

The Empty Homes Standard

General

This leaflet will give you an idea of what standard to expect when you move in to your new home.

- It is our duty as a Council to provide a property which is safe, warm and dry and has all the services you will need such as power, water and heating. The property should also be clean.
- Properties will not be redecorated. The decoration carried out by the previous tenant will be left if it is in reasonable condition. You may qualify for a decoration allowance if the wallpaper is badly torn, paintwork is badly scratched, if unusual colours or unusual materials have been used or if there is smoke discolouration. If this is particularly bad, we may also strip wallpaper and leave walls, ceilings and woodwork left ready for you to paint or paper. If you going into sheltered housing, or a property which has been adapted for you on medical grounds, we will not give you a decoration allowance, but will carry out any required redecoration work before you move in.
- It is our policy to re-let properties as quickly as possible. We may not have completed all non-essential repairs before you move in, but we will let you know if this is the case. Repairs which have to be done for health and safety reasons, or repairs which are difficult to do when the house is occupied will have been completed.
- If previous tenants have improved the property by installing showers, kitchen fittings, hard flooring or internal doors, we will leave these in place unless they are badly fitted, dangerous or in very poor condition, on the understanding that you take responsibility for their future removal, maintenance and renewal.
- Any disabled adaptations which have been made for a previous tenant will be left- we will not remove a walk in shower and put in a bath for instance;
- As a tenant of Highland Council there are some repairs which you are responsible for once you move in – your Repairs Book will list these. In general, if something is the responsibility of the tenant, we will not repair it when the property is being made ready for letting.

Inside the property:

- We will ensure that the property is free from penetrating and rising damp;
- We will make sure that all plaster work is in good condition;
- We will make sure the property is clean, particularly the kitchen and bathroom and that the floors have been swept or mopped where appropriate;
- We will make sure there is a bath or shower, toilet and wash hand basin in the property and that these are in a clean and safe condition. Any fittings such as showers left by former tenants will be left if they are safe, on the understanding that you take responsibility for their future removal, maintenance and renewal;
- We will make sure that kitchen units and worktops are clean and in good condition. Any improvements or fittings left by the former tenants will be left if they are safe on the understanding that you take responsibility for their future removal, maintenance and renewal;
- We will leave carpets and hard flooring laid by the previous tenant unless they are in a poor condition, on the understanding that you take responsibility for their removal, maintenance and renewal;
- We will leave blinds and curtain poles/tracks left by the previous tenant unless they are in a poor condition, on the understanding that you take responsibility for their removal, maintenance and renewal;

- We will ensure that outside doors and windows are wind and watertight , are secure and open and close easily;
- We will change the door locks before you move in and will provide you with two sets of keys;
- We will provide keys for window locks (if installed in your property);
- Internal doors are your responsibility – however, before you move in, we will make sure that they are free from holes or serious damage , that the handles and latches work and that they meet fire safety standards where required. This is on the understanding that you take responsibility for their future maintenance and renewal;
- The heating system will be safe and in working order and:
 - Where there is gas in the property we will arrange for a gas safety check to be carried out before the start of your tenancy and you will be provided with a copy of the gas safety certificate. We will provide a carbon monoxide detector to every gas heated property;
 - Where there is a solid fuel heating system, we will sweep the chimney – you will then be responsible for sweeping the chimney as required thereafter;
- We will check all electrics in your property to ensure they are in good working order and meet safety standards;
- We will provide one or two smoke detectors depending on the size of the property;
- We will make sure any internal glazing is intact and meets safety standards;
- We will make sure that all floors are safe and free from rot, protruding nails and other problems which could prevent the laying of carpets;
- We will make sure all skirting boards are in reasonable condition;
- We will make sure there are no polystyrene tiles in the property;
- We will make sure any banisters and balustrades are safe;

Outside:

- We will make sure that the roof and any chimneys are wind and watertight;
 - We will make sure that paths and steps between the front and back gates and front and back doors will be safe. Any other paths, such as those around the side of properties, will be your responsibility;
 - We will make sure that the garden is cleared of rubbish. We will not cut the grass unless it is so long that it would be difficult to cut with domestic equipment. We will not trim bushes or trees left by previous tenants;
 - Gates and boundary fences/walls will be checked to ensure that they are safe – however they may not be repaired or renewed as this type of repair is low priority and will only be done when there is enough money in the budget. You are responsible for the dividing fences/hedges;
 - We will not supply clothes poles or rotary driers in your own garden – however, if those left by the previous tenant are in good condition, we will leave them for your use on the understanding that you take responsibility for their removal, maintenance and renewal. We will provide clothes poles or rotary driers as appropriate in communal drying areas in flats;
 - We will ensure that gutters and downpipes are in good working order and free from leaks;
 - We will ensure any door entry system provided in flats is working and give you keys or codes where appropriate;
 - Repairs to any garages or sheds associated with the property are low priority and will only be done when there is enough money in the budget ;
 - We do not provide TV Aerials and satellite dishes unless your property is in a larger flat block.
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