

Customer Scrutiny Panel's Review of the Voids Process: 23 April 2018- 11 September 2018

Date report presented to Housing Management Advisory Board	25/10/2018
Review Lead – Lesley Storey	Panel members directly involved in the review James Smith Doreen Howell Chris Danpure

1.	PURPOSE OF THE SERVICE REVIEW
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish any areas for improvement in voids management Investigate areas of poor performance in relation to the process Interrogate internal procedures for unnecessary delays or duplication Investigate communications elements, both within repairs and to other teams To interrogate ways to improve the voids process, saving time and money
1.2	The review looked at the service because the average turnaround time was consistently greater than the set target resulting in increased rent loss and customers having to wait longer to get properties.
2.	RECOMMENDATIONS
2.1	<p><u>One</u></p> <p>All properties and gardens should be inspected on a more structured regular basis throughout the tenancy.</p> <p>Benefits – It would provide a regular up to date stock condition in the database. Issues with the property could be identified earlier and potential breaches of the tenancy agreement e.g. meter tampering, unauthorised major alterations and vulnerable tenants would be highlighted.</p> <p>This could also reduce the void turnaround time and therefore loss of income.</p> <p>Evidence - Interviews, operations meeting, shadowing and viewing the void properties.</p> <p>Timescale – Six months</p>

2.2	<p><u>Two</u></p> <p>At the pre-void stage both the tenant and SBC sign and agree on the work that needs to be completed by the tenant. This, then be followed up by an inspection before the tenant hands back the keys.</p> <p>Benefits –Property is left in a lettable standard, shorter turnaround time and lower void loss.</p> <p>Evidence – Voids inspections and interview.</p> <p>Timescale – Six months</p>
2.3	<p><u>Three</u></p> <p>To establish up to date documentation on policy and procedures.</p> <p>Benefits – Fit for purpose so that staff have the necessary information to complete their role.</p> <p>Evidence - Interviews and no documentation available at the commencement of the review.</p> <p>Timescale – Six months</p>
2.4	<p><u>Four</u></p> <p>Investment should be involved in the regular void meetings to provide quicker decisions on work requiring major investments.</p> <p>Benefits- Improved communication and productivity, shorter turnaround time and lower void loss.</p> <p>Evidence - Interviews and documentation.</p> <p>Timescales – One month</p>
2.5	<p><u>Five</u></p> <p>All relevant staff should have access to the keystone IT system.</p> <p>Benefits- The system holds gas, electrical, asbestos and building certificates which are needed by the staff to check the status of the empty properties.</p> <p>Evidence - Interviews.</p> <p>Timescales – Three months</p>

2.6	<p><u>Six</u></p> <p>When a property is ready to let, any unfinished work should be listed and signed by the project officer and sent to the lettings team. When letting to the customer, this document should be countersigned by the letting officer and the incoming tenant.</p> <p>Benefits- Quicker turnaround time and will prevent disputes between SBC and the tenant. Better customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Evidence - Complaints received documentation.</p> <p>Timescales – Six months</p>
2.7	<p><u>Seven</u></p> <p>To provide officers and operatives with a reliable tablet computer to use when inspecting properties to allow quick upload of information regarding the property.</p> <p>Benefits-Speed up the process and improved accuracy.</p> <p>Evidence - Interviews and void visits.</p> <p>Timescales – Six months</p>
2.8	<p><u>Eight</u></p> <p>When tenants return keys to SBC they should deliver them to the CSC or a member of SBC staff, and receive a signature for keys returned. The member of staff would also be able to check if the tenant should return communal door key fobs as well. The tenant would then have proof of returned keys/fobs and would avoid possible problems for the tenant and SBC.</p> <p>Benefits – Keys would not go missing or get mixed up if posted through the CSC letterbox. Ensuring the return of fobs would also save on the cost of replacements, resetting a door entry system, and maintain the security of tenants/leaseholders living in the block.</p> <p>Evidence – Interviews.</p> <p>Timescale – Six months</p>

3.	POSITIVE FINDINGS
3.1	We noticed that there is good communication between void/repairs, lettings and tenancy thorough regular weekly meetings, where the information is fully shared.
3.2	The majority of information is now stored on Northgate, Keystone and P drive. This allows all relevant staff to access the information.
3.3	Photographic evidence of all recharges is saved on P drive as a proof for the outgoing tenant when invoicing the recharges.
3.4	Project officers make regular visits to ongoing voids to monitor the progress and liaise with Chargehand.
3.5	Project officers carry out meter reading on day one of the voids process, and inform SBC's electricity supplier.
3.6	The change of locks being done by project officers at start and end of voids process makes efficient use of their time.
3.7	Recycling of lock barrel/keys to reduce costs.
3.8	At the end of the voids process all documentation and keys are handed to the lettings team. This enables the lettings team to have a complete history of the voids transactions.
3.9	Professionalism of the officers in dealing with tenants.
3.10	The willingness of the staff to engage fully with the CSP during this review.
3.11	Previous problems experienced with gas contractor have improved.
4.	OBSERVATIONS
4.1	Northgate can be slow which has led to the use of separate spread sheets.
4.2	There is not enough storage space for discarded tenant property. This causes delay in void process.
4.3	The use of a handyman service could assist the tenant to make the necessary repairs. This also could be used by the elderly and vulnerable to make any repairs that they require. This would give the tenants the confidence to use the service as it would be recommended by SBC.

5.	BACKGROUND
5.1	<p>This report covers the review of the voids process carried out by four members of CSP team. The voids process includes various departments and is measured by council wide performance indicators.</p> <p>Following a kick start meeting the group formulated their remit and served the Service Review Notice to SBC to formally advise them of their review.</p>
6.	METHODOLOGY
6.1	Four members of the CSP used a range of methods to carry out the research for this service review:
6.2	<p>Documents reviewed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Void Management Guide • Official forms used by the staff in their work • Performance reports • Previous external review of the voids process • Previous CSP voids review • Leaving standard • Tenancy Agreement • Penningtons Asbestos report • Voids complaints spread sheet
6.3	<p>Other methodologies used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with staff • Work shadowing • Shadowing an Operations Meeting • Benchmarking with other organisations including reviewing web information with Housemark • Visiting properties at various stages of the void process
7.0	LIST OF ANNEXES
7.1	Notice of Service Review

Annex - Service Review Notice

Title: Voids Service Review of Repairs and how they manage this

Purpose:

- To establish any areas for improvement in voids management
- Investigate areas of poor performance in relation to the process
Interrogate internal procedures for unnecessary delays or duplication
- Investigate communications elements, both within repairs and to other teams
- To interrogate ways to improve the voids process, saving time and money

Evidence used:

- Performance information – including:
- The average time taken to hand back homes to lettings
- General needs empty property turnaround time
- Cost per void to bring up to the standard
- Number of empty properties over the year 2017/18
- Empty properties as % of stock
- Number of properties becoming empty
- Void loss in year
- Any customer feedback reports
- Information on legislative requirements
- Shadowing

Further evidence required:

- Pre void checks – how these are carried out
- Minutes from Voids meetings
- Voids reports on different types of voids
- Pre-void Assessment Checklist
- Void Policy
- Void Procedure
- Keys procedure

Project team and roles:

- Project team:
 - Lesley Storey, Doreen Howell, Chris Danpure, James Smith;
 - Project Leader – Lesley Storey
Collate and evaluate data – Lesley Storey, Doreen Howell,
Chris Danpure & James Smith
 - Scrutiny Panel Champion –Guru Lota
 - Scrutiny Panel Champion for facilitating – Guru Lota

Review start date: 23 April 2018

Review finish date: 11 September 2018

Signed by:

Chair of Scrutiny Panel:
(print name & sign)

Scrutiny Champions:
(print name & sign)

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Date: 23 May 2018

Scrutiny panel review number: