



**Safer Communities  
Public Health & Communities**

**Empty Homes Financial Support Policy**

**1. Purpose:**

- a. To provide financial assistance for improvement works to enable long term empty homes to be brought back into use in the Borough as part of the Empty Homes Programme.

**2. What support we can provide**

- a. Barnsley Council can provide grants up to 50% of the agreed quotation up to a maximum of £10,000 per property, subject to available funds and Council approval.
- b. The owner will be required to pay 100% of any excess cost above the grant amount. If the owner is unable to fund the excess sum above the grant amount then the grant may not be approved
- c. The council will inspect the property and produce a Schedule of Works, which will detail the improvement works required to bring the property back into use. Work will be prioritised in order against the following:
  - i. Work identified with regard to a Housing Health and Safety Rating System assessment
  - ii. Work required improving the energy efficiency of the property
  - iii. Work required improving the general letting standard of the property. This can include basic landscaping and boundary treatment work
- d. For the grant to be offered the following criteria must be met:
  - i. The property must have been empty for at least 24 months upon application submission
  - ii. The applicant must have owned the property for at least 12 months upon application submission
  - iii. The owner and/or the property must not have received a grant from Barnsley Council within the last 10 years
  - iv. The outstanding debt registered against the property must exceed 75% loan to value of the property valuation at application submission
  - v. There must be no debts owed to Barnsley Council

**3. Application & Procurement Conditions for Empty Homes Works:**

- a) Applications will be open for an initial period of 6 weeks before being considered on a case-by-case basis
- b) The owner will be required to obtain three quotations. Contractors must be based in the Barnsley borough and be part of an accredited scheme relevant to their industry
- c) The owner must ensure the contractors send their quotations in a PDF format directly to the council via email to [emptyhomes@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:emptyhomes@barnsley.gov.uk) for assessment within 4 weeks of the production of the schedule of works being submitted to the owner. The council will recommend the appointment of the contractor and to confirm the grant amount within two weeks of receiving the written quotations
- d) The quotations must be itemised and will be based on the council's Schedule of Works. The lowest price quotation may be used as the basis for assessing the grant. However, the council reserves the right to reduce the amount of assistance if the council ascertains that the aggregate of the cost of completing the works and the costs and expenses incurred with respect to preliminary and ancillary services and charges is or is likely to be, lower than the estimated expense or that there are concerns over the contractors' deliverability of the works
- e) The owner and/or their contractor will be required to obtain adequate insurance in relation to the works, for the duration of the project

**4. Management of Empty Homes Works:**

- a. On determination of a grant being awarded, the owner will be required to sign a Grant Agreement
- b. Following the appointment of the contractor, the owner will be required to act as 'Client' for the project

under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, fulfilling their duties in this role accordingly. Part of these duties will require the owner (as 'Client') to formally appoint the contractor as 'Principal Contractor' and 'Principal Designer'

- c. The owner will be expected to manage the contractor on site and resolve any issues around poor contractor performance themselves

**5. Payment:**

- a. On completion of the works, the council or its agent will inspect the property to ensure that the Schedule of Works has been adhered to and that the finished job is to a satisfactory standard. On receipt of a copy of the contractor's invoice, all relevant certification, and following the remedy of any apparent defects, the council will make one payment only to the owner. No interim payments will be made. The council reserves the right to withhold or reduce the grant amount, should the invoice, certification, or standard of works prove unacceptable or unsatisfactory

**6. Eligibility Criteria:**

- a. The total amount of financial support for the Empty Homes programme is limited. As a result the council retains the right to limit the total number of grants paid to a property owner. There is no automatic entitlement to financial assistance; each application will be assessed on a case by case basis by the council or its agent
- b. The applicant will be required to provide evidence of the ownership of the property. For the purpose of the grant, a property is defined as a unit of accommodation for which an individual charge for council tax is applicable
- c. The property will be located within the boundary of the borough
- d. The property must be a private residential property that has been empty for at least 12 months
- e. Owners who will be occupying the property on completion must demonstrate upon application that they are either first-time property owners or are purchasing the property following a divorce or separation. Evidence to support such claim should be provided.
- f. Private ex-commercial properties (e.g. potential flats above shops, shops to houses), may be considered, only if a 'change of use' has been officially approved and documented by the council's Planning department
- g. Financial support cannot be paid for works which have been carried out prior to a grant application
- h. Properties should have a good life expectancy (this is likely to rule out many properties that have been built using non-traditional methods of construction)
- i. Applications for financial support from owners with outstanding debts to the council will be held in abeyance until such debts are fully settled. The council reserves the right to offset any grant amount awarded against outstanding debts.
- j. Applications will only be considered for single household properties e.g. no HMOs

**7. Priority criteria:**

- a. Any applications will be dealt with in order of enquiry date.

**8. General Conditions:**

- a) A Local Land Charge will be placed on the property for the grant/loan amount for 5 years.
- b) Unless otherwise agreed with the Council, the owners must enter into an industry- approved build contract (e.g. RIBA, JCT, NEC) with the appointed contractor.
- c) The owner confirms that in respect of obtaining quotations for the works they:
  - have not colluded with any of the contractor to fix or adjust the quotation;
  - have not communicated the quotation or terms to any of the contractors;
  - have not entered into arrangements with other contractors or parties not to provide a quotation, or to quote a certain price or terms; and
  - have not given inducements or rewards to the council or their representatives
- d) If the property is sold within 5 years following completion of the works, the loan must be paid in full or the grant will be repaid using the sliding scale below.

<b>Period begins following completion of the works</b>	<b>YEARS</b>					<b>Zero after 5 year period</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>25%</b>	
<b>PERCENTAGE OF GRANT REPAYMENT</b>						

- e) Any breach of the conditions as set out in the Grant Agreement will result in full repayment of the grant
- f) It is a condition that if, within the condition period, the owners make a *relevant disposal* of the dwelling they are obliged to repay to the council in part or in full the grant. The owners are required to notify the council forthwith in writing of their intention to make a *relevant disposal* and to give the council any information reasonably requested by them in that connection
- g) The executor or the administrator who is/are responsible for administering the estate of the deceased, shall be held responsible for discharging the repayment obligation of the deceased or the successor of the dwelling or flat, from the sales proceeds of the dwelling or flat where a *relevant disposal* is made, using the sliding scale
- h) Upon completion of the works, the property must be occupied by a tenant or owner-occupier (as applicable) within three months following completion.
- i) A periodic check on the property will be carried out to determine continued occupation, to ensure conditions are being met.
- j) The property owner must cooperate with the council in all efforts to bring the property back into use, during the process and for a period of one year following the completion of works.
- k) Financial support cannot be claimed retrospectively.
- l) The owner will be responsible for any notifications and associated costs that may be required under the Party Wall Act, 1996.
- m) The owner will be responsible for obtaining and maintaining, where applicable, all necessary Building Regulation and/or Planning approvals at all stages of the works and must provide evidence of such approvals to the Council upon request.
- n) The offer of financial support is conditional on the works being satisfactorily completed and inspected by a representative of the Council within six months of the date of approval.
- o) The Council reserves the right to use any photographs of the property, a brief description of any works done, and the owner's name for publicity purposes, unless the owner explicitly requests in writing to the contrary.