group for review, oversight and decision-making. The Strategic Core Group meets quarterly to review strategic risks, performance trends and improvement actions.

Empty homes are subject to post-inspections to provide assurance that works have been completed to the required standard. Contractors are required to provide all relevant documentation and evidence to demonstrate compliance with contractual requirements before a property can be signed off as Ready to Let.

4.5 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

MTVH will ensure that empty homes are managed in compliance with all applicable legislation, regulatory requirements and internal standards. Properties will not be released for letting until all mandatory compliance checks, inspections, statutory certificates and required remedial works have been completed, evidenced and appropriately recorded.

The following compliance certification must be available and in the relevant renewal period before the property can be made available for letting:

- Satisfactory Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)
- Landlords Gas Safety Record (if applicable) (LGSR)
- Asbestos (for properties pre-dating 2000)
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

A new satisfactory EICR and LGSR (where the property has a gas supply) must be in place at every tenancy change.

Properties with a gas supply are initially let with the gas capped and the appropriate safety certification in place. Following occupation, and once the incoming resident has confirmed their chosen gas supplier, MTVH will arrange for the gas supply to be reinstated, complete all required safety checks, and issue a new Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR).

The management of empty homes supports MTVH's compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards by supporting

- the Safety and Quality Standard through ensuring homes are safe, compliant, free from significant hazards and meet the MTVH Lettable Standard before occupation
- the Tenancy Standard through the fair, efficient and transparent allocation and letting of homes
- the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard through performance monitoring, complaint handling, resident feedback and continuous improvement
- the Neighbourhood and Community Standard through the effective management and security of empty homes and the minimisation of adverse impacts on local communities

4.6 Managing Empty Homes

MTVH will take reasonable steps to protect empty homes from deterioration, unauthorised occupation, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Empty homes are subject to regular inspections and safety checks, in line with legal requirements and the terms and conditions of our insurance, which is reviewed annually. Where risks are identified, we implement appropriate security measures, whilst being mindful of any impact on the surrounding neighbourhood.

MTVH will seek to minimise the impact vacant properties have on local communities. Where necessary, action may be taken to address

- fly-tipping
- overgrown gardens
- pest infestations
- unauthorised occupation
- environmental issues affecting neighbours

Where empty homes meet the threshold to be considered a Hard to Let property, we use a range of strategies to find a suitable tenant and minimise financial risks, including

- offering incentives, such as carpets, white goods or rent-free weeks
- utilising other marketing routes (subject to local nomination agreements) such as third-party letting platforms catering to social housing applicants
- reviewing applications on our internal transfer register

4.7 Roles & Responsibilities

Role	Responsible for
The Board	Overall governance of organisational compliance with all relevant legislation and regulation.
Head of Lettings & Commercial	Providing oversight and assurance that the delivery of the empty homes process remains compliant with policy and all relevant regulatory or legislative requirements.
Head of Assurance (Voids, Disrepair, Damp & Mould)	Providing oversight and assurance that the delivery of void maintenance works carried out by Property Services remains compliant with policy and all relevant regulatory or legislative requirements.
Regional Heads of Property	Administrative management of void maintenance works and the preparation of Business Cases relating to high cost void maintenance works.
Regional Heads of Delivery (Metworks)	Carrying out the construction works within empty properties and ensuring works are delivered safely and in accordance with the specified standards.
Lettings Operations Manager	Overseeing the delivery of the empty homes process, including high quality and effective communication with residents and prospective residents.
Regional Void Lead	Budgetary and operational management of void maintenance works in line with the MTVH Lettable Standard, ensuring that • property-related records (including inspection reports and compliance certificates) are appropriately maintained and retained in accordance with MTVH data retention requirements, and • homes are only signed off as Ready to Let once all relevant quality, compliance and safety requirements have been met

4.8 Adapted Properties

Where a property has been adapted to meet the needs of a resident with disabilities, MTVH will endeavour to allocate the property to another resident requiring those adaptations.

To enable us to identify suitable applicants without unnecessary delays to reletting the property, it is important to know if a home has been adapted at the earliest opportunity. Ideally this should be identified at the Pre-Termination Visit, or failing that, the specification visit. This information should be shared with the relevant teams such as Lettings, Voids Management and Housing.

In exceptional circumstances, where we are unable to find a suitable applicant for an adapted home, we may decide to remove adaptations from a property. Any decision to remove adaptions must be approved by the Regional Head of Property and Head of Lettings & Commercial before works commence.

4.9 Complaints, Feedback & Continuous Improvement

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement in the management of empty homes, we use information obtained through:

- resident feedback
- satisfaction surveys
- complaints
- compliments
- refusal data
- performance monitoring
- audits and assurance reviews

to identify trends, understand resident experience, improve service delivery and inform future policy, process and investment decisions.

Improvement actions arising from complaints about the condition of new homes are recorded and monitored through our complaints process, in line with our **Complaints Policy**.

5 Background legislation

This Policy will ensure compliance with the following standards and legislation and promote good practice.

- Localism Act 2011
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Construction Design and Management Regulations (CDM 2015)
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 GSIUR as amended 2018
- Approved Code of Practice and guidance
- British Standard 7671 As Amended (Electrical Installations)
- The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- The Housing Act 2004
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Regulator of Social Housing: Consumer Standards
- Regulator of Social Housing: Decent Homes Standards
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System 2006
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012

6 Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

In implementing this policy, MTVH is committed to treating all colleagues, customers, suppliers, and stakeholders fairly and with respect. Further information on our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, including how to raise a grievance or concern, is available in the MTVH Diversity & Inclusion Policy. An Equality Impact Assessment for this policy has been completed and will be retained by the Policy Team.

7 STAIRs Statement

MTVH publishes the information covered in this policy under the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) publication scheme. All information published under STAIRs can be accessed on our website www.mtvh.co.uk. However, some information may be protected under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and will be redacted or withheld to prevent harm.

8 Key Policy Information

Policy Owner	Director of Housing
Author	Head of Lettings & Commercial
Approved by	Customer Services & Property Services SLT
Effective from	September 2026
Approach to review	This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed within 5 years of the 'Effective date' of this document, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation, regulation, or operational need. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off before being clearly communicated to residents and colleagues.
This is a controlled document maintained and accessible via MTVH's intranet, The Hub. When viewed outside of the intranet, this document should be checked against the master copy held by MTVH to verify that it is the current version, or it shall be considered uncontrolled.	

Lettable Standard

Preparing homes for new beginnings
and thriving communities.

MTVH

We understand the difference safe, secure, and affordable homes can make to people's lives. Your new home will be clean, safe, secure, and in good repair ready for you to move in.

Here's what you can expect when you move into your new home:

SAFE

- We will test all gas installations to make sure they're safe and in good working order
- We will check the wiring and electric installations and repair any faults

We will give you a copy of your:

- Gas certificate (where there is a gas supply to the property)
- Electrical safety certificate
- Energy performance certificate

- We will check, repair or replace any faulty fire-resistant doors and fire prevention mechanisms
- We will fit suitable child-safety catches to all windows above ground floor
- We will make sure handrails and banisters are present and securely fixed
- We will check all glazing is intact and re-glaze where necessary.
- We will ensure all external doors have working locks so your home can be safely secured. Please note, we do not hold spare keys - if keys are lost, you will need to arrange and pay for a locksmith.

CLEAN

- We'll always remove any belongings or rubbish left by the previous resident and ensure the home is clean and free of pests.

INSIDE YOUR HOME

Kitchen

- We will provide a minimum of a double base and double wall unit, including worktop and stainless-steel sink
- We will replace any missing or damaged unit doors in a colour or style to match existing as closely as possible
- We will make space for a cooker, fridge and washing machine (unless communal washing facilities are available)

Bathroom

Your bathroom will have a bath or shower, a wash hand basin, and a toilet in good working condition. They will be clean and free from limescale.

Floors & Flooring

- We will provide non-slip floor coverings in the kitchen, bathroom, and WC.
- We will ensure floors in other rooms are free of trip hazards and loose floorboards, or prepare the tiles so they are ready to receive a floor covering.

Carpets are a tenant's responsibility. In your home, the outgoing tenant has either lifted their carpets for their own use or we have removed them due to their condition. Please refer to your terms and conditions of tenancy.

Decorating

Decorating is a Tenant's responsibility. As part of our work we'll re-stick small areas of loose wallpaper and strip any large areas of loose paper.

In some circumstances, where some rooms are in poor decorative condition, we may provide some decorating vouchers.

OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

- We will repair any leaks we identify to roofs and gutters
- We will clear any blocked drains and/or broken manholes

If your new home has a private garden:

- We will clear the garden area of any rubbish
- We will leave boundary walls, fencing and gates in a safe condition
- We will ensure all paths and paving are sound and free from trip hazards

Once we've achieved this standard, the upkeep of your garden is your responsibility, including maintenance of the following items:

- Grassed areas
- Plant/ shrub bed
- Trees
- Fencing (unless the fence borders a public highway)
- Patio
- Rear garden path
- Sheds
- Anything within your property's boundary.

Remember, some repairs may be carried out after you've moved in

Please refer to the terms and conditions of your tenancy