



# Voids Repairs Process Service Review Report 2025

## Housing Scrutiny Group

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## 1. Summary

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Group review of the void\* repairs process, conducted in collaboration with Housing teams. The primary aim of the review was to ensure that void properties meet a consistent a high-quality lettable standard, are ready for new tenants, and that tenants are well-informed about the service.

The group chose to scrutinise the repairs element of the voids process as they had analysed the performance information on the average relet time, which was high. They therefore considered it an important topic to both the Council and tenants as empty properties are a loss of revenue and keep customers on the Housing Register for longer.

The group undertook a structured process to gather evidence, including tenant feedback, service observations, collaborative discussions, and reviewed recent complaints. This enabled them to make informed and practical recommendations to improve the voids process and enhance tenant experience.

The Scrutiny Group emphasised the importance of tenant involvement in monitoring the implementation of these recommendations to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.

You can find recommendations on Page 8.

**\*Voids are empty homes that need work before getting relet to a new tenant.**

## 2. Acknowledgements

The review was undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Group consisting of Tenants and Leaseholders. We want to give a special thank you for their time and dedication to this project.

Officers providing support to the Scrutiny Group to enable them to gain an understanding of the void repairs process and their roles and responsibilities in the Scrutiny process:

- James Whiter, Housing Repairs and Compliance Manager
- Kim Dawson, Housing Strategy and Services Manager
- Parmjit Cheema, Voids Inspector
- April Hatcher, Engagement Manager
- Raoul de Sousa, Engagement Coordinator

### **3. Introduction**

Following a discussion with the Housing Influence Panel (formerly the Tenant Panel), the group reviewed performance data and engaged in dialogue with the Housing Senior Management team to identify a key area for scrutiny. The subject chosen was voids - specifically, the process of preparing empty homes for re-letting. The original intention was to review the entire re-letting process. However, due to staffing limitations within the Lettings team, it was not feasible for that service to dedicate time away from operational delivery. As a result, the scope of the review was refined to focus specifically on the repairs element of the voids process.

The Scrutiny Group aimed to explore how effectively the repairs process supports the delivery of homes that are ready to let, meet agreed standards, and provides a consistent experience for incoming tenants.

A key area of concern identified early in the review was that the Lettable Standard had not been updated or reviewed in over seven years. Additionally, it was noted that independent quality assurance checks are not routinely conducted on void properties once they have been processed.

The group also examined the availability and clarity of information provided to tenants about the voids process, with a view to improving transparency, trust, and tenant confidence in the service.

This report outlines the group's approach, findings, and recommendations to enhance the quality, consistency, and communication regarding the repair's element of the Voids Service.

### **4. Purpose of this Report**

This report is intended to inform the Housing Department and Cabinet of the service review outcome by providing details of the Group's findings and recommendations.

### **5. Scope of the Review**

In April 2024, members of the Housing Influence Panel successfully completed Scrutiny Training. At the subsequent Panel meeting, they reviewed the end-of-year performance data for 2023/2024 and collectively agreed that the Voids process—specifically, the journey of empty properties through the repairs and re-letting stages—should be the focus of their first formal scrutiny review.

The Panel identified the critical importance of ensuring a swift turnaround of void properties, particularly considering the high demand for housing as evidenced by the volume of applicants on the Homechoice system and the loss of revenue due to high relet times.

It was noted that a dedicated role had recently been established to oversee and improve the Voids process. With this role having been in place for a full year, the Panel considered it a timely opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of this essential service.

As such, the scope of the review was defined to focus on the repairs element of the Voids process, with particular attention to the quality, consistency, and monitoring of the lettable standard, as well as the information provided to tenants about the condition and readiness of their new homes.

## **6. Information / Evidence**

To enable an in-depth review of the service to be undertaken, the following information, evidence and activities were made available to the Group:

### **Performance Information**

Performance information about the Voids Service was provided and there were discussions covering expectations with the Voids Inspector and their team, and the checks they complete using the Lettable Standard.

### **Satisfaction Information**

The Scrutiny Group was provided with Lettings Customer Satisfaction survey data as part of the review. However, it was noted that the number of completed surveys within the selected timeframe was limited, which restricted the ability to draw comprehensive conclusions from the data.

In addition to the survey responses, the Group also reviewed recent complaints received regarding the condition of properties at the point of letting. These complaints highlighted areas of concern and reinforced the need for a more robust and consistent approach to quality assurance within the Voids process.

### **Discussions With Officers**

#### **James Whiter – Housing Repairs and Compliance Manager**

James Whiter attended all Scrutiny Group meetings, offering a comprehensive overview of the voids process. He provided detailed explanations of service constraints, shared relevant documentation, and contributed to discussions around potential improvements and the practical limitations of the service.

#### **Parmjit Cheema – Voids Inspector**

Parmjit Cheema outlined the responsibilities of the Voids Inspector role and described the step-by-step process a property undergoes to become suitable for re-letting. She also shared operational documents and checklists used in the inspection process and facilitated site visits to properties currently undergoing void works.

### **April Hatcher – Engagement Manager**

April Hatcher coordinated the overall service review, including the commissioning of TPAS to deliver scrutiny training in preparation for this first formal review. She advised on tenant involvement activities and supported the development of review methodologies and potential recommendations.

### **Raoul de Sousa – Engagement Coordinator**

Raoul de Sousa provided logistical and administrative support throughout the review. He ensured that Scrutiny Group members had access to all necessary documentation and assisted in drafting materials to support the group's emerging recommendations.

### **Kim Dawson – Housing Services & Strategy Manager**

Kim Dawson provided supplementary information including performance, complaints, and customer satisfaction data.

### **Lettalbe Standard**

The Scrutiny Group with the Repairs and Compliance Manager dissected the current version of the Lettable Standard (2019), line by line, asking questions and discussing sections to be added and removed from the Standard.

At the end of this discussion, a new Lettable Standard was drafted and is part of this report and recommendations. Please see Appendix 8.

### **Reality Checks**

To support their understanding of the Void repairs process, the Scrutiny Group visited three properties at various stages of the voids journey. These visits allowed the group to observe first-hand the type and quality of work conducted to prepare homes for re-letting, and to assess how well the service aligns with the expected standards.

The properties visited included:

**A one-bedroom flat** at the end of its tenancy, providing insight into the initial condition of a property before void works begin.

**A one-bedroom flat within an Independent Living complex**, which was in the final stages of preparation before being re-let.

**A one-bedroom bungalow** that had completed the voids process and was ready for a new tenant to move in.

These visits were a valuable part of the review, helping the Group to better understand the practical challenges and strengths of the current voids process.

### **Documents, Policies and Procedures**

The group were provided with an overview of information that could be made available to them to inform the review, and it was agreed that they received the following:

- Lettable Standard
- Void Management Policy
- Storage and Clearance Procedure
- Recent property rejections
- How to avoid unnecessary recharge notices
- Example of a Decoration Pack voucher
- Lettable Standards from other landlords

## **7. Findings and recommendations**

The following table summarises the findings and recommendations for improvement:

Area of Impact	Recommendation	Reason	Who is responsible?	What Consumer Standard it sits under?
Lettable Standard	<p>For Broxtowe Borough Council to adopt the updated Lettable Standard that has been reviewed by the Scrutiny Group in collaboration with the Repairs and Compliance Manager.</p> <p>Offer to provide the Standard in other formats and languages.</p>	<p>The document was last updated in 2019 and does not reflect the current requirements of living standards.</p> <p>To also ensure that the document is easy to read and accessible for Housing Employees</p>	Housing Repairs and Compliance Manager	Safety and Quality Standard
Lettable Standard	For the Voids Inspector to complete a Lettable Standard 'sign off' for every property.	To ensure all elements of the Lettable Standard are completed and signed off accurately. This will allow Housing to track required jobs more easily. To spot check more efficiently, using the standard as a checklist during the sign-off process.	Voids Inspector	Safety and Quality Standard

Area of Impact	Recommendation	Reason	Who is responsible?	What Consumer Standard it sits under?
Lettable Standard	<p>Provide all new tenants with a signed completed copy of the Lettable Standard at sign up in their tenancy pack.</p>	<p>To inform all new tenants what expectations they should have when moving into their new home.</p> <p>The actions checklist in the Lettable Standard will indicate what work has been completed and what work is outstanding at the point of sign up.</p> <p>This will mean tenants have a written list of specific works yet to be completed and clearer expectations on timeframes to be completed.</p>	Housing Assistants	Safety and Quality Standard
Cost-Effective Refurbishments	<p>To suggest that bathrooms and kitchens be fitted with panelling. This would replace tiling.</p>	<p>It would reduce labour time and is easier to install.</p> <p>Materials and installation costs are often lower.</p> <p>They will reduce water going behind and creating damp and mould issues.</p> <p>No grouting.</p> <p>Durable and easy to clean.</p>	Housing Repairs and Compliance Manager	Safety and Quality Standard

Area of Impact	Recommendation	Reason	Who is responsible?	What Consumer Standard it sits under?
Boilers	To complete a full Gas Safety service before decommissioning the boiler for voids works.	Looking at the evidence and discussions it was highlighted that when a number of tenants moved into the property and turned on the boiler – it was not fit for purpose. So, they then had to contact the Housing repairs to resolve the issue.	Housing Compliance Manager	Safety and Quality Standard
Tenant Support Material	Develop a 'How to' guide and instructional videos to support tenants moving into their new home	The group were aware that for many tenants, it is their first home, and they may need support on tasks such as turning off the water, topping up the boiler etc. Having easy to access videos will reduce confusion and communication with the Council.	Housing Engagement Manager	Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
New Home Information	Introduce a "Welcome to Your Home" guide, including essential information such as the written location of the stopcock, gas, and electric meters.  Ideally, they will also show location at viewing.	The guide showing location of the stopcock will reduce leaks turning into emergencies. Sharing location of meters will reduce tenants getting into fuel debt.	Tenancy Services Manager	Safety and Quality Standard

Area of Impact	Recommendation	Reason	Who is responsible?	What Consumer Standard it sits under?
Education Workshops	Offer practical workshops on home maintenance, decorating, and tenancy responsibilities.	Many tenants are new to renting a property. By having workshops to educate tenants, they are more likely to care for their home, reducing repairs and issues.	Housing Engagement Manager	Tenancy Standard
Customer Feedback	<p>Explore methods to improve customer satisfaction return rates for Voids.</p> <p>This could be a pre-stamped envelope with a survey for customers to post pack, or setting targets to contact new sign ups via phone calls or letters.</p> <p>This would increase the amount of feedback the Council receives, and it could be used to improve the service.</p>	Currently there is only one question on the Lettings survey that asks about the condition of the home at the start of tenancy.	Housing Performance Manager	Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Area of Impact	Recommendation	Reason	Who is responsible?	What Consumer Standard it sits under?
Service Inspector Volunteer Role	Create and deliver a volunteer role to conduct spot checks on void properties to ensure standards are met.	Having a team of Volunteer Service Inspectors spot check properties is key. They would be able hold the Council to account and make sure recommendations and the lettable standard is being adhered to.	Housing Engagement Manager	Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
Post-Void Works	Improve post-void works communication with tenants about outstanding repairs by developing a tracker system.	To make sure any works that still need to be completed after a tenant has moved in has been picked up and completed within a timely manner.	Housing Repairs Customer Services Manager	Safety and Quality Standard
Post-Void Communication	<p>By developing a Voids Customer Satisfaction survey.</p> <p>This could be a phone call, use of the new customer satisfaction survey or a visit.</p>	Improving post-void communication with tenants is essential to maintaining trust and satisfaction in council housing.	Housing Performance Manager	Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Area of Impact	Recommendation	Reason	Who is responsible?	What Consumer Standard it sits under?
Post-Void Inspection and Checklist	To complete a post inspection with the new post-void checklist that signs off all work required for the property (please see appendix 1)	<p>Quality Assurance: Confirms that the property meets safety, quality, and cleanliness standards.</p> <p>Compliance: Ensures legal and regulatory requirements (e.g. gas safety, electrical checks) are fulfilled.</p> <p>Efficiency: Helps streamline the re-letting process by avoiding delays or missed tasks.</p> <p>Accountability: Provides a clear record of who completed and signed off each task.</p>	Voids Inspector	Safety and Quality Standard
Partnerships	Explore collaboration with colleges, universities, tenants, and volunteers to support voids-related initiatives.	<p>These collaborations also offer community engagement opportunities, fostering local pride and giving students or volunteers hands-on experience in housing and property maintenance.</p> <p>Partnering with colleges, universities, and volunteers can provide valuable skills and resources to support void repairs, helping councils address labour shortages and improve turnaround times.</p>	Housing Engagement Manager	Neighbourhood and Community Standard

Area of Impact	Recommendation	Reason	Who is responsible?	What Consumer Standard it sits under?
Grounds Maintenance	<p>Grounds maintenance to be completed near the end of the Voids process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grass</li> <li>- Hedges</li> <li>- Trees</li> </ul>	<p>If the grass/hedges are cut at the beginning of the process, and the void process takes a while it will become untidy/overgrown by the time the new tenant moves in.</p>	Voids Inspector	Neighbourhood and Community Standard
Trust and Transparency	<p>Ensure commitments made to tenants are fulfilled, reinforcing trust in the service.</p> <p>This means doing what the Council says they will do and following policies and procedures.</p>	<p>Fulfilling commitments and following established policies and procedures builds trust and transparency with tenants, showing that the council delivers on its promises and values accountability in housing services.</p>	Housing Services and Strategy Manager	Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

There were a number of recommendations suggested that we are not proposing to take further:

Area of Impact	Recommendation	Reason	Reason For Not Taking Further
Stock Surveys	Conduct more frequent stock condition surveys (every 6–12 months) to maintain property standards.	<p>Conducting more frequent stock condition surveys helps councils identify and address property issues early, reducing the risk of costly repairs and ensuring homes remain safe and habitable.</p> <p>Regular surveys also support better planning and resource allocation, enabling councils to maintain high standards across their housing stock and improve tenant satisfaction.</p>	<p>Due to financial constraints.</p> <p>Condition surveys are currently conducted every 5 years, with 20% of the housing stock being inspected annually.</p> <p>There is an expectation that tenants will raise any repairs issues in a timely manner.</p>
Void works	Back boundaries will be 1 6ft panel, a privacy panel closest to the house and the rest of the fencing will be 1-metre tall.	<p>Using a 6ft privacy panel closest to the house with 1-metre fencing for the remaining back boundaries provides privacy where it's most needed while maintaining visibility and openness for safety. This design clearly defines property boundaries, deters unauthorised access, and creates a secure yet welcoming outdoor environment.</p>	<p>The Council is obliged to mark the boundary of the property, but this is often with chainlink fencing and boundary posts. Fitting a 6ft high panel and 1m wooden fencing around the boundary would be a significant financial cost.</p> <p>Tenants are able to request permission to fit their own fencing if they feel the chainlink fencing is inadequate.</p>

<b>Area of Impact</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Reason For Not Taking Further</b>
Voids works	Recommendation to install security lights in the front and back of the property where possible.	Installing security lights at the front and back of council housing properties enhances safety by deterring crime and antisocial behavior, improves residents' confidence when accessing their homes at night, and reduces the risk of accidents in poorly lit areas.	Independent Living properties already have external lighting installed.  For General Needs properties, these would cost approximately £350 per property to install. For 200 General Needs voids per year, this would cost approximately £70,000.  Tenants are able to request permission to install these themselves.

Following the conclusion of the project, the Scrutiny Group will meet in 6 months to review how the recommendations have been implemented, review performance and analyse the new tracker system.

The Scrutiny Group has placed the Lettings Procedure as one of their future topics. They feel it will link well to the voids process review just completed and help shape an overall better lettings service.

## 8. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Suggested Voids Completed Sign Off Document

#### Internal for Voids Inspector

Task	Notes	Date completed
EPC Document in Folder (Energy Performance Certificate - one is required for each new letting)		
Gas Certificate in Folder		
Asbestos Report in Folder		
Electrical Performance Certificate in Folder		
All Certificates labelled correctly and individually		
Pre-inspections photos in folder (at least 2 images per room)		
Post Inspection Photos in Folder (at least 2 images per room)		
Repairs spreadsheet updated with dates		
Teams/Tracker updated including major works dates		
Location of Gas Meter		
Location of Electric Meter		
Location of Water Meter		
Location of Stopcock		
Location of key safe (containing front door key only)		
Key Safe Code		
Spare Keys in Kitchen		
Window Keys in Kitchen		
Has a House clean been completed? (Orbis / Mobile Clean)		
Has garden clearance been complete?		
Location of Garden	Front / Back / None / N/A	
Communal Bin	Yes / No	
Post Inspection Complete		
Any other information		
Gas Meter Reading		
Electric Meter reading		
Customer Satisfaction Survey Sent		
Type of Central Heating System		
Copy of Signed Lettable Standard		

Works List - Jobs completed on the property		
	<b>Date</b>	
	<b>Signature</b>	
	<b>Officer</b>	

## Appendix 2: Housing Performance 2023/2024

Performance Measure	2023/2024	Target
Overall Satisfaction with the service Provided by Broxtowe Borough Council	66%	90%
Gas Safety	99.85%	100%
Homeless cases successfully intervened	82.70%	70%
Rent collects as a proportion	100.20%	99%
Current Arrears as a percentage	0.90%	2.00%
Electrical Compliancy	89.10%	100%
Reactive Repairs appointments kept	97.70%	98%
Housed outside the Borough - Homelessness	26	0
Average Relet Time - Independent Living	45 Days	40 Days
Average Relet Time - General Housing	63 Days	29 Days

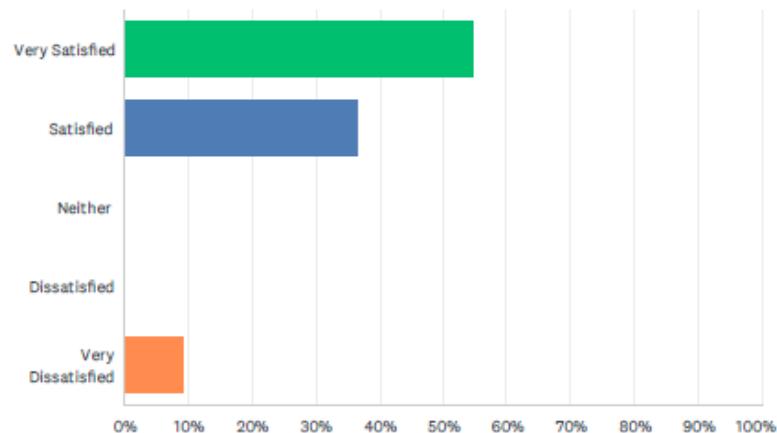
Average Relet Time - General Needs	KPI	HSTOP_03	Business Plan	Pentana	(A/B) A = Total number of calendar days that standard void properties were vacant prior to being let in the reporting period B = Total number of standard void re-lets during the reporting period (excluding major works)
Average Relet Time - Independent Living	KPI	HSLocal_03a	Business Plan		
Average relet time in days (standard re-lets in month)	BM	-	Housemark		
Void Rent Loss	KPI	HSLocal_03a	Business Plan	Pentana	(A+B) A = Total void rent less for each property let within the reporting period from date property became void B = Total void rent less since start of reporting year
% of dwellings vacant but available to let at the end of the month	BM	-	Housemark	Send to CR	(A/B) x 100 A = Number of low cost rental accommodation units that are vacant, but available to let at month-end B = Total low cost rental accommodation units

## Appendix 3: Lettings Customer Satisfaction Surveys 2023/2024

### Lettings - Customer Satisfaction Survey

#### Q1 The helpfulness of staff dealing with your new tenancy?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very Satisfied	54.55% 6
Satisfied	36.36% 4
Neither	0.00% 0
Dissatisfied	0.00% 0
Very Dissatisfied	9.09% 1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>

## Appendix 4: Other Key Data Information

**How many signups across General and Independent Living?**

- 610

**Spend on voids for the last 2 years:**

Year	Spend
2023/2024	£828,631.66
2024/2025	£669,416.82 spend and commitment to 27/01/25

**Rent loss:**

Year	Number of void properties	Rent loss

2022 - 23	415	£794326
2023 - 24	278	£397377
2024 – 25 (so far)	206	£276444

### What is the average cost of a void property?

- We currently do not capture this information, but due to the introduction of a new Voids Tracker, this information will be available going forward.

### What is our current number of empty homes going through the voids process?

- 64 at 27/01/25

### Turnaround times:

		Average re-let time (performance measure)	Actual- average re-let time
2023/2024	Independent Living	40	45
2022/2023	Independent Living	40	170
2023/2024	General Needs	20	63
2022/2023	General Needs	20	88

### What is the average time of the key from lettings being handed over the voids team?

- We currently do not capture this information, but due to the introduction of a new Voids Tracker, this information will be available going forward.

### In the last 2 years, how much has been spent on decorating vouchers?

2023/2024	£11.014.68	57 completed decoration packs
2024/2025	£5350.19 financial year to date	25 completed decoration packs

### Recent property rejections:

- 1 bed Independent Living property at Rockwell Court, Stapleford - 30/10/2024 – needs a lot of decorating.
- 1 bed Independent Living property at Rockwell Court, Stapleford - 31/10/2024 - needed a lot of decorating and carpets which she does not have the money for.
- 1 bed Independent Living property at Regency Court, Beeston - 29/10/2024 - condition of property
- 1 bed Independent Living property at Cloverlands Court, Watnall - 22/07/2024 - there is a lot of work that needs doing to it.

We have a Void Management Policy which can be found internally:

<https://intranet.broxtowe.gov.uk/media/5318/void-management-policy.pdf>

At present, there is no centralised Void Management Procedure.

### **Is there a sign off procedure?**

- The Void Inspector post inspects the work carried out and then the property is cleaned.
- There is no current sign off procedure of work carried out.

### **What does the voids team use for decision making?**

- Minimum letting standard/checklist

### **Appendix 5: Site Images, Cost of Works and Work Sheets**

- [Site Visit Images](#)

### **Appendix 6: Scrutiny Panel Minutes**

- [Scrutiny Panel Minutes](#)

### **Appendix 7: Complaints**

- [Complaints](#)

### **Appendix 8: Old and updated Lettable Standard**

- [2019 Lettable Standard](#)
- [2025 Lettable Standard](#)