

Scottish Empty Homes Partnership

EMPTY HOMES PRIORITISATION TEMPLATE

Introduction

Below is a suggested template to use in analysing your database of private sector empty homes. You can use the existing fields or create ones that reflect the local issues in your area. By applying this prioritisation method you should arrive at a list of 'priority properties' that warrant more attention from staff at the council to attempt to bring it back into use. Depending on resources your priority list might be 1 property long or it might be 30 properties long. Once you have brought the properties on your list back into use you can go through the prioritisation process again to identify new priority properties.

By using this method you will ensure that you do not spend undue staff time on empty properties that are not a top priority for the council, for example because they are not in an area of housing need or because the owner appears to be making genuine efforts to bring the property back into use themselves.

Template

The below template incorporates elements from matrices in use by councils in England and Wales. The weightings indicated by the score column are illustrative and can be adjusted to reflect the importance of each criteria in relation to your council's priorities and goals. Page 3 provides a rationale for each of the categories included and may be useful for determining if your council would like to use the same categories and criteria.

Category	Criteria	Score
Time Empty	Under 1 year	0
	1 – 2 years	10
	2 years +	20
Location (choose all that apply and	In area of housing need	10
	In conservation area	10
	In a regeneration area	10

add up scores)	In a prominent/visible position	10
	None of these	0
Neighbourhood Impact (choose all that apply and add up scores)	Property well maintained	0
	Garden overgrown	10
	Broken windows and/or boarded up	20
	Complaints received	20
	Evidence of criminal activity (vandalism, graffiti, flytipping, etc)	20
Owner Response (chosed all that apply)	Property being actively marketed for rent or sale	0
	Property being renovated/refurbished	0
	Awaiting planning permission	0
	Owner replied to letter or survey	10
	Owner wants help	20
	Owner unidentified	20
Money owed to council (pick one)	None	0
	£1-£500	10
	£500-£1000	15
	£1000 +	20
Total		

Scores:

0 – 40 Low Priority

40 – 70 Medium Priority

70 + High Priority

If you have a large number of 70+ properties simply determine how many cases you can focus on and start your priority list from the highest scoring, working down the list as time and resources allow.

Rationale

Time Empty: This category is included as the time a property has remained empty can be an indicator of its likeliness to be brought back into use. Put simply, the longer it has been empty the longer it is likely to remain empty.

Location: This category highlights the need to prioritise work on areas of the most strategic concern to the council. The scores in this category can be altered to place an emphasis on one type of area over another, for example if your council wanted to dovetail empty homes work with regeneration efforts this criteria could be given a higher weighting.

Neighbourhood Impact: This category takes into account to what extent the property is affecting others. Are people complaining about it? Is it attracting criminal behaviour? Is it unsightly?

Owner response: While most empty homes work involves pro-active approaches by the council, it should be recognised that there will be more straightforward opportunities to bring empty homes back into use where the owner is looking for help. In order to maximise the number of empty homes re-occupied it is important to support and advise these owners. Thus a higher score has been given to owners who engage with communication from the council. Similarly a lower score is given where owners are already taking steps to bring the property back into use.

A high score has been given to unidentified owners as well in recognition that if the council is unaware of the owner they are likely not receiving council tax payments from the property. Equally if the council can't name the owner it is unlikely that the owner is taking steps to bring the property back into use. In these cases the council's intervention to determine ownership can be the necessary push to get the property re-occupied.

Money owed to council: There may be opportunities to work with finance colleagues to co-ordinate work on empty homes with debt recovery.