

Policy Guidance Note (No.22)

ROUTINE CHECKS OF EMPTY PROPERTIES

Responsible Officer	C Medley
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1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1 It is necessary to carry out routine checks of empty properties to ensure that the stock remains in good condition for when it is required.
- 1.2 It is also necessary to ensure that estates and schemes are not left to look run down.
- 1.3 By ensuring an empty house remains in good condition, the investment required to bring it to a lettable standard is reduced. It will also help to ensure that if the property is required it can be re-let in the shortest possible timescale.
- 1.4 The attendance of housing staff for these inspections is also a further opportunity for tenants and residents to raise estate management issues on a formal or informal basis.
- 1.5 Regular inspection should ensure that all schemes are brought up to and maintained to a high standard allowing problems to be dealt with promptly before it becomes a more serious issue.
- 1.6 This prompt action and proactive approach should reduce the number of complaints overall.
- 1.7 This procedure **does not** apply to properties that are due to be re-let in less than one month from the date of the report (see 2.3 below).

2.0 **Routine Checks of Empty Properties Procedures**

- 2.1 All Council housing schemes should be externally inspected, at least twice each year with no more than 6 months between each inspection. See operational procedure OP44.
- 2.2 However, all individual properties that remain empty for more than one month are to be checked at least monthly. Properties that are due to be re-let in less than one month are **not** be inspected under this procedure. Properties due to be re-let in less than one month should be inspected as part of the void procedure (see OP 49).
- 2.3 A report is to be generated from Orchard each month advising each Technical officer of empty properties in their respective areas.

- 2.4 The technical officer is to either inspect or arrange inspection of the property.
- 2.5 Wherever, practicable to do so these estate inspections should be planned to coincide with other business in the area e.g. pre or post inspection of repairs.
- 2.6 The completion of the inspection is to be recorded on Orchard within the "notes" section.
- 2.7 Any repairs necessary are to be ordered.
- 2.8 The "pink sheet" relating to the property is to be amended to reflect the prevailing condition of the property.
- 2.9 In remote island locations it may not be best value to send an officer from the mainland for a relatively short inspection period. Wherever practicable to do so the inspection in these remote island areas should be carried out when a visit is made for some other reason. However, if there is not a proper reason to attend, the Technical Officer can make arrangements for a resident on the island to act as an agent on behalf of the SIC housing service but the procedure as outlined above should still be followed.

3.0 **Guidelines for inspections**

External inspections should assess the general condition of the following:

- Roofs, chimneys, chimney heads, pots, cans and cowl
- Guttering / down pipes
- External walls and finishes
- External windows and doors
- Paths and steps should be in a safe condition
- External handrails should be secure
- Boundary walls and fences are secure (councils responsibility)
- Divisional fencing is secure (tenants responsibility)
- Garden areas are being maintained in a clean and tidy condition
- Sheds or other garden structures are maintained in a good state of repair
- Property is secure
- Property is wind and water tight