



12th September 2016

[Empty Homes in England - Embargoed press release for 13th September 2016](#)

[Empty Homes charity sheds light on latest government data on empty homes](#)

The campaigning charity Empty Homes has today published its report *Empty Homes in England (attached)* with its annual analysis of government data on empty homes.

The official data is derived as a side product from council tax returns, rather than from a targeted exercise aimed specifically at understanding *all* empty property and the charity urges people to understand what is and is not included. The numbers do not include, for example, properties that are in such a state of dereliction that they are not counted as dwellings for council tax purposes. In other cases, local authorities will simply not know a property is empty, for example if the outgoing occupants did not tell them.

Nevertheless, latest data as at October 2015 suggests a small but welcome decline in the overall number of long-term (more than six months) empty homes in England.

Top line findings from the official data suggest that, as at October 2015:

- There were over 200,000 homes that had been empty for more than six months;
- There has been little change since the previous year - a 1.1% reduction in long-term empty property, sufficient for Government to declare the number of empty properties "at its lowest level since records began";
- There was significant regional variation, and evidence of a general North/South divide. Areas in the North generally had higher levels of long-term empty homes as a proportion of their dwellings. Table 2 and maps 5 and 6.

Commenting on the findings, Empty Homes Director Helen Williams says:

"The measures that we have campaigned for in recent years have been effective in creating new homes through empty properties. However, this trend may now be under threat, as a result of the shift in emphasis away from specific government investment programmes to target empty homes.

"This year we are examining areas with the highest levels of empty homes to understand their characteristics better, and to help inform a better understanding of "what works", with a view to helping more communities use their housing stock effectively and improve their neighbourhoods. It is crucial to get to the heart of the issues that local people face and the reasons properties stay empty if we are to achieve effective strategies for bringing them into use and improving neighbourhoods for the benefit of communities."

Empty Homes has a range of forthcoming activity, in addition to the examination of high concentration areas, designed to help drive practical action. While Empty Homes Week 2016 from the 28th November to the 2nd December encourages local authorities and housing providers to not only celebrate successes, but reach out to local people so that they know about the advice and assistance on offer locally to bring long-term empty properties back into use.

Notes to editors:

1. Empty Homes is a national campaigning charity focused on promoting strategies for bringing empty property into use to create affordable housing. Find out more at www.emptyhomes.com
2. For media enquiries, please contact Helen Williams on helen.williams@emptyhomes.com telephone 0203 135 0672.