



INNISFREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

June 2026

Abandonment Policy

ABANDONMENT POLICY

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ABANDONMENT POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Innisfree Housing Association (Innisfree) is committed to managing its homes responsibly and making best use of its housing stock to meet local housing need.
- 1.2. Abandonment occurs where a tenant appears to have left their home without formally ending their tenancy or licence. Abandoned homes prevent properties being used by those in housing need and may present health, safety, and security risks.
- 1.3. This policy sets out how Innisfree will identify and manage suspected cases of abandonment, and the principles we will follow when recovering possession of a property.
- 1.4. This policy should be read alongside the Tenancy Agreement or Licence Agreement, and the following policies and procedures:
 - Allocations Policy
 - Antisocial Behaviour Policy
 - Income Management Policy
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Tenancy Fraud Policy
 - TORTS (Interference with Goods) Procedure
 - Unauthorised Occupation Policy

2. OUR APPROACH

- 2.1 Innisfree will take a lawful, proportionate and evidence-based approach to suspected abandonment.
- 2.2 We recognise that there may be a range of reasons why a tenant is absent from their home, including hospitalisation, imprisonment, domestic abuse, or other personal circumstances.

2.3 When investigation concerns for an abandoned property we will take reasonable steps to:

- Establish whether the tenant has returned or intends to return
- Contact the tenant, household members, friends, and family
- Consider vulnerability or safeguarding concerns

2.4 Innisfree will not unlawfully evict tenants. Where there is any doubt about the status of a tenancy, legal advice will be sought before action is taken.

2.5 The aims of this policy are to:

- Recover abandoned properties lawfully and efficiently
- Minimise rent loss and the time homes remain empty
- Protect tenants from unlawful eviction
- Ensure decisions are fair, consistent, and transparent
- Make best use of Innisfree's housing stock
- Safeguard vulnerable tenants and household members

3. REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

3.1. Innisfree will comply with all relevant legislation and guidance when managing suspected abandonment, including:

- Protection from Eviction Act 1977
- Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024

- The Renters' Rights Act 2025

4. WHAT IS ABANDONMENT?

- 4.1. Innisfree recognises that there are many legitimate reasons why a home may be empty for a short period of time. This may include holidays, hospital stays, caring responsibilities, temporary stays with family or friends, or other personal circumstances.
- 4.2. Tenants are entitled to be absent from their home for short periods, provided that the property remains their only or principal home. We strongly encourage tenants to inform Innisfree if they expect to be away from their home for an extended period of time, so that we can update our records and avoid unnecessary concern or investigation.
- 4.3. Where Innisfree is not aware of the reasons for a prolonged absence, or where there are indicators that a tenant may have left the property permanently, we may make enquiries to establish whether the home has been abandoned.
- 4.4. A property may be considered abandoned where there is evidence that:
 - The tenant has left the property as their only or principal home; and
 - There is no intention to return; and
 - The tenancy has not been formally ended.
- 4.5. Indicators of abandonment may include:
 - Rent account inactivity or non-payment
 - Lack of furniture or personal belongings
 - Utility disconnection
 - Neighbour reports
 - Returned mail or an inability to contact the tenant
- 4.6. No single indicator will be relied upon in isolation. Each case will be assessed on its individual circumstances, taking into account all available evidence.

5. INVESTIGATION AND DECISION-MAKING

- 5.1 Where Innisfree suspects that a property may have been abandoned, we will carry out careful enquiries. We recognise that an absence from a home does not automatically mean that a tenancy has ended, and we will not make assumptions without evidence.
- 5.2 Our first priority will always be to establish whether the tenant has temporarily left the property and intends to return. We will make reasonable attempts to contact the tenant using the contact details we hold, and where appropriate we may also make enquiries with known household members, family, friends, or support agencies.
- 5.3 Innisfree will not treat a property as abandoned simply because it appears unoccupied, rent has not been paid, or neighbours have raised concerns. These factors may prompt further investigation, but they will not be relied upon in isolation.
- 5.4 We will visit the property where necessary to assess its condition and occupancy, but we will only enter a home in line with the terms of the tenancy agreement and relevant legislation. Innisfree does not have the legal power to enter a property or take possession of it unless the law allows us to do so.
- 5.5 In particular, legislation such as the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 means that Innisfree cannot lawfully end a tenancy or remove a tenant's belongings unless:
- The tenancy has been ended through the correct legal process; or
 - There is clear evidence that the tenant has permanently left the property and abandoned their tenancy; or
 - A court has granted possession.
- 5.6 Where there is any uncertainty about whether a tenancy has been abandoned, Innisfree will take a cautious approach. We will seek legal advice where appropriate and will not take action that could place a tenant at risk of unlawful eviction.
- 5.7 Before a decision is made to end a tenancy due to abandonment, Innisfree will consider:
- All evidence gathered during the investigation
 - Any explanation provided by or on behalf of the tenant
 - Whether there are known vulnerabilities, safeguarding concerns or support needs
 - Whether reasonable steps have been taken to contact the tenant

- 5.8 Decisions to end a tenancy on the grounds of abandonment must be authorised by a senior manager. This ensures that decisions are consistent, proportionate and properly reviewed.
- 5.9 Where abandonment is not established, Innisfree will take no further action to recover the property. Where abandonment is established, the tenancy will be ended in accordance with the law, and the property will be secured and prepared for re-letting.
- 5.10 Innisfree will keep clear records of all actions taken, decisions made and evidence relied upon during an abandonment investigation. This helps ensure transparency and accountability and allows decisions to be explained if questioned or challenged.

6. SAFEGUARDING AND VULNERABILITY

- 6.1 Innisfree recognises that suspected abandonment can sometimes be linked to difficult or distressing circumstances. These may include illness, hospital admission, domestic abuse, mental health concerns, imprisonment, bereavement, or other situations that may place a tenant or household member at risk.
- 6.2 Where Innisfree becomes aware, or has reason to believe, that a tenant or a member of their household may be vulnerable, we will take this into account at every stage of an abandonment investigation. Our approach will be cautious, proportionate, and focused on wellbeing as well as tenancy management.
- 6.3 In cases where vulnerability or risk is identified, Innisfree may:
- Pause or slow down investigative action where appropriate
 - Make enquiries with relevant support agencies
 - Make safeguarding referrals in line with our Safeguarding Policy
 - Consider whether reasonable adjustments are required
- 6.4 Safeguarding considerations do not automatically prevent Innisfree from recovering a property where abandonment is clearly established. However, they will inform how we approach the case, how decisions are made, and how we communicate with the tenant or others acting on their behalf.

- 6.5 All safeguarding concerns identified during an abandonment investigation will be recorded clearly, and actions taken will be consistent with Innisfree's safeguarding duties and wider legal responsibilities.

7. PERSONAL BELONGINGS

- 7.1 Innisfree understands that personal belongings may have significant practical, emotional or financial value. Where belongings are left in a property that is believed to be abandoned, we will handle them carefully and in accordance with the law.
- 7.2 Innisfree does not have the right to dispose of personal belongings simply because a property appears to be empty. Legislation, including the Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977, places clear duties on landlords to protect a former tenant's belongings and give them an opportunity to recover them.
- 7.3 Where belongings are found in a property following suspected abandonment, Innisfree will:
- Take reasonable steps to identify and contact the former tenant
 - Secure the belongings where possible
 - Provide notice of how and when the belongings can be collected
 - Allow a reasonable period of time for collection
- 7.4 Where it is necessary to remove belongings for safety or security reasons, this will be done proportionately and recorded clearly. Storage arrangements and any charges applied will be managed in line with Innisfree's TORTS (Interference with Goods) Procedure.
- 7.5 Innisfree will only dispose of personal belongings where it is lawful to do so and where reasonable steps to contact the former tenant have been taken. Records will be kept of the items involved, the actions taken, and the reasons for disposal.
- 7.6 Further detail on how personal belongings are managed is set out in Innisfree's TORTS (Interference with Goods) Procedure, which ensures consistency, transparency, and legal compliance.

8. COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS

- 8.1 Tenants or former tenants who are unhappy with how a suspected abandonment case has been handled may raise a complaint through Innisfree's Complaints Policy, at Stage 1.

9. DATA SHARING

- 9.1 All information will be stored in our Housing Management systems. All case notes, case files, and personal information will be kept confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. We will adhere to the Data Protection Act and comply with General Data Protection Regulation for Sharing Personal Information to ensure that we maintain confidentiality of all parties.
- 9.2 We will share information with third parties where we have an information sharing protocol in place, if there are safeguarding concerns, or we have a duty to do so for the purpose of crime prevention under the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (and any other relevant legislation) justify it.

10. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

- 10.1 We are committed to embedding the Equality Act 2010 into our Policies and Procedures. As part of this commitment, staff should facilitate reasonable adjustments and adapt our standard policies and procedures wherever possible, to ensure every individual can access our services.

11. REVIEWING THIS POLICY

- 11.1 The policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or with any changes to regulation or legislation.



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