

Empty Properties



Empty Homes

The presentation will cover:

- the current position with long term empty properties across the city
- the approaches being employed to tackle long term empty properties
- an outline of the challenges faced with tackling long term empty properties
- future plans in tackling long term empty properties





Housing Strategy

Strategic Housing Priorities

1. Maximising housing growth and increasing the choice of housing
2. Making the best use of existing homes and improving our neighbourhoods
3. Supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing

Housing Empty Homes Team

- The Empty Homes team consists of two full time officers
- Their aim is to bring ***long term, problematic*** empty properties ***back into use.***
 - ***Long term: 6 months and over***
 - ***Problematic: causing issue such as anti social behaviour, a blight on the community and/or dilapidated and ruinous***
- The team work together with Environmental Health and Planning Compliance to engage with owners of empty properties
- Whilst Environmental Health and Planning Compliance serve improvement notices the “end game” with the Empty Homes team is not simply to improve but to bring the property back into sustainable use



Long term Empty Homes

- Long term empty properties are those that have been empty for over 6 months
- The data for these properties is attained via Council Tax
- Council Tax provide Housing with a monthly report which we scrutinise and analyse the data
- The Empty Homes Team with colleagues in Environmental Health monitor the data as well as the reports and complaints that come in for investigation
- Empty properties can have a significant negative impact in a local area and community so we try and use the data to identify “hotspot” properties



Ward	As @ December 2019		As @ March 2023			
	Number of Empty Homes	% of Empty Homes within Ward	Number of Empty Homes	% of Empty Homes within Ward	Unit movement from Dec 2019 data	% movement
Barnes	155	3.73	128	3.08%	-27	-17.42
Castle	78	2.70	62	2.15%	-16	-20.51
Cophill	157	4.09	123	3.43%	-34	-21.66
Doxford	54	1.65	66	2.02%	12	22.22
Fulwell	127	2.57	112	2.27%	-15	-11.81
Hendon	392	9.84	369	9.26%	-23	-5.87
Hetton	157	4.42	117	3.55%	-40	-25.48
Houghton	129	3.42	83	2.54%	-46	-35.66
Millfield	286	6.53	223	5.09%	-63	-22.03
Pallion	135	4.65	96	3.31%	-39	-28.89
Redhill	72	2.60	60	2.17%	-12	-16.67
Ryhope	85	2.55	89	2.67%	4	4.71
St Anne's	66	2.27	59	2.03%	-7	-10.61
St Chad's	90	2.96	55	1.81%	-35	-38.89
St Michael's	302	6.74	190	4.24%	-112	-37.09
St Peter's	160	3.65	193	4.40%	33	20.63
Sandhill	84	2.96	53	1.87%	-31	-36.90
Shiney Row	136	3.27	110	3.14%	-26	-19.12
Silksworth	95	2.77	89	2.59%	-6	-6.32
Southwick	135	4.39	114	3.70%	-21	-15.56
Washington Central	75	2.10	76	1.98%	1	1.33
Washington East	53	1.61	59	1.66%	6	-11.32
Washington North	166	5.09	140	3.72%	-26	-15.56
Washington South	45	1.29	38	0.91%	-7	-15.56
Washington West	71	1.90	55	1.47%	-16	-22.54
TOTAL	3305		2759		-546	

Area Summary

	As @ December 2019		As @ March 2023		
Area	Number of Empty Homes	Area	Number of Empty Homes	Unit movement from Dec 2019 data	% reduction
East	1119	East	937	-182	-16.26
Coalfield	579	Coalfield	433	-146	-25.22
West	625	West	480	-145	-23.20
North	572	North	541	-31	-5.42
Washington	410	Washington	368	-42	-10.24
TOTAL	3305	TOTAL	2759	-546	

Programmes, Interventions and reason for impact

- Market Conditions
- Advice and assistance on Empty Homes
- Council tax premium charges
- Landlord accreditation scheme to support private sector landlords to manage their properties to a good standard as well as providing references for prospective tenants
- Financial Assistance Policy
 - Empty Homes Loans
 - Grants of up to £15,000 for long term (6m+) empty homes to be brought back into use

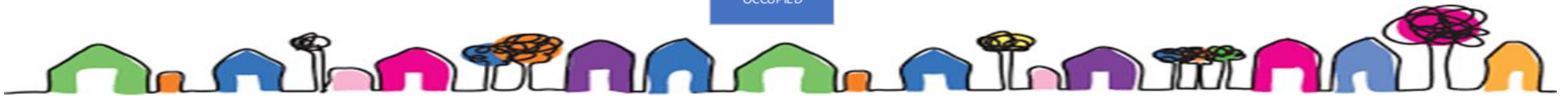
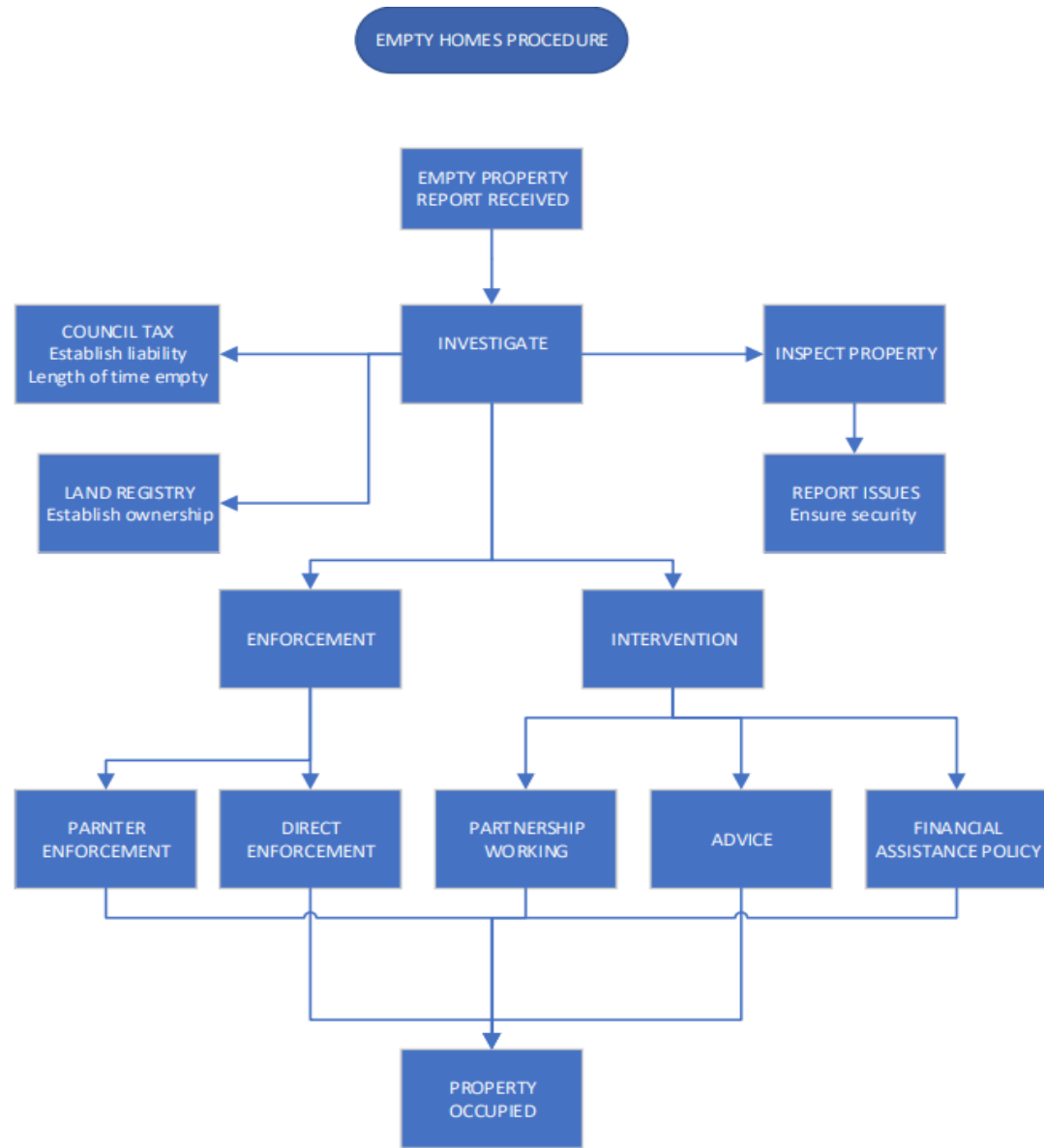


Programmes, Interventions and reason for impact

- Effective joint working with Housing, Environmental Health and Planning Policy Teams to investigate proactively and when necessary, serve improvement notices and/or enforce under legislation including the Housing Act 2004, Building Act 1984 and Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Tenant passport scheme - to match tenants to a vacant private rented property, provide tenancy training and a £750 deposit guarantee
- Private Sector Leasing - where the Council will lease and where needed repair empty properties, support tenancy creation and manage the tenancy
- Council has in the Purchase and Repair Programme acquired 65 empty properties
- Council has acquired 12 empty properties from the NSAP and RSAP programmes



Process



Case study

- Property empty from 2020
- No engagement from owner despite repeated efforts to do so
- Multi agency liaison between Empty Homes, ASB, Environmental Health and Private Rented Sector team
- Contact made with mortgage company regarding ASB and poor external condition at the property
- Mortgage company took steps to repossess property
- Property put on the market before being sold to a responsible property developer who has a portfolio of privately rented properties across the North East
- The new owner actively engaged with Sunderland City Council's Empty Homes Officers and was successful in applying for a grant to help with the necessary repair work
- This enabled the owner to quickly bring the property up to a decent standard to let, the Private Rented Sector team inspected the property and it is now part of the accreditation scheme
- This brought an end to the problems the home was bringing to the area.



Challenges

- Legal process is challenging and difficult to get quick impact – creates frustrations to stakeholders
- Concentrations of PRS low value stock creating concentration of poor quality, poorly managed homes and this prevents transient tenants or no tenants at all
- Out of area landlords and owners
 - Hard to track down
 - Reluctance to engage quickly or positively
- Poor local management agents
- Low value property in some areas attracting the wrong investors for the city
- Affordability of the PRS as rents are increasing – some property empty longer
- “Churn” of PRS stock due to Section 21 Notices
- Repairs and maintenance and build costs increasing preventing some owners to invest and properties stay empty longer

