

Reporting an Empty Property

If you know of a property standing empty and causing problems, whether it is council or privately owned, then contact us for advice and assistance:

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Team
Development and Enterprise
Civic Centre
Regent Street
Gateshead NE8 1HH

Phone: 0191 433 3000 or
0191 433 3376 (the Empty Property Officer direct line)

Or email: privatesectorhousingcivic@gateshead.gov.uk

The Empty Homes Agency website can also provide information on this matter www.emptyhomes.com. The Empty Homes Agency has a web page where reports of empty properties in our areas are forwarded to us, this can be found at www.reportemptyhomes.com.

Whichever way the empty property is reported to us we will investigate and take whatever steps are appropriate.

If you own an empty property - for whatever reason - and would like advice on the options available to you, please contact the Empty Property Officer who will be able to advise you.

Other information leaflets in this series:

- Is an Empty Property causing you problems?
- Bring Your Empty Property Back into Use
- Letting your Empty Property
- Empty Property and Enforcement

These are available free of charge from The Private Sector Housing Renewal Team.



Other useful contacts

Northumbria Police
High West Street, Gateshead
Tel: 0191 454 7555

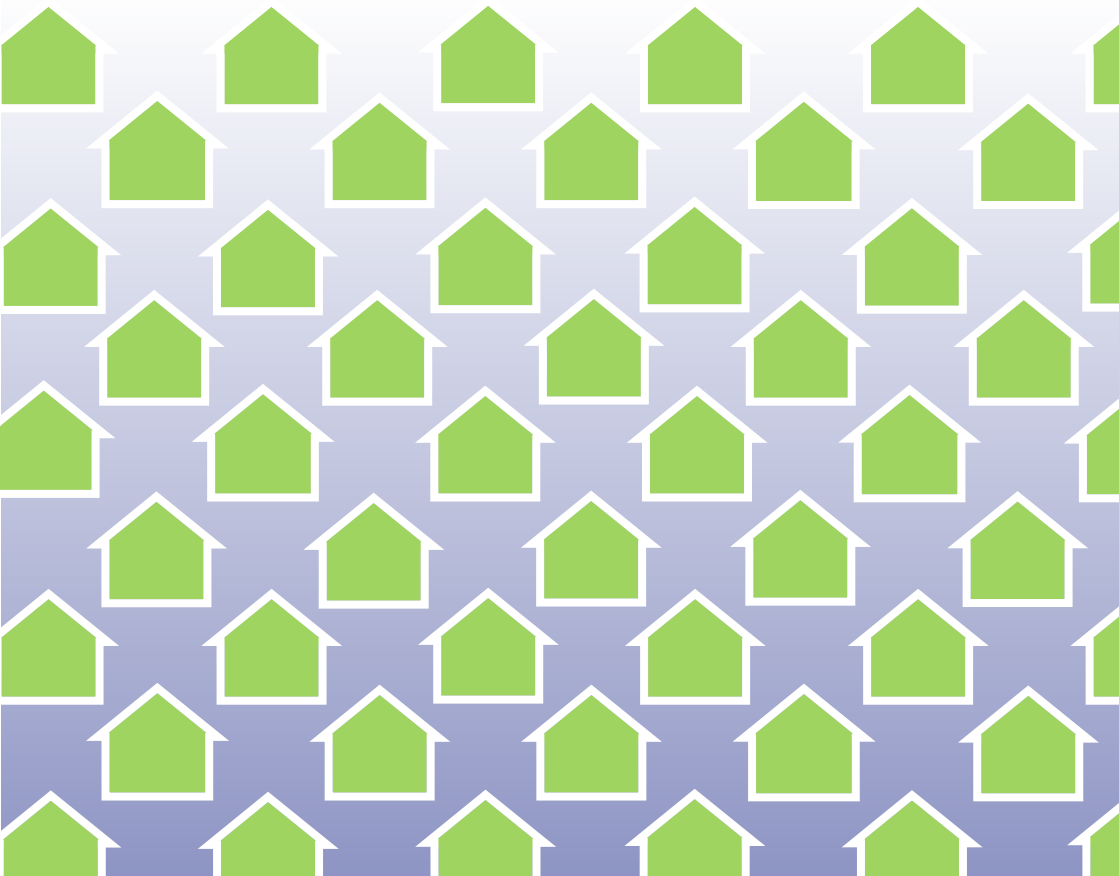
Citizens Advice Bureau
5 Regent Terrace, Gateshead
Tel: 0191 477 1392

**Gateshead Private Landlords'
Association**
Civic Centre, Regent Street
Gateshead
Tel: 0191 433 2893

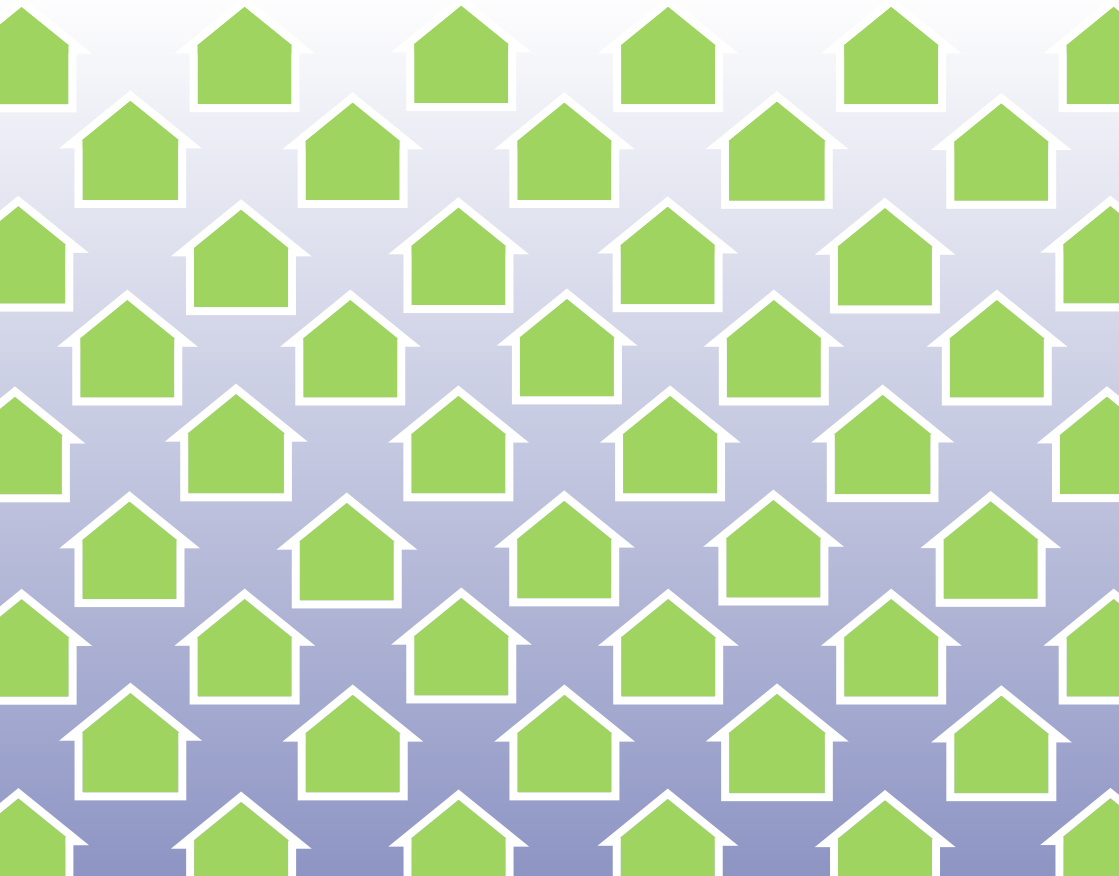
For more information about Gateshead Council Services including housing services: www.gateshead.gov.uk



Produced by Gateshead Council, February 2009



Empty Properties in Gateshead - an overview



This leaflet tells you more about Empty Properties in Gateshead. It gives you more information about what the Council can do about empty properties and how you can report an empty property.

Empty Properties in Gateshead

There are approximately 4000 empty properties in Gateshead at any one time and over half of these are vacant for longer than six months. The number of long term empty properties in Gateshead continues to be a problem.

From a surge of new build properties standing empty, to increased repossessions as a consequence of the 'credit crunch', empty properties continue to cause problems to the residents of Gateshead.

The Council is concerned about empty properties as:

- They are a wasted resource both financially and in terms of potential housing or community use.
- They attract crime and anti-social behaviour including vandalism, litter, squatters and sometimes arson.
- Market values are often reduced as neighbours move away and confidence is reduced.
- The reduced spending power of the local area impacts on local businesses and the general economic stability of the area.
- There are also implications for public services such as schools or leisure activities if the population of a particular area is reduced.

Gateshead Council's aim is to develop and sustain communities. We can give advice and assistance about empty properties, whether to a landlord, owner or neighbour of an empty property.

As part of a national push to get empty properties back into use, we have set up a means by which people can report empty properties so that we can do something about them.



An Empty Property Officer is dedicated to bringing empty properties back into use and make a positive improvement to neighbourhoods throughout Gateshead. This officer is supported by the Private Sector Housing Renewal Team to tackle the increasing numbers of abandoned properties going to waste in Gateshead.

What is the reason for bringing empty property back into use?

By bringing long term empty properties back in to use we can:

- Increase the supply of much needed housing
- Reduce homelessness
- Contribute to the regeneration of an area
- Help to create sustainable communities
- Respond positively to public concerns
- Reduce the need for 'green field' development

What can the Council do about an empty property?

There are many ways the council can deal with empty properties. We target long-term vacant properties and their owners are encouraged to take action to return them to residential use. Occasionally we need to take enforcement action against owners who continue to leave their property empty.

Where we have received complaints that there are public health issues, such as a large build up of rubbish or the property is open to unauthorise access and such like, we can:

- Work with owners so they can voluntarily fix the problem, or
- Serve Notice on owners whose property is causing statutory nuisance where they have failed to willingly remedy the cause, or
- Carry out the works 'in default', should an owner refuse to comply with the terms of the Notice within the timescale given.



We can offer landlords and owners:

- Free advice and assistance.
- Financial assistance for repairs to bring properties back into use (only in certain circumstances).
- An introduction to the Gateshead Private Landlords' Association to benefit from its membership.

However in some cases properties may continue to be left empty. This can result in further deterioration and may attract crime, vandalism and antisocial behaviour. In these situations we have a variety of options available to bring properties back into use. This includes:

- **Enforced Sale Procedure** - Used to recover debts owed to the Council from works carried out in default and to enable the property to be brought back into use.
- **Compulsory Purchase Order** - This option can only be used where a housing need is demonstrated.
- **Powers for local authorities to lease long-term empty properties** - The property may be managed either in-house by the Council or contracted out to a housing association or private letting agent.
- **Development of area based renewal initiatives** - In communities suffering from neighbourhood decline, area based initiatives can be the most effective method of restoring confidence and halting decline.

Any statutory action we take will be in compliance with the Compliance Code and Enforcement Concordat and will be targeted towards those owners who have disregarded their responsibilities as owner of a property. In some cases the owners may have abandoned the property altogether.

