

Empty Homes Policy & Standard

1. What this policy is about

We are committed to effectively managing the refurbishment and allocation of our homes that become empty in a safe, timely and cost-effective way. This policy outlines the actions that will be taken to ensure this is achieved.

The policy has been adopted to ensure we comply with our Empty Homes Standard. The Empty Homes Standard defines the standard at which we will let properties and what we will provide for all new customers. This in turn ensures we provide properties that are fit for occupation and comply with the Decent Homes Standard and our statutory and regulatory property compliance and building safety obligations.

This policy will ensure all colleagues are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the effective management of empty homes.

This policy is designed to support the Lettings Policy.

2. Our approach

The specific objectives of the policy are to ensure:

- Timely refurbishment and allocation of homes that become empty and subsequently reduce rent loss levels.
- Empty homes are refurbished in line with our Empty Homes Standard, which in turn ensures compliance with the Decent Homes Standard and our statutory and regulatory property compliance and building safety obligations.
- Keeping housing related debt to a minimum through effective communication and engagement with customers throughout their tenancy and prior to its termination.
- Control of refurbishment costs, rechargeable repairs and component replacement through accurate pre-work surveys, effective contract management and robust tenancy management.
- Homes are let in a fair and equitable way.
- Promoting a positive collaborative culture to ensure empty homes and lettings performance is an integral element of business operations.

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This policy applies from February 2026
This policy applies to: Livv Housing Group
and Livv Maintenance

Our approach to empty homes management is set out within the following:

2.1 [Pre-tenancy termination inspections](#)

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2.1 Pre-tenancy termination inspections

When notice is given for a tenancy transfer or termination, the Housing Advisor, with the support of a surveyor, will carry out a pre-tenancy termination inspection. Property condition will be assessed, including external areas within the property boundary, and customers advised of their responsibilities before termination.

2.2 Rechargeable Repairs

If evidence of disrepair, poor property condition, poor cleanliness, excessive belongings, or poor overall presentation, that a customer is responsible for, is identified during a pre-tenancy termination inspection, the customer will have the opportunity to address the issues prior to leaving the property. If issues are left for us to rectify, the customer may be recharged for those issues. In the event of a customer seeking a transfer to another of our properties, we reserve the right to refuse the transfer if significant issues are not addressed.

2.3 Property Assessment

Full, detailed surveys will be undertaken by a surveyor to identify any defects or hazards to be addressed to enable the property to meet our Empty Homes Standard. We will assess any previous customer alterations and remove any substandard alterations as part of our survey and refurbishment process.



When a property becomes empty, if there are any visual signs of damp or mould, prior to refurbishment works, a damp & mould survey will be carried out. This will be to ensure that risks of future damp and mould reports are mitigated before a new customer moves into the property.

We will ensure all records of surveys are retained, along with empty homes works records, and actions identified from the survey are undertaken within the scope of empty homes work and are completed prior to re-letting.

We will check the date of the current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), if it has expired it will be renewed ahead of re-let. If a property is below an EPC C, we will endeavor to carry out work during the Empty Homes process to bring it up to C (or above).

2.4 Property Appraisals

Where refurbishment works are estimated to be above c.£20k, properties will be evaluated in relation to their asset performance, including financial, social impact, customer demand/suitability and strategic development objectives.

Properties identified as potentially nonviable investments will be appraised in line with our Land and Property Disposal Policy. This appraisal will consider the assets' contribution to the Groups' strategic objectives, local community value, and performance across financial and social measures. Based on this assessment, alternative options such as disposal, reconfiguration, or inclusion in a planned programme will be explored. Any requests for an alternative route will be submitted to the Investment Appraisal Panel for approval.

2.5 Property Adaptations

If a property has previously undergone any adaptations, we will endeavor to retain these so future customers can benefit from the feature e.g., level access showers.

We will do everything possible to retain adaptations within properties and market them in a way that targets prospective customers who may benefit from specific adaptations (e.g., level access showers, stair lifts, through-floor lifts etc.). In some circumstances, consideration for the removal of an adaptation may need to be given if a match for the property cannot be sought after extensive marketing.

Any request for the removal of an adaptation can only be approved by the Head of Performance.

2.6 Cleanliness

All properties, including loft spaces and outbuildings/storage cupboards, will be cleared and left free from rubbish and debris. All properties will undergo a full internal valet clean before re-occupation. All internal cleansable surfaces will be left free from mould, dirt, and grease and all sanitaryware will be chemically cleaned or renewed, as determined necessary. Further details on our approach to cleanliness is provided within the Empty Homes Standard (Appendix 1).



2.7 Planned Programmes

Properties that require component replacement (such as kitchens and bathrooms) may be deferred to a planned programme and replaced within the first 3 months of a new tenancy, unless they are in such a state of disrepair that they need to be replaced before occupation as they do not meet decency.

2.8 Property Refurbishment

Livv Maintenance or their contractors will provide an anticipated completion date and undertake the refurbishment of properties in line with the survey provided to them by our surveyors. Where variations to the original survey are identified, a tiered approach to authorisation will be employed to ensure sufficient control over expenditure.

The authorisation threshold levels for variations are as follows and refers to the total cost of variations required:

- Up to £500 – Livv Maintenance Property Manager
- £500 - £1500 – Surveyor
- Over £1500 – Head of Performance

Ongoing analysis of variations will be undertaken to identify trends and common variations to assist in improving the accuracy of initial property surveys.

2.9 Utility Supplies

We aim to ensure that gas and electricity supplies are available at the start of tenancy. We will aim to rectify any issues relating to supply to properties, meters or historic utility debt prior to a new customer moving in. If issues cannot be rectified within a reasonable timescale, we may instead support the customer with rectifying issues once they have moved in and they are the registered bill payer.

2.10 Post Refurbishment Surveys

Once the property has been refurbished, a joint inspection will be undertaken by our surveyor and a Livv Maintenance Property Manager to confirm whether the property can be made available for let. If any additional works are identified at this stage, then they will be agreed along with the timeframes for completion.

There may be works identified that can be completed when the customer has moved into the property and those works will be agreed with the incoming customer before the tenancy commences.

2.11 Property Allocations

Properties will be allocated in accordance with our Lettings Policy. Applicants will be allowed to view properties during the refurbishment process, provided it is safe to do so, and again when works are complete.



When the applicant signs the tenancy for their new home, they will be provided with a Welcome Handbook which will include an up-to-date copy of the EPC and the latest Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR), where applicable, and the Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)

Any items gifted to the customer at the start of a tenancy will be recorded via a Customer Acceptance Form, e.g., floor or window coverings, fitted furniture, inbuilt appliances, existing TV aerials, out buildings/sheds. The gifting of these items will transfer responsibility for maintenance, upkeep, and eventual replacement to the customer at the start of tenancy.

Should applicants reject a property offer, the reasons for this will be collated to provide an insight into any trends that may warrant further action.

2.12 Hard to let properties

Properties may be hard to let for a variety of reasons including property types/internal layout, geographic areas, or social factors. A range of options will be considered to assist in the timely letting of such properties including:

- Identifying and addressing any barriers to allocation resulting from social and/or environmental factors
- Enhancement of our Empty Homes Standard
- Increasing the marketing routes utilised
- The use of local lettings plans with a view to improving the desirability of properties in addition to driving tenancy sustainability

2.13 Health and Safety

All visits, inspections and customer contact will be carried out in accordance with health and safety guidelines and good practice. There will be standard risk assessments in place for all these activities, as well as dynamic risk assessments that can be completed on a case-by-case basis, to ensure the safety of staff, contractors, and customers.

2.14 Data Protection

The termination of existing tenancies and allocation of new tenancies is carried out in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and the General Data Protection Regulation UK 2021.



3. Responsibilities

The Director of Assets is responsible for overall implementation of this policy, however under this policy the following teams/employees have the following responsibilities.

Role	Responsibility
Customer Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitoring of Empty Homes performance.
Executive Director Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Final approval of the policy under the Policy Framework.Act as nominated Health & Safety Lead under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.To ensure there are adequate resources in place to deliver the policy objectives.
Director of Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Operational implementation of the policy.Ongoing monitoring of policy objectivesPerformance reporting to the Executive Directors Team and Customer Committee.
Head of Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Operational oversight of service delivery.Ongoing monitoring of performance, instigating corrective action as needed.
Head of Repairs & Maintenance (Livv Maintenance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure the availability of sufficient operatives and subcontractors to meet the policy objectives.
Head of Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Operational oversight of tenancy pre-termination process.Operational oversight of our lettings and allocations process
Senior Surveyor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensuring properties are let at the required standard

4. Monitoring and review

To monitor the implementation of this policy, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be in place, including:

- Average Key to Key Time
- Average Refurbishment Cost
- Number of Empty Homes in refurbishment
- Rent Loss

With reporting to:

- Operational Empty Homes huddles – twice weekly
- Executive Director Team – monthly
- Customer Committee - quarterly



We will review this policy every three years, or sooner if our monitoring of the policy identifies that changes are required, for example because of changes to law, regulation or related Livv strategies and policies.



Control framework

Compliance

This policy supports compliance with the latest editions of the following Acts, Regulations and Codes of Practice:

- Landlord and Tenants Act 1985
- Housing Act 2004
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957
- Right to Repair Regulations 1994
- Equality Act 2010
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitations) Act 2018
- Housing Health and Safety (England) Regulations 2005
- A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation. June 2006
- Consumer Standards - Safety and Quality / Neighborhoods and Community (as of 1 April 2024)
- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025
- The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022
- The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) (Amendment) (Extension to the Social Rented Sector) Regulations 2025
- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Fire Safety Act 2021
- The Building Safety Act 2022
- The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- Control of Legionella in Water Systems L8 Approved Code of Practice 2013
- LOLER (Lifting Operation and Lifting Equipment Regulations) 1998



Document control

Version	1.0
Policy applies from	7 February 2026
Policy applies to	Livv Housing Group; Livv Maintenance
Approved by	Executive Director - Property
Approved on	6 February 2026
Replacing	Empty Homes Policy 2023 – 2026 v1.3
Next review due by	February 2029
Responsible Executive Director	Executive Director – Property
Policy author	Head of Performance
Equality Analysis	December 2025
Environmental Impact Assessment	Not Required
Circulation	Intranet; Livv Housing Group website

Version control

Version	Date of Review	Summary of changes made
1.0	February 2026	Full periodic review of the policy and standard, with a number of changes made to ensure the policy and standard continue to reflect operational practices.



Appendix 1 – Empty Homes Standard

1. [Fire Detection and Carbon Monoxide Detection](#)
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1. Fire Detection and Carbon Monoxide Detection

Fire detection shall be provided in accordance with BS 5839-6, with a Grade D1, LD2 alarm system, meaning that as a minimum, each property installation shall include:

- Smoke alarms installed in circulation spaces, living rooms and hallways in accordance with LD2 requirements.
- Heat alarms installed in kitchens
- Combined heat and carbon monoxide alarms where the boiler is located within the kitchen.
- Carbon monoxide alarms in any room containing a gas appliance, in accordance with the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022
- Mains powered alarms with a tamper-proof lithium battery capable of lifetime operation.
- Integrated test, hush, and fault warning functions, including:
 - Automatic self-test for circuitry and sensor functionality
 - Hush facility for false alarm management
 - Fault and low-power warning with auditory and visual indicators.
- Interconnected alarms, using hard-wired or radio-linked interconnection, ensuring activation of one alarm triggers all alarms within the dwelling.

2. Cleanliness

All properties will undergo an internal valet clean prior to reoccupation that will ensure:

- Walls and ceilings are free of dirt and cobwebs
- All woodwork, radiators and windowsills are cleaned
- Kitchen units, worktops, shelves and draws to be free from dirt and grease
- Wall tiles to be cleaned and free from mould



- All sanitaryware to be cleaned and sanitised
- Toilet seats and shower heads and hoses to be sanitised or renewed
- Finished floor coverings will be cleaned
- All windows will be clean on the inside

Additional items may be requested at the discretion of the surveyor at the time of survey:

- Cleaning of any doors, windows or external glazing
- Cleaning of cooker hoods and extraction fans, ensuring they are free from dirt and grease
- Litter picking of gardens and brushing of paved areas
- Cleaning of white goods

3. Decoration

Decoration is only undertaken in exceptional circumstances and in the affected areas only:

Scenario	Definition	Mandatory Action
Offensive Graffiti	Abusive, discriminatory, or obscene markings or unsightly.	Clean/prepare substrate. Seal if oil-based. Apply neutral finish
Heavy nicotine staining	Yellow/brown discolouration evident on ceilings/walls with odour.	Clean/degrease surfaces. Apply stain block. Apply neutral finish
Unsanitary conditions	Surfaces contaminated by dirt/grease that cannot be fully cleaned or cleared and/or odours present within a dwelling following de-sanitisation	Clean/sanitise surfaces. Treat mould. Apply neutral finish.

* Exclusions: cosmetic wear, minor defects, and standard.

When new decoration is required, the finish will be practical, efficient, and consistent. To achieve this neutral colours will be applied in keeping with the existing base colour where possible or as close as (e.g., magnolia over magnolia, white over white) wherever coverage allows. This should minimise the number of coats required, reducing time and cost and delivers the best possible finish by working with the existing substrate rather than against it. Where the existing colour cannot be matched, we will select the most neutral option to achieve uniformity and durability. Lining paper may be specified in certain areas to help extend the lifespan of plasterwork.



At the discretion of the surveyor, new customer painting packs will be issued when property condition is poor or moderately poor throughout (e.g., multiple rooms with heavy scuffs, discoloration, patchy coverage, and chipped woodwork).

Photographic evidence of property condition should be captured and saved by the Surveyor.

4. Security

All locks to external doors will be changed and properties will be let with a set of keys for all doors, and outbuildings where applicable, and at least one key for lockable windows.

All external doors and windows will be weather tight, operational (i.e., freely opening and closing) and with working locks.

There must be child-resistant window restrictors, which can be overridden by an adult, on all windows which present a fall risk for children, specifically where all the following apply:

- where the change in floor level between the inside and outside is more than 600mm
- the window can be opened over 100mm
- the guard height is less than 1100mm above internal floor level
- it does not have a functioning window restrictor in place

All windows to bathrooms and WCs will have privacy glass fitted.

A minimum of one key or fob will be provided for all communal doors.

A review of security at a property will be undertaken when it becomes empty. Any properties at an increased risk of being targeted by vandalism or theft will have appropriate security measures put in place to protect the assets.

5. External Areas

Gardens will be left in a manageable condition and free from trip hazards and litter.

Excessive growth (e.g., grass, bushes) will be cut back to manageable levels for the incoming customers to maintain unless a communal garden is present. All visible debris will be removed and bins left empty.

Boundary walls, gates, and fencing will be free from significant defects. Paths, steps, and ramps to be in reasonable condition and free from hazards.

Outbuildings/sheds to be cleared and left in situ if in reasonable condition and gifted to the incoming tenant.

Visual inspection to be undertaken of any Damp Proof Course to ensure not being bridged.

Any urgent repairs will be undertaken during empty homes' refurbishment, and any non-urgent repairs will be deferred to a planned programme.



6. Flooring

All floors will be free from structural defects, trip hazards and be securely fixed.

All finished flooring will be flat, defect free with no trip hazards and left in a ready cleansable state.

Finished flooring will be provided in kitchens, bathrooms, wet rooms and w.c. Flooring in any other rooms left by the previous tenant will be left in situ (and gifted to the incoming tenant) if they are in reasonable condition, and will be cleaned at the end of the refurbishment work.

7. Internal Doors & Staircase

Internal doors will be inspected and repaired/replaced as necessary, e.g., distorted or unseated doors and frames; rusting or rotten ironmongery; missing hardware.

Staircases will be free from defects and have appropriate balustrades and handrails in place where applicable prior to re-occupation.

Staircases with a ranch-style banister in place will be enclosed.

8. Kitchen

The number of kitchen units installed is determined by the space available, however we will endeavor as a minimum to ensure three units are provided including the sink top and at least one work surface. Kitchens will have a mechanical extraction fan and an enclosed LED luminaire light fitting installed and tested for operation during refurbishment works.

A cooker space with a minimum of one supply (gas or electric) will be provided. In flats within a communal block, we will provide an electric point only and where there is an existing gas cooker point this will be removed. We will endeavor to provide spaces for white goods where possible to standard sizes although, if opening sizes vary, slimline goods may be required.

A washing machine space will be available with cold-water feed and provision for the waste. Where communal washing facilities are provided this facility may not be provided. Kitchens in flats will have an anti-vibration mat installed in the washing machine space to help reduce sound transmittance produced by the customer's washing machine.

Kitchens will be left cleansable and serviceable and only kitchens beyond economic repair and/or deemed to be in disrepair as defined by the Decent Homes Standard will be replaced during empty homes refurbishment.

9. Bathroom

Bathrooms and toilets will have a WC, a bath and/or shower and a wash hand basin.

A minimum of one row of tiles will be fixed above any baths and basins with a mould free silicone sealant.



Bathrooms without adequate ventilation, normally in the way of an opening window or internal bathroom, will have mechanical extraction installed, tested for operation during refurbishment works.

An enclosed LED luminaire light fitting will be installed and tested for operation during refurbishment works.

Shower curtains, shower heads and hoses will be sanitised or replaced as appropriate.

Bathrooms will be left cleansable and serviceable and only bathrooms beyond economic repair and/or deemed to be in disrepair as defined by the Decent Homes Standard will be replaced during empty homes refurbishment.

10. Heating

We will aim, wherever practicable, to provide a primary heating system capable of distributing heat throughout the home. This system should be sufficient to heat every room and be programmable by residents, allowing control over both temperature and timing. Where the installation of a full primary heating distribution system, such as wall-mounted radiators/panel heaters is not feasible due to spatial constraints or room configuration, particularly in areas like bathrooms and kitchens, we will explore other appropriate alternative heating solutions. These may include downflow heaters, plinth heaters, or other suitable alternatives that provide a safe and practical heating within the available space.

At the start of tenancy, new customers will be shown where all controls are and how to operate their heating system.

11. Roofs, Gutters and Drainage

All roof structures and coverings and chimneys will be structurally sound, free from any major defect and watertight. Where solar panels are present, suitable birdproofing measures will be installed.

All rainwater goods will be securely fixed in place, clear of debris/vegetation and operating effectively.

All soil stacks will be free from defects/blockages.

All drains on the premises will be running freely, and any suspected blockages/collapses will be investigated and rectified prior to occupation.

12. Walls and ceilings

All fixings and fixtures deemed unsafe are to be removed.

All nails, screws and Polystyrene tiles will be removed from walls and ceilings.

All surfaces to be left free from mould.

All visible plasterworks will be left in a state that can receive decoration. Any defective plasterwork identified after occupation should be notified via the Responsive Repair Process.



13. Asbestos Surveys

For properties-built pre 2000 the asbestos register will be checked for a valid asbestos survey. Where a survey is not available then an enhanced management survey will be undertaken ahead of works to provide a detailed report of any Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) within the property, and outbuildings, prior to any refurbishment work commencing. This enhanced management survey will include core holes, back to substrate, to all walls and ceilings. Samples will be taken and tested of any suspected ACMs

14. Water Hygiene

All Empty Homes undergo a make-safe process. Where configuration and access allow, we will isolate and drain down the water supply at the start of the Empty Homes process. Where possible, any cold-water storage tanks identified during the survey will be removed along with associated pipework.

As part of the Empty Homes process, a Legionella checklist is completed. This records that all outlets have been flushed, shower heads and hoses have been replaced or sanitised, and toilets have been flushed twice. Following this exercise, the water is isolated on completion of handover, and the system is run off.

The incoming water feed will have water isolation on the incoming supply in the way of a stop tap or sure stop where these can be reasonably accommodated. Best endeavours will be made to make these easily accessible within practicalities of our Empty Homes process.

15. Aerial Provisions

We do not install new aerials in our properties. Where an existing aerial is already in place, it will be left in situ and gifted to the incoming customer. Once gifted, we will not attend or undertake any repairs, maintenance, or replacements to that aerial.

If a customer wishes to install a new aerial, they may do so through the Home Improvement Request process, and approval must be obtained before any work is carried out.

