



promoting equality in housing
hybu cydraddoldeb ym maes tai



FLOORED: 3 YEARS ON



**Practice compendium on the provision
of flooring in social housing in Wales.**

September 2023

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What is in this report?

In this report we:

- **Share practice from Welsh social housing providers on the provision of flooring in social housing to help members prepare for potential changes introduced by WHQS 2023**
- **Capture the impacts of FLOORED report and suggest future work and support needed in this area to make access to good flooring in social housing a reality**



Why have we written it?

In 2020 TPAS Cymru and Tai Pawb published FLOORED report which looked into the lack of provision of flooring in social housing.



The aim of the report was to consider the practice related to voids and flooring amongst social landlords in Wales as well as to explore the experiences of and impact on social tenants.

The report found that social housing – other than non-slip flooring in kitchens and bathrooms – rarely has any flooring or carpeting fitted when new-lets are taken up. In addition, few providers offered flooring to tenants as standard practice unless a need was identified by an occupational therapy assessment or another process identifying vulnerability.

The report also uncovered the wide-ranging negative impacts of lack of flooring on social tenants, many of which were experienced by groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. Tenants told us that the cost of purchasing suitable flooring was prohibitive, linked largely to low income and a lack of available funds. Other issues reported by tenants included lack of warmth, safety and sound in their homes, health issues including breathing difficulties and depression. Responses from tenants with children highlighted safety issues with hard concrete or wooden flooring – including splinters – and an increase in loneliness and isolation in not feeling able to invite friends to visit.

It was our hope that FLOORED report would serve as the basis for a constructive approach to working together to explore and improve the lettings practice in Wales. These hopes were quickly turned into reality.

Widespread and positive interest from social landlords committed to changing their policies and practices enabled us to set up our FLOORED implementation group.

The group was attended by social landlords, Welsh Government colleagues and other interested organisations. The group met regularly, sharing ideas and in many cases learning, piloting and adopting new practices which led to improvements in flooring provision and the lives of tenants served by social landlords.

In 2022, the Welsh Government issued a consultation on the draft Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 (WHQS 2023), with a new element requiring landlords to provide suitable floor coverings in all habitable rooms at change of tenancy – a change welcomed by TPAS Cymru, Tai Pawb and partner organisations.

As the draft WHQS 2023 standard is being designed and many social housing providers are considering their policy and practice on flooring, this report incorporating learning from FLOORED work and will serve as a useful tool for learning and information.



In May 2023, Altair, funded by Longleigh Foundation, released its [Scene Setting report into the Provision of Floor Coverings in Social Housing](#). **The report contains a number of useful case studies from England and considerations, which, alongside this compendium, will be a useful tool for social landlords in Wales.**



Interested in connecting with organisations who shared their practice in this report? Contact info@taipawb.org and subject to consent we will provide you with contact details.

Methodology

Content of this report is based on two sources:

- **A survey of social landlords in Wales involved in FLOORED working group set up by TPAS Cymru and Tai Pawb to help implement recommendations of FLOORED report. Responses were received from 15 organisations, 43% of which were RSL's and 57% - local authorities.**
- **Practice shared during FLOORED working group meetings**
- **Questions and comments received from landlords at TPAS Cymru/ Tai Pawb WHQS 2023 engagement event in preparation for WHQS consultation.**





Part 1: Keeping existing flooring

Context

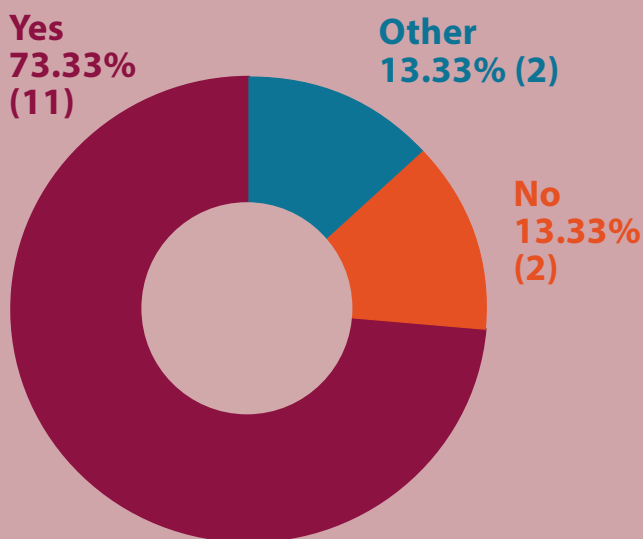
In 2020:

We found that most social housing providers removed any flooring or carpets left by the previous occupant in a void property due to it being deemed unsafe. A minority of social housing providers left existing flooring where it was safe to do so, and the new tenant requested it.

In 2022:

Most of the providers who answered the survey provided an option to keep existing flooring, however detailed responses made it clear that this option might be much more constrained in some organisations than others.

Q1: Do you supply the option to re-use flooring/carpet from former tenants when re-letting a property?



Answered: 15 Skipped: 0

Our surveys and engagement showed that organisations had very different definitions and approaches to what constitutes suitable flooring. Some organisations offered the opportunity to keep existing flooring in very limited circumstances (“we remove most flooring”), mainly due to more strict health and safety policies or condition standards. For others, the practice was more common. For more details: see health and safety section below.

Considering the potential changes introduced by the draft WHQS 2023 standards, organisations may wish to review their relevant policies and practices relating to the required condition of flooring kept by new tenants.

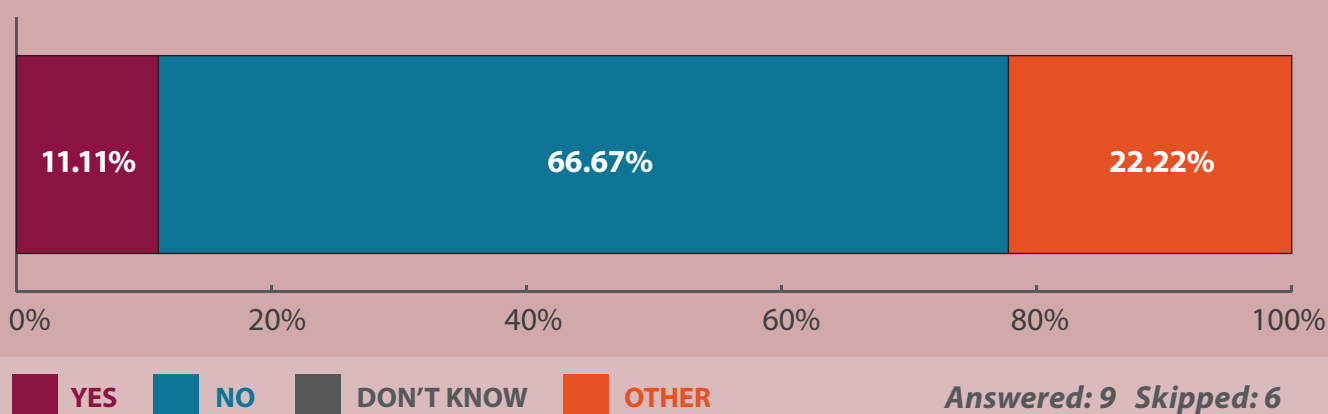
Suitability of flooring

Draft WHQS 2023 stipulates that 'Floor coverings must be present at change of tenancy, but need not be renewed if they are suitable, appropriate and in good condition.'

As indicated above, organisations will have different definitions as to the meaning of suitable, appropriate and in good condition.

This is potentially further compounded by lack of formal policies which would define suitable flooring, as seen in chart below.

Q2: Do you have a written policy which defines what constitutes 'suitable flooring/carpet' if it is being re-used?



Our respondents also provided examples of reasons for deeming flooring unsuitable or in bad condition:

- Poor condition, unable to be cleaned/slip, trip or fall hazards/ environmental clean required
- Where previous tenant had pets (cats/dogs)
- Health & Safety e.g. torn and fraying especially in areas such as hall stairs and landing, stained, fleas, chipped laminate or poorly laid leading to 'bumps' so causes a tripping hazard
- Dirty, heavily stained, tears and not well fitted/unsafe
- Wear and tear, too dirty to clean, not fitting the room properly, issues with fleas/mites, poor condition, damaged, dirty
- Dirty, smelly, not laid correctly, worn, fleas, substantial works planned at the house.

Recommendations:

- **Welsh Government should consider whether further guidance as to the suitability and appropriateness of flooring is needed.**
- **Social landlords should develop policies and procedures which would help define the above requirements and guide operational staff in their decisions.**

Mitigating health and safety risks

In the course of our work, health and safety risks have often been quoted to us as the key reason for taking out existing flooring as an automatic process. This is clearly not the case with organisations which do offer the option to keep existing flooring.

Below are examples of how risks are assessed and managed:

- *We manage this by allowing our trained surveyors to choose whether the flooring can remain or not - they make their decision with H&S in mind. The only issue we have faced with this, is if an incoming customer does not feel the standard of flooring is good enough when viewing (normally as the colour isn't to their liking for example) and asks us to remove so they can replace themselves. It has never caused us any other problems and customers are informed that flooring is gifted at time of let.*
- *Disclaimer signed by new tenant*
- *It is a tenant choice. We provide a welcome pack and checklist that is signed by staff and tenant to state it is a gift with no future maintenance liability on landlord.*
- *An assessment of the flooring is made during the void period. If the flooring is not deemed suitable by a surveyor it is removed. If the surveyor does deem it clean and in a good state of repair, we will then ask the incoming tenant if they wish to keep it on the viewing.*
- *Each is treated on a case-by-case basis, we do however air on the side of caution and so only flooring left in a good state of repair will remain.*
- *We utilise a company to clean and disinfect carpets if only lightly spoiled.*
- *We would only leave carpet in a good condition and if the new tenant accepts responsibility for it. Many PRS properties are carpeted so I don't see what the issue is!*
- *Our void inspectors will decide if flooring is safe and suitable to remain. if there is any wear and tear, stains, smells, dirt or if flooring isn't laid correctly it will be removed. Also if substantial works is needed in the house then flooring will be removed as it will be damaged during the works as we often bring forward major jobs so there is less disruption once tenants are in place.*



Proportion of re-lets where existing flooring is kept

We asked social housing providers to estimate the proportion of re-lets where existing flooring is kept. This indicated clear differences in proportions of re-lets which keep existing flooring. It is clear that the vast differences in proportions between different organisations are not due to tenant preferences (see the next section).

Out of the organisations which provided responses to us:

- 3 estimated that proportion of re-lets where flooring was kept was below 5%
- 1 estimated it at lower than 10%
- 2 estimated it at 20% of homes re-let
- 2 estimated that between 50-60% of homes keep existing flooring
- 1 organisation indicated that many outgoing tenants will remove flooring in fear they will be recharged if it's not deemed good enough – something that should perhaps be clarified through communication with outgoing tenants

While health and safety and good housing conditions are always paramount, the difference in proportions above, raises a question as to whether organisations with very low proportions of existing flooring kept have policies and procedures which are restrictive.

Recommendation

We would encourage landlords to examine their policies and procedures related to keeping existing flooring in-situ and consider how restrictive these are - especially where proportions of flooring kept are very low.

Removal due to tenant preferences

We asked social landlords to indicate the proportions of tenants who prefer to have the existing flooring removed even if it is in good condition.

All landlords but one indicated that this proportion is very low, with the exception of one, who indicated that approximately 80% of tenants prefer their own flooring. Tenant preferences are unlikely to be this different across different areas, therefore we would encourage organisations to examine this further.

One answer also indicated that allocation process does not allow for tenants to choose whether carpets are kept.

Below are examples of responses we received:

- *Only a small percentage ask for flooring to be removed - maybe a handful of customers. This is often based on the colour/ type of the flooring not being to their liking and the fact they can afford to put flooring down themselves/ family have offered to do this for them.*
- *Recent policy change so not as yet determined but anecdotally very few.*
- *Less than 5%, all that have requested this have the means to buy new*
- *We've never had a case where the flooring has been rejected.*
- *A high percentage (approx. 80%) prefer to have their own carpets installed either before they move in or once they have settled in.*
- *They aren't really given the choice historically as at the time of removal the property isn't allocated. Most of our lounge, dining room, hall areas have vinyl floor tiles laid and often the carpet that is removed just reveals these.*

Keeping existing flooring - decision making process, tenant choice and allocations

We asked respondents to indicate the decision-making process in relating to keeping existing flooring which is in good condition.

One answer in previous section, as well as our engagement with landlords indicated that in those organisations where flooring is automatically removed – it is often done so before the home is allocated to new tenants. Our 2020 survey of tenants however also indicated cases where flooring was removed after viewing the property (with flooring in situ), despite tenants' expectations that it will be kept. Good communication needs to be considered as part of void policies.

In organisations which offer the choice to keep existing flooring – the flooring is naturally in situ at the time of allocation if in good condition and tenants are able to make the decision.

Once the new WHQS 2023 element is introduced, there is a question as to whether tenant choice might be further restricted, where flooring is in good condition due to increase in costs i.e. tenants might not be allowed to have flooring removed, especially where previous flooring was put in by the landlord. Landlords should consider this in their reviewed policies, carefully considering how to avoid restricting tenant choice.

Some landlords also offer to clean the carpets where the condition is good but perhaps requires cleaning.

Below are examples of how decisions are made:

- *The final decision is made by our surveyor, however if a customer views and does not like the flooring, as long as it isn't one we have fitted ourselves then we will remove to allow them to fit their own. (This is applicable to all rooms apart from the kitchen and bathroom)*
- *Condition of carpet determined by surveyor, ultimate decision by new tenant if wants to keep it, where not need it is subsequently removed.*
- *Surveyor leaves in property unless in really poor condition, Housing Officer and new tenant view the property in the void period, the tenant makes the decision as to whether to leave down or take up. We also discuss if carpets need cleaning, and we'll do that if needed.*
- *This is made by the repairs team leader or surveyor and is then shown to the tenant at viewing stage.*
- *Our Housing Management Team (Housing or Allocation Officer) following conversations with incoming tenant.*
- *Voids surveyor that inspects the home*
- *Voids inspectors decide. Tenants views are not considered as the properties are not allocated at that time. Flooring would be one of the first things to be removed if it needs to be.*
- *Tenants views and if they can afford to recarpet, if not, then the carpet remains.*

Recommendation

Landlords should examine the interaction between their allocation and void policies in order to provide tenants with choice to decide on whether to retain the current flooring.

Landlords should carefully examine how their policies and processes in relation to keeping existing flooring allow for balance in decision making between tenant and voids inspector/ relevant officer.

Giftng agreements

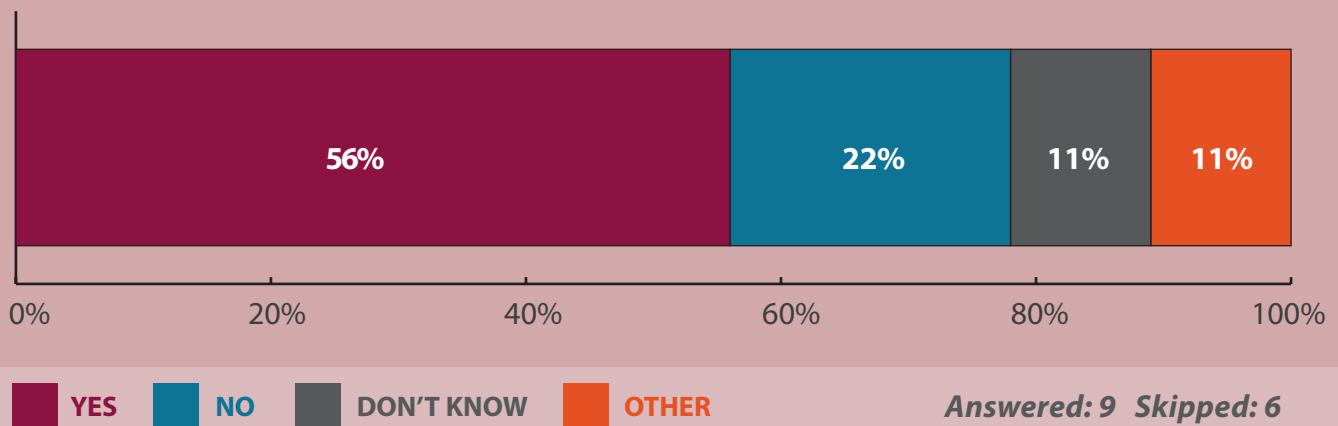
The absence of clear ownership and responsibility for maintaining flooring in new or re-let properties has frequently been mentioned as an obstacle in our interactions with social landlords in Wales.

A potential solution to address this challenge is the utilisation of a gifting agreement. This is a written document endorsed by both the landlord and tenant, explicitly stating that the tenants assume ownership of the carpets or flooring.

Majority of the landlords in the survey we conducted used such agreements. We would be happy to obtain and share examples of such documents from our members.

Altair's Scene Setting report (s.2.18) contains a legal view on gifting agreements from Devonshires, Housing Management Solicitors.

Q8: If keeping old flooring, do you use a gifting agreement/ arrangement with new tenants?



Cleaning of existing flooring

In our engagement to date, landlords were interested in how cleaning arrangements were handled by those who allowed for keeping existing flooring. The responsibility for cleaning, time (impact on void turnaround) and cost involved would be cited as potential barriers by those that do not keep existing floors.

We asked landlords what happens if existing flooring is in good condition but dirty. Answers indicate that some landlords would clean the carpets/flooring whilst others would automatically remove if dirty.

- *If the flooring is dirty but no hazards are identified, then we will clean it during the void process.*
- *Carpets would be cleaned where left.*
- *If needed, we arrange the cleaning, this is discussed during the void period*
- *We have had this and we clean the carpets or floor.*
- *Remove*
- *We clean the flooring to an acceptable standard. If we cannot meet this standard or have concerns, we remove the flooring.*
- *We would remove if dirty and could not easily be cleaned*
- *If we are leaving carpet and it is dirty often we will have it cleaned before re-let. All voids are mopped through where there are hard floors before hand over for relet*
- *We have used cleaners in the past- tenant not charged*

We also asked about estimated proportions of carpets/floor coverings that are kept and require cleaning. Answers were mixed, potentially due to different interpretation of what 'cleaning' actually involves:

- *All would require some form of cleaning, around 50% require a deep clean.*
- *Recent policy change, yet to be determined.*
- *Less than 5%*
- *Roughly 3 to 4%*
- *20%*
- *50%*
- *5%*

Recommendation

When reviewing voids policies, landlords should pay particular attention to policy related to cleaning of existing carpets/flooring.

Impact of keeping existing flooring - the positives and the challenges

We asked landlords to identify the positive impacts they have seen from the practice of keeping existing flooring as well as the challenges.

Vast majority of landlords were very positive about the impact on tenants, including satisfaction and warmth, as well as broader impacts such as reduction in rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and repair requests. Some referred to greater satisfaction amongst staff.

Some individuals expressed concerns about potential obstacles prior to the implementation of the policy, but these concerns were proven false once the practice was actually established.

Only a small number of landlords identified specific challenges that should be taken into account, but these can still be overcome. These challenges included two instances where infestations were not detected during property allocation. Additionally, one landlord mentioned concerns regarding cost and time, but emphasized that the benefits outweighed those.

The positives:

- *Not that we have collected data on this yet, feedback from customer facing teams is that customers are more satisfied when there is flooring down in a property.*
- *Recent policy change, but anecdotally well received by new tenants.*
- *Our tenant satisfaction survey compared satisfaction with overall quality of homes between those who had flooring and those who did not. No flooring - 67% answered Very Satisfied but where Flooring left by previous tenant 88% answered Very Satisfied. Where we provided flooring under Homes not Houses Scheme 100% answered Very Satisfied. Staff are much happier to show homes to potential families when it is in good decor and flooring is provided. We have evaluated homes that have benefited from the Homes not Houses initiative and saw a reduction in rent arrears, ASB and repair requests - Caredig*
- *Yes, some tenants cannot afford carpets or floor coverings. There are some that are in very good condition and can be re-used for many years. This assists the tenant greatly and can provide some much-needed support and relief. The tenant can then utilise the money on other essential purchases. Satisfaction is definitely increased.*
- *Reduction in void costs as saves us installing new flooring. Green - better for the planet, new tenants- cost effective*
- *Where flooring is deemed good enough to stay often we have positive feedback. Since Covid we have been carpeting a large number of our housing stock as its been used as Temp accommodation. we have also be trying to carpet the majority of 1 bed properties and 2 bed flats where they are 1st floor or above.*
- *Warmer homes*

The challenges:

- *Only at the very beginning of the scheme when assumptions were made, mainly by the property services department, that it would a) create more work / more time b) create more cost c) create a H&S risk . We have been able to show this isn't the case. No negatives at all.*
- *Void turnaround times are often affected.*
- *Only impacts on staff time and budgets, but the benefits definitely justify these.*
- *Where carpet has been kept and when new tenants move in and turn heating on and there is a fleas problem which is sometimes not picked up on voids as the heating is off so even if the house has been bombed the fleas are dormant at that time. It is sometimes hard to re-lay carpet if rewires etc are needed at properties and there are cost implications with that also.*

Keeping existing flooring: landlords suggestions

Here we asked landlords what one piece of advice they would provide to those organisations which are changing their policies. We provide those verbatim below:

- *Start from the default wherever possible that it will be left rather than removed.*
- *Don't let assumptions of health and safety risk, of increased costs etc etc stop you from doing the right thing by the tenants and the environment.*
- *Do you want a turnaround time of 1 day or do you want to provide homes that are right first time from the moment the tenant gets the keys? Ask yourselves what product do you want to supply and what is the consequence of your answer for the tenant, for your department and others?*
- *Give the tenant the option!*
- *Be cautious and only keep excellent flooring as removing flooring after the void has been completed leads to more problems (skirting boards needing repainting etc).*
- *Assess condition, procure a good company to assist in cleaning, advise tenants open and honestly that they are gifted and will remain in the property prior to it being let only if they wish.*
- *Why not?*
- *Clear policy on responsibility once new tenant moves in.*
- *Check and re-check for fleas*

Good Practice: Greenstream - affordable flooring project

Greenstream Flooring CIC was a social enterprise with a mission to maximise community benefit from the reuse and sales of flooring in the UK.

They were initially set up to reduce waste of commercial flooring and reuse with the other big aim being provision of carpets to people living in carpet poverty.

Greenstream recycled flooring from commercial companies and provides it at affordable prices to people in need of carpets (as well as running community free give-away days). Apart from working on an individual basis, they also partner with housing associations.

They also provided employment opportunities through work placements. Watch a BBC piece on their **[work here](#)**.

Greenstream's work not only supported people in need of carpets but the recycling element reduces waste and its environmental impact.

By 2021 when Greenstream presented to our FLOORED group, they had:

- Given away 50,000 sqm / 2900 rooms worth of carpet tiles amounting to 660 tonnes of embodied CO2
- Subsidised 11,200 sqm/616 rooms worth of carpet for tenants amounting to 148 tonnes of embodied CO2
- Provided 32 work placements, volunteering, training or other employment opportunities

Unfortunately, Greenstream closed their organisation down in June 2023.

Good Practice: pilot in Clwyd Alyn

Clwyd Alyn begun piloting vinyl flooring throughout their voids. Initially there were some concerns about slips and liability however the risk was deemed to be negligible against the benefits.

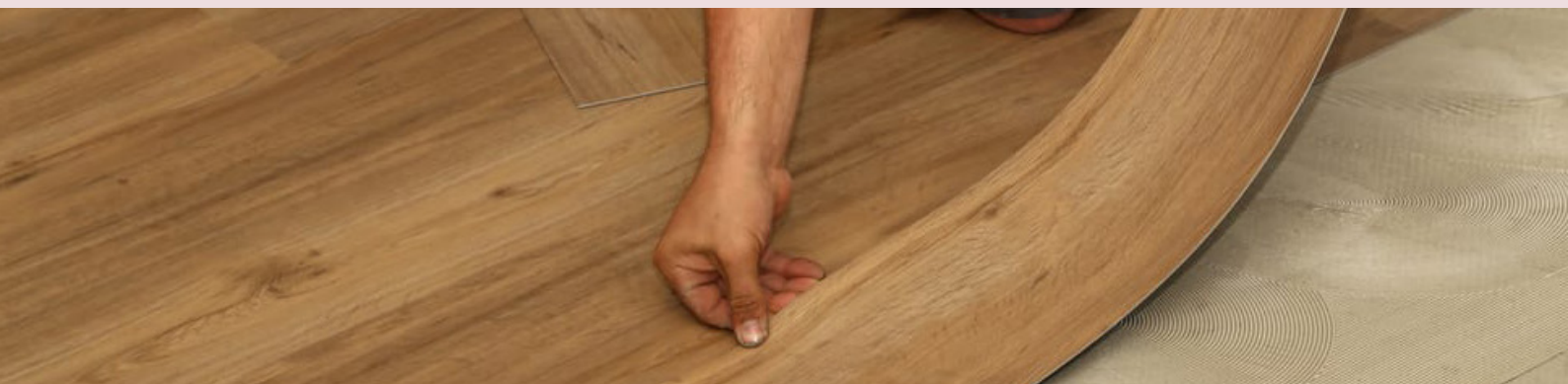
Clwyd Alyn's Mission is 'Together to Beat Poverty' and they see provision of flooring as a key contributor to this objective. In Clwyd Alyn's view, good flooring can change perceptions of what social home is - it can become a home for life because people value it and want to be there. Their pilot predicted fewer voids less anti-social behaviour and an improvement in well-being.

On lesson learnt by the organisation (and others who engaged with FLOORED working group) was to put in slightly higher-level thresholds to match future carpets so that the door doesn't need to be adjusted (as they found this had to be done on a number of occasions)

Clwyd Alyn established a partnership with a nearby supplier and collaborated with the voids team to ensure that where possible existing flooring remains in place when tenants vacate the property.

They have also set up internal finance and monitoring criteria. The pilot is person centred so at pre-tenancy they can understand tenants' situation then make a decision as to the need for flooring, while also looking at existing tenants in financial hardship.

Cost of flooring provision varies per property. They have found it hard to capture the return on investment in the short term because a lot of the outcomes are so called soft, but important, targets like tenant satisfaction and wellbeing. They are looking into tenancy sustainability and how to quantify impact through rent arrears, ASB etc.





Part 2: Providing flooring in new-lets

Context

In 2020:

FLOORED report in 2020 found that social housing rarely had any flooring or carpeting fitted when new tenants take up occupation, other than non-slip flooring in kitchens and bathrooms which is part of the current Welsh Housing Quality Standard. Few social housing providers offered flooring to tenants as standard practice unless a need was identified by an occupational therapy assessment or another process like hardship assessment.

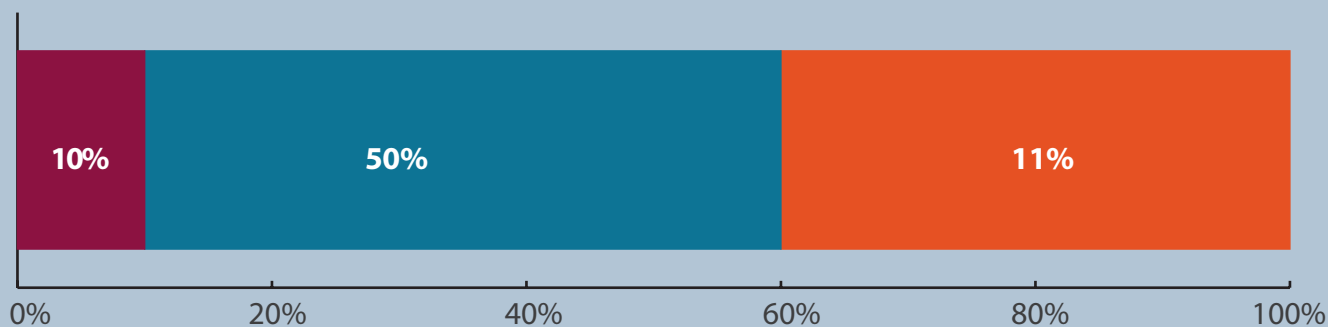
In 2023:

Out of the organisations which responded, only one indicated that they offer to fit new floor coverings in new lets where existing flooring is not suitable – Powys County Council.

40% of organisations provided flooring in some circumstances including:

- Homes not Houses programme in Caredig where, depending on financial situation, flooring can be fitted
- Flintshire County Council was piloting provision
- Pembrokeshire Council was carpeting temporary accommodation and providing vinyl flooring in majority of its housing stock
- Carmarthenshire County Council have secured their own grant to floor up to 2 rooms in homes with no flooring with their own set of criteria

Q14: Do you fit (or offer to fit) flooring/carpet into all your new lets (OR new lets where previous flooring is not suitable) as standard practice?



■ YES ■ NO ■ DON'T KNOW ■ OTHER

Answered: 10 Skipped: 5

Other organisations which provide (some) new flooring in new-lets

Here are some organisations which engaged with us through surveys or FLOORED group, and which provide flooring in all or some new-lets.

Their practice ranges: from providing flooring for all new-lets as part of void standard, through piloting provision to providing some flooring in limited circumstances.

- Monmouthshire Housing Association – provide flooring in all new-lets, this is part of their voids standard.
- Pobl have piloted provision in some homes
- Taff offer flooring to incoming tenants if they cannot afford flooring themselves - this is usually in the form of recycled carpet tiles that are delivered and fitted for free. Not all tenants take up this offer.
- Hafod offer gifted carpet tiles for one room depending on circumstances
- Valleys to Coast have a conversation with incoming tenants about floor where a property has no carpet in living spaces and will provide carpeting if needed.

Note: the offer of flooring tiles will no longer be valid due to the closing down of Greensteam CIC).

Good practice: Monmouthshire Housing Association voids standard

In Monmouthshire Housing Association the change in policy to provide flooring in all new lets was initially piloted in flats with a commitment from CEO and senior staff members to pilot and evaluate.

In 2015 Monmouthshire Housing Association introduced a pilot 'Void Gold standard' across a number of our homes. This had the aim of addressing reduced demand for some property types, dissatisfaction levels from customers about their new home and refusal rates at point of offer/ viewing at nearly a quarter of all homes.

The gold standard meant additional works were completed during the void period including full decoration, fitting of carpets, completion of all nonessential repairs and cutting back/tidy up of gardens.

The project evaluation showed the impact of the pilot was both positive and numerous including: increased tenant satisfaction, improved staff satisfaction, reduced refusal rates, targets achieved on void turnaround time, more bids per advertised property.

Following robust evaluation of the pilot, MHA decided to adopt the standard across all voids.

Monmouthshire Housing Association identified and measured the following benefits following a change in their void standard:

- *Increased sustainability of tenancies*
- *Substantial decrease in rent arrears*
- *Substantial decrease in numbers of refusals therefore decrease in costs related to re-allocation*
- *Improvement in staff morale based on senses of pride in being able to provide good quality homes and service*
- *Increased interest from bidders and numbers of bids within the choice-based lettings system*
- *Increased good reputation amongst communities*
- *Anecdotally - reduction in noise/ASB, although this was not measured*

Good Practice: Pilot in POBL Group

Pobl Group, were able to secure initial internal funding to roll out a small pilot to provide flooring in 22 homes in year one, this increased to 100 homes in year 2 and 226 homes in year 3.

Key in the development of the project was:

- *The launch of the FLOORED report.*
- *A drive to want to improve customers experience moving into a Pobl home, ensuring they feel a sense of security and easing financial pressures.*
- *Neighbourhood teams engaging with tenants and providing the organisation with a number of case studies where customers who were not able to provide their own flooring explained how this affected their health, specifically mental health.*

The initial pilot was planned with housing managers who helped identify initial homes, based on vulnerability of tenants, hard to let properties and other factors.

A project plan was developed to deal with the practical process and address things like; viability, number of voids, how it fits with void standard etc. The average cost was £1200 per home. POBL's spec also includes vinyl flooring for high traffic areas and wheelchair users.

Pobl are keen to continually track the progress of the project and use the findings from the pilots to improve void standards going forward and roll out the offer as wide as possible.

Although the project has been very positive in terms of outcomes for both customers and the organisation so far, there have been challenges, including; financial pressures, turnaround times, contractor availability and measuring customer expectations. One of the key lessons learnt was to carpet the homes while they were empty to avoid disruption for tenants and issues for contractors – this also delivered the best outcomes in terms of reduced refusals and employee and customer satisfaction.

Pobl measured impact of this work by contacting tenants via their preferred methods. The benefits of the project are evident over the last year in the highlights from the customer satisfaction survey, including:

- *4.5 star rating on flooring quality*
- *93% Pobl Trust score (compared to 67% for BAU survey)*
- *At 6 months 100% of customers still had the flooring in their homes*
- *Average 96% satisfaction rate for overall service by new customers.*

With many customers commenting how grateful they were to be given a home with flooring and the positive impact it has had on their wellbeing and financial situation.

They have also received great feedback from our neighbourhood colleagues who are responsible for letting our homes, telling us how lovely it is to be able to offer customers a floored home, how they see the positive impact this has on our customers and how they feel an increased level of pride in their role and our organisation.

Pobl also ensure where possible existing flooring to be kept in for new customers, gifting it to them as they would new carpet fitted by them.

Residents own assessment on impact was:

- *It saved money*
- *Less stress*
- *Wouldn't have been able to afford it otherwise*
- *It was cosy and motivated them to have a nice home*
- *They felt more settled and would recommend Pobl as a landlord*

Another £250,000 budget has been set for the project again this financial year and they intend on continuing to monitor the project, with a focus this year on how it is effecting the business as well as customer and colleague satisfaction.



Proportions of tenants who accept new flooring in new-lets

We asked providers where new floor coverings were optional about the proportions of tenants who accepted the offer.

One landlord answered that this was not optional and if they were carpeting this would go down before allocation and there was no guarantee the first offer would accept the home.

Another landlord only started piloting at the time of the survey and believed approximately 50% of tenants would accept council's offer but thought this would rise considerably going forward.

Another organisation said that of those who qualified for flooring – about 97% accepted it. People who refused it usually wanted lino or laminate flooring, which is not provided.

Recommendation:

As with keeping existing flooring, landlords should consider how their allocations and void policies can take into consideration tenants' choice. Landlords should explore new options for flooring provision now that Greenstream CIC is no longer in operation.

Choice offered

As well as asking whether new flooring provision was optional (above) we asked whether and what choice of floor coverings were offered.

Out of the 5 organisations which provided new flooring in all or some properties 3 provided some choice:

- *Budget range but sample of colours to choose*
- *As part of pilot tenants have a choice of colours*
- *3 choices of colour*

2 organisations did not offer a choice of flooring or colour.

Recommendation

Organisations should consider how to provide tenants with a choice of flooring/carpets.

Ownership and charges

As we hear from colleagues in England that some landlords charged substantial service charge for new flooring provided – we asked landlords in Wales whether this was their practice and were pleased to see that this was not the case with organisations who responded.

One organisation, which was piloting provision, provided more detail by stating that both: existing flooring from previous tenants and new flooring provided by the organisation are gifted to tenants. They were also looking to making further efficiencies in the void process to divert more finances into their pilot.

Recommendation

Landlords should consider how ownership of new floor coverings is structured and how this relates to their re-charge policies. Costly re-charges or service charges should be avoided.

Type and cost of floor coverings

We asked social housing providers to specify the type and cost of floor coverings provided. Although we did not get many responses, those who shared information mostly provided carpets.

During our engagement with the FLOORED working group, securing cost effective and good suppliers and fitters could prove challenging. Several organisations mentioned shortage of fitters specifically and it was suggested that this could be an opportunity to provide training and employment opportunities to tenants.

Responses from organisations were as follows:

- *We provide carpet, unsure of how much it costs but we have established a partnership with local supplier to have competitive rates*
- *We provide new carpet (£15-£20 per m2, cost from 2022). Kitchen & Bathroom have vinyl as per WHQS*
- *Carpet used for Temp accommodation (TA) is foam backed and adhesive spray is used to fix to the floor. Grippers will be used on stairs for safety. If not TA then generally hard floors will have vinyl floor tiles glued down as part of the void process if not already in situ.*
- *We provide new carpet, underlay, grippers, fitting plus doors planed - about to go to retender for new contract.*

Recommendations:

- Landlords should carefully consider the type of floor coverings provided in different types of accommodation and for different groups, e.g. carpets will not always be appropriate for wheelchair users.
- Landlords should consider partnerships to access cost-effective bulk carpet suppliers and/or fitters.
- Landlords should consider how they can provide training and employment opportunities to tenants interested in carpet fitting.

Impact of providing new flooring - the positives and the challenges

The positive impact of providing new flooring was similar to that of providing the option to keep existing floor coverings:

- *In our pilot we saw a reduction in rent arrears, ASB and repair requests. No tenancies have ended but it has only been running since 2020*
- *Tenants are often happy when they see a property has been carpeted ready for them.*
- *Increased satisfaction, reduction in fuel poverty and rent arrears, staff morale better, wellbeing*

Provision of new flooring, especially where this is a new practice, does not come without its challenges. While several landlords said there were no challenges others mentioned problems with suppliers and fitters, temporary accommodation, some impact on turnaround time and considerations as to ownership/damage:

- *Costs, availability (both supply and install) and sometimes tenants have removed at a later date or taken them with them if they have moved.*
- *Turnaround time increased impacting lost rent, costs for removing old flooring, costs for installing new flooring, some concerns regarding carpet being laid on old floor tiles where there is a potential asbestos concern even though that is very minimal. Concerns moving forward with regards to whose responsibility carpet is, is it something that will need to be renewed by us, do we recharge for damage, how do you assess fair wear and tear in that circumstance and if it is gifted we have to accept that the carpet can be destroyed in a short time and we won't be able to recharge for replacement.*
- *We have had instances where carpet has had to be removed after only 6 months when a property has gone through voids following use as TA as tenants haven't looked after it and animals have been at the property also.*
- *It's difficult to justify spending the £500k per annum cost to replace flooring in all of our voids when there is little data to back up the benefits of it. We all understand the potential anecdotal benefits but in the current financial climate HA's are trying to reduce their spending unless there is a clear return on investment*

Whilst financial constraints in the current financial climate can be a barrier and cannot be disregarded, we would hope that some of the examples in this report of how impact and return on investment was measured by different organisations will help landlords in their decision making.

Providing new flooring: landlords' suggestions

In this section we asked landlords what one piece of advice they would provide to those organisations which are changing their policies to provide new flooring in their homes.

We provide those verbatim below:

- *Start from the default that it will be provided.*
- *Just do it. Don't assume every property will need carpeting which would equate to ££££££'s (leave previous flooring and not every tenant wants them) it's more affordable than you think and there will be cost savings across several areas of the business*
- *Pilot in a small area first where properties are difficult to let or where the Housing Teams can engage within the incoming tenants as early as possible to identify need/support.*
- *Trial on certain types of properties in the first instance. Having a good relationship with a carpet contractor can speed up installation. We are currently considering the potential impacts of the new WHQS if its deemed carpet is needed in every void. We will most likely create a complete separate framework so carpet can be separate from voids works so we have a consistent product being installed in a timely fashion. We would also look at then having cleaning as part of that framework also (Pembrokeshire County Council)*
- *Ensure capacity/ policy around refitting of doors*
- *Needs to be recognised as an essential item as a significant cost for tenant when setting up their new homes.*
- *It should be a standard.*
- *Tenants would value flooring in all properties that they move into. However, most tenants want to put their own flooring to make the property their own. Many tenants would prefer to choose their own flooring as opposed to what we may choose.*
- *We are attempting to create a framework of local suppliers and installers where our tenants can engage with them directly. It would be useful if more could be done on the engagement with local suppliers or national suppliers who use local installers.*
- *I do think its a positive thing especially for tenants however there is the issue of the added cost for carpet and the added voids time which will also impact revenue and where we find this extra money especially at a time when all of the other materials we buy are going up also.*

Impact of floored report

As organisations working to support our membership, TPAS Cymru and Tai Pawb were keen to capture impact of FLOORED report on landlords. Through engagement with landlords as part of our joint FLOORED working group, we could already identify that the report led to changes in policies and piloting of new provision in several organisations and we were pleased to see a positive response and understanding of the report.



We also asked providers to tell us about any impact of FLOORED as part of our survey and we were pleased to see the following comments:

- **The report and working group supported the introduction of leaving existing carpets wherever possible**
- **The report and working group had a positive impact. We had started discussions internally but the report gave the proposal for the Homes not Houses initiative more importance which got the trial off the ground**
- **The report and working group placed it higher on our radar and has given an emphasis on reusing flooring.**
- **FLOORED report and working group has helped shape our pilot.**
- **We would have continued to carpet TA properties regardless but it's good to hear what others think especially where they are social housing providers.**

Discretionary assistance fund

In the course of our work we had many enquiries about the use of emergency funds to fund flooring for those people in particular crisis – this was particularly asked by homelessness and housing support organisations, whose clients often find themselves unable to buy flooring and living without floor coverings for long periods of time.



Providers pointed out that DAF funding was not available for carpet provision. We raised this question with Welsh Government colleagues responsible for DAF who attended FLOORED group.

It was stressed that DAF is a 'fund of last resort' with finite resources and, while flooring was the responsibility of landlords, they did make some changes to DAF criteria after listening to stakeholders. These are as follows:

DAF can now pay for rugs and underlay for main living space, bedrooms and any rooms where children are sleeping. This is available to households with vulnerable children <16yo and other children <7yrs old. The maximum funding available is for up to 3 rugs per house.