

Priority 2

Improving Housing Quality

2.3 Empty Homes

Minimising the number of empty homes, especially long-term voids, is key to making best use of housing stock in the city. A long-term empty property is one that has been unoccupied for at least 6 months. Empty properties can bring blight to localities given that they can become a target for vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The city has been successful in reducing the number of empty properties over the last four years. Actions include charging 100% Council Tax on empty properties, enforcement action when property owners do not work with the Council to bring homes back into use and providing loans to carry out improvements that may have prevented properties being used. The Leeds Neighbourhood Approach, beginning on the Nowell streets in East Leeds, has been successful in bringing empty homes back into use and raising housing quality standards. The Council wants this model to be further rolled out across the city. The Council has worked with the [‘Leeds Empties’](#) Social

Case Study: 65 Mexborough Place

65, Mexborough Place is a semi-detached house in Leeds 7 that had been empty since 2001. The Council sought to encourage the property owner to carry out improvements and bring the property back into use. The slow progress of this work led the Council to initiate Compulsory Purchase procedures. The property owner subsequently took more proactive action to improve the property and it was re-occupied in December 2010.

[Council Empty Homes Webpage](#)

Empty Homes Performance

April 2010 – 16,700 (6,721 long term) empty properties

April 2014 – 13,573 (4,747) empty properties

Actions

- Return 3200 empty homes into occupation each year
- Achieve a net annual reduction of 400 long term empty homes up to 2018
- Bring 100 empty homes into use through the Council Housing Growth programme
- Roll out the Leeds Neighbourhood Approach to a new area each quarter
- Further develop relationship with ‘Leeds Empties’ and landlord representative groups

Enterprise which engages with long-term empty property owners to try and find bespoke solutions to bringing properties back into use. Working with landlord representative groups is another key element of the empty homes reduction programme.

The Council, as part of the Council Housing Growth programme, is seeking to purchase up to 100 long-term empty homes and bring back into use as council housing. This initiative is being funded through Council resources supplemented by Homes and Communities Agency grant funding. The Council is exploring the feasibility of working with investment partners to purchase empty homes and use rental income to cover purchase/improvement costs. One option would be for such properties to become council housing once the purchase/improvement costs have been covered.