

Vacant Space Handback Scheme





Vacant Space Handback Scheme:

A Guide for Commissioners

Reduce the cost of maintaining space you no longer need by handing back empty space in your properties

The Vacant Space Handback Scheme allows Commissioners to pass on the liability for eligible vacant space to NHS Property Services (NHSPS).

The scheme has been developed with NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care, in response to feedback from Commissioners who are looking to reduce the costs of maintaining space that they decide is no longer needed.

Although the costs of vacant space in the NHS are kept as low as possible, some costs are unavoidable due to remaining rent, business rates and some services charges. Therefore, handing the empty space back to NHSPS means Commissioners can avoid some of these costs.

Once handed back, NHSPS will then use its property expertise to repurpose the space, via:



Re-letting



Disposal



Development



“We value the opportunity to work with our ICB and ICS colleagues to optimise the NHS estate and reduce the inefficiencies, liability and costs associated with vacant space.”

Trish Stephenson
Chief Operating Officer,
NHS Property Services

Eligibility Criteria

Who can apply?

- All Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)
- NHS England
- Commissioning Support Units (CSUs)

Who cannot apply?

- Other Arm’s Length Bodies (ALBs)
- Local Authorities
- Providers and GPs
- Commercial tenants

Providers and GPs who are unable to apply directly should liaise with their Commissioners.

Is your space eligible?

To qualify, vacant space must meet the following criteria:

1. Part of a property transferred to NHSPS on 1 April 2013 under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
2. Property in which NHSPS has a legal interest.
3. Not a Private Finance Initiative or subject to an onerous lease.
4. Is deemed to be:
 - a. Marketable and lettable (i.e. contiguous space and separately accessible)
 - b. A self-contained unit
 - c. Declared surplus to requirements by Commissioners
 - d. Vacant at the time of handback
 - e. Free of debt due from the Commissioner

For more information on eligibility, see the Charging Policy 2017/18 (property.nhs.uk/about-us/policies/charging-policy/) which contains the full terms and conditions.

Commissioners are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these details to fully understand their rights and obligations under the scheme.

How to apply

To qualify to take part in the scheme, Commissioners should review the eligibility criteria carefully before submitting an application form, called a Property Vacation Notice.

Through the development of infrastructure/estate strategies (on which our Estate Strategy team can support), ICBs will categorise property as either:



“Core” aligning with the LTP and clinical strategy;

“Flex” providing unique access to services but does not fully fit with the LTP; or

“Tail” poor quality to be phased out when alternative estate is available.

This will enable the effective management of the vacant space scheme, as well as to help actively anticipate and plan options for vacant space in the future.

How to get in touch

If you are unsure your space qualifies for the scheme, please contact:

 vacantspace@property.nhs.uk

To learn more about the scheme and submit a Property Vacation Notice, visit:

 property.nhs.uk/contact/vacant-space-handback-scheme/

Application process

Next steps for eligible space

When space qualifies for the scheme, the NHSPS team will guide customers through the process of how to officially hand back the space.

The actual handback will take place when qualification is confirmed and a vacating payment has been received.

Until this time, ongoing accommodation costs remain the responsibility of the Commissioner.

Vacating payment

A vacating payment will be charged to customers which covers liabilities for a fixed transition period.

The payment is dependent on tenure (freehold or leasehold) and takes in to account that the space is vacant.

It covers 3 months accommodation costs for whole freeholds, 6 months for part freeholds and 12 months for other leaseholds. There is a 50% discount where the property has been vacant since 1 April 2016.

Handback

Once these steps are achieved, NHSPS will take responsibility for the costs, risks and opportunities associated with the space.

Next steps for ineligible space

If your space does not meet the eligibility criteria for this scheme, we are happy to discuss alternative options for managing your space more effectively.



Alternative options for managing your space

In addition to the Vacant Space Handback Scheme, Commissioners can work with NHSPS to manage their space via:



Booking flexible sessional space via NHS Open Space, with 1,100+ rooms across 200 healthcare properties nationwide. Visit openspace.nhs.uk for more information.



Declaring property surplus to requirements, for NHSPS to dispose. Where the property is freehold or long leasehold, this generates funds for reinvestment in the NHS. Visit property.nhs.uk/services/property-disposals/ to learn more.



Signing an occupancy agreement, giving security and clarity of occupation. Visit property.nhs.uk/services/property-management/ to find out more about our ongoing Occupancy Programme.



Get in touch



www.property.nhs.uk



0808 196 2045



customer.service@property.nhs.uk



NHS Property Services



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