

Void Management Best Practices for Local Authorities: Strategies for Minimising Voids and Improving Housing Availability

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As local authorities across the UK grapple with increasing demand for social housing, the efficient management of void properties has become a critical issue. Void periods, where properties remain unoccupied between tenancies, represent not just a missed opportunity to address housing shortages but also a significant financial burden. By adopting best practices in void management, local authorities can minimise these periods and improve overall housing availability, benefiting both tenants and taxpayers.

Understanding the Impact of Voids

Void properties create a ripple effect of challenges. Financially, they result in lost rental income and increased maintenance costs due to prolonged vacancy. Socially, unoccupied properties can contribute to community decline, becoming targets for vandalism or anti-social behaviour. Addressing void periods efficiently is therefore both an economic and societal imperative.

Best Practices in Void Management

1. Streamlined Turnaround Processes

Efficient void management begins with reducing the time properties spend vacant. Authorities should:

- Standardise and automate key processes such as inspections, maintenance scheduling, and tenant allocation.
- Implement technology solutions that allow real-time tracking of property readiness.
- Establish clear KPIs for teams managing void periods, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

2. Proactive Maintenance and Repairs

Pre-emptive maintenance can significantly reduce the time required to prepare a property for new tenants. This includes:

- Conducting regular inspections to identify potential issues before they escalate.
- Establishing a responsive and well-resourced repairs team.
- Maintaining an up-to-date database of property conditions to streamline refurbishment planning.

3. Tenant Engagement and Transition

Support Smooth transitions between tenancies can prevent unnecessary delays. Strategies include:

- Offering support to outgoing tenants to ensure properties are vacated in good condition.

- Providing clear guidance and assistance for new tenants to move in promptly.

- Actively addressing tenancy sustainment by offering support services that reduce the likelihood of premature terminations.

4. Collaboration with External Partners Local authorities can benefit from partnerships with housing associations, private landlords, and contractors. Collaboration can:

- Increase access to additional resources for repairs and maintenance.
- Enable quicker tenant allocation through shared databases or housing pools.
- Encourage the adoption of innovative solutions, such as temporary leases to manage short-term housing demand.

5. Leveraging Data for Strategic Decision-Making Data-driven approaches can provide actionable insights to improve void management. Authorities should:

- Analyse trends in tenancy turnover and property readiness to identify bottlenecks.
- Use predictive analytics to anticipate demand and allocate resources effectively.
- Continuously review performance metrics to refine strategies and processes.

Strategies for Minimising Voids and Enhancing Housing Availability

Beyond efficient void management, addressing housing shortages requires a proactive approach:

1. Expanding Stock Through Acquisition and Development Increasing the availability of housing stock can ease the pressure of high demand. Authorities should:

- Invest in the acquisition of underused private properties.
- Prioritise the development of affordable housing to meet local needs.

2. Innovative Use of Existing Housing Stock Creative solutions can maximise the utility of current properties, including:

- Repurposing unused commercial or industrial spaces for residential use.
- Offering incentives for private landlords to make properties available for social housing.

3. Enhancing Tenant Retention Reducing tenancy turnover directly impacts void rates. Authorities can achieve this by:

- Offering long-term tenancies with stable terms.
- Providing access to support services that enhance tenant well-being.
- Encouraging community-building initiatives to foster a sense of belonging.

Conclusion

Effective void management is not just about filling empty properties quickly; it is about creating a streamlined, proactive approach that benefits tenants, communities, and local authorities alike. By adopting best practices and addressing systemic challenges, local authorities can minimise void periods, improve housing availability, and contribute to more resilient communities.

Case Study: Success with a Local Authority Client

One of Madison Brook's recent projects involved partnering with a local authority to address their significant void management challenges. By implementing streamlined processes and proactive maintenance strategies, we achieved remarkable results:

- **On-Time and On-Budget:** Delivery: Properties were turned around 30% faster, reducing void periods to an average of two weeks.
- **Improved Financial Outcomes:** Lost rental income was minimised, and energy-efficient upgrades reduced utility debts across the portfolio.
- **Enhanced Resident Satisfaction:** Higher satisfaction rates were recorded, leading to improved tenant retention and rent recovery exceeding Private Rented Sector (PRS) standards. This case exemplifies the tangible benefits of adopting Madison Brook's tailored void management solutions.

Call to Action

At Madison Brook, we specialise in working with local authorities to deliver expert construction services and tailored solutions that drive results. Let us help you streamline void management processes and maximise housing availability. Get in touch with us today to learn more.

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