



SHN

Scotland's Housing Network

VOIDS AND RELETS 2024

A REVIEW OF LOCAL AUTHORITY APPROACHES
TO VOIDS AND RELETS

Follow SHN
on Twitter
& LinkedIn



www.scotlandshousingnetwork.org

Dr Ross Morris
Scotland's Housing Network



Scotland's Housing Network

Voids and Relets 2024

A review of Local Authority approaches to voids and relets

Contents

Introduction	4
Background	4
Methodology	8
Findings.....	9
Pre-termination	9
Process	9
Keys received/Termination of tenancy.....	10
Process	10
Void Repairs	11
Utilities	13
Relet standard.....	13
Decoration allowances	14
Ready to let	15
Allocations and Refusals.....	16
Demand	20

Date	Version	Description
16/2/2024	1.0	Initial draft for participants
4/3/2024	1.1	Updated version amended following member feedback

Introduction

This report presents a summary of findings from a recent survey of SHN's local authority members on the topic of voids and relets. In addition, comments made during a focused session on this topic – held on 30th January 2024 – have also been reflected in order to give as complete a picture of voids and relets practice across Scotland as possible.

A further study, this time looking at RSL performance, is currently being conducted, with results to follow.

Background

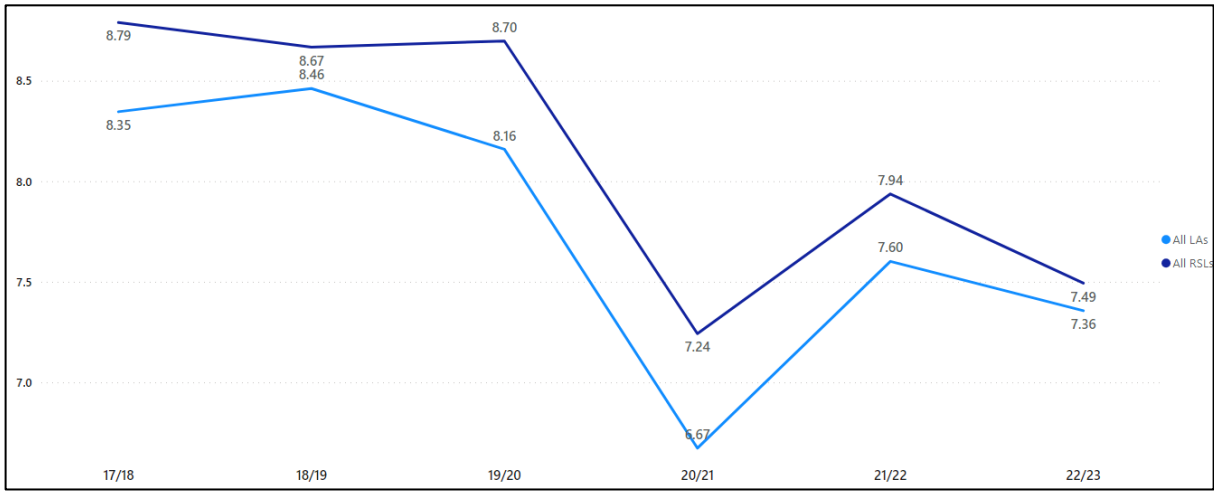
A number of SHN's members – both local authority and RSL - have seen significant increases in relet times over the last few years, particularly during and in the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020-2021. Factors cited anecdotally included increasing volumes of properties becoming vacant, labour and materials shortages, repairs backlogs, issues with utilities companies and a deterioration in the condition properties were coming back in.

Nevertheless, we can see from the most recent data available provided by landlords as part of the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), that this picture is not uniform and some authorities have managed to keep average relet times relatively prompt.

Looking first at stock turnover, we can see that the proportion of properties becoming vacant is on average lower for local authorities than for RSLs. Prior to the pandemic, about 8.7% of properties became vacant in the reporting year, compared to 8.2% to 8.5% for local authority stock.

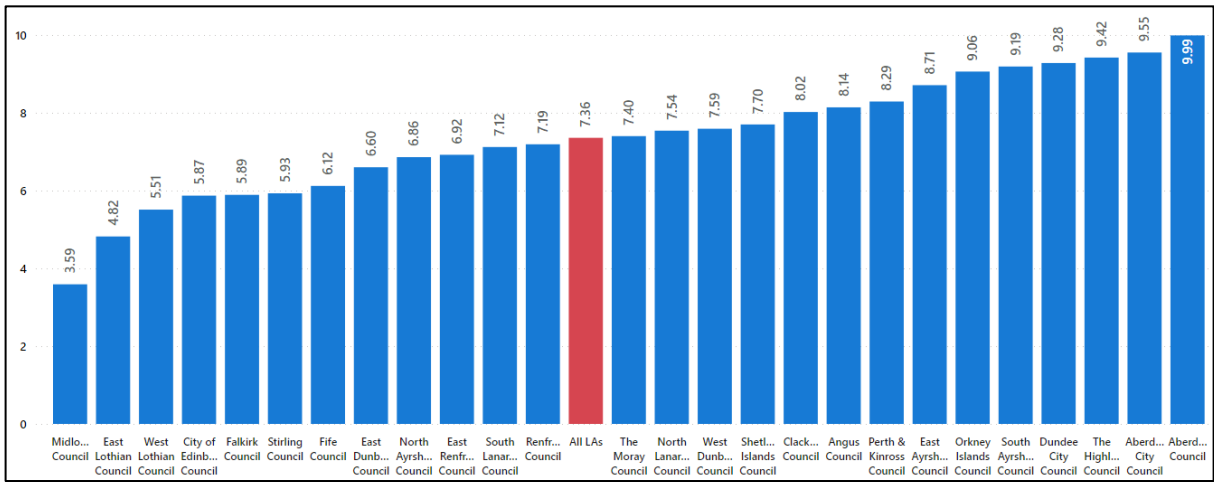
This reduced significantly in 2020/21, as tenants weren't moving unless they had to, and there were restrictions on the actions landlords could take. In 2021/22, the proportion of properties becoming vacant increased for both LA's and RSLs, but didn't get back to pre-pandemic levels. In 2022/23, the proportion of properties becoming vacant on average again reduced for both LA's and RSLs, although the gap narrowed between these two aggregate groups.

Figure 1: Indicator 17 - Proportion of self-contained properties becoming vacant in the year¹



Turning now to stock turnover by local authority for the most recent reporting year at the time of writing (2022/23), we can see that this again shows a varied picture across the sector, ranging from the Lothians and City of Edinburgh at the lower end of the spectrum (3.6% to 5.5% of stock becoming void) to the Highlands, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council seeing the most stock turnover in the year (9.4% to 9.6%).

Figure 2: Indicator 17 - Proportion of self-contained properties becoming vacant in the year, 2022/23²



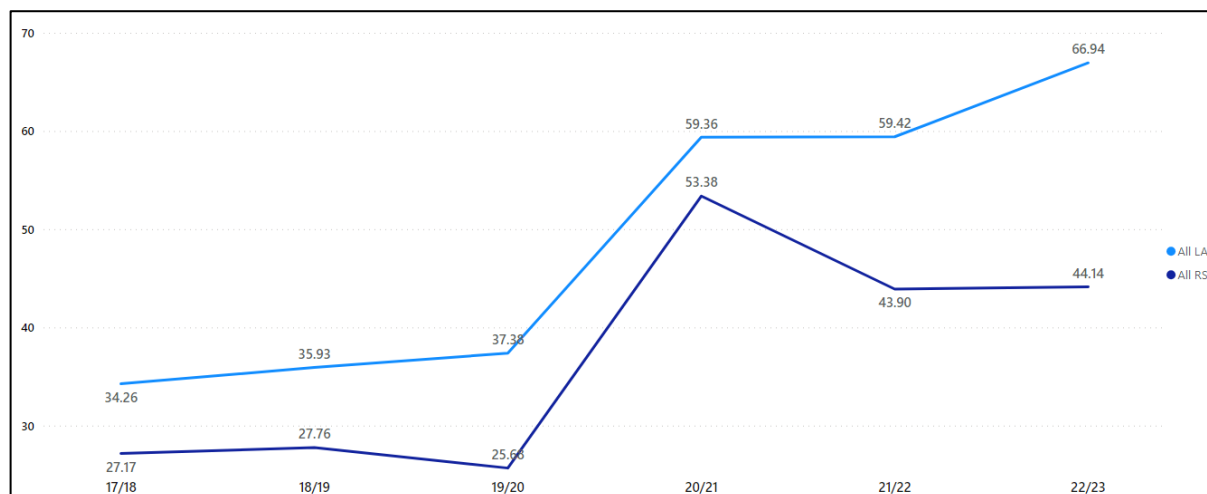
¹ **Source:** SHN analysis of SHR Annual Return on the Charter data to 2022/23, chart produced using SHN Data and Benchmarking Tools

² **Source:** SHN analysis of SHR Annual Return on the Charter data to 2022/23, chart produced using SHN Data and Benchmarking Tools

In terms of relet times, we can see something of a widening gap between averages for local authority and RSL performance in this area. While local authority average relet times have tended to be higher than that for RSLs even prior to the pandemic, this has become particularly pronounced in recent years, with 2021/22 seeing RSL performance improve significantly while LA performance stayed at a similar level to that seen during the pandemic year of 2020/21.

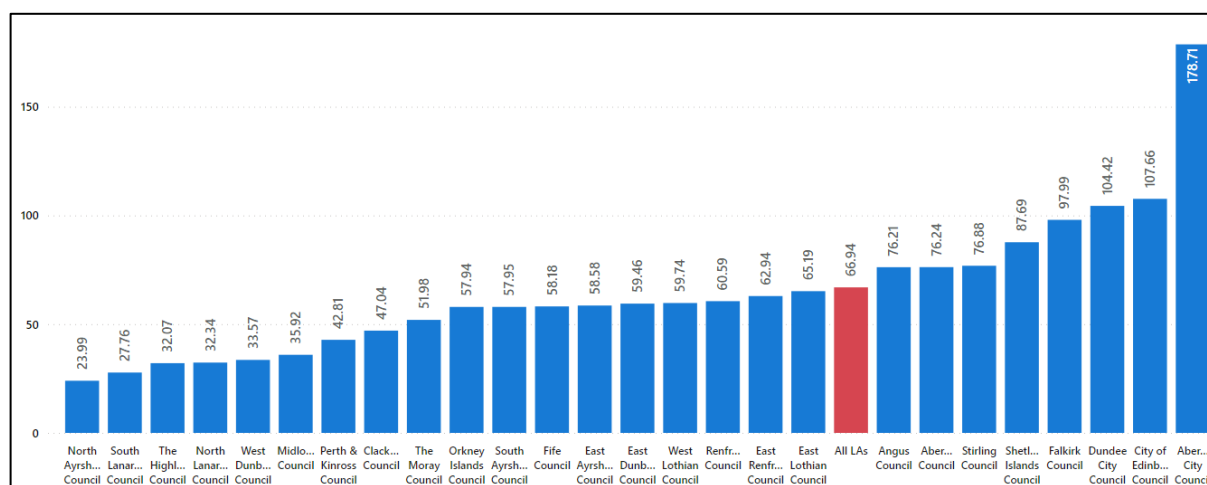
It is important to recognise that this is of course a weighted average, and as such can be skewed by larger landlords, and in addition can be skewed by long-term voids being relet – a positive for both the landlord and the community but can impact on average figures for the year.

Figure 3: Indicator 30 - Average time to relet properties (calendar days)



As we can see below, however, this again isn't a uniform picture across the sector.

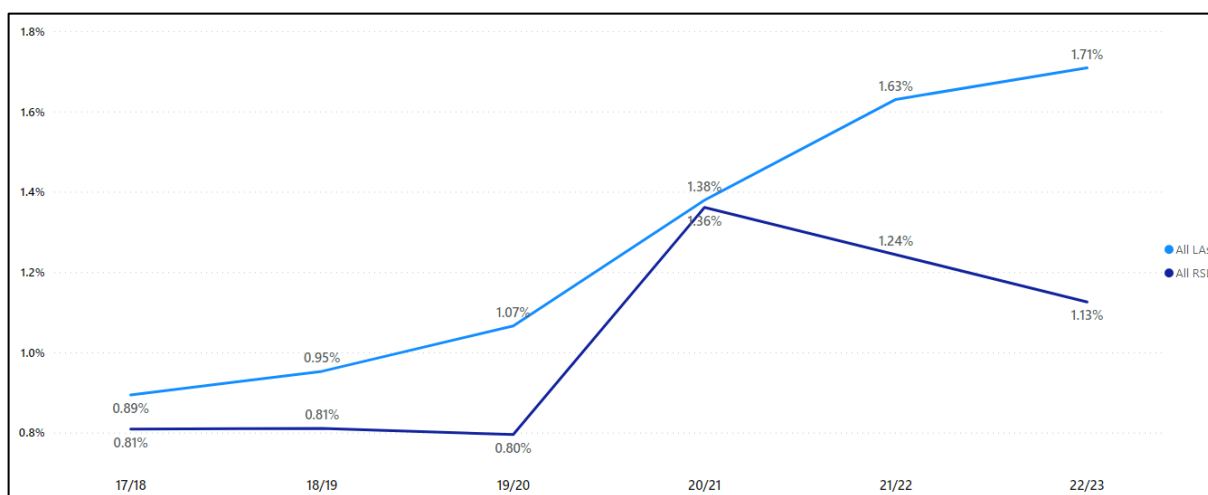
Figure 4: Indicator 30 - Average time to relet properties (calendar days), 2022/23



While many local authorities have managed to bring their relet times down closer to pre-pandemic levels, the majority of stock-owning landlords in 2022/23 reported relet times greater than 50 days, and around a third were above the average of 67 days.

As a consequence of this, we can in turn see a corresponding increase in void rent loss for local authorities while this same metric continues to decrease for RSLs, with void rent losses reaching around £22million for LA's during 2022/23.

Figure 5: Indicator 18 – Percentage of rent due lost through properties being void during the reporting year



2023/24 has seen continuing issues in void relet times for both local authorities and RSLs, and as such in early 2024 SHN decided to survey its members on their voids and relets practice in order to develop a better understanding across the sector of best practice and where improvements can be made.

Methodology

The findings in this report have been drawn from both our Voids and Relets survey – carried out in January 2024 - and a Voids and Relets discussion session which followed on from this – which took place on 30th January 2024. Responses received were thematically analysed for significant statements and any common experiences. We have tried to present as full a picture as possible while maintaining an engaging narrative, and as such this is more of a summary than a complete description of all contributions received.

The following Councils participated in the survey and/or the discussion session³.

- Aberdeen City Council*
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Angus Council
- Clackmannanshire Council*
- Dundee City Council*
- East Ayrshire Council
- East Dunbartonshire Council*
- East Lothian Council*
- East Renfrewshire Council
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Falkirk Council
- Fife Council
- Highland Council
- Inverclyde Council*
- Midlothian Council*
- Moray Council*
- North Ayrshire Council
- North Lanarkshire Council*
- Perth & Kinross Council
- Renfrewshire Council
- Shetland Islands Council*
- South Ayrshire Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Stirling Council*
- West Dunbartonshire Council*
- West Lothian Council

Sincere thanks to all for their participation in both the survey and the resultant discussion session.

³ * Attendance at forum event only

Findings

Pre-termination

Process

In reviewing approaches applied during the pre-termination period, we could see that there were considerable variations across the country, with some local authorities describing very in-depth termination procedures, particularly around repairs.

Aberdeenshire Council, for instance, aim to carry out a pre-termination inspection within the first week of the notice period. This inspection determines the category of the void and the timescale for completion based on this, as well as identifying any repairs that can be carried out before the tenant moves out. Prior to this assessment taking place, staff check to confirm if any capital works are programmed in. Where the property has been categorised as a 'Rapid' void – needing less work to bring back to the lettable standard – this would be advertised to encourage applicant interest prior to the tenant moving out.

A number of other local authorities noted that they also carried out pre-termination inspections – including **City of Edinburgh Council, East Ayrshire Council, Fife Council, North Ayrshire Council, Perth and Kinross Council and South Ayrshire Council** – but many officers commented on the relatively poor success rate in gaining access. During our follow-up session, landlords noted that access tended to be gained primarily to those properties that would have been less likely to cause difficulties at void stage. In terms of who carried out the termination inspection, for **City of Edinburgh Council**, this was carried out by Housing Officers where possible to get access, for **Fife Council** the pre-termination was carried out by a Housing Options Officer, while at **Aberdeenshire Council** the pre-termination inspection was carried out by a Clerk of Works. During our follow-up session, some landlords noted that they had previously carried out more pre-termination inspections, but that these had been cut back during the pandemic and not picked back up due to capacity issues. One landlord noted that who is carrying out pre-termination visits is important, and that more value could be gained by this being carried out by maintenance staff/clerk of works.

Very few landlords reported carrying out repairs during the pre-termination stage, and even where keys have come back in early, some landlords noted that they would not carry out repairs during this time. Other authorities, including **South Ayrshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, Highland Council and Clackmannanshire Council**, noted that they would however repair properties if keys had been received.

Some landlords, including **Angus Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Highland Council** noted fitting key

safes at this stage where the tenant would leave the keys at time of termination, making it easier to control access to these keys. Aberdeenshire Council noted that this had sped up the process for carrying out repairs, and once installed, keysafes were left in situ for tenants to use if they wish. During our follow-up discussion, colleagues from **Perth and Kinross Council** spoke about their 'suited locks' system for properties which eliminates the need for key safes, with properties being changed over to 'void locks' with all trades being issued with void lock keys. A small number of landlords asked their tenants to post their keys at termination through the property's letterbox and advise the Council when they had done this. These Councils would then force entry and fit a key safe at this stage.

In terms of the approach to properties being advertised or pre-allocated during the pre-termination period, there was again significant variation across the country. Some Councils – such as **East Ayrshire Council, Fife Council, South Ayrshire Council, Moray Council, North Ayrshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council** – pre-allocate or advertise the property during the notice period, whereas others wait until the keys are handed back in to begin this process. Those who pre-allocate or advertise during the pre-termination period appear to have performed better during 2022/23 in terms of relet times, most notably **North Ayrshire Council** (23.99 days) and **South Lanarkshire Council** (27.8 days). While **Clackmannanshire Council** would typically only allocate at the point of keys being received, where officers are aware of an applicant with particular needs that would be met by this property they would look to pre-allocate in this instance.

Some Councils noted the challenges in pre-allocating properties where a common housing register was in operation, as this effectively excluded the person from receiving any other offers. **City of Edinburgh Council**, for instance, work with 18 RSL partners as part of EdIndex, and as such a pre-allocation to a Council property that may take some time to be ready-to-let would remove the household as a priority for other partners. **North Ayrshire Council** noted that where it was likely that the void period would be more lengthy, they would have this discussion with the applicant and give them an estimated completion date, giving the tenant the opportunity to advise if they're happy to wait. Where the estimated completion date changed significantly, a Housing Officer would keep the applicant up to date on this and again confirm that the tenant was happy to continue waiting. If not, the offer would be withdrawn and not counted as a refusal.

Keys received/Termination of tenancy

Process

Turning now to look at the void process following on from keys being received at termination, we could

see that for most this was the point at which a Change of Tenancy inspection/pre-inspection was carried out. At this stage, compliance and void works are requested and for those who hadn't yet instructed capital works, these were requested. A number of Councils including **Aberdeenshire Council**, **Angus Council**, **North Ayrshire Council** and **West Lothian Council** reported categorising void repairs required at this stage in order to establish an approximate target timescale.

As noted above, the use of key safes is common in ensuring void works progress as smoothly as possible, with some installing key safes at this stage. **Falkirk Council** and **East Ayrshire Council** reported that tenants would post keys through the letterbox before a lock change was carried out, while **Fife Council** reported a lock change at both the beginning and end of the voids process.

The majority of responding Councils – including **Aberdeenshire Council**, **East Renfrewshire Council**, **Falkirk Council**, **Fife Council**, **Highland Council**, **Renfrewshire Council** and **South Lanarkshire Council**, noted a final inspection (post-inspection) following completion of void works.

As we saw earlier, while some Councils pre-allocated during the pre-termination period, the majority of responding authorities began the allocations process at this stage. **Falkirk Council** referred to this as a 'parallel process' of carrying out allocations actions while repairs are being carried out.

A number of authorities – including **Falkirk Council** and **Perth and Kinross** stated that they would carry out viewings during this period, but only when safe to do so. During our discussion session, **Clackmannanshire Council** noted the benefits of doing this, as it meant that prospective tenants could advise if they wished for carpets, blinds and non-standard light fittings to be left in situ by the Council following void works. In their response to our survey, **Highland Council** noted that if certain items were left – such as sheds, carpets etc, a disclaimer would be produced to include all items which the applicant signs to agree they are taking on these items without any responsibility to the Council. For **East Renfrewshire Council**, viewings only take place after void inspection, compliance checks and clear outs are complete, and unlike the Councils mentioned above, their policy is to clear the property in full. As such, this can mean viewings will often take place some way into the void repairs process.

Void Repairs

With regard to void repairs, most responding authorities reported primarily utilising in-house teams to carry out void repairs, with support from external contractors when required. Examples included:

- **Capacity:** *Making use of approved contractors and sub-contractors when particular trades were at*

capacity

- **Specialist works:** *Using external contractors for certain specialist jobs including dampness, asbestos, gas works, structural work, dry rot, needle sweeps etc.*
- **Major works:** *Some local authorities noted capital works being passed to external contractors*

A small number of responding local authorities – including **Angus Council** and **Falkirk Council** reported primarily using external contractors for their void work, while one Council reported currently exploring outsourcing as an option for a ‘whole house’ approach to void work including where necessary kitchens, bathrooms and rewires.

Average void repairs costs ranged from £2,000 through to £7,500 – with most responding authorities within the £3,000 to £5,000 range. One Council reported that their voids cost had doubled in recent years, with most noting an increase – one reported a 45% increase in costs since 2020/21 and another reported a 47% increase since 2019/20.

When asked about whether upgrade works were carried out at void, most noted that these did happen but only where condition of components was very poor, or where works were required to meet the lettable standard. Most noted a preference to replace components such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows etc once the property was tenanted, given the significant impact this can have on relet times.

Others noted that they would carry these works out if replacement was imminent (i.e. within 6 months or 12 months depending on policies), or wouldn’t be cost effective or possible when the property was tenanted

A number of authorities noted that gas and electric upgrades were more common during the void period.

In their response to our survey, **Perth and Kinross Council** noted that while carrying out component replacement works during void can adversely affect relet times, this consideration needed to be balanced against ensuring good standards of service:

“If capital upgrades are required, we normally complete these during the void process or Enhanced Voids process where possible e.g. Kitchen, Bathroom and Heating renewals or rewires etc. These take longer adding to the average void turnaround and impacting negatively on our performance. We have however considered this against the importance of providing a suitable offer of tenancy to new or transfer tenants whilst providing safe, secure, warm housing and positively contributing to tenancy sustainment.”

Utilities

Utilities remains a significant issue for many local authorities. Over the last few years, significant staff resources have had to be applied to this, with one LA employing agency staff to free up capacity for housing staff to carry out their regular duties. Another LA reported having to relet a property without supply in order to move this along.

Nevertheless, it appears that there has been some improvement in this area, with some local authorities have been able to resolve most issues by making use of Energy Management Suppliers or Contracts with third party switching suppliers and clearing debt. A number of local authorities also referenced preferred supplier arrangements with energy companies. It is worth noting, however, that most local authorities were making use of similar solutions prior to the pandemic and energy crises, but contracts had been suspended. Landlords also reported issues with certain types of meter as continuing to cause issues despite these arrangements.

Relet standard

With regard to letting standards, most local authorities reported carrying out a recent review although one Council noted that their relet standard was almost 30 years old. Having reviewed those submitted to SHN unsurprisingly relet standards tend to focus on compliance, safety and cleanliness.

Some standards set out the authority's approach to capital replacement works, and under what circumstances these works would be carried out during the void period. **East Ayrshire Council**, for example, note that where capital replacement works relating to kitchens, bathrooms or electrics are scheduled within the current or next financial year, these works will be carried out at void. Nevertheless, colleagues at East Ayrshire Council have advised that in practice due to the current excessive number of voids, capital replacement is currently only occurring at void when it is in such poor condition that they couldn't let the property. If it can be left as is the capital team would pick this up after the tenant moves in.

Some local authorities' letting standards also set out how the authority will deal with items left behind by tenants. **Highland Council**, for instance, allow tenants to leave carpets, flooring, blinds and curtains. All integrated appliances can also be left and maintained by the Council on the understanding that *'if the appliances break down, a best value replacement will be found and not a like for like model'*. **Aberdeenshire Council** noted during our discussion session that they take a similar approach, citing the reason that many tenants who are moving in don't have a lot of resources, and as such it was counter-productive to remove useful items from a tenancy sustainment point of view, although they still remove non-standard light

fittings. **North Ayrshire Council** noted that they don't do this as a rule, because it had been more problematic in practice. New tenants were lifting carpets and discovering issues hidden by the carpet, including woodworm. In addition, carpets being left weren't typically in a good enough condition that the tenant would want to retain these.

During our discussion session, a few local authorities made reference to the condition of properties coming back in, and how this was having an impact on voids costs. Discussion then took place on the topic of annual visits and the efficacy of these. Again, there were various approaches to this and differing views as to how beneficial these visits were relative to the staffing resource to carry these out.

Decoration allowances

Most responding local authorities reported offering some kind of a Decoration Pack or Paint Pack if condition of décor was poor. A small number reported a decoration allowance that was paid as a voucher or cash depending on number of rooms where décor poor. **Angus Council**, for instance, reported grading each room from A-D and paying an allowance to tenants based on this for each room that was assessed as being a C or a D in terms of decoration. One landlord noted that *"Paint packs don't always meet the needs of the customer as the walls may need prepped or papered and not all tenants have the means to do this"*

Décor standard for some local authorities was built into their Relet Standard, while one local authority reported not offering paint packs or decoration allowances, but may paint some rooms if requested by an incoming tenant. Some local authorities noted decorating when letting properties to specific groups. **South Lanarkshire Council** noted that they would decorate for Sheltered Housing tenants or Care Experienced Individuals.

North Ayrshire Council's letting standard specifically notes that some properties may be decorated where the property is in low demand and the condition would not allow a tenant to move in for reasons other than personal taste.

A brief summary of approaches in responses is provided below:

- **Aberdeenshire Council:** Decoration Pack, paint if poor condition
- **Angus Council:** Financial allowance based on each room
- **East Ayrshire Council:** No current, but previously had decoration packs, paint if poor condition
- **East Renfrewshire Council:** No decor pack, no promise of redecoration, but Mixed Tenure squad is an

internal resource that can decorate rooms on occupation as agreed between new tenant and Housing Officer

- **City of Edinburgh Council:** Decoration carried out where condition poor, paint pack also offered (Edinburgh)
- **Falkirk Council:** No decoration allowance but properties either freshly emulsioned or in acceptable condition
- **Fife Council, North Ayrshire Council:** Paint pack where condition poor
- **Highland Council:** Paint pack or vouchers depending on geographical area (Highland)
- **North Ayrshire Council:** Paint pack where condition poor
- **Perth and Kinross:** Paint pack when condition is poor, full paint if internal works are substantial
- **Renfrewshire Council:** Voucher allowance based on each room, previously offered paint packs in low demand
- **South Ayrshire Council:** Decoration allowance where more than 1 m² damage to wall covering/painted wall. Also for DTL/Zero demand properties
- **South Lanarkshire Council:** Paint packs where person can decorate and condition poor, full decoration for sheltered and care experienced

Ready to let

Our survey then looked at actions taken from the point at which the property was ready to let. Again we could see that there was considerable variation across the country at this stage.

As discussed in the previous two sections, many local authorities were well into the allocations process by this point, but some – including **Angus Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Renfrewshire Council** and **West Lothian** would only begin to advertise or allocate at this stage. One such landlord – **Dundee City Council** – noted that they wait for the property to be ready to let before allocating as they operate a common housing register, and don't want applicant households to miss out on offers from the 3 other partners, some of whom are developing new build properties. **North Ayrshire Council** noted that their approach to this is to make the offer to the tenant with clear timelines for the property being ready, and if void timescales shift this is communicated to the tenant to allow them to make this decision themselves.

Some landlords noted that repairs or upgrade works were being carried out after the tenant moves in, with the tenant being notified of this at sign-up.

In terms of viewings, again for some Councils this had already taken place prior to the property becoming ready to let, but others reported viewings and virtual viewings at this stage. **East Ayrshire Council** in their survey response referenced paperwork being prepared ahead of the viewing appointment, and if the prospective tenant wishes to accept the property the sign-up is carried out there and then, and tenants are given access to the property's key safe.

Renfrewshire Council reported that *'Housing Management staff conduct virtual viewings with potential tenants using photographs and video footage. The applicants are then given 24 hours to decide whether or not to accept the property. If they do, sign-ups are conducted in the properties.'*

Angus Council noted that following viewing of the property, the prospective tenant is allowed 2-3 days to decide on the property, and if refused the process would begin again.

Some Councils highlighted that they start and end tenancies on a specific day of the week. The reasoning for this was cited as being down to housing management system issues, but different LA's confirmed they were using the same system but were able to start and end tenancies on any day. This may be down to the version of the system being used.

Allocations and Refusals

There were a wide range of approaches to allocations being utilised across the country. SHN intends to run a session reviewing the various advantages and disadvantages of the various models in the coming months, as there is clearly an appetite to understand what works and what doesn't.

- **Choice Based Lettings:** Councils operating Choice Based Lettings (CBL) models included **Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Angus Council** and **Falkirk Council**. **Aberdeenshire Council** that they allow applicants to 'auto bid' or for staff to bid on an applicant's behalf. Both **Highland Council** and **Renfrewshire Council** advised that they are currently piloting CBL in certain geographical areas.
- **Common Housing Registers and Common Allocations Policies:** Councils operating Common Housing Registers included **East Ayrshire Council** (groups plus points with 3 RSL partners), **City of Edinburgh Council** who have 18 RSL partners and utilises CBL, **Dundee City Council** who have 3 RSL partners, **Fife Council** who utilise a needs-based approach (groups plus points), **Perth and Kinross Council** (groups plus points with 3 RSL partners) and **West Lothian Council** (needs-based – groups plus points)

- ***Waiting list/needs based:*** Councils utilising a needs based approach included **North Ayrshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, Highland Council and South Ayrshire Council.**

All LA's advised they were providing some sort of information on turnover, available stock, waiting lists etc. but the nature of this again varied, with some having in-depth and up-to-date data available to accompany their online application – while others advised this was only made available on request, or where an applicants' choices were too restrictive.

A selection of examples of the different approaches being employed are given below:

East Ayrshire Council	East Ayrshire recently implemented an online housing application, which was built with the customer in mind. With the introduction of the new online housing register, SEARCH online, customers can now: • self-manage their application by updating their housing preferences. • view their position on the list • view the stock and turnover of a multitude of areas of choice by accessing our interactive map. • view our immediately available to-let properties. • access answers to general inquiries in our Frequently Asked Questions section. • contact us directly via their customer account. The customer can now do all of the above at a time that is suitable to them and are no longer constrained by East Ayrshire Council's office opening hours.
East Renfrewshire Council	We have an Information Guide on Lets, Bids and Stock for Applicants for Housing with East Renfrewshire Council This guide is provided to help applicants and housing advisors see what, where and how empty council homes are let in East Renfrewshire. It helps show what properties

	may come up for let, how often, how much demand there may be for them, and who the properties may be let to. It can also help applicants decide what to be noted for and what to bid for. This guide is refreshed every 6 months to reflect changes in demand and allocations.
Fife Council	All applicants require to complete a Housing Options Plan prior to making a housing application. More info. Available at Housing Options Fife Housing Register The Housing Options Plan is a guided process, providing information relevant to housing circumstances and needs. Applicants will receive a callback from a Housing Options Officer where housing needs are identified to provide more tailored advice. There are specific pathways available to those experiencing domestic abuse, PRS tenancy is at risk or in groups at risk of homelessness. FHR Partners have agreed protocols around all groups most at risk of homelessness.
Perth and Kinross Council	We currently have Housing online that anyone can access and gain information regarding housing options within Perth and Kinross. This allows potential applicants to explore all their options and arrange for a housing options interview with an officer to discuss and explore all options in more detail. The Online system will also enable the customer to apply for social housing should they feel this a route they would like to progress.
South Lanarkshire Council	Information available on our website on number of properties, size and turnover. Applicants also can complete online housing options assessment prior to submitting an application. If an application is received and applicant is being restrictive with preferences, they will be contacted to discuss housing options and outlined limited availability and turnover within certain localities.

West Lothian Council	The council provides a variety of information to applicants including how to apply, how the allocation policy works including points and groups. Quarterly information is published on the Council website on stock levels and turnover rates in each of the 49 areas as well as information on what properties in each area have become available for re-let including their size and property type. https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/housingfaq Housing Options officers will support homeless applicants to assess and examine all their options within the authority area.
-----------------------------	---

In terms of areas of preference, most Councils asked applicants to advise of their preferences based on either Town or 'lettings area'/neighbourhood level. Most advised applicants could exclude certain streets or areas, with only a small number of respondents noting that they didn't allow applicants to exclude geographies within selected areas.

In terms of refusals, the most common approach was 2 refusals for general waiting list applicants and 1 refusal for homeless applicants. **Renfrewshire Council's** approach varied slightly from this, where 'applicants can decline two offers before their situation is reviewed – if they refuse a further two offers, their applications may be suspended for up to six months'. **South Ayrshire Council** similarly allow for applicants to receive 4 offers of accommodation before the application is suspended for a period of 12 months. **Aberdeenshire Council** allow for one reasonable offer of accommodation before the applicant is suspended from the waiting list for 6 months (subject to appeal). Suspending applicants was relatively common, with suspensions for those who exceeded the number of allowed offers lasting between 3 and 12 months.

By contrast, **West Lothian Council** reported no limit on offers for most applicants, and no penalty for refusing an offer 'When an applicant refuses an offer, the Housing Officer may suggest a review of their application by carrying out a Housing Options meetings- these are considered on case by case basis.'

Homeless applicants tended to be given 1 reasonable offer before duty was discharged, although **Renfrewshire Council** allowed for 2 reasonable offers, giving greater parity with other applicants

Demand

Local authorities were also asked to advise what steps they took where there was little or no demand for a property. Firstly, it was clear that not every local authority had an issue with low or zero demand stock, however where this was an issue, the following approaches were taken:

- **Advertising:** A number of landlords noted undertaking some form of advertising, for example on social media, in offices, placing adverts locally or via Community Councils. **Renfrewshire Council** noted that they make use of S1 Homes, a website usually used to market private sector housing in order to get more exposure. Some landlords market these as ‘immediately available properties’ or similar as a means of encouraging interest amongst prospective tenants.
- **Highlighting properties to specific applicants:** Some Councils – including **South Ayrshire Council** and **Aberdeenshire Council** reported taking the step of marketing properties to individual applicants where there was lower demand.
- **Enhanced decoration** – A number of authorities – including **Angus Council, East Ayrshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council, City of Edinburgh Council, North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council** and **South Lanarkshire Council** – reported that they offered an enhanced decoration standard as a means of encouraging interest in low or no demand properties. One local authority noted that while they currently paint properties to address demand, a previous pilot project where properties were both painted and carpeted didn’t make a significant difference.
- **Angus Council** reported applying a **Rent Free period**
- While **Highland Council** established a **Local Lettings Plan** with the local community to address issues of demand in their area.
- **East Ayrshire Council** reported close partnership working with homelessness colleagues to **flip low demand properties** to temporary accommodation or decant properties as required.



About Us

Scotland's Housing Network is the national benchmarking club in Scotland and supports social landlords to improve services by benchmarking cost and performance results and sharing best practice. The organisation provides support to landlords through our data collection and benchmarking service, our invaluable forums and through our self-assessment resources. With over two thirds of social landlords in Scotland as members of the network, representing almost 90% of the sector by stock, the organisation plays an important role in driving up service standards across the social rented sector in Scotland.

Get in touch

Scotland's Housing Network

5 South Charlotte Street
Edinburgh
EH2 4AN

T: 01315819222

E: info@scotlandshousingnetwork.org

W: www.scotlandshousingnetwork.org

 [@ScotHousingNet](https://twitter.com/ScotHousingNet)

 facebook.com/scotlandshousingnetwork

 Linkedin.com - Scotland's Housing Network