Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Cyclical Property Surveying

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Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Cyclical Property Surveying

1. Purpose

This procedure sets out how the Council undertakes cyclical property surveys across its housing stock, property, and land to ensure that its condition is accurately understood and that properties remain safe and compliant with required standards.

The procedure supports the Council to:

- Maintain compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.
- Ensure properties meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- Maintain accurate data on the condition of housing assets.
- Support planned investment and maintenance programmes.
- Inform the Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy and Housing Revenue Account business planning.

This procedure also supports compliance with:

- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Consumer Standards issued by the Regulator of Social Housing
- The Building Safety Act
- Energy requirements under the Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations

This SOP ensures the Council can evidence:

- A robust understanding of stock condition
- A proactive approach to risk and safety
- Delivery of safe, well-maintained homes for tenants

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all physical property surveys undertaken by the Directorate of Housing and Investment.

The procedure covers:

- Programmed stock condition surveys
- Void property surveys
- Responsive property surveys
- Garage surveys
- HRA land surveys
- EPC's
- Inspections of buildings containing flats, sheltered accommodation and associated communal areas

- Miscellaneous surveys including drone surveys, structural surveys and specialist surveys

The procedure also covers:

- Identification and recording of hazards
- Management of survey data
- Remedial actions following surveys
- Quality assurance and validation of survey data
- Risk-based prioritisation of survey activity
- Monitoring and assurance of compliance

3. Types of Property Survey

The Council undertakes seven types of survey.

3.1 Programmed Stock Condition Surveys

Programmed surveys are undertaken as part of the Council's cyclical survey programme.

The Council must ensure that in maintaining its homes it meets the core legislative requirements, i.e. homes must:

- Meet the statutory minimum housing standard through compliance with:
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11)
- Awaab's Law (Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023)
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 – (HHSRS)
- Decent Homes Standard the HHSRS requires properties to be assessed against 29 housing hazards during inspection.

Programmed surveys include:

- A full physical inspection of the property
- Assessment of the condition of key building components
- Recording of component age and expected lifecycle
- Assessment of hazards using the HHSRS framework
- Photographic evidence to support findings
- Data capture in accordance with the Council's asset data standards

The purpose of programmed surveys is to ensure all homes receive regular inspection and to provide assurance to the Council and RSH regarding stock condition. Properties that are subject to a Right to Buy application will not be surveyed. Should the application fail to complete the property will be added back into the programme.

3.2 Void Property Surveys

Void property surveys are undertaken when a property becomes vacant.

All properties must receive a full survey when void, irrespective of survey frequency unless the property is temporary accommodation. Surveys in temporary accommodation will be updated as required.

The Council must ensure homes meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard including energy efficiency standards.

Void property surveys include:

- A full stock condition survey
- Identification and assessment of hazards
- HHSRS hazard inspection
- Verification and update of asset data
- EPC assessment where required
- Void letting standard assessment and retro fit assessments

The purpose is to ensure the property meets the the core legislative requirements prior to the start of a new tenancy and that any risks to incoming tenants are mitigated.

3.3 Responsive Property Surveys

Responsive surveys are undertaken when hazards or property issues are reported. These surveys support the identification and resolution of issues outside the programmed survey cycle.

Responsive surveys include:

- Damp and mould inspections
- Individual component inspections
- Internal or external building inspections
- Drone surveys where required
- Hazard identification

All responsive inspections include assessment against the 29 HHSRS hazards where applicable.

Responsive surveys also contribute to the Council's understanding of emerging risks and inform future programmed survey priorities.

3.4 Garage Surveys

Garage surveys include:

- A full physical inspection of the garage site
- Assessment of the condition of the garage including key building components
- Recording of component age and expected lifecycles

- Assessment of hazards

These surveys also consider environmental risks, security, and misuse of land.

3.5 HRA land surveys.

These include

- A full physical inspection of the land including boundaries, fixtures and fittings present
- Assessment of hazards

These surveys also consider environmental risks, security, and misuse of land.

3.6 EPC's

EPC surveys include:

- A non-intrusive inspection of the property to assess its energy efficiency and assign the property a rating
- Assessment using RdSAP methodology
- Recording of energy performance data and recommendations

EPC data supports compliance, investment planning, and carbon reduction strategies.

3.7 Inspections of buildings containing flats, sheltered accommodation and associated communal areas

Communal area surveys will include,

- A full physical inspection of the communal area
- Assessment of the condition of key building components
- Recording of component age and expected lifecycle
- Assessment of hazards using the HHSRS framework
- Photographic evidence to support findings
- Data capture in accordance with the Council's asset data standards

4. Survey Frequency

Survey frequencies are informed by compliance requirements and a risk-based approach.

- Programmed Stock Condition Surveys / Responsive Property Surveys
  All homes will receive a full physical stock condition survey at least once every 5 years.
- Void Property Surveys
  All properties must receive a full survey when void.

- Garage surveys
  Surveyed at least once every 5 years, with 20% annually.
- HRA land surveys
  Surveyed at least once every 5 years, with 20% annually.
- EPCs

  Required at letting, after major upgrades, on submission of a RTB application and at least every 10 years
  We aim to undertake surveys on 10% of our stock annually.
- Inspections of buildings containing flats, sheltered accommodation and associated communal areas. All communal areas will receive a full physical stock condition survey at least once every 5 years.
  20% of communal areas will be surveyed annually on a rolling basis.

In addition, ad hoc specialist surveys. including drone surveys may be carried out.

Survey programmes will be adjusted where risk, data gaps, or emerging issues are identified.

5. Responsibility for ensuring survey delivery

- Programmed stock condition surveys. To be arranged by Investment Team Manager.
- Void property surveys. To be arranged by Investment Team Manager.
- Responsive property surveys. To be arranged by Investment Team Manager.
- HRA Land Surveys. To be arranged by Investment Team Manager.
- Garages. To be undertaken by Garage Officer.
- EPCs. To be arranged by Investment Team Manager or Void Support Team Leader if Void.
- Inspections of buildings containing flats, sheltered accommodation and associated communal areas. To be arranged by Investment Team Manager.
- Specialist surveys. including drone surveys. To be arranged by the appropriate Service Area.

In addition:

- Surveys will be undertaken by competent, trained surveyors or accredited contractors
- 10% of surveys will be subject to quality assurance checks
- Overall accountability sits with the Director of Housing and Investment

6. Access to Properties

The Council will take reasonable steps to obtain access to properties to undertake surveys.

This will include:

- Arranging appointments with tenants in advance
- Making repeat contact where access is not achieved (minimum three attempts)

- Access to property is managed in line with our Access Policy and Access Procedure.
- Using multiple communication methods

Where access is refused or repeatedly unavailable, the Council may implement its Access Policy where this is considered necessary and proportionate.

Ensuring access is essential to maintain compliance with housing safety standards and to provide assurance to the RSH.

7. Actions Following Surveys

7.1 Category 1 Hazards

Where surveys identify Category 1 hazards under the HHSRS:

- These hazards must be prioritised.
- Remedial works must be arranged promptly to remove the hazard.
- Immediate risks will be made safe within 24–48 hours where required

Where major works are required to resolve hazards, the Council may implement existing decant processes.

7.2 Other Hazards

Hazards below the Category 1 threshold will be addressed through:

- The Council's Repairs and Maintenance Policy, where repairs are required, or
- The Council's planned maintenance and investment programmes
- The Fire Safety Assurance Team
- Housing Management
- Aids and Adaptations Team
- Damp and Mould Team

8. Asset Data and Systems

Accurate property data is essential to effective asset management.

Following surveys, the Council will:

- Record survey findings within its housing ICT systems.
- Record the date surveys are undertaken.
- Maintain property condition data to support cyclical surveying.
- Apply data validation controls and mandatory fields
- Capture photographic evidence where appropriate

The Council will also:

- Collate additional property condition data from other sources.

- Expand the use of environmental sensor technology to monitor property condition.
- Work towards consolidating property data within the minimum number of ICT systems, ideally achieving a single asset data view.

Property data will be analysed to identify trends relating to:

- Property archetypes
- Locations
- Common building issues

This information will inform strategic investment and maintenance planning and provide assurance of data quality.

9. Performance Monitoring

Performance relating to property condition and surveys will be monitored using a suite of performance measures.

These will include:

- Quarterly Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Monthly housing performance dashboards
- Internal operational management information
- Quality assurance sampling of surveys

Performance information will be reported to:

- Directorate Management Team
- Corporate Management Team
- Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- Lincoln Tenants' Panel
- Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing

10. Key Performance Indicators

The Council's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provide a clear and measurable way of ensuring that activity delivers tangible benefits to tenants and the housing stock. Collectively, this framework drives continuous service improvement, strengthens regulatory compliance, and supports The Council in achieving its strategic objectives of providing safe, decent, and sustainable homes for its tenants. Performance measures are detailed below.

Programmed Stock Condition Surveys

Stock Condition Surveys

Percentage of homes with a stock condition survey completed within the previous 5 years.

- Target, 100%
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Annual Survey Programme Delivery

Percentage of annual stock condition surveys completed against annual target.

- Target: % of stock surveyed in year against number required in year
- Reporting frequency, annually

Category 1 Hazard Resolution Compliance

Percentage of Category 1 hazards identified via stock condition surveys resolved within target timeframe.

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Percentage of properties meeting Decent Homes standards

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Void Property Surveys

Void Survey Completion Rate

Percentage of void properties receiving a stock condition survey before letting.

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Average Void Survey Turnaround

Average working days from void notification to completed survey.

- Target: 3 working days
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Hazards Resolved Before Letting

Percentage of identified Cat 1 hazards resolved before commencement of tenancy.

Commented [KB1]: @Mark Hebblewhite I suggest we change to number of surveys completed against number required in year

Commented [MH1R2]: @Kevin BowringSee above comment, if the target has changed ed please amend to whatever the new target is

Commented [KB1R3]: @Mark Hebblewhite change made as per discussion with Matt

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Responsive Property Surveys

Immediate Risk Make-Safe Compliance

Percentage of HHSRS Category 1 hazards made safe within required emergency timescale.

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Repeat Damp and Mould Case Rate

Percentage of damp and mould cases recurring within 12 months of the completion of remediation works.

- Target: Continuous improvement
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Garage Surveys

Garage Survey Coverage

Percentage of garages surveyed within the previous 5 years.

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, annually

Annual Garage Survey Delivery

Percentage of annual garage surveys completed against annual target.

- Target:20% annually
- Reporting frequency, annually

Garage Hazard Resolution Compliance

Percentage of identified Cat 1 garage hazards resolved within target timeframe.

- Target: 100 %

- Reporting frequency, annually

HRA Land Surveys

HRA Land Survey Coverage

Percentage of HRA land inspected within previous 5 years.

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, annually

Annual HRA Land Inspection Delivery

Percentage of planned HRA land inspections completed against annual target.

- Target: 20% annually
- Reporting frequency, annually

Percentage of HRA Land Free from Significant Hazard or Misuse

Percentage of HRA land assessed as free from significant hazard, environmental concern, encroachment, or misuse.

- Target: Continuous improvement
- Reporting frequency, annually

EPC Surveys

Valid EPC Compliance

Percentage of homes with a valid EPC certificate.

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Annual EPC Programme Delivery

Percentage of annual EPC surveys completed against annual target.

- Target: 10% annually

- Reporting frequency, annually

Reduction in EPC F and G Rated Properties

Percentage reduction in properties rated EPC F or G.

- Target: Reduction year-on-year
- Reporting frequency, annually

Communal Areas / Buildings Containing Flats

Communal Area Survey Coverage

Percentage of communal areas surveyed within previous 5 years.

- Target: 100 %
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Annual Communal Survey Programme Delivery

Percentage of planned communal surveys completed against annual target.

- Target: 20% annually
- Reporting frequency, annually

Fire Safety Defect Resolution Compliance

Percentage of identified fire safety defects resolved within target timeframe.

- Target: 100%
- Reporting frequency, monthly

Reduction in Communal Reactive Repairs

Percentage reduction in reactive repairs relating to communal areas over rolling 12 months.

- Target: Continuous reduction
- Reporting frequency, annually

11. Annual Reporting

An annual update on:

- Stock condition surveying progress

- Property condition data
- Decent Homes compliance

will be reported to:

- Corporate Management Team
- Lincoln Tenants' Panel
- Housing Sub-Scrutiny
- Via the City of Lincoln Council website

The annual report will provide assurance on compliance, risks, and planned actions.

12. Risk-Based Approach

The Council will adopt a risk-based approach to surveying and asset management.

This will include consideration of:

- Property age, type, and construction
- Known issues such as damp and mould
- Tenant vulnerability
- Historical repairs and complaints data
- Additional considerations such as gas capped properties or properties where no repair requests have been received for 12 months

Survey programmes will be adjusted accordingly to ensure higher-risk properties are prioritised.

13. Health and Safety

All survey activity will comply with health and safety requirements.

Surveyors must:

- Follow lone working procedures
- Undertake risk assessments
- Use appropriate PPE