

## **Bringing private sector empty properties back into use**

### **Introduction**

The council aims to assist, encourage, and educate empty property owners of the schemes and initiatives available to regenerate their properties and the wider community. By working closely with owners and the Residential Environmental Health Department over the past 3 years through grants and housing initiatives the council has brought back into use over 500 properties.

### **How to report an empty property**

You can report a possible empty property in several ways.

**By telephone:** We have 2 lines to contact either 020 7527 6080 or the North London Sub regional free phone on 0800 9536305

**By email:** You should email [empty.property@islington.gov.uk](mailto:empty.property@islington.gov.uk) or [contact@islington.gov.uk](mailto:contact@islington.gov.uk)

**By the Islington web site:** You should visit <http://www.islington.gov.uk/Doit/Onlineforms/reportproblem.asp>

**By letter:** If you wish to write to us the address is.  
Empty Property Officer  
Room 111  
Town Hall  
Upper Street  
London, N1 2UD

### **Responding to enquiries**

If an officer is unavailable to take your telephone enquiry and a voice message is received, a response will be provided within 24 hours. If your enquiry is via email or letter an acknowledgement will be provided within 24 hours and a response within 10 days.

### **Investigation into an empty property**

The Empty Property Officer will carry out initial investigations into the reported property and will endeavour to establish the owner or owners of the property within 5 working days. These investigations will include but not exclusively:

- Verify the property is not managed by a social landlord
- Council's own computer system checks
- Land registry checks to establish the owner
- Companies House searches if the land registry search highlights the property is owned by a company

- Council Tax checks to verify the billable owner and any other helpful information like why a discount or exemption has been applied to the property
- The internet to help locate property and owners if main areas of investigation fail
- Writing to the owner or owners

If after investigating the reported property it is established that the property is managed by a social landlord, the Empty Property Officer will

- Contact the relevant Housing Office and advise of the enquiry.
- Provide full contact details for the Housing Office to the person who reported the property.

### **Property visits**

The Empty Property Officer will carry out a property visit within five days to the reported property (if the property is a private sector property) to ascertain the type and condition of the property and to verify the property is actually empty or occupied.

At the property the Empty Property Officer will carry out the following checks but not exclusively:

- Type of property (flat, terrace, flat above a shop, detached etc)
- Condition of property
- Condition of surroundings (overgrown garden, full bins, pile of junk mail, estate agents boards etc)
- Call at the property to see if anyone is actually living there
- Call at a neighbouring property for any local information
- Leave a calling card

### **Follow up action**

Once the owner or owners are established they will receive letters from the council regarding their intentions towards the empty property. The letters will also encourage the owner to contact the council to discuss ways and the advantages of bringing the empty property back into use.

The council will also provide advice and assistance on

- Empty property grants available
- Council run housing schemes for private sector housing

If after attempting all methods of assistance and persuasion, the empty property owner still does not comply to bring the property back in to use, the council can proceed with formal action to compulsory purchase the property.

- Please note that follow up action can be a lengthy process depending on the individual nature of every property.

### **Empty Property Grant information**

The Empty Property Officer will provide information on the many types of grants available. Empty property grants are available from the council for bringing empty residential properties back into use under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002.

The grants are administered by the Council's Residential Environmental Health Department. You can contact the Grants Officers:

**By telephone:** 020 7527 3104

**By email:** You should email [grants.residential@islington.gov.uk](mailto:grants.residential@islington.gov.uk)

**By the Islington web site:** You should visit <http://www.islington.gov.uk/Housing/PrivateHousing/housinggrants.asp>

**By letter:** If you wish to write to us the address is.  
The Grants Officer, Residential Environmental Health  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Municipal Offices  
222 Upper Street  
London, N1 1XR

### **Empty property pack**

All owners of empty properties who the Empty Property Officer makes direct contact with are offered an empty property pack. The pack contains:

- VAT exemption information
- Empty Property Grant information
- Council run Private Sector Housing Schemes

### **Freedom of Information enquiries**

All Freedom of Information requests on empty properties within Islington will be responded to within 20 days.

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