



# Empty Homes Policy

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## 1 Accessibility of Document

Our aim is to make our services easy to use and accessible for everyone.

We will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments needed for you to contact us, access our policies, or any requests to provide responses in other formats.

Depending on the individual's needs, these might include:

Using larger print, or a specific colour contrast

- Giving more time than usual to provide information or comments on a complaint
- Using the telephone rather than written communication
- Communicating with a person through their representative or advocate
- Arranging a single point of contact
- Having an 'easy read' version of the document

If you would like to contact us about reasonable adjustments or alternative formats, please email [edi@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:edi@dacorum.gov.uk) or call us on **01442 228000**

If you prefer to write to us, send your letter to:

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team**  
**Dacorum Borough Council**  
**The Forum,**  
**Marlowes,**  
**Hemel Hempstead**  
**Hertfordshire**  
**HP1 1DN**

You can find information on Advocacy support here:

<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/do-it-online/contact-us/advocacy-support>

## **2 What is the goal of the policy?**

- To minimize empty home rent loss
- To facilitate repair works as quickly and efficiently as possible
- To prepare homes to a consistent minimum standard that is communicated and understood by residents

## **3 Who and what does the policy impact?**

This policy supports the empty homes and void process to deliver social rented units.

## **4 How does the policy comply with the law and other requirements?**

The legislation listed below will be taken into consideration when implementing this policy:

- Housing and Planning Act 1985
- Equality and Diversity Act 2010
- Homelessness Act 1996
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (defined within the Housing Act 2004)
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012

## **5 Supporting Policies or Procedures**

### **Procedures / Guidance / Impact Assessments**

Impact Assessment

### **Dependent policies / strategies**

Housing Strategy

Asset Management Strategy

Housing Allocations Policy

Recharge Policy

Aids & Adaptations Policy

## **6 EDI Statement**

The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity. The Council has procedures in place to ensure that all individuals are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination.

## **7 Policy Statement**

### **7.1 Context**

Tenants are expected to comply with the responsibilities listed in 2.1 when vacating a property. Failure to comply may result in tenants being charged in accordance with the Recharge Policy (see 2.1)

We will aim to minimize the amount of time each property is vacant as much as possible in order to maximize rental income (see 2.2).

We will ensure that all properties made available to let meet a minimum Lettable standard and comply with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (see 2.3).

We will consider best use of stock when a property becomes vacant (see 2.4).

### **7.2 Link to corporate objective**

This policy supports the council's corporate priorities which are set out in [‘Delivering for Dacorum’ – Corporate Plan 2020 - 2025](#)

In particular:

Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need

### **7.3 Other considerations**

The Council is required to respond to any local or national restrictions imposed by central government. The administration of this and other Council policies could, therefore, be impacted by a pandemic or other emergency for the period that such restrictions are in operation.

## **8 Policy content**

### **8.1 Tenant Responsibility & Recharges**

If the vacating tenant does not repair or make good any unauthorised alterations and clear items as described (identified by a council officer in a pre-void visit) then the housing service will carry out the necessary work and recover the costs from them via the Recharge Policy. Cost amount will be dependent on works needed.

It is the responsibility of the out-going tenant to:

- Give 28 days' notice when wishing to end their tenancy (unless transferring);
- Undertake any repairs that are your responsibility and reinstate any alterations you have made;
- Vacate the property by the agreed termination date;
- Remove all furniture, personal belongings and unwanted items from all areas (including storage and loft spaces) by the agreed termination date;
- Return all keys by termination date to council building (including shed, garage, parking barrier and security door keys);
- Leave the property and any garden areas in a clean and tidy condition;
- Ensure that any outstanding rent and rechargeable repair charges are paid;
- Read any meters and advise utility companies that you are leaving and settle any outstanding debts on the utility meters.

Items which are a tenants responsibility and has not been reinstated, recharges will be raised following the termination of the tenancy.

There is more information about chargeable works in our [Recharges Price List](#)

## **8.2 Transfers to other Dacorum Borough Council or Other Registered Provider**

When a Tenant is transferring to another Dacorum property, or Registered provider (e.g. Housing Association) They do not need to give 28 days' notice, however they will be expected to move into their new property as soon as possible and are required to adhere with all outgoing tenant responsibilities to avoid recharges.

## **8.3 Minimising Turn-Around Time of Vacant Properties**

There are a number of ways in which an empty home can be categorised, determined by how much or what type of work is needed on the property. This can impact the length of time that properties remain vacant.

Any repairs which need to be carried out after the incoming tenant has moved in will be completed within a 20 day period or added to the relevant programme of works.

## **8.4 Lettable Standard**

Our lettable standard is the standard of safety, comfort and cleanliness properties must meet for new tenants. More detail is available in the printable booklet on our website: [Standard for letting empty homes](#)

## **8.5 Best Use of Stock**

In emergency cases or to better achieve value for money, an option to use the property for shorter- term use may be needed (i.e. in relation to a decant (move) or for temporary accommodation.) Where properties are identified for refurbishment,

re-development, sale, demolition or adaptation (as outlined in our [Housing Allocations Policy](#)) is this the correct version the decision will be made within two weeks of the property becoming vacant wherever possible.

## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix 1

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List below any on-executive partners: (any team, external body contributing to policy/strategy)