



Your Homes  
Newcastle

# Void Management Strategy

Updated January 2008

# **Your Homes Newcastle Void Management Strategy 2008**

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# Your Homes Newcastle Void Management Strategy 2008

## 1 Policy Statement

This is YHN's second void management strategy that sets out for all stakeholders Your Homes Newcastle's vision for the void management service and the aims and objectives that underpin that vision. It should be read in conjunction with the void management action plan, which shows how we will deliver our aims, the timescales and responsibilities.

## 2. Vision

Our vision is for YHN to ensure that our void management service produces properties of the highest standard that, meet tenant's needs, and which offer excellent value for money.

## 3. Context

### 3.1 Government context

- 3.1.1 In December 2003, the Audit Commission published "A framework for the review of housing management and assessment" which revised its methodology for inspecting housing services to include Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's), one of which relates to Tenancy and Estate Management and contains a section on void property management which is still being used at present to assess organisations during inspections. We are developing our services to go beyond the KLOE framework.
- 3.1.2 In July 2007 the Government published its green paper "Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable" in which the Government aims to "create prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities. Everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place in which they want to live now and in the future, that promotes opportunity and a better quality of life in a secure and attractive environment." The paper sets out the Governments plan for 3 million new homes by 2020.
- 3.1.3 The green paper builds on the Hills review also published in 2007 which upholds the principles of social housing but concludes that social housing must be a more effective platform for social mobility, helping people get on in life, and play an active part in their community and wider society.
- 3.1.4 The Cave review published in 2007 which discussed the regulation of social housing and states that in the twenty-first century the Government needs a regulatory system that enables social housing to respond more effectively to people's changing needs, that gives tenants more opportunity to have their say, and demand action on the issues that matter to them and that ensures Government gets the most out of its investment.

3.1.5 To enable housing organisations to meet the aspirations of the Cave and Hills reviews, the issues around the supply of social housing need to be considered. While housing supply continues to fall short of demand and we continue to lose so many more homes through regeneration than we build, we will not be able to balance supply and demand.

### 3.2 Council context

The North East has a higher than average proportion of its households on housing waiting lists and the worst proportion of homeless households in the country outside of London. In over 40% of North East areas housing waiting lists have more than doubled in five years: in Newcastle they have more than trebled. Decreasing numbers of social homes exacerbates the situation further. New social house building is a long way short of matching stock losses. Not a single local authority area in the North East has seen any increase in social housing overall in the last five years.

While housing supply continues to fall short of demand and we lose more homes than we build, we will not impact on the growing housing need in Newcastle.

Making sure that Newcastle offers the right choice of good quality homes is an essential part of any regeneration strategy. The council, working with its partners and stakeholders, has therefore developed a 15-year plan in tandem with the overarching regeneration strategy.

The city's housing has been subject to significant change in recent years:

- Finding an affordable home is now a problem for all areas of the city following house price increases since 2003 with the current average house price at £140,000 and average salaries of £24,000;
- There has been significant house building in adjacent authorities;
- Long-term population decline has stopped, influenced by a rise in international in – migration;
- The role of private renting is changing as student numbers, buy-to-let and city centre living increases;
- Demand for social housing has increased as Right-to-Buy sales and demolition of unpopular homes continue to cut back supply.

Newcastle's housing market is now characterised overall by problems more closely related to higher demand and under-supply than the more mixed picture of even five years ago.

In view of these issues any void strategy and subsequent action plan must fit with the City council's regeneration and housing strategies to achieve the vision for Newcastle to 2021.

### 3.3 YHN context

The number of voids as a percentage of stock across the City has reduced substantially over recent years from 2% in 2004 to 1.2% in January 2008 (This figure includes sheltered housing).

The reduction in stock across the city through Right to Buy, demolition and disposal as well as reduced turnover has led to the demand patterns changing dramatically over recent years and low demand stock is now very localised.

The delivery of an excellent void management service will contribute to the Asset Management strategy, the YHN investment strategy and the Repairs and Maintenance strategy.

It is crucial to the delivery of Your Homes Newcastle's strategic objectives of:

- Three star excellent services
- Refurbishing and building homes

## **4. Aims and Objectives**

4.1 We aim to provide an excellent voids management service which will; deliver continuous improvement through efficient management of voids at all levels, and involve comprehensive training for all staff involved in the void process and challenging targets based on turnaround times.

The strategy will ensure that throughout the void process we demonstrate value for money and delivery of efficiencies through reduced void numbers and reduced relet times.

Achieving the Decent Homes Standard by 2011/12 will be a focus of the strategy by ensuring void properties where possible are brought up to the decent homes standard within the boundary of also achieving value for money.

We will aim to ensure a year on year reduction in the number of empty council homes to a level that allows for movement within the stock and the ability to assist customers to access council housing in the city and importantly provides homes where people want to live.

4.2 The Strategy will achieve these aims through:

1. Continuous improvement in performance with top quartile seen as the benchmark norm.
2. Valuable contribution to sustaining the city's housing stock and to achievement of the Decent Homes Standard
3. Productive partnership working with the service provider and service users
4. Supporting and driving the service improvement plans from the review of the Housing Management service in 2006
5. Showing how we monitor and review our processes for dealing with empty properties
6. Conveying a clear and consistent message about our service ethos to all stakeholders in the void management process
7. Ensuring that our voids management strategy is aligned with wider strategic plans to build sustainable communities

## **5 Voids Management and continuous improvement**

5.1 Voids are managed by YHN staff based at Community Housing Offices and within the sheltered housing service. These staff are responsible for taking action to

ensure that vacated properties are re-let as quickly as possible, which involves arranging for repairs to be carried out, identifying new tenants through the Your Choice Homes Scheme, and managing any security or other problems that arise.

5.2 June 2006 saw the introduction of a new Repairs and Maintenance contract between City Build and YHN following a major procurement exercise. The new contract arrangements included the introduction of the Technical and Maintenance client team within YHN and a range of key performance indicators with a number specific to void performance. Within YHN's client team there are 6 void technical surveyors who support local housing staff, and sheltered housing staff in managing voids which require works.

5.3 As part of our commitment to continuous improvement we have already made a number of changes to our void management processes in the following areas: -

- In 2006 the new tenant property standard was reviewed with tenants and improvements made to its design, however to ensure YHN is delivering high quality homes for new tenants this standard will continue to be reviewed by YHN and its tenants.
- In July 2006 the sheltered housing service was created within YHN's Care Services section. This discreet service was set up to manage all of the Council's sheltered housing schemes across the City to offer a bespoke service to the tenants of those schemes. One of the aims of the new service was to reduce the numbers of voids across the schemes and this proved very successful with a reduction from 127 voids in July 2006 to 61 December 2007.
- In addition to new management arrangements for the service an investment plan was developed that will produce a consistent level of amenities in each scheme. Funding was also secured to carry out a pilot conversion scheme at Milecastle House. This has resulted in seven bedsits being converted in to two one bedroom flats and one two bedroom flat. It is hoped that further small scale conversion work will be carried out in Wansbeck House in 2008/09.
- We have agreed a policy to redecorate sheltered scheme properties for new tenants at a reduced rate with our repairs contractor.
- In 2006 YHN changed the way it delivered training on core housing management functions and introduced a competency based approach. Training on void management was delivered in 2007. Any gaps in staff's knowledge will be identified through individual assessment and the necessary coaching and learning has been arranged.
- In October 2007 YHN introduced a programme for mystery shopping of void properties to ensure compliance with the property standard. Following the first two months of this programme, a report has been produced with an action plan to further improve the void management and condition of empty homes. This programme will continue on a monthly basis and the action plan updated by relevant officers
- Quarterly reviews take place to consider bringing back long term voids in to use in a programmed way. Long term voids are classified as those empty for over six months. As at January 2008 there were only 24 general needs and 33 sheltered housing long term voids in the city.

## 5.4 Future developments

In order for YHN to achieve upper quartile performance, an action plan has been developed and is attached to this strategy. Some of the key features of the action plan are

- Implementation of a revised end to end process
- Development of performance targets for the Furniture Service to assist quick turnaround of properties
- Development of a handyperson scheme to help new tenants settle in to their homes
- Joint training with our repairs contractor to improve consistency in achieving the lettable standard first time
- Reviewing the Your Choice Homes advertising process
- Building on the mystery shopping being carried out by tenants to improve consistency
- Reviewing the procurement of decoration vouchers
- Introduce a welcome pack for new tenants
- Consider the need to introduce specialist teams to manage void properties
- Develop a marketing plan for sheltered housing

## 5.5 Number of voids and relet times

The total number of void properties for the city at the end of quarter 3 of 2007/08 was 927 (including 62 sheltered units). However, only 355 (including 61 sheltered units) were categorised as lettable for new tenants with the remainder being held for regeneration schemes or demolition.

### 5.5.1 BV212 – Statutory Indicator

The average relet time for the same period April to December 2007 was 105 days for all properties. This figure has been greatly affected by YHN bringing many long-term voids (those empty for over 6 months) back into use to respond to the increasing demand for accommodation across the city. It is worth noting that average relet performance for properties terminated within the financial year to December was 41 days. In order to understand the issues surrounding the time taken to relet properties, the YHN board agreed to set up a time limited void management committee in 2007 with a remit to explore good practise and help provide evidence to support this strategy update.

In order to further understand performance YHN is part of the Housemark Benchmarking club where discussions have taken place on the definition of this indicator. The Government's definition is: -

"The average time taken to relet local authority housing. It is measured in calendar days from the date when the tenancy is terminated up to and including the date when the new tenancy agreement starts. Properties which can be excluded from the calculation are:

- Those let through mutual exchanges

- Those undergoing major works

those the council intends to sell or demolish

A void can be classed as ‘major works’ only if an existing tenant would have had to be decanted in order for the works to take place. This would include:

- Structural works – which included floors/walls/roofs
- Site works to remedy the safety and security of tenants (i.e. asbestos removal)
- Works to basic amenities (gas/electric/heating) only where lacking;
- Consequential works as a result of major works;
- Fire and Flood.

In these cases, the void period starts from the date the works are completed.”

Before bringing any long-term void property back into use a robust appraisal is made to ensure there is demand for the property and any investment costs are not excessive. This involves using data and information available through the estate based planning process, Your Choice Homes Feedback reports and local housing knowledge. A process for dealing with long-term voids is included within staff guidelines, which were updated in 2007 (see appendix 1).

## 5.6 **Repair contracting arrangements**

There are currently two contracts for the repairing of void properties as follows:

### 5.6.1 **Reinstatement voids**

Voids which require work to bring them to the property standard are processed through the “One Stop Shop” which is provided by the current Repairs and Maintenance contractor City Build as part of the Repairs and Maintenance contract. The Repairs & Maintenance contract was awarded for a period of 5 years in June 2006 and has a number of KPI’s, incentives and penalties which are monitored by the YHN Technical & Maintenance team.

### 5.6.2 **Modern Homes Voids**

Voids which require works to bring them up to the modern homes standard are processed through the modern homes contract and the works are carried out by one of YHN’s construction partners. The majority of these voids are brought up to standard by City Build who has a yearly allocation of work through the modern homes programme.

Performance in relation to both contracts are monitored by YHN officers at the following meetings:

- Weekly meeting between YHN technical surveyors and the contractor
- Fortnightly meetings between Housing Services Managers, YHN technical surveyors and the contractor.
- Monthly contract meetings between YHN and the contractor

During 2008/09 the void repairs process will be reviewed to align both the above contracts to ensure YHN are getting value from the void budget.

## **6 Delivering Improvements**

6.1 We aim to secure for our tenants a service proactively managed by YHN, which delivers the following:

### **6.2 Continuous improvement in performance with top quartile seen as the benchmark norm**

In 2007 the Government reviewed the range of statutory indicators that are used to measure performance and from 2008 there are no longer any statutory indicators for housing management, however YHN will continue to set indicators using the following measures:

- Local indicators developed to reflect priorities
- Benchmarking to enable learning from best practice elsewhere
- Routine and systematic performance monitoring

### **Repairs to empty properties are carried out to a high standard by skilled operatives**

- Continued development of multi-skilling initiatives
- Further improvement to the void property standard

### **Demonstrable efficiency and value for money**

- Rational and strategic process for dealing with voids with decisions based on sound option appraisal
- Work within constrained resources to ensure effective use of both capital and revenue funding
- Review the procurement of decoration vouchers

### **Top quality customer care and information for all users**

- Accompanied viewing of properties for prospective tenants
- New tenant questionnaire
- A new tenant visit during the first six weeks after a tenancy starts
- Information for tenants on our property standard in plain language and different formats
- Publishing our performance on void management

### **Valuable contribution to sustaining the city's housing stock and to achievement of the Decent Homes Standard**

- A robust voids management process based on initial options appraisal, identifying properties for capital expenditure through the modern homes void process
- Deliver improved void management by ensuring all voids are managed, monitored and progressed timely within set performance targets
- Further development of IT systems to ensure integration of data
- Alignment between the voids strategy and the wider repairs and maintenance strategy, developing good practice and maximising value for money

## **Productive partnership working with the service provider and service users**

- Regular dialogue
- Joint communications
- Joint training
- Joint action planning
- Mystery Shopping

## **Ensuring that our voids management strategy is aligned with wider strategic plans to build sustainable communities**

- Regular dialogue with key strategic partnerships
- Ensuring alignment with the Council's wider regeneration, development and growth strategies
- Utilising existing information from estate based planning to inform the voids option appraisal, determining both demand and investment priorities
- Utilising, voids management information to inform and update estate based planning

## **7 Targets and Performance Management**

- 7.1 YHN has established targets for void management based on achieving continuous improvement. YHN continually reviews the performance of its contractors to ensure high service standards are maintained and improved.
- 7.2 Tenant questionnaires and other methods of seeking tenants views, including consultation with established tenants' groups, 'mystery shoppers' and sample surveys, will be used to obtain feedback from tenants on the standard of works to empty properties. The results of these will be published in our newsletter Homes & People and will be used to help improve performance.
- 7.3 A performance monitoring and management framework has been devised, setting performance standards for overall service delivery, and in particular for monitoring the performance of contractors. Performance on void repairs and turnaround will be monitored during repairs and maintenance contract meetings and by the YHN Management Team, the Board, and the three Area Boards.
- 7.4 YHN will carry out regular 'reality checks' on the voids process, on a sample basis. These checks will be undertaken by a panel of mystery shoppers to ensure:
- Voids works are being carried out to the agreed lettable standard
  - Citywide consistency in applying the lettable standard

The checks will be carried out on a monthly basis and will incorporate properties that have been through the repairs process and those which are ready to let with no repairs. The first series of checks were carried out in October and November 2007 and a report incorporating an action plan was produced in January 2008. There will be a series of responses to the actions highlighted by the mystery shoppers with appropriate responsible officers and a timescale for completion. Reports and

actions will be published on the YHN website.

7.5 YHN has an aspiration for performance that is in the top 25% of ALMO's.

Performance on average relet times in 2004/05 was calculated excluding those voids which went for any repair works, however, the definition of this indicator changed in 2005/06 resulting in a dip in performance during 2007/08. YHN currently include all voids in the calculation of the average relet times, however work is ongoing to examine the data to ensure an accurate reflection of performance is reported.

For key performance indicators in 2007/08 and 2008/09 see appendix 2.

## **8 Service standards**

To underpin target setting and performance, YHN has developed a lettable property standard in consultation with the Tenants Federation. The current version provided to new tenants is attached at appendix 3. However it has been agreed to consult with tenants on a revised booklet

## **9 Consultation and Tenant Involvement**

9.1 Consultation on void management has been carried out over recent months to establish what issues and barriers exist around the void process and procedures. The time limited void committee consists of an independent, tenant and council member of the YHN board as well as a representative from the City Council. Newcastle Tenants Federation were also invited however due to other work commitments were unable to attend all meetings but submitted their issues to the committee.

Following the establishment of the time limited void committee, an officer group was set up which included staff from various sections within YHN as well as representation from the City Council.

As part of the work on improving the void service, a panel of mystery shoppers were trained to carry out reality checks on void properties to ensure the agreed property standard was being met across the city. An action plan has been developed and will be monitored by the mystery shoppers.

9.2 The strategy and action plan has been agreed by the time limited void committee for consultation and the final version will be presented to the YHN Board and remitted to the Area Boards for information.

9.3 We will discuss with the Newcastle Tenants Federation including the Repairs Development Group how best to consult tenants on this strategy. We will also investigate ways of

9.4 We will also consult tenants who are involved in the void mystery shopping programme. Discussions will also be held with YHN Tenant Involvement service to investigate ways of ensuring that under represented groups are consulted on the strategy.

## 10 Financial Position

10.1 Voids management is an area of fairly high spend on both revenue and capital resources. Our aim is to maximise value for money, whilst achieving consistency in standard, working within set revenue and capital budgets.

Our aim will be to ensure that the lettable standard is achieved on all voids, and revenue lost through empty periods is minimised through effective management and control of the void relet process.

10.2 An option appraisal model has been devised to identify properties where capital resources should be utilised, based on the level of work required to achieve the Decent Homes Standard, and demand for the property. Investment will only be made where there is demonstrable demand.

10.3 On voids not requiring extensive replacement works, our aim is to work within constrained budgets to achieve the lettable standard.

10.4 As part of the review of the voids process, a new policy has been introduced for decorating empty properties. We will only decorate properties where there is a need to do so based on the condition of the property. The exception to this is for sheltered housing where we will decorate all properties before reletting them. It is proposed that in 2008/09 a soft market test is carried out to ensure YHN is receiving value for money on the current arrangements for decorating void properties. Where we do not carry out any decoration work, a decoration allowance in the form of decoration vouchers will be offered to incoming tenants.

10.5 The budget for reinstatement voids through the R&M contract for 2007/08 is £5m with £800,000 for cleaning, clearing and security.

10.6 The budget for modern homes voids for 2007/08 is £2.2m

10.7 YHN has agreed a 5 year projection on Repairs and Maintenance void spend subject to review as follows:

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Reinstatement work	5,125,000	5,250,000	5,332,000	5,415,000	5,499,000
Garden Clearance	197,000	202,000	205,000	208,000	212,000
Internal Cleaning	183,000	187,000	190,000	193,000	196,000
Internal Clearance	410,000	420,000	426,000	432,000	439,000
Board ups	216,000	222,000	225,000	228,000	231,000

## **11 Risk Analysis and Legal Issues**

Risks to achieving 3 Stars for void management service

- Performance on the ground – contractor capacity, client leadership, effective processes, staff training
- Not addressing key performance issues (i.e. reducing average relet times)

## **12 Equalities and diversity**

We are committed to ensuring that:

- All of our void practices support our Equality Policy and enable us to meet our duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000;
- All contracts we award in relation to void repairs are non discriminatory and promote equality of opportunity;
- The contractors we work with are non discriminatory and share our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity;
- We work with our partners and contractors to establish targets which we can monitor to assess their performance; and
- We provide advice, guidance and support to our contractors and potential contractors so that they can improve their performance and the performance of those they work with.

Copies of Your Homes Newcastle's Equality Policy can be viewed on the Your Homes Newcastle website [www.yhn.org.uk](http://www.yhn.org.uk).

## **13 Customer Information**

We will keep our tenants informed of the void management service using plain English and a range of media, all of which can be translated, interpreted or produced in audio or Braille including.

- Lettable property standard
- Decoration Voucher leaflet
- Revised tenancy handbook
- Mystery shopping report and action plan
- Website

## **14 Staff Guidance**

- Staff guidance will be provided in a range of ways, including

- Void procedure manual and good practice guide on YHN intranet
- Revised induction information for new staff
- Void management competency based for housing management, including an annual refresher
- Briefings for additional YHN staff, for example concierge and sheltered housing service staff

## **15 Implementation and Monitoring**

In order to ensure implementation and monitoring of the strategy it is important that YHN considers identifying a lead officer to co-ordinate delivery at the action plan over the coming years and continues to develop the following mechanisms for monitoring performance.

- Performance against targets on voids will be reported on a quarterly basis to Main Board.
- Property Committee and Area Boards will receive performance reports.
- Consultation with the Repairs Development Working Group and Tenants Investment Forum on this strategy.
- Performance against the attached action plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure achievement against targets.
- The Voids Strategy will be reviewed annually.
- Continue to develop the mystery shopping process

In the short term the Principal Housing Manager (Inner West) will continue to take the lead role for delivery of the action plan through the re-establishment of a voids workstream in the YHN Programme.

## Void Strategy Action Plan 2008-10

			<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>When</b>
1.	<b>Continuous improvement in performance with top quartile seen as the benchmark norm</b>	Local indicators developed to reflect priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish cascade of performance information from Citywide to neighbourhood level</li> </ul>	Northgate Project Team	30/06/08
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop cascade to estate level</li> </ul>	Northgate Project Team	30/06/08
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include feedback on performance in information to tenants</li> </ul>	Communication Manager	30/09/08
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create targets for furniture service around collections and deliveries of furniture</li> </ul>	Area Director (Inner West)	30/06/08
		Improved local average relet time performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the level of multi skilling of operatives</li> <li>Analyse data against relet definition</li> <li>Adjust resources to meet top quartile for average relet times</li> <li>Review procedures to ensure properties are advertised as early as possible</li> </ul>	Technical & Maintenance Manager  Lead Performance Management and Policy Officer  Director of Tenancy Services  Manager, Your Choice Homes	31/12/08  30/06/08  31/03/09  30/06/08

		Benchmarking to enable learning from best practice elsewhere using the Housemark benchmarking club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research into best practice services and implement appropriateness</li> <li>• Expand the role of the void contract meeting to improve repairs performance and develop the service</li> </ul>	Director of Tenancy Services	31/03/09
				Technical & Maintenance Manager	30/06/08
		Routine and systematic performance monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct monthly area contract monitoring meeting</li> <li>• Reinforce the need for fortnightly void meetings at local office level</li> <li>• Review performance against targets each month.</li> <li>• Include void performance in monthly one to one supervision sessions</li> </ul>	Area Directors	Ongoing
				Area Directors	Ongoing
				Area Directors	Ongoing
				Area Director / Principal Housing Managers / Housing Service Managers	Ongoing
		Start relet process immediately notice is received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilise YCH adverts</li> <li>• Evaluate the end of tenancy incentive scheme for improvement on condition of properties coming empty</li> </ul>	Housing Service Officers Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	Ongoing 30/09/08
		Monitor tenancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop new reports within</li> </ul>	Principal Housing	30/06/08

		termination rates and reasons	Northgate to help analyse termination rates and reasons	Manager (Inner West)	
		Monitor refusal rates and reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create reports within Northgate and use to reduce the rate of refusals</li> </ul>	Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	30/06/08
<b>2.</b>	<b>Repairs to empty properties are carried out to a high standard by skilled operatives</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue programme of mystery shopping to check against the agreed property standard</li> <li>• Conduct joint reality checks with contractor on cleaning standards</li> <li>• Develop further joint pre inspections with YHN</li> </ul>	Tenant Investment Manager / Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)  Technical & Maintenance Manager / City Build  Technical & Maintenance Manager / City Build	Ongoing  30/07/08  30/06/08
		Further improvement to the void property standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with tenants on revised booklet for the property standard</li> </ul>	Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	30/06/08
<b>3.</b>	<b>Demonstrable efficiency and value for money</b>	Review current decoration voucher scheme to include alternative suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procure new decoration voucher contract</li> </ul>	Procurement and Payments Manager	31/03/09
		Ensure void is easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot the use of key safes to</li> </ul>	Principal Housing	30/09/08

		to access to avoid unnecessary delays	<p>speed up the access arrangements for voids and reduce travel time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop performance measures based on the level of work content rather than value</li> </ul>	<p>Manager (Inner West)</p> <p>Technical &amp; Maintenance Manager / City Build</p>	30/09/08
4.	<b>Top quality customer care and information for all users</b>	Accompanied viewing of properties for prospective tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish 100% accompanied viewing target</li> <li>• Develop a method of measuring customer satisfaction with the property standard</li> </ul>	Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	30/06/08
				Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	30/06/08
		Introduce Handyperson scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This scheme would add value to customers in getting small jobs carried out as a new tenant</li> </ul>	Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	31/12/08
		Publish the need to give proper notice amongst tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilise Homes + people</li> <li>• Posters in CHO's</li> </ul>	Communication Manager	30/09/08
				Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	30/06/08
		New tenant questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a new tenant questionnaire to include measuring satisfaction with their new home</li> </ul>	Performance management and policy	30/06/08

		Publishing our performance on void management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YHN board reports</li> <li>• Area board reports</li> <li>• Property Committee reports</li> <li>• Homes and People newsletter</li> <li>• Internet</li> </ul>	<p>Performance management and policy</p> <p>Performance management and policy</p> <p>Technical &amp; Maintenance Manager</p> <p>Communication Manager</p> <p>IT Manager</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>30/06/08</p>
		Introduce welcome pack for new tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss and agree with tenants the provision of a welcome pack</li> </ul>	Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	30/06/08
<b>5.</b>	<b>Valuable contribution to sustaining the city's housing stock and to achievement of the Decent Homes Standard</b>	Review current contract arrangements for Repairs & Maintenance and DHS voids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One route for voids with rates negotiated with the contractor appropriately.</li> <li>• Utilise evidence from the current average costs exercise to review costing process for voids</li> </ul>	<p>Technical &amp; Maintenance Manager / City Build</p> <p>Technical &amp; Maintenance Manager / City Build</p>	<p>31/12/08</p> <p>30/09/08</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Productive partnership working with the service provider and service users</b>	Regular dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly contract meetings at Citywide and area level.</li> </ul>	Area Directors	Ongoing

		Joint training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore needs and options for joint training around the property standard</li> </ul>	City Build / Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	30/08/08
		Joint action planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop joint action plans for service improvement based on performance monitors and stakeholder feedback</li> </ul>	Principal Housing Manager (Inner West) and Tenant Involvement Manager	31/12/08
<b>7.</b>	<b>Ensuring that our voids management strategy is aligned with wider strategic plans to build sustainable communities</b>	Regular dialogue with key strategic partnerships around the housing and regeneration strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise existing protocols with NCC Strategic Housing.</li> </ul>	Director of Tenancy Services	Ongoing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise the Annual lettings review to assist in the void management process including the development of a quarterly exchange of information.</li> </ul>	Principal Housing Managers	From 30/09/08
<b>8.</b>	<b>Communication</b>	Ensure void turnaround is a corporate responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly communicate this to all teams</li> </ul>	Principal Housing Manager (Inner West)	30/06/08

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce and implement marketing plan for sheltered housing</li> </ul>	Sheltered housing service	30/06/08
<b>9.</b>	<b>Management Arrangements</b>	Consider specialised teams to manage the complete void property management process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures consistency</li> <li>• Ensures effective monitoring of contractor and standards</li> </ul>	Director of Tenancy Services	30/06/09

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Long-Term and Difficult to Let Voids Proposal**

It is essential that YHN has a clear process to deal with long-term voids and voids that are difficult to let.

There are a high number of current voids across the City that cannot be let for a variety of reasons, a number of meetings have taken place to agree what should happen with these voids and options for consideration include disposal, demolition, and conversion.

The proposed process to reach decisions for future voids that are difficult to let is as follows:

- The Housing Services Officer would identify to the HSM where there was a property that was proving difficult to let having already explored letting the property through the current procedures. The Housing Services Officer would know at this point if the void was included in any regeneration plans and those voids would fall outside of this process.
- The HSM meets regularly with staff from the Property & Contract Services, at these meetings the void should be highlighted and a proposed action suggested. Such action for the void could be demolition, disposal or conversion. The HSM would have knowledge of the locality and be in a good position to agree the best option.
- The HSM would advise the Area Director and PHM of the void and the proposed action, the AD and PHM meet with the Investment Delivery Manager for their areas on a regular basis. At these meetings a decision should be reached on the future of the void property taking into account the view of the local HSM and costs involved and the local housing market.

At this point there are two options as follows:

1. The Area Director submits a report to HMT to agree the void proposal and the next stage
2. The Area Director makes the decision on the void proposal and proceeds to the next stage

The preferred option for this process needs to be agreed and then this proposal can be included in the void management process guide that is currently being developed and is in draft form.

## Appendix 2:

Key performance indicators for 2007/08 are as follows:

Indicator	Description	Target
BV212	Average time to relet YHN housing	78 days
R&M 14	Voids maintained within target costs	91%
R&M 15	Void inspections from release to ticked raised	3 working days
R&M 16	Voids meeting the property standard	95%
R&M 23a	Time taken to clean and clear voids	2 working days
R&M 23b	Time taken to clean and clear voids (inc re-lets)	2 working days
R&M 24	Time taken from authorisation to completion of voids (<2.5K up to Nov 07 - ,2.7 Nov onwards)	8 working days
R&M 25	Time taken from authorisation to completion of voids (<2.5K up to Nov 07 - >2.7 Nov onwards)	12 working days
R&M 26	Time taken from release to handover of voids (<2.5K up to Nov 07 - <2.7 Nov onwards)	13 working days
R&M 27	Time taken from release to handover of voids (>2.5K up to Nov 07 - >2.7 Nov onwards)	17 working days
YHN 30	Time taken to authorise voids	1 working days
DHS Voids KPI	Number of days to survey	11 working days
DHS Voids KPI	Number of days to complete	20 working days

**Proposed indicators for 2008/09 are:**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Target</b>
Local indicator	Average time to relet YHN housing	50 days
Local indicator	Number of lettable voids	1% of available stock as at 31/3/2009
R&M 14	Voids maintained within target costs	91%
R&M 15	Voids inspections from release to ticket raised	3 working days
R&M 16	Voids meeting the property standard	95%
R&M 23a	Time taken to clean and clear voids	2 working days
R&M 23b	Time taken to clean and clear voids (inc re-lets)	2 working days
R&M 24	Time taken from authorisation to completion of voids (<2.5K up to Nov 07 - <2.7 Nov onwards)	8 working days
R&M 25	Time taken from authorisation to completion of voids (>2.5K up to Nov 07 - >2.7 Nov onwards)	12 working days
R&M 26	Time taken from release to handover of voids (<2.5K up to Nov 07 - <2.7 Nov onwards)	13 working days
R&M 27	Time taken from release to handover of voids (>2.5K up to Nov 07 - >2.7 Nov onwards)	17 working days
YHN 30	Time taken to authorise voids	1 working day
DHS Voids KPI	Number of days to survey	11 working days
DHS Voids KPI	Number of days to complete works	20 working days