

TACKLING EMPTY HOMES IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT



ACTION PLAN

2017-2019

Introduction

This Action Plan forms an appendix to the strategic document **Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Bradford District 2014 – 2019: A Place to Call Home**. The Action Plan:

- responds to the growing need to make better use of the district's housing supply, at the same time addressing a whole range of problems associated with empty homes, including the blight on communities that empty homes contribute to;
- outlines our objectives and planned actions.

This Action Plan details **what** we plan to do, **how** the Council and its partners are going to do it and **who** will be responsible for taking the action.

The actions are based on our four objectives:

- Objective 1 – Preventing properties from becoming empty
- Objective 2 – Partnership approach to tackling empty homes
- Objective 3 – Practical solutions to bringing empty homes back into use
- Objective 4 – Prosperity for the district

Bradford Empty Homes and Loans Team has been working closely with its partners within and outside the Council to tackle a wide range of issues associated with empty homes. The key focus of the team is to reduce the number of empty homes in the district by directly bringing empty properties back into use or by influencing others to do so.

This Action Plan focuses on the actions the team and its partners will be committing to in order to achieve the four objectives above.

We are going to review the Action Plan annually to ensure that we monitor our progress and to enable us to respond to new challenges.

Ref	What we are going to do and How we are going to do it	Objectives				Who will lead	Who will help
		Preventing properties becoming empty	Partnership Approach	Practical solutions	Prosperity		
1	<p>Ensure property owners understand the impact of their empty property on them, on the community and explain their options, opportunities and the products and services that can help them, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicising and promoting the Council's empty homes work and services it can offer; Maintaining direct contact with empty property owners through letters, visits, etc; Take enforcement action where necessary to resolve issues caused by empty properties. 	✓		✓		Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>Council: Press Office, Revenues & Benefits</p> <p>External partners: Police, Fire Service</p>
2	<p>Constantly review current practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek feedback from empty home owners on how the Council can support them better; Develop new initiatives to encourage homes being brought back into use; Networking locally and nationally to keep abreast with new approaches and products. 	✓	✓	✓	✓	Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>Council: Revenues & Benefits,</p> <p>External partners: Registered Providers, Community organisations, Homes & Loans service</p> <p>National agencies: Empty Homes Network</p>
3	<p>Communicate the Council and its partners' commitment to reducing the number of empty homes and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage residents to report any issues or concerns; Continue to take enforcement action where appropriate and publicise the outcomes. Share this information with partners. 	✓		✓		Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>Council: Revenues & Benefits, Legal, Press Office, Elected Members</p>
4	<p>Make neighbourhoods stronger and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support regeneration initiatives in localities; 	✓	✓	✓		Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>Council: Department of Place, Council Wardens,</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Council Wardens are kept up to date with activities and work around empty homes; • Keep councillors aware. 						<p>Elected members</p> <p>External partners: Voluntary & Community Sector</p>
5	<p>Work proactively with other Council colleagues, external partners, Registered Providers (e.g. Incommunities), Voluntary and Community organisations, social enterprises and within communities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop alternative approaches; • Attract additional investment & monitor performance; • Share data and intelligence; • Undertake joint projects; • Provide feedback to communities on action taken; • Publicise the joint work between the Council and partners; 	✓	✓	✓		Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>Council: Services such as Environmental Health, Planning, Building Control, Neighbourhood Service, Revenues & Benefits, Elected Members</p> <p>External partners: Police, Fire Service, Valuation Office, Registered Providers, Voluntary and community organisations, Homes and Communities Agency</p>
6	<p>Stimulate empty homes owners to find best solutions for themselves through promoting existing products and services (eg the Private Sector Lettings Scheme) and keeping up-to-date with latest developments.</p>	✓	✓	✓		Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>Council: Press Office</p>
7	<p>Continually consider and develop new products and services and extend and improve existing products or services for empty homes owners in response to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in the housing market; • Changes in the behaviour of property owners; • Changes in legislation; • Opportunities that arise, such as funding, etc 	✓		✓		Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>Council: Revenues & Benefits, Legal</p> <p>External partners: Sheffield Homes & Loans</p> <p>National agencies:</p>

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	and innovations.						Homes & Communities Agency, Empty Homes Network
8	Consider opportunities to further use the council tax system to encourage empty home owners to return their properties into use, through financial incentives and penalties.	✓		✓	✓	Revenues & Benefits	Council: Empty Homes & Loans Team, Legal National agencies: Empty Homes Network
9	Improve health outcomes of future occupiers of empty homes brought back into use by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging empty home owners to bring their properties back into use to recognised minimum standards; • advising home owners on the standards that need to be achieved in order to be able to let properties to tenants, eg. Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS); • advising owners on help that is available either through the Council or through other initiatives / partners. 			✓		Empty Homes & Loans Team	Council: Housing Standards Team, Public Health Service
10	Improve access and choice for residents by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to include housing need, supply and affordability of housing as a key factor in risk assessing and prioritising empty properties for action; • Contributing to reducing homelessness through the increased supply of affordable housing. 			✓	✓	Empty Homes & Loans Team	Council: Housing Options Team External partners: Registered Providers, Private Sector Landlords & owners
11	Make sure record keeping on empty homes is correct and up-to-date by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to verify the accuracy of empty homes data through site visits and 'street by street' inspections of empty homes; 			✓	✓	Revenues & Benefits and the Empty Homes & Loans Team	Council: Legal, Estate Management External partners: District Valuer /

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulating empty homes owners to provide up-to-date council tax returns / land registry details; Data cleansing projects around properties taken off valuation list; Looking at empty homes owned by the Council; 						Valuations Office
12	<p>Maximise the New Homes Bonus (NHB) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring Council Tax data is as accurate as possible; Through reducing the number of long term empty properties in the district. 			✓	✓	Empty Homes & Loans Team and Revenues & Benefits	
13	<p>Deliver products & services which recycle funds by place increasing emphasis on products and services which recycle funds / investment back into future service provision, e.g. enforced sales, Empty Property Loans, etc.</p>			✓	✓	Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>Council: Finance, Legal</p> <p>External partners: Sheffield Homes & Loans</p>
14	<p>Maximising the use of external funding and 'levering in' additional investment where possible by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making successful bids for HCA and other government funding. Working with the private sector to deliver market-led solutions. Explore opportunities to utilise the resources of the Third Sector. 			✓	✓	Empty Homes & Loans Team	<p>External partners: Homes & Communities Agency, Leeds City Region, Sheffield Homes & Loans, Private Developers and purchasers.</p>