

Empty Homes in London

flats not found or type unknown

Key information

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Introduction

The London Assembly Housing Committee is investigating empty homes in London.

Terms of Reference

- Understand the scale of the problem of empty homes in London and to what extent this is contributing to the city's housing shortage.
- Identify the key factors driving the increasing number of empty homes, including both social housing and privately-owned properties.
- Examine how boroughs are addressing empty homes, assess the effectiveness of these approaches, and determine what additional support is needed to bring empty homes back into use.
- Scrutinise the Mayor's work to reduce empty homes in London, including the commitments and policies set out in the London Housing Strategy, the London Plan, and acquisitions through the Affordable Homes Programme.
- Explore what further action the Mayor, boroughs and central government could take to reduce the number of empty homes in London.

Key issues

- According to MHCLG's Council Taxbase data, there were 105,138 empty homes in London in 2025, equivalent to 2.5 per cent of the total dwelling stock. This is the highest number of empty homes in over 20 years. The proportion of empty homes in London peaked in 1993, when 5.4 per cent of London's housing stock was empty. This figure gradually fell until it reached a low of 1.7 per cent in 2014, after which the number of empty homes began to rise again.
- One cause of homes becoming empty is when new build properties are purchased as investments and left empty, known as "buy to leave". The slow letting rates of student accommodation and Build to Rent properties are also leading to newly built homes remaining empty.
- In 2024, 12 per cent of the total number of empty homes in London were owned by local authorities. London has a higher proportion of empty local authority housing than any other region. In some cases this is a result of homes being left vacant pending demolition as part of regeneration schemes. There is also the issue of voids from the slow re-letting of council properties after tenants move out.
- Local authorities have a range of powers and incentives at their disposal to bring privately-owned empty homes back into use. These include Empty Dwelling Management Orders, council tax exemptions and premiums, enforced sales, compulsory purchase, and measures to secure the improvement of empty properties.
- Higher levels of empty homes reduce the supply of housing available to those in need and can have negative social and economic effects on communities. This includes an increase in anti-social behaviour such as vandalism and disrupting or worsening the delivery of services to tenants in areas with many vacant properties

Key questions

1. What are key factors driving the increasing levels of empty homes in London and to what extent is this contributing to the city's housing shortage?
2. How effective are the mechanisms available to boroughs to monitor and address empty homes?
3. To what extent are homes purchased by investors or second homes contributing to rising levels of empty homes in London?

4. Given the increasing number of empty homes in London, to what extent has the Mayor acted on his commitments to reduce the level of empty homes in the London Housing Strategy 2018?
5. What more could the Mayor and Government do to tackle empty homes in the capital?
6. How could reducing the number of empty homes help tackle the housing crisis in London, especially the availability of temporary accommodation?

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