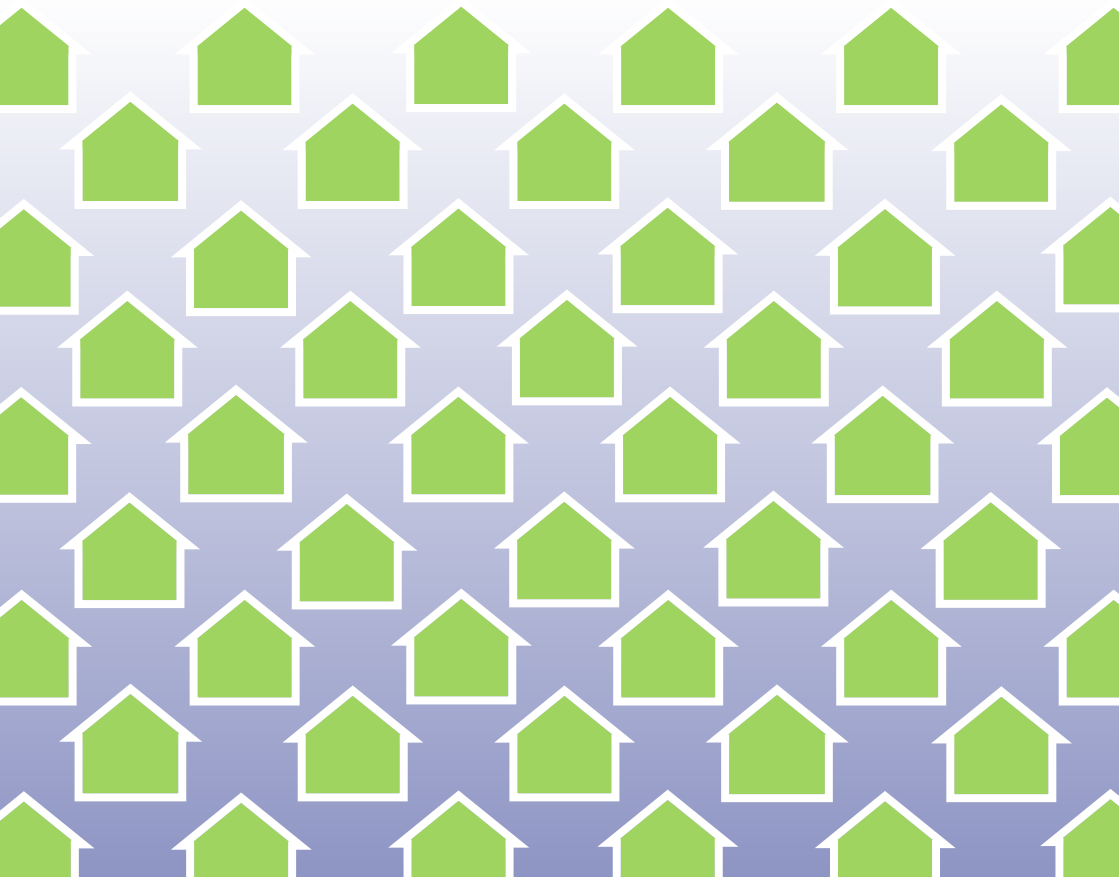


Letting your Empty Property



This leaflet gives you advice and information on how you can let your empty property.

There are approximately 4000 empty properties in Gateshead at any one time with over half of these vacant for longer than six months. From a surge of new build properties standing empty to increased repossessions as a consequence of the 'credit crunch', long-term empty properties continue to cause problems to the residents of Gateshead.

As part of a national push to get empty properties back into use, the Council has appointed an Empty Property Officer dedicated to help deal with these issues and encourage the owners of empty properties to bring these much needed homes back in to occupation. This officer is supported by the Private Sector Housing Renewal Team to tackle the increasing numbers of vacant properties going to waste in Gateshead.

Gateshead Council has produced a series of information leaflets about empty properties. If you own an empty property and want more information on the options available to you see the leaflet 'Bring your Property Back into Use'.

How can the Council help?

We can offer landlords:

- Free advice and assistance
- Financial assistance for repairs to bring properties back into use (in certain circumstances)
- Introduce a landlord to the Gateshead Private Landlords' Association (GPLA) so you can benefit from its membership.

What are the benefits of letting your empty property?

- No responsibility for council tax or utility correspondence.
- Receive rental income.
- It becomes a capital asset that could make money and increase in value.
- It provides someone with a home.



The Housing Act 1996 has introduced such changes that has made tenancies much more flexible and has given landlords increased powers to gain possession of the property, making it easier to control and manage. Assured shorthold tenancies now allow landlords to determine the length of the lease period and guarantee possession at the end of the tenancy. Hence problems associated with long term sitting tenants are now a thing of the past.

What benefits would I get from joining the Gateshead Private Landlords' Association?

The GPLA aims to raise the standard of housing across Gateshead by providing a support network for landlords.

What condition does my property have to be in before I can let it?

Under the Housing Act 2004, the property must have no Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. It must be in a good state of repair and decoration and have adequate and suitably located amenities.

In addition there are other regulations relating to gas safety, electricity and furniture that you need to comply with.

For more information contact the Empty Property Officer on (0191) 433 3000.

Where can I find tenants?

If you are a member of the GPLA, you can advertise your property through the association. Also the network gives you the opportunity to know other landlords who may recommend you to tenants.

In addition, you could possibly advertise your property through managing and letting agents, local newspapers, colleges and hospitals.



How would I go about managing the property?

You can manage the property by yourself or via an estate management agency who will charge you a management fee (this can be between 10 and 20% of the rental income).

If you are a member of the GPLA, you will receive support and assistance on how to achieve good management standards and many other benefits listed below.

What benefits would I get from joining the Gateshead Private Landlord Association?

The GPLA aims to raise the standard of housing across Gateshead by providing a support network for landlords. There are many benefits including:

- Vetting tenants
- Advertising properties
- Providing detailed tenancy agreements
- Help with evicting problem tenants
- Assistance with welfare benefit problems
- Group insurance scheme
- Informative meetings
- Updates on new legislation
- Recognition of good property standards
- Discount scheme
- Direct links to Council, Police etc
- Training Courses
- Sharing of information with other members
- Accreditation of Properties

For more information on the GPLA and its benefits call Kim Waugh, Landlord Development Officer, on 0191 433 3000.



What is Accreditation?

As a member of the GPLA your property could become accredited under a three tier system; accredited, commended and highly commended. Accredited properties are those which the Accreditation Officer has certified as meeting the requirements stated in the scheme's code of standards. Accreditation enables a landlord to display a certificate of accreditation in the property to which it relates.

What are the objectives of the Accreditation Scheme

- To recognise and encourage landlords who are prepared to provide good quality accommodation at an appropriate rent.
- To improve and promote the public image of the private rented sector.
- To improve and promote private rented sector housing conditions.
- To improve liaison and communication between landlords and the local authority.
- To promote good practice in the private rented sector.
- To provide tenants with confidence in the quality and management of the accommodation they are renting.

How long will accreditation last for?

The accreditation status will last for three years. At the end of this period further checks and a re-inspection of the property will be undertaken before the accredited status is renewed. Relevant certificates for each property will also be required annually and spot check inspections of properties may be carried out within the three year accreditation period.



What is selective licensing?

Following the implementation of the Housing Act 2004, Gateshead Council has introduced the selective licensing of private landlords within the Sunderland Road area. Selective licensing may be introduced in other areas where the need is identified by the council and Secretary of State. The overall aim of Landlord Licensing in conjunction with other interventions is to improve the environment in which people live, improve property conditions and management standards within the private rented sector, as well as reduce incidences of anti social behaviour in the area.

For further information on Accreditation contact the Private Sector Housing Renewal Team on 0191 433 3000.

Other information leaflets in this series:

- Empty Properties in Gateshead - an overview
- Is an Empty Property causing you problems?
- Letting your Empty Property
- Empty Property and Enforcement

Useful publications

- Assured and assured shorthold tenancies - Published by ODPM
- Repairs: a guide for landlords - Published by ODPM
- Letting your home - Published by DETR
- Making furniture safer for tenants - Published by Trading Standards
- A guide to landlords duties: Gas Safety (Installation and use) Regulations 1998 - Published by HSE

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



Do something about your empty property now!

If you are the owner of a property standing empty contact us for advice and assistance:

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

Tel: 0191 433 3000

Tel: 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

Other useful contacts

Rent Officer

4th floor
Hadrian House
Higham Place
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tel: 0191 255 7517

Gateshead Private Landlords' Association

Civic Centre
Regent Street
Gateshead
Tel: 0191 433 2893

Citizens Advice Bureau

5 Regent Terrace
Gateshead
Tel: 0191 477 1392

Northumbria Police

High West Street
Gateshead
Tel: 0191 454 7555

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





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