

## Void [Technical] Standard

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Flint Housing acquires new build homes, so all of its properties will have been fully compliant with all relevant regulations and standards at the point of handover to Flint. To make sure that properties remain in an appropriate condition, and compliant with all relevant legislation, including the Decent Homes Standard, the requirements outlined in this document should be achieved prior to properties being let to a new customer. These standards will make sure a consistent approach when letting void properties and maintaining the quality of our homes.
- 1.2 An aim of the void standard is to identify our minimum standards and to support our contractors and/or managing agents to promptly assess, agree and implement the required works to make sure the quick and successful letting of all empty properties that are safe and compliant with all regulatory requirements including Awaab's Law.
- 1.3 Feedback from new tenants regarding property condition informs ongoing improvements to our void standards, ensuring homes are prepared to the highest possible standard for incoming residents.

### 2. The scope of this policy

- 2.1 When customers move in, they should expect to find their homes clean, safe and free:
  - Of any health and safety risks, such as protruding nails, loose floorboards, etc.
  - Of stains, grease, and debris so that when touched surfaces will be clean of dirt and grime
  - From leaking taps or waste pipes
  - From damp, mould, and excessive condensation
  - From pests (mice, rats, cockroaches, and any other infestations)
  - Structural issues.
- 2.2 When reletting a home, Flint is committed to making sure the condition of our properties does not put the health and safety of the future tenant at risk. The property will be assessed against the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and will be free of serious hazards. All properties will undergo pre-tenancy inspection in accordance with Awaab's Law requirements, including standardised assessment for damp, mould and condensation risks.
- 2.3 Awaab's Law Pre-tenancy Inspection Requirements: All void properties must undergo standardised pre-tenancy inspection covering:
  - Signs of damp, mould, water ingress, or excessive condensation
  - Functionality of heating and ventilation systems
  - Presence of mould (including behind furniture areas, curtains or in cupboards)
  - Water penetration risks from external structures
  - Mechanical extractor fan functionality
  - Any Category 1 hazards under HHSRS

- Findings will be recorded and a summary made available to the customer on request
  - If any serious hazard is identified and cannot be addressed, the home will not be let until safe
  - New customers will be informed of how to report damp and mould and legal response timeframes.
- 2.4 For the purposes of this Policy, any reference to Flint Housing or “our” or “we” shall be relevant to all its associated entities and administered, where applicable, by its housing management provider(s).

### **3. Electrical and gas services**

- 3.1 Full electrical and gas safety checks will be undertaken, and certificates provided.
- 3.1.1. The consumer unit will be clearly identified, marked, and tested.
- 3.1.2. The gas services will be clearly identified and marked, tested, and any gas appliances serviced.
- 3.2 Any white goods that are to remain in the property will be subject to in-service inspection and testing (ISIT).
- 3.3 New mains-powered smoke detectors/heat detectors will be fitted if these are not present. Any existing mains-powered detectors will be cleaned and new back up batteries fitted. Detectors will be installed on each floor of the property and linked together wirelessly. Additional battery powered detectors will be gifted over, or removed, if already in place.
- 3.4 Hard wired Carbon Monoxide Detectors will be checked/repaired/installed if the property has a gas boiler.
- 3.5 Any other solid fuel burning appliances that residents may have installed within the property will be removed.
- 3.6 Any consumer unit that needs upgrading to conform with current building regulations, will have the necessary works carried out.
- 3.7 Any C1 or C2 observation codes identified during the electrical condition report will be rectified prior to the condition report being issued.
- 3.8 The electrical system within the property will be inspected. All sockets and switches will be free of paint, cracks, or scorch marks and in safe working order.
- 3.9 If there is no form of central heating present, central heating will be installed. Instructions for customers will be provided for both individual and communal systems.
- 3.10 If an individual heating system is installed, then where possible a radiator will be provided in all rooms and fitted with thermostatic radiator valves, including the bathroom (where the design of the room allows this).
- 3.11 Central heating systems will be recommissioned at point of tenancy and operating instructions provided to the resident.
- 3.12 Pre pay electric and gas key meters should be left in credit when voids are complete ready for the incoming customer.

### **4. Kitchens**

- 4.1 The kitchens in our homes vary in size, but our minimum standard is to provide a sufficient number of kitchen units dependent on the number of persons the property is designed to accommodate.
- 4.2 All kitchen units will be checked to confirm they are operationally sound, clean and fit for use. Where replacement units are required, this will be of the same quantity as originally provided and be the closest match where possible.

- 4.3 Kitchen sinks should be in good working order and taps and pipe work will be checked and left in good working order.
  - 4.3.1. Taps should be securely mounted and fully operational and plugs and chains will be replaced if missing or damaged.
- 4.4 Worktops will be substantially free from damage, scorching and scoring. Where necessary, worktop joints will be raked out and replaced with a suitable mastic.
  - 4.4.1. The silicone sealant around the sink unit and the junction between the worktops and tiles will be renewed if defective.
- 4.5 Wall tiles will be substantially free from chips and cracks. All tiling will be sound and sealed with grouting in a good condition. Sealant around the work surface will be intact and free from mould.
- 4.6 Any missing or cracked splash back tiles will be replaced to match existing tiles where possible. All walls above worktops and sinks should have a minimum two rows of splash back tiles or equivalent. Cooker spaces should be fully tiled.
- 4.7 Any white goods that remain in the property under the ownership of Flint must be inspected and cleaned as necessary.
- 4.8 If a washing machine space is provided any pipe work will be in good working order.
- 4.9 There will be a space for the cooker with a gas or electricity supply (or both) and an area for a fridge with a nearby socket.
- 4.10 Gas cookers will be disconnected, made safe and removed.
- 4.11 Extractor fans, where fitted, will be in good working order and tested to confirm adequate airflow to prevent moisture build-up. Where no extractor fan is installed in kitchens or bathrooms, natural ventilation will be confirmed as sufficient to prevent condensation and mould growth.
- 4.12 All cupboards, kitchen units, windows, shelves, and surfaces including splash backs will be thoroughly cleaned (inside and out).
- 4.13 Kitchen units should not be above the cooker space and the cooker space should be available to floor level.

## **5. Windows & Doors**

- 5.1 Windows and doors will open and close properly and be sound and secure with relevant keys supplied.
- 5.2 All the windows will have been checked for cracks and customers will be given at least one window key for those with locks.
- 5.3 All windows from the first floor onwards will have restrictors fitted. Where window restrictors are provided, these shall be checked to make sure they are working and replaced if faults are identified.
- 5.4 All glazing will be intact and free from cracks and misting. Blown sealed units will be replaced and appropriate certification provided where required.
- 5.5 Any glass below 0.8m must be kite marked British safety glass.
- 5.6 All windows will open, and where fitted, locks will be reachable without the help of a ladder.
- 5.7 All doors to the property must open/close with ease.
- 5.8 The locks on the front and back doors that exit to a common public area will have been changed. At least two keys will be provided for each door.
- 5.9 We will fit a closure to the kitchen door and make sure that any front door opening onto a communal hallway will be fire resistant.

- 5.10 Any holes in any internal doors less than 50mm in diameter will be filled, otherwise a new internal door will be supplied on a like for like (or as near to) basis. If the door is a fire door on the escape route from the property, the door will need to be replaced.
- 5.11 All door furniture to be in good working order.
- 5.12 Main entrance doors will have a 5-lever security lock or equivalent fitted. We will also make sure all fobs and communal door entrance keys are supplied, including pedestrian gates and outbuildings.

## **6. Walls, Ceilings, Floors, and Decorations**

- 6.1 Internal structures will be free from any structural defects, with walls and ceilings ready to receive decorations.
  - 6.1.1. Ceilings and walls will be free from substantial cracks or holes and be in a reasonable condition. Substantial cracks should be reviewed to identify if there are any associated structural issues to be addressed.
- 6.2 Internal decorations will be in a reasonable condition, and some decoration may be needed by the incoming customer.
- 6.3 Decorations will only be carried out by Flint Housing in the following cases;
  - 6.3.1. In kitchens and bathrooms where the installation of a complete kitchen and bathroom are undertaken.
  - 6.3.2. On an exceptional basis e.g. in a very poor condition, cigarette staining and odours, graffiti/murals on walls, fire damage, bad mould, damp staining, torn wallpaper.
- 6.4 Any rising damp and/or infestations will be addressed.
- 6.5 Stairs and balustrades (where applicable) will be checked and repaired to make sure they are safe.
- 6.6 All parts of the staircase will be in good condition and handrails and supports will be properly fitted and secure. Stairs should have a handrail on at least one side.
  - 6.6.1. All properties identified with top landing balustrades which could create a climbing hazard, must be recorded during the void inspection, arrangement must be made to implement remedial action (fill in with solid boarding to eliminate a climbing hazard) when the property is void and any such boarding to be painted with two coats of suitable wood paint.
- 6.7 A thorough visual check will be carried out through the entire property and all walls on all floors be checked with an electronic moisture meter to make sure the property is free from rising and penetrative damp. All areas prone to condensation (around windows, in corners, behind where furniture typically sits) will be specifically inspected for signs of damp or mould.
- 6.8 Any evidence of damp staining or water ingress will be investigated and rectified.
- 6.9 Any mould or mildew will be treated and cleaned with antifungal solution.
- 6.10 Floors and skirting boards will be clean, sound, secure and free from trip hazards. Floor tiles will be replaced if they are broken or missing.
- 6.11 Kitchen, bathroom, and toilet flooring should be non-slip vinyl unless previous tenant has tiled the floor. The existing tiled flooring can be gifted over to the new tenant if safe and the inspector deems it appropriate.
- 6.12 Solid wood or laminate flooring can be gifted in houses and ground floor flats if in good condition at the discretion of Flint. It must be removed from upper floor flats if it has not been laid with suitable underlay to reduce noise and impact disturbance to neighbours.

6.13 Floor coverings (which are being provided by Flint on the first let in new homes) will be left where in an acceptable condition and gifted to the tenant. They will need to be assessed as follows:

6.13.1. If the floor coverings are in good condition, they require a surface clean/h Hoover.

6.13.2. If the floor coverings are in adequate condition, they require a steam clean/carpet cleaning.

6.13.3. If the floor coverings are in a damaged, soiled, or inadequate condition, they will need to be removed and replacement floor covering fitted, to all rooms except bathrooms, toilets, and kitchens (see 6.11).

## **7. Bathroom / toilet**

7.1 Customers homes will have either a bath or a walk-in shower and at least one toilet.

7.2 All sanitary furniture (toilet, bath, shower, basin) will be cleaned.

7.3 A new white toilet seat will be fitted to all toilets.

7.4 All sanitaryware will be in good working order with tiled splashbacks behind the bath and basin (if fitted) and will have plugs and chains. If pop up plugs are fitted, these are to be checked to confirm they are in proper working order and repaired as necessary.

7.4.1. There will be a minimum of 4 rows of tiling above the bath area and 2 above the wash hand basin. If a shower is fitted that is to remain in situ the walls should be fully tiled, or wall panels fitted, as appropriate.

7.5 The tiling will be sound, grouted and sealed with all sealants intact and free from mould.

7.6 Wall tiles will be free from chips and cracks. Tiles will be replaced to existing courses and nearest match.

7.7 Where non-standard tiles have been fitted or painted in non-standard colours they are to be replaced if the inspector considers them to be of poor standard; bathroom wall panels may be fitted instead at the discretion of the repairs and voids manager.

7.8 Air vents and extractor fans will be cleaned if dirty or replaced if not working correctly.

7.9 All bathroom furniture will be well sealed with waterproof sealant.

7.10 If a Flint fitted electrical shower is present, we will make sure this is maintained, including shower poles. If a previous customer has left a shower this can remain, providing it passes an electrical test, the area is adequately tiled, and a shower curtain or screen can be accommodated.

7.11 Adaptations will be checked which may include grab rails and raised toilet seats and will be left providing they are in a good condition and Flint has confirmed they are required for the incoming customer. Any additional adaptations required will be installed as per a needs assessment

7.12 Vanity units should be gifted unless considered to be in poor condition by Flint. The same would apply for bath panels, toilet roll holders, towel rails or any other non-standard fitted items.

7.13 There will be an adequate supply of hot and cold water, which is checked and tested.

7.14 Taps will turn off/on with ease with no dripping. Pipework is securely fixed and no signs of leaks and all joints around fittings will be sealed with a suitable waterproof mastic.

7.15 The toilet flushing system should be fully functional.

7.16 An extraction fan must be fitted if there is not one already in place and tested to make sure adequate airflow to prevent moisture build-up and mould growth.

## **8. Water supply and waste pipes**

- 8.1 All taps will be in working order.
- 8.2 Before the property is made available for someone to move in to, all water supply pipes will be flushed through to make sure all water is running clean.
- 8.3 We will also check the waste pipes and make sure they are not blocked, and water drains away freely.
- 8.4 Any cold-water tank, hot water cylinder and pipes at risk of frost will be lagged.
  - 8.4.1 Immersion heaters will be checked to make sure they are in good working order, fitted with a thermostat and lagged or properly insulated.
- 8.5 All plumbing services will be checked to make sure they are watertight and in good working order.
- 8.6 All mains water stop-valves will be checked to make sure free operation and labelled to identify their purpose.
- 8.7 Wheel valves to hot water cylinder are in good working order.
- 8.8 Consideration should be given to fitting either a lever type isolating valve or a SureStop valve in older people's schemes to allow them to be able to easily turn off the water supply in case of an emergency. If the decision is taken to install either of these options, they must be fitted after the main stop cock to make sure there is no breach of the Water Fittings Regulations 1999.
- 8.9 Any dead legs within the plumbing system will be removed.

## **9. Loft Spaces**

- 9.1 If a property has access to its own loft space, it will be inspected to make sure no items have been left by the previous tenant. Any items remaining will be cleared and the outgoing tenant will be recharged.
- 9.2 Insulation will also be checked to make sure it meets Decent Homes Standard requirements. Any properties found to have insulation less than 300mm in depth will have the appropriate additional amount of insulation added.
- 9.3 Water tanks are to be inspected to make sure there is no contamination within the tank, so the risk of legionella is minimised.
- 9.4 Any damaged or missing water tank lids will be replaced.
- 9.5 Should the property be void for considerable time, consideration should be given to have the water tank drained (where fitted) to reduce the risk of legionella bacteria growth.
- 9.6 Consideration should also be given to altering the plumbing system to disconnect and/or remove the water tank system.

## **10. Cleaning**

- 10.1 Overall cleanliness of the property will be free of stains, grease, and debris so that when touched, surfaces will be clean of dirt and grime. This means we will:
  - Clean kitchen units and worktops.
  - Make sure that all paintwork is left in a clean condition.
  - Clean windows (internally).
  - Clean and disinfect sinks, toilets, baths, and wash hand basins.
  - Skirting boards and architraves will be cleaned if required.
  - Sweep/vacuum and clean all floors.

- 10.2 All rubbish will be removed. The property is to be swept clean and all sanitary ware, windows, kitchens, sinks, work tops, kitchen units and gloss work will be cleaned including extractor fans, descaling of baths, toilets, and sinks.
- 10.3 Where electrical sockets, ceiling roses, light switches are badly stained with nicotine or yellowed with age, and cannot be cleaned to a satisfactory standard, they will be replaced.
- 10.4 Any available waste bins will be emptied and left for incoming customer.

## **11. Outside the home**

- 11.1 Homes with private gardens will be free from rubbish. Overgrown gardens will be cut back once and left in a manageable condition. Damaged washing lines will be removed but not replaced.
  - 11.1.1. Grass will be cut once to an acceptable level during the void period. During the summer months grass may grow to a high level by the time it is let, but this is a typical task for the incoming resident.
- 11.2 The garden will not be levelled or prepared for planting etc. This will be the responsibility of the incoming customer.
- 11.3 Ponds will be filled in and Japanese knotweed will be removed (if present) by specialist subcontractors.
- 11.4 Sheds can be left in situ if in good condition and will be gifted to the incoming resident on the basis that they take on the responsibility for the maintenance of the structure.
- 11.5 Any outbuildings will be free from rubbish and structurally sound and secure. Dangerous structures like greenhouses will be removed and uneven and dangerous paths will be repaired. Steps and ramps must also be left in a safe condition.
- 11.6 Where boundary fences and walls joining a public highway or communal area (including paths, fences, steps, handrails etc.) are managed by Flint, they will be repaired to make sure the property is secure and they do not constitute a hazard.
  - 11.6.1. Work will only be undertaken prior to occupation in cases where there is a safety risk.
  - 11.6.2. Poor quality paving/paths or raised areas that pose a potential health and safety risk, need to be rectified (if more cost effective) or removed and made safe, sensible judgements will need to be made on an individual property basis.
  - 11.6.3. Additional walls or raised areas such as decking, raised flower beds or additional paths/paving can be left and no action taken as long as they are safe and pose no health and safety risk to customers. It should be made clear to customers these are gifted items and Flint will not carry out repairs or maintenance to these items if they are left in situ.
- 11.7 All gutters fall pipes & gullies will be visually inspected to make sure they are free from blockages and working properly. Drains and gullies will be in good condition and the roofs, walls and down-pipes will be sound and keep the property water-tight.
- 11.8 The external walls, roofs, soffits, fascia, and structure will be checked to make sure it is safe and in good condition.
- 11.9 We are not able to pass a tree on to a customer which could cause inappropriate risk; trees will be checked for safety and appropriate action taken as necessary.
- 11.10 If external lighting is fitted it will be fit for purpose.
- 11.11 All access adaptations will be checked to make sure they are in good condition these will include outdoor access ramps and step rails; these will be left providing they are in good condition. Where additional adaptations are required, they will be installed as per a needs assessment.

## **12. Equity and diversity**

- 12.1 Flint is committed to making sure all services are accessible to all our customers. Our staff will be trained to ensure they are communicating appropriately with our customers, and they have the relevant information and access to translation services to ensure they fully understand you.
- 12.2 These standards will be applied in a way which makes sure we treat all customers with fairness and respect. We recognise our duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination or victimisation on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and any other protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010.
- 12.3 On request we will provide translations of all our documents, policies and procedures in various languages and formats including braille and large print.

### **13. Delivery of the standards**

- 13.1 This standard should be read alongside:
- Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy
  - Electrical, kitchen and bathroom specifications
  - Lettable Standard
  - Tree Management Policy
  - Lettings and Allocations Policy
  - Defects Policy
  - Emergency Accommodation, Permanent and Temporary Moves Policy
  - Helping You Access Our Services Policy.
- 13.2 The effective delivery of this standard including training, guidance and support required by staff for implementation of this standard will be provided by Repairs Team.

### **14. Standards Review**

- 14.1 We will review these standards at least every three years to make sure they remain relevant and accurate unless:
- Legislation/regulation or industry changes require otherwise, making sure that they continue to meet our aims and industry best practice
  - We identify any problems or failures in this standard as a result of customer and stakeholder feedback, complaints, or findings from any independent organisations.