

1. Empty Homes Policy

2. Reference Number 3.10.1

3. Statement of intent including cross-reference to BDHT's Corporate and Directorate objectives

- 3.1 By adopting this Policy bdht commits to operating in a fair, equal and proportionate way, ensuring that the process of repairing and reletting empty properties is undertaken effectively to maximise the availability of its stock and rental income.
- 3.2 bdht will develop procedures for the proper management and monitoring of the service and the contractors providing the service ensuring that Corporate and Directorate objectives are met.
- 3.3 bdht aims to ensure that its properties are in a good state of repair and will be safe, secure and in a clean and wholesome state when let to new tenants.
- 3.4 bdht commits to implement continuous improvements within the service in order to deliver and to maintain an efficient and effective high quality service.

4. Legal and Regulatory Requirements

4.1 Legal requirements:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

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Regulatory requirements:

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). Regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2015;

- Tenancy standard 1st April 2024 – Allocations & mutual exchanges
- Safety and Quality Standard 1st April 2024 – Quality of Accommodation & Repairs & Maintenance.
- Transparency, influence and accountability (including satisfaction measures)

5. Policy Statement

- 5.1 bdht is committed to the provision of a high quality service that achieves the promises made to its tenants and leaseholders; properly discharges its legal and regulatory obligations and protects the value of its housing stock.
- 5.2 bdht will set performance standards for the management of the service, including target timescales for turning round properties, and will monitor its performance against them.
- 5.3 bdht will have regard to the impact of its empty homes property repairs service on the environment by embracing the principle of sustainability and wherever possible using environmentally friendly materials and methods.
- 5.4 bdht will implement an empty homes property repair specification '*Letting Standard*' to ensure a consistent approach in repairing empty homes and a consistent quality of re-let properties. This specification will represent minimum standards and will aim to ensure that properties are clean, safe and free from significant disrepair. In reducing empty homes turn round time the standard of work will not be compromised.
- 5.5 bdht will implement detailed procedures that will be consistent with any legal requirements; facilitate effective communication between all parties; and that aim to minimise the amount of time the property stays empty by, for example, undertaking of minor repairs after the new tenant is in occupation.
- 5.6 bdht will implement a code of conduct for the service and will ensure that all its staff and contractors abide by this in order to secure high levels of customer satisfaction.

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- 5.7 bdht will ensure that our actions reflect our policy and procedures by monitoring compliance and performance and will provide customers with information on its achievements.
- 5.8 bdht will consult with customers on issues surrounding service provision and will regularly assess customer satisfaction with the service through appropriate methods
- 5.9 bdht will monitor the turnover of properties and understand the reasons why homes become empty. Where demand is low or turnover significantly above average bdht will take action to mitigate these impacts
- 5.10 bdht will review service standards in the light of transactional analysis and customer feedback
- 5.11 bdht will ensure that capital Improvement works due are considered and carried out during the empty home period.
- 5.12 Stock Condition and property data will be reviewed and updated as part of the empty homes assessment process.
- 5.13 bdht will ensure that customers are communicated with effectively during the process and receive a comprehensive package of information as detailed in the Lettings Procedure, including Health and Safety Documentation, whether the property is in a current damp and mould case and any works due to be completed on occupation.

6. Summary of Service Standards

- 6.1 Service Standards will be published in leaflet form to give easy-to-read information to tenants.
 - Property Termination Standard
 - Lettable Standard
 - Letting Standard
- 6.2 Leaflets will be available in digital and hard copy format, large print and can be translated to required languages.

7 Priorities

- 7.1 It is essential for the effectiveness of this policy, that all stages of this policy are given equal priority.

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8 Policy Implementation

8.1 Procedures

8.1.1 The implementation of this policy will be detailed in the following procedures:

- Code of Conduct
- Contractor Code of Conduct
- Voids Process Procedure

8.2 Training

8.2.1 bdht will train staff to ensure that the service is delivered efficiently and effectively. bdht will ensure that staff members are aware of the implications of all relevant legislation and regulatory guidance.

8.3 Monitoring of the Policy

8.3.1 bdht will establish systems and KPI's to monitor the management of the empty homes Property Repair Service to identify compliance with and the need for change and development of the policy and procedures.

9 Links to associated external Documents

- Decent Homes Standard

10 Link to associated internal Documents

This Policy is linked to the following internal documents:

- Service Standards
- Recharge Policy
- Repairs Handbook
- Housing Needs and Access to Housing Policy
- Allocation Tenancy Policy
- Mutual Exchange Procedure
- Equipment & Adaptations Policy
- Planned Maintenance and Improvements Policy
- Damp and Mould Policy

11 Consultation arrangements

This policy has been reviewed by the customer Read and Review Panel and further consultation has been completed with new customers to gather their feedback on our empty homes and lettings process.

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12 Board/EMT Approval was gained

Approved by the Board on 16 September 2024.

13 Review Date

This policy will be reviewed in September 2027.

14 Responsibility for implementing the policy

The Director of Asset Management & Development is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

15 Date Issued

- 13th March 2006.
- Reviewed August 2009
- Reviewed June 2015
- Reviewed March 2018
- Reviewed July 2021
- Reviewed July 2024

16 Equality Policy Statement

- 16.1 At bdht, we are proud to serve and work within a diverse society. We recognise that some individuals and communities face systemic barriers, disadvantage, and discrimination, including those related to socio-economic background, caring responsibilities, and the impact of intersectionality.
- 16.2 We believe that discrimination in any form is unacceptable. In all our areas of work we are committed to ensuring that our policies, practices, and services promote fairness, equity, and respect for all. We aim to *reduce inequalities, promote respect, and create an equitable culture within our organisation.*
- 16.3 bdht fully complies with the Equality Act 2010 and all relevant statutory and regulatory guidance, including that issued by the Regulator of Social Housing, Homes England, the Government Equalities Office, and our funding partners.
- 16.4 We believe that equality of opportunity is fundamental to delivering excellent services and building vibrant communities together. Our commitment is underpinned by clear policies, regular monitoring, and continuous review, all of which are actively supported by our Board and Teams.

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