



Aberdeenshire *housing partnership*

VOID POLICY

**Approved 23 January 2004
Review January 2007**

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1.0 Introduction

Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership (AHP) is a registered charity established in 1999 with New Housing Partnership Funding and registered with Communities Scotland. Our housing stock comprises approximately 300 trickle transfer properties from Aberdeenshire Council, which we own and a further 200 new build properties all of which are located throughout Aberdeenshire.

The majority of AHP's housing is for general needs, however there is a Very Sheltered Housing Complex in Fraserburgh, a Respite Care facility in Banchory and 2 Special Needs Units in Turriff and Portsoy, which provide accommodation and support for people with physical and learning disabilities.

Our current development programme will ensure that a further 70 properties are built and available for letting during the next 12 months.

AHP considers that a Void Property is defined as any property which, for whatever reason, is not occupied by a tenant for a period of time.

2.0 Aims

Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership aims to provide good quality, affordable rented accommodation for people in housing need.

Around 10% of our properties become void each year, and it is important that these properties are managed correctly in order to minimise loss of income to AHP and to ensure that we maximise our role in tackling the demand for affordable rented housing in the Aberdeenshire area.

3.0 Principles

Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership seeks to ensure that the following key areas are addressed within this policy:

1. Properties are let promptly in accordance with targets and procedures as set by the Housing Committee and Board of Management, to minimise loss of income to AHP.
2. The cost of void repairs is kept to a minimum, whilst ensuring that all voids are re let in accordance with agreed lettable standards.
3. Outgoing tenants will be charged for outstanding repairs for which they are responsible according to the Recharge Policy.
4. All legal responsibilities and good practice in relation to Void Management are adhered to such as gas and electrical safety checks.
5. Ensuring that Tenants are aware of their repair responsibilities at the end of a tenancy
6. To provide Performance Information to staff and the Board of Management on a regular basis, to ensure scrutiny throughout the Void Process and an awareness our strengths and weakness in order that achievements can be built on and failures addressed.
7. To ensure that Housing Need is addressed as effectively as possible.

4.0 Void Categories

AHP categorises voids as follows:

1. Termination by Tenant

Where the tenant gives 28 days written notice of their intention to give up their tenancy. This includes transfers of tenancies

2. Death of Tenant

Where AHP is informed of the death of a tenant, and there is no one to succeed to the tenancy.

3. Eviction

Where a tenant is removed from a property following Court Action for breaching their tenancy conditions.

4. Abandonment

Where a tenant leaves their tenancy without giving notice and the property is repossessed under Abandonment Procedures.

5. New Lets

Where new properties are handed over to AHP to be let for the first time.

5.0 Legislative Framework

AHP is committed to observing all legal requirements in relation to void properties including:

1. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

The Scottish Secure Tenancy advises tenants of the need to give a minimum of 28 days written notice if they want to give up their tenancy. It also gives information on the procedures which AHP will follow to recover possession of a property if a tenant abandons their tenancy.

2. Schedule 7, Part 1 of the Act, relates to payments and benefits for staff, Board Members and relatives.

Staff will be appraised of this legislation to ensure that a conflict of interest does not occur as a result of the void process.

Any queries regarding a potential breach of Schedule 7 regulations should be notified to the Housing Manager or Chief Executive immediately.

3. Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Sex Discrimination Act and Disability Discrimination Act

AHP is committed to fair and equal treatment of all of its tenants. AHP will not discriminate against any tenant who terminates their tenancy on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, religion, marital status, physical disability, appearance or sexual preference.

4. Gas Safety Regulations 1994

AHP has a programme of Servicing in place to ensure that all of its properties which have gas heating or other appliances are annually inspected. In addition to this Gas Safety checks will also be carried out to each property which becomes void.

This document also takes account of SFHA/COSLA Raising Standards in Housing and guidance issued by Communities Scotland in relation to Void Management.

6.0 Lettings Standard

In order to ensure that all voids are let to an appropriate standard, guidance on this has been produced for use by staff as they carry out end of tenancy and post repair inspections.

Also a guide has been compiled for tenants, to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities prior to terminating their tenancy.

Both of these guides can be found at Section 11 Standard Letters and Forms.

7.0 Targets

Every year targets will be set by the Board of Management.

Specifically these will relate to the following categories:

1. Average time in calendar days to let a void.
2. Void Loss as a percentage of the Annual Rental Income.

8.0 Monitoring, Reporting and Reviewing

Reports will be produced monthly, recording details relating to all aspects of void management to enable performance to be closely monitored by staff, the Housing Committee and Board of Management.

Reports will cover the following:

1. Number of void days for each void property.
2. Number of void days in repair.
3. Number of void days in housing management.
4. Total number of voids on a monthly and accruing basis.
5. Average void days on a monthly and accruing basis.
6. Rent Loss for each void property.
7. Total rent loss for voids on a monthly and accruing basis.
8. Average rent loss per property on a monthly and accruing basis.

9. Rent loss as a percentage of the Annual Rental Income.
10. Total number of days it takes to identify a new tenant for each void property.
11. Average number of days it takes to identify new tenants.
12. On a quarterly basis, repair costs and decoration allowances relating to voids will be issued relating to actual and average costs per void as will information collected from tenant surveys.
13. Reports will be further split to reflect the area of the void and whether the void relates to a new build or a trickle transfer property.
14. Reports will be used to determine performance against targets, and information from the surveys will be used to highlight areas where improvements to procedures and performance can be made.

9.0 Tenant Involvement

In addition to reporting on all aspects of the void management process, it is equally important to monitor the outcome of the voids process from our tenants' perspective.

To enable us to gather information, such as reasons for giving up the tenancy, quality of information provided at the end of a tenancy etc., a short survey will be issued to all tenants along with their letter of termination.

Similarly we will also gather information relating to the standard of the void repairs from the new tenant. Again this will be in the form of a small survey which will be conducted as part of the tenants settling in visit.

In addition to this, complaints in relation to voids which are made through the Complaints Procedure, will also be monitored and reported to the Housing Committee and the Board of Management quarterly.

Information collected from these surveys will be reported quarterly to the Board of Management.

Future reviews of the policy and procedures will take account of tenant feedback and will be carried out in accordance with the Tenant Participation strategy.

10.0 Procedures

The critical aspect of void control is to use the notice period of 28 days correctly, to ensure that by the time keys are handed into the office the following critical activities should have occurred:

1. A new tenant for the property should be identified and waiting to view the property.
2. Staff should have an idea of the level of repairs required to re let the property and whether a decoration allowance will be necessary.
3. All arrangements relating to the outgoing tenant should be resolved e.g. rent arrears and tenants repair responsibilities.

At the time of writing this procedure, the targets for voids are:

Total Re let time: 15 Calendar days

This starts from the day after the date of termination.

This is further split into 10 Calendar Days for Void Repairs and 5 Calendar Days for Housing Management.

The flowchart below breaks down the individual stages of the void and who has responsibility for each activity.

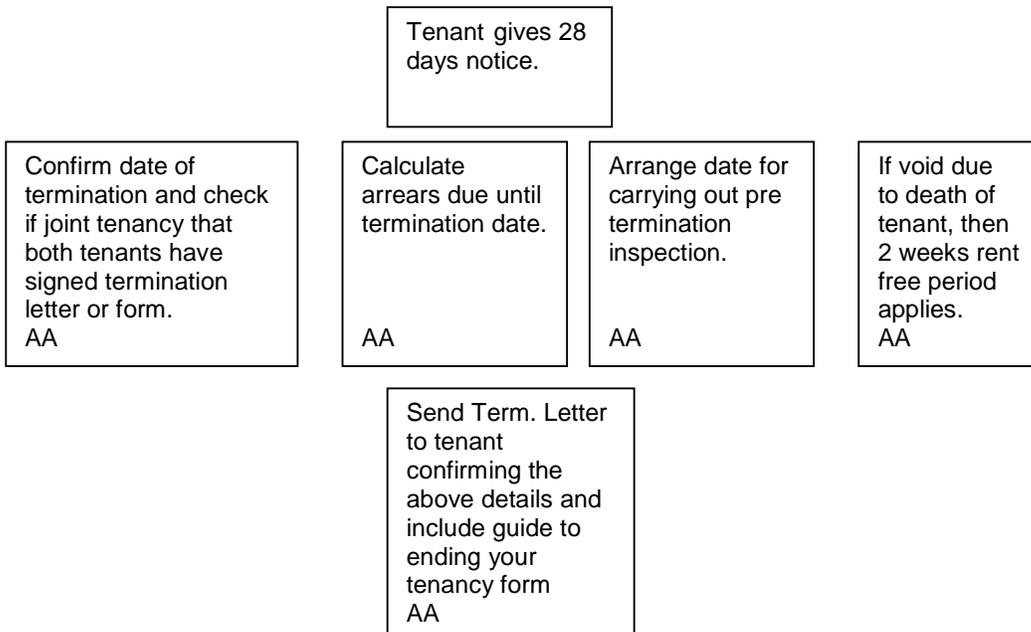
AA = Administrative Assistant

HA = Housing Assistant

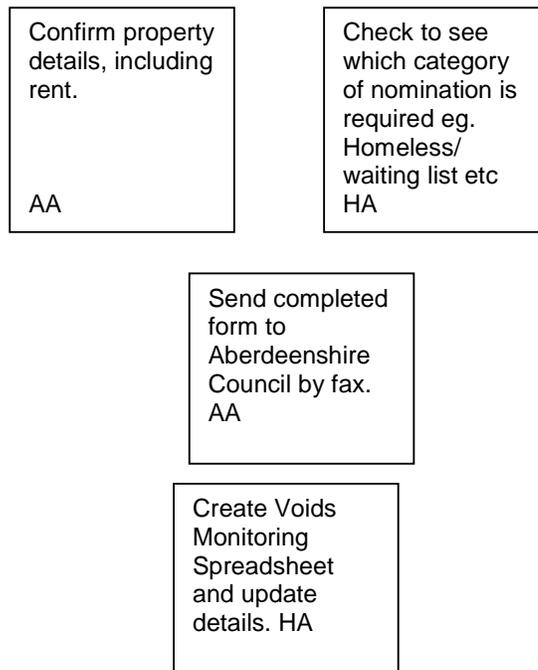
HM = Housing Manager

11.0 Procedures Flowchart

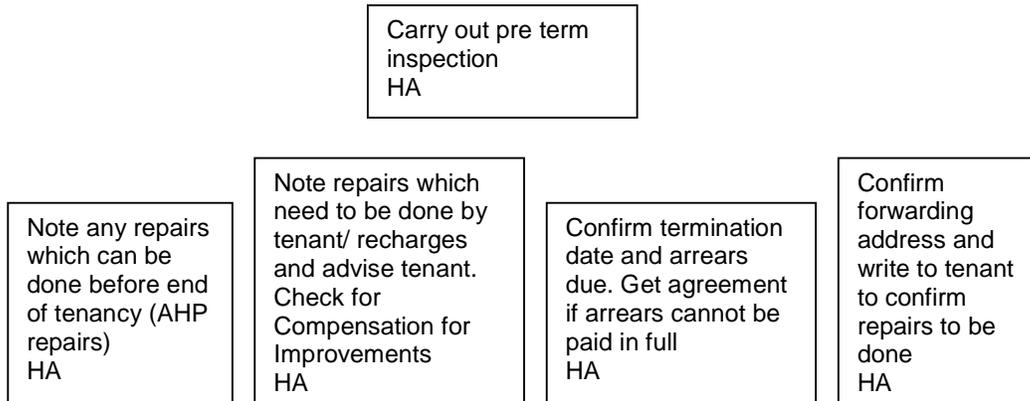
Day 1



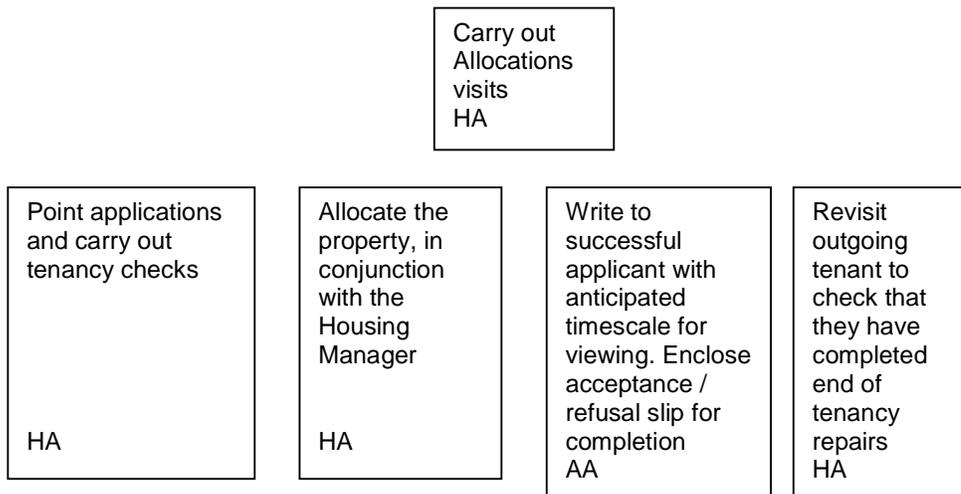
Days 2 - 4



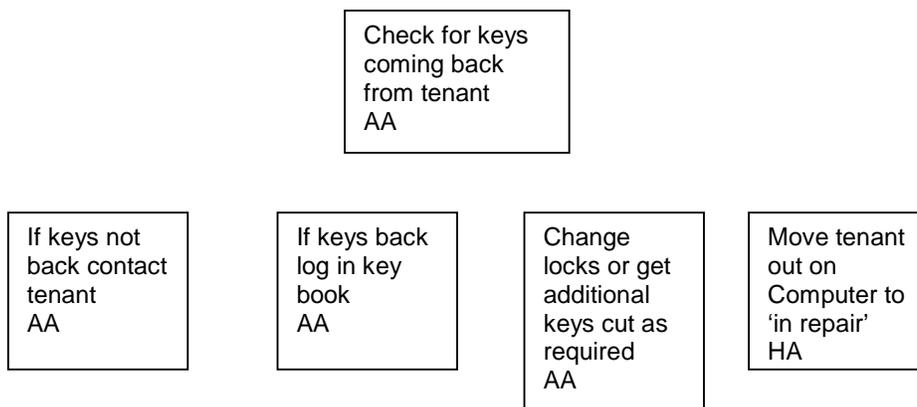
Days 3 - 10

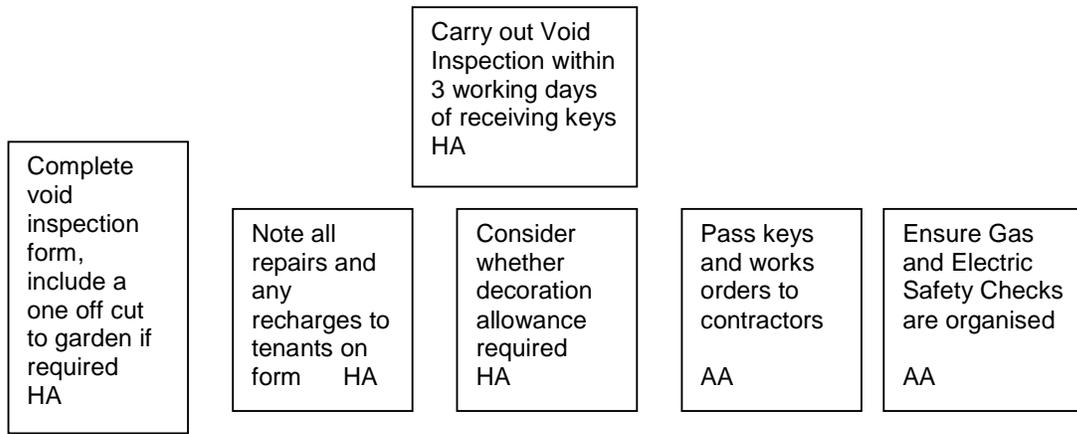


Days 10 – 28

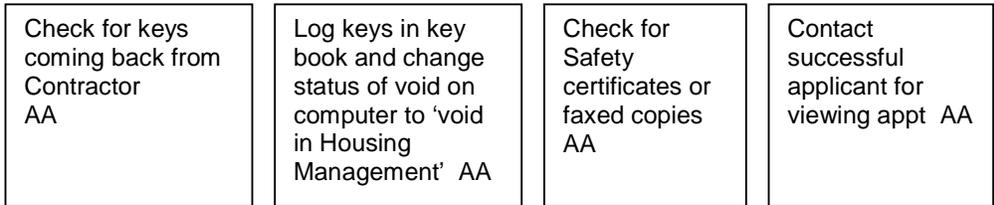


Days 28 onwards





Monitor repairs closely – contractor has 10 days from issue of works order to complete jobs
AA



Carry out Post Inspection of Repairs using original Inspection form to note that work has been carried out. Chase up outstanding work
HA

Make up signing pack and lease for new tenant, including copies of safety checks certificates and Annual Service Certificate for properties with Gas
AA

View and advise tenant if decoration award is payable, and of any non essential repairs which may be outstanding
HA

Sign up tenant
HA

After Signing Completed

- Write to unsuccessful applicants (AA)
- Notify council tax of new tenant (AA)
- Update computer records with new tenant details(AA)
- Ensure Voids Monitoring Form is complete(HA)
- Process First Part of Decoration allowance if applicable(HA)
- Check Decoration before issuing Second Part of Decoration Allowance(HA)
- Arrange 'Settling In' visit 6 weeks from date of tenancy starting (HA)

12.0 Standard Letters and Forms

The following letters and forms are attached:

1. Termination Form (for tenants who want to complete a form rather than write a letter themselves)
2. Confirmation of Termination of Tenancy
3. Guide to Terminating Your Tenancy Form
4. Lettable Standards Check List
5. Inspection Form
6. Unsuccessful Applicant
7. Successful Applicant Letter
8. Tenancy Acceptance Form
9. Nomination Form
10. Applicant Profile Form
11. Settling In Visit Form



Aberdeenshire *housing partnership*

NOTIFICATION OF TERMINATION FORM

REASON:

Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership
Unit 8
Netherton Business Centre
Kemnay
By Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 5LX

Tenant Ref:

Property Ref:

Monthly Rent:

Name:

Address:

I wish to terminate my tenancy on:

Signature: (Tenant/Joint
Tenant).....

Signature: (Tenant/Joint
Tenant).....

Note: 28 days notice must be given to terminate your tenancy.

Forwarding Address:
.....
.....
.....



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Dear

TERMINATION OF TENANCY

Further to , please remember that your date of termination must include 28 days notice and the date would therefore be . I have enclosed a termination of tenancy form which I would be grateful if you would complete and return as soon as possible.

Your rent due, up to and including, this date will be £ and I would ask that this be paid before you leave your tenancy. A member of staff from Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership will visit you at your property to carry out a pre termination inspection on --/--/

The property should be cleared of all furniture and personal belongings. A charge will be made for uplifting any unwanted items, e.g., carpets and cookers, etc. You may be charged for any costs incurred by the Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership in ensuring that the property is in a satisfactory condition for re-letting.

Please arrange for final gas and electricity readings to be taken. Should you have a Hydro Electric card meter installed, we would ask that you contact the Hydro Electric, prior to your date of termination, in order to arrange for the meter to be cleared. Please complete the enclosed Hydro Electric form and return to Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership, at the above address.

All keys should be handed in, on or before your termination date, to our Kemnay offices. If the keys are not received at our office within twenty-four hours of your termination date then, for security reasons, the lock to the property will be changed at your expense.

Should you have any queries about the content of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Housing Assistant
Enc.



Aberdeenshire *housing partnership*

A GUIDE TO TERMINATING YOUR TENANCY

1. Rent Payments and Outstanding Invoices

Any outstanding rent arrears or invoices should be paid before the end of your tenancy.

If you cannot pay these in full, then please discuss your proposals for repayment with a member of staff.

2. Keys

All the keys to your property should be handed back to the office or, in the case of Sheltered Housing, your Warden, on or before the last day of your tenancy.

Failure to hand in your keys by the due date will result in a lock change, the cost of which will be recharged to you.

3. Condition of Property

Once we receive keys from you we will inspect the property. We expect to find that you have removed all of your personal belongings, furniture and floor coverings.

The property and garden areas should be left in a clean and tidy condition, with all surfaces such as worktops, cupboards and bathroom fittings having been washed down, and floors swept out.

All repairs which are your responsibility should be complete.

If the property is not left in a satisfactory condition, then we will carry out the work required and we will recharge you for the costs.

4. Early Re-Let

If you want to return your keys before agreed termination date of your tenancy, please do so.

If we are able to re let the property prior to the termination date then you may be entitled to a refund of rent.

5. Cancelling Your Termination

Remember you can cancel your request to terminate your tenancy at any time up until the agreed termination date.

Please contact the office for more advice.

LETTABLE STANDARDS CHECKLIST

This checklist should be used in conjunction with the Termination Inspection form.

1. External

All external doors should fit securely and locks should be fully operational, as should any doorbells, letterboxes etc.

Access paths should be checked for trip hazards.

Where gates are fitted, these should close securely.

Drying green ropes or whirleys should be intact and operational and there should be a safe access path to reach them.

Garden areas should be cleared of rubbish and garden debris and if required, a one – off cut should be ordered to cut the grass and trim hedging.

Outbuildings such as greenhouses and sheds will not normally be the responsibility of AHP. If these are left by the previous tenant and the new tenant wishes to assume responsibility for these items, then they should sign a letter to agree to this.

If the new tenant does not want to accept responsibility, then the previous tenant will be contacted to remove them. If they do not then AHP will instruct the work and recharge the costs to the outgoing tenant.

Check the condition of the aerial and also the roof generally for slipped tiles, choked guttering, drains etc and pass repairs as required.

2. Internal

All pass doors and cupboard doors should open and close securely, and all handles etc should be fitted securely.

If non standard doors have been fitted which contain non – safety glass, then these must be replaced.

All skirting boards and door facings should be intact and glossed or stained.

Ceilings should be white and free from cobwebs etc. In some of our older properties, polystyrene tiles may have been fitted. These should be removed, and the ceiling made good.

Decoration should be intact in each room, holes where pictures etc have been hung should be filled ready for decoration. If rooms have been decorated in bright colours or black, or generally the standard of decoration is very poor then a decoration allowance may be payable. See Policy on Decoration Allowances.

Where non standard light fittings have been put up by tenants AHP will replace these with standard pendant fittings.

Wall lights should be removed.

Kitchen worktops, units, drawers and cupboards should be in a hygienic condition and should be cleaned prior to the new tenant moving in. All mechanisms should work smoothly.

All plumbing work should be intact; taps should be easily turned on and off, and should not drip. There should be a plug fitted at each sink.

Each kitchen should have an electric cooker consumer unit, but some may also have a gas connection. All gas connections should be properly capped.

All bathrooms should be hygienic and cleaned before the new tenant moves in.

There should be a lock on the door that works. If this needs to be replaced, then it should be with a lock that can be opened from outside.

The flush mechanism on the toilet should be working correctly and there should be a securely fitted toilet seat.

If an Xpelair fan has been fitted, check to see if it needs to be cleaned and if it is in working order.

Showers unless fitted by AHP will only remain if they are in good working order. If they are not, or e.g. tiling has not been completed, then the shower should be removed and the wall made good.

Stair treads should be secure as should banisters and rails.

Check for the location of smoke detectors, in a 2 storey house there should be one upstairs and one downstairs.

Where these are found to still be battery operated alarms, they should be replaced with hard wired mains electricity alarms.

Loft spaces should be checked and left empty. Tenants should not be encouraged to store items in the loft.

All electrical sockets and switches should be secure and operational. This also includes storage heaters and panel heaters.

Where storage heaters are badly discoloured, new cases should be provided. Each room should have a storage heater, panel heater or fan heater fitted.

Where a feature gas fire has been fitted and it is not part of the Central Heating system, this should be retained if it is in good condition and will then become part of AHP's responsibility for servicing and maintenance. If it is in poor condition it should be removed and the wall made good for decoration.

Thermostatically controlled (wet system) radiators should have easy to use controls, and there should be one in each room of the house.

All rooms should be free of floor coverings unless they are of an exceptionally good standard, in which case they may remain for the new tenant. Otherwise, rooms should be empty of all belongings and furniture and swept out.

Floorboards should be even and secure.

All windows should open and close easily. Window catches or restrictors should be fitted to all upstairs windows. Check that these are operational. Glass should be intact.

The property should be aired before viewing, however if this is not possible then air freshener should be sprayed to ensure a pleasant atmosphere in the house.

TERMINATION INSPECTION FORM

ADDRESS	DATE/ TIME <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;">Pre -EOT</td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;">Post Term</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">.....</td> <td style="border: none;">.....</td> </tr> </table>	Pre -EOT	Post Term
Pre -EOT	Post Term				
.....				
Key Ref.	Inspected by:				
No of Keys Returned	Date of Inspection / /				
Change of Lock Required Yes/No	New Key No:				
Reasons:	Forwarding Address:				

Living room	Decor	Cleanliness	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/Fair							
Poor							
Comments							

Kitchen	Decor	Cleanliness	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/Fair							
Poor							
Kitchen Fitments	Sink	Worktop	Units	Extractor	Cooking Gas/Elec		Washing Machine Yes/No
Comments							
Position of Stop Cock							

Bathroom	Decor	Cleanliness	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/fair /poor							
	WC	WHB	Bath	Shower	Extractor		
Good/fair /poor							

Bedroom 1	Decor	Cleanliness	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/Fair Poor							
Comments							

Bedroom 2	Decor	Cleanliness	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/Fair Poor							
Comments							

Bedroom 3	Decor	Cleanliness	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/Fair Poor							
Comments							

Bedroom 4	Decor	Cleanliness	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/Fair							
Poor							
Comments							

W/C	Decor	Cleanliness	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/Fair							
Poor							
Comments							

Hall	Decor	Cleanlines s	Doors	Windows	Walls	Electric	Heating Type
Good/Fair							
Poor							
Comments							

Front Door	Type	Condition	Lock Type	Keys
Back Door	Type	Condition	Lock Type	Keys
Windows	Type	Glazing	Condition	

Electric Meter Position	Meter Readings
Meter No:	Domestic:
Meter No:	Heating :

Gas Meter Position	Meter Readings
Meter no	Reading
Oil	Level of Tank

Items Left to be removed

Fridge		Chairs	
Cooker		Tables	
Wash/Machine		Small Items	
Bed		Curtains	

Detail Recharges to Tenant:

Garden	

Signature of Housing Assistant who carried out the inspection:

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