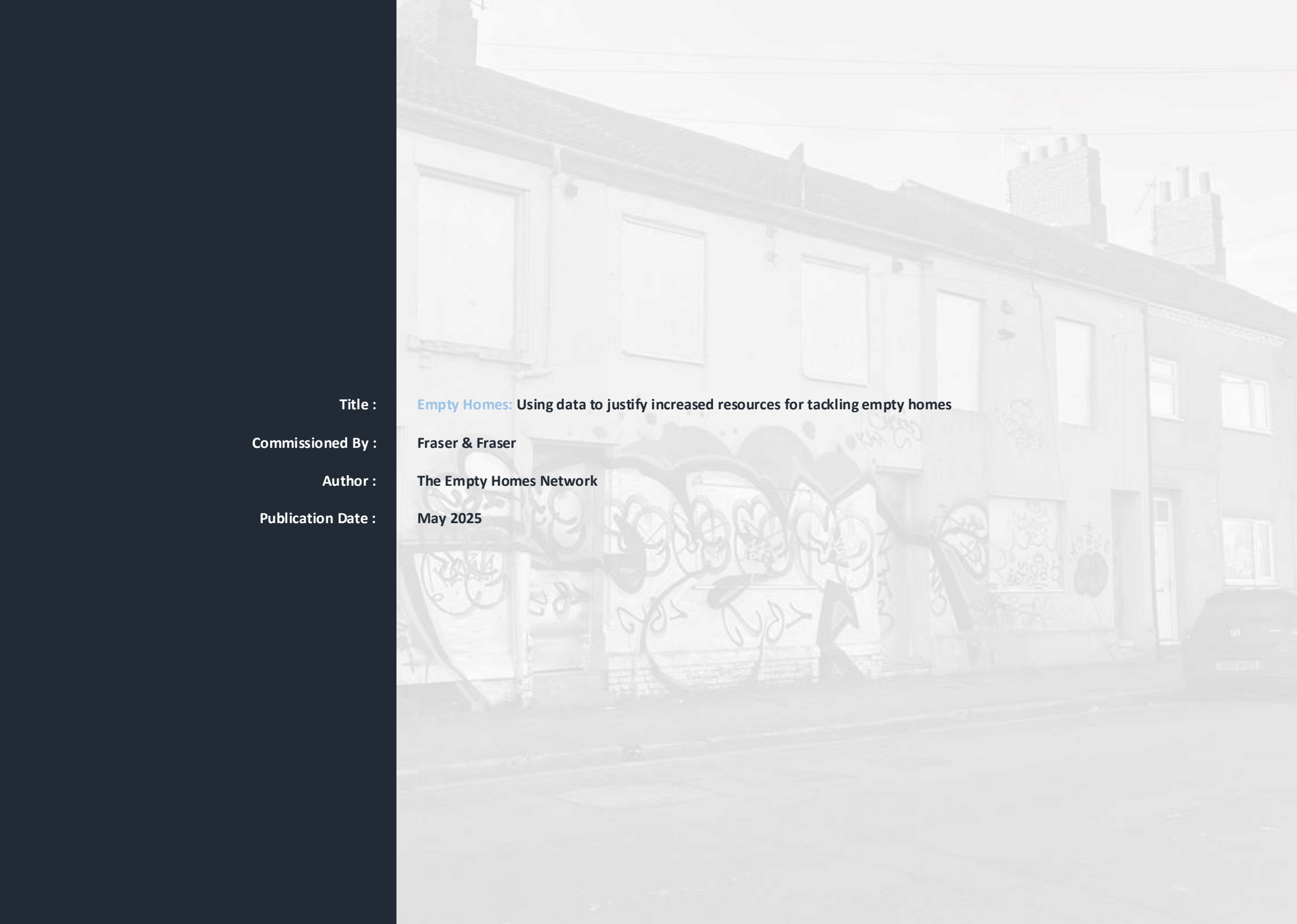




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## Empty Homes:

**Using data to justify increased resources for tackling empty homes**



**Title :** **Empty Homes:** Using data to justify increased resources for tackling empty homes

**Commissioned By :** Fraser & Fraser

**Author :** The Empty Homes Network

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Empty homes are a blight on our communities, a waste of precious resources and a missed opportunity to provide secure and sustainable housing for those in need. At a time when so many individuals and families face the challenges of housing insecurity, the presence of empty homes, often in good condition but left unused, stands as a stark reminder of the inefficiencies we must address.

As a government, we are committed to tackling the housing crisis from every angle, and bringing empty homes back into use is a vital part of this strategy. Empty homes are more than just bricks and mortar; they represent untapped potential to revitalise neighbourhoods, support local economies, and strengthen social cohesion. By repurposing these properties, we can create homes for families, opportunities for first-time buyers, and stability for those currently on the peripheries of our housing system.

The importance of addressing empty homes cannot be overstated. They often become focal points for neglect, vandalism and antisocial behaviour, undermining the vibrancy of the communities they sit within. But the story of empty homes is not simply one of neglect, it is also one of opportunity. Each empty property represents a chance to invest in our communities, to work collaboratively with homeowners, developers, and local authorities, and to demonstrate our shared commitment to building a fairer and more sustainable society.

This guide, commissioned by Fraser & Fraser and delivered by The Empty Homes Network, is a testament to the hard work and innovation of countless individuals and organisations who refuse to accept the status quo. It provides practical guidance, real-life case studies, and insights that illustrate how local authorities can leverage data and their local knowledge, to increase capacity on strained services. It shows that with determination and creativity, we can turn empty properties into thriving homes once again.

I hope this guide inspires and equips you, whether you are a policymaker, council officer or elected member to join us in this mission. Together, we can unlock the potential of empty homes and ensure that every property contributes to a future where everyone has a place to call home.

Councillor Adam Hug  
Leader, Westminster City Council

This informative guide outlines strategies and case studies to address the growing issue of empty homes in the UK. Published in May 2025, it emphasises the societal, economic, and environmental importance of bringing vacant properties back into use. Vacant homes also contribute to housing shortages, urban blight, and financial losses for local councils due to unpaid council tax and lost revenue opportunities.

Empty homes represent a critical challenge in a country facing a housing crisis, with over 999,000 properties unoccupied in 2024, representing 2.56% of England's housing stock. These include homes left vacant for over six months, second homes, and properties under council tax exemptions. Councils face significant barriers in tackling this issue, as empty homes work is not a statutory function and often competes with other local priorities. Additionally, reductions in government incentives such as the New Homes Bonus have constrained resources, making it challenging to justify investment and increase capacity in this area of work.

This guide aims to identify and give insight into practical approaches for councils to optimise their efforts in dealing with properties, including:

- **Council Tax Arrears:** Investigating empty properties with significant amounts of unpaid council tax arrears
- **Unoccupied Exemptions:** Reviewing properties eligible for an unoccupied exemption, to ensure proper application and explore the opportunities and benefits of returning these properties back to use
- **Probate Cases:** Assessing cases eligible for a Class F exemption, to ensure correct classification, and that local authorities are maximising the the use of disincentives to bring empty homes back into use

Case studies and examples illustrate successful strategies, showing how councils have recovered significant arrears by prioritising high-value cases and leveraging council tax debts to incentivise owners. Other case studies highlight the assessment of long-standing exemptions, and the benefits of conducting appraisals on exempt properties to ensure proper application, and that any potential council tax revenue is maximised.

The guide underlines that addressing empty homes is not only a solution to housing shortages but also a pathway to community revitalisation and financial sustainability. It advocates for proactive engagement with property owners, targeted use of data, and strategic partnerships to transform vacant homes into valuable assets. This guide acts as a supportive call to action to Local Authorities, not only to encourage the investigation of cases that would usually sit on the periphery of an officer's workload, but also to consider such cases as potential revenue that could support or underpin the work being done to bring empty homes back into use.



# About Fraser & Fraser



Fraser and Fraser are a UK-based firm specialising in genealogical research, probate services, and property solutions, with a particular focus on unlocking the value of unclaimed estates and addressing challenges related to empty homes. With decades of expertise, they offer tailored services to a diverse clientele, including local authorities, legal professionals, and individuals seeking assistance with complex inheritance and property matters. Fraser and Fraser is renowned for its role as a leading heir hunting and probate research firm. The company's core mission revolves around locating beneficiaries of unclaimed estates, helping resolve legal and financial issues tied to inheritance, and supporting local councils in reviewing complexed estate administration.

Empty homes pose significant challenges, including social blight, decreased property values, and strained housing markets. Fraser and Fraser provides essential services to address these issues. Their work includes resolving probate delays, identifying rightful owners, and collaborating with councils. By facilitating the re-use of these homes, the firm supports community revitalisation and helps mitigate homelessness.

Fraser and Fraser prides itself on innovation and maintaining high professional standards. Their team is well-versed in navigating complex legal landscapes, including data privacy regulations like GDPR, ensuring their services are both effective and compliant. Testimonials from clients and local authorities highlight the firm's ability to resolve cases that others find insurmountable, solidifying their reputation as problem-solvers in the probate and property sectors. The firm actively engages with the broader community through sponsorships and events. For example, they collaborate with organisations like the Empty Homes Network, participating in conferences and webinars to share insights and best practices. This proactive approach demonstrates Fraser and Fraser's commitment to addressing societal challenges related to inheritance and housing.

By bringing empty homes back into use, they support sustainability and economic development, helping to reduce the environmental impact of new housing developments. Their involvement in local and national initiatives underscores their dedication to making a positive impact.

Fraser and Fraser's collaborative approach, innovative problem-solving, and dedication to professional standards make them a trusted partner for individuals, councils, and legal professionals alike. Whether resolving probate cases or investigating the ownership of empty homes, Fraser and Fraser continues to deliver impactful solutions that benefit communities and individuals across the UK.

# About The Empty Homes Network

Established in 2001, the Empty Homes Network is the prominent voice, support and resource community for empty homes officers and practitioners across the country. With over 900 members and subscribers, the Network's aim is to support councils in bringing empty homes back into use, through the sharing of best practice methods, hands-on experience, and tools to develop effectiveness and efficiency.

Formed as a non-profit organisation, the Empty Homes Network lobby and campaign for service improvement and assist those with the least capacity and experience to gain confidence, whilst at the same time ensuring that those who are more experienced have a platform to share, develop and innovate. We support policymakers in formulating approaches and frameworks by offering insight at an operational level, all with the aim of adequately equipping councils with the tools required to negotiate, support and enforce where needed.

In addition to our online platform, The Empty Homes Network host an annual national conference bringing together practitioners, experts, and policymakers to share first-hand their experiences and relevant case studies. Our conference has grown year on year, highlighting the importance and willingness of councils to allocate and dedicate resources to the issue, albeit one that is not a statutory function.

In recent years, the Empty Homes Network have expanded their development opportunities for councils through their training and consultancy services. Aimed at empty homes officers and practitioners of all experience levels, their courses offer an introduction into the subject of empty homes from a practitioner's point of view and provides a foundation level approach for delegates to use in their roles. We also source courses in specialist areas for the benefit of our members, in topics such as probate legalities and hoarding.

Our consultancy services are specifically tailored to meet an authority's specific needs. These include a full empty homes service review, enabling the council a fresh perspective and opportunity to assess where best practice or policy improvements can be made; a challenging case appraisal, offering a practical action plan of next steps in dealing with difficult empty homes cases; and empty homes strategy writing and refreshing, for those authorities who are looking to take their first, or next step in developing their policy and procedures. The Empty Homes Network have also worked with authorities to produce investment proposals for new initiatives such as grants, loan and leasing schemes.





**Part One |**  
**Introduction**

# Why Empty Homes Matter



At a time of critical housing need, both central government and local councils consider the supply of safe, affordable and sustainable housing as a top priority. The ability to build houses at a rate that meets demand, coupled with the reduction in the availability of homes through the popularity of short-term lets and second home ownership means that all opportunities to increase supply need to be explored. One area of increasing interest are the opportunities for bringing empty homes back into use. Empty properties come in all shapes, sizes and locations, with varying levels of deterioration and effect on their surrounding communities. Equally, such properties present a significant opportunity to increase available housing stock quickly and efficiently.

Statistics released by government in November 2024, show nearly 1m homes were classed as unoccupied in England, with over 270,000 of those reported to having been vacant for six months or longer. This represents just over 2.5% per cent of the country's total housing stock being considered as empty. Whilst many of these are yet to have reached a stage of deterioration that prompts concern, every empty home removes a property from the housing market, and with it the chance to help those on housing registers to be housed, first time buyers to purchase, or those looking to progress on the property ladder. However, owning an empty home is not illegal.

Affecting towns and cities across the UK, empty homes come in all forms, shapes and sizes. The variation in their condition and circumstance also requires a variation in the approach needed to return them to occupation, with no one-size-fits-all solution. Whilst councils are ideally placed to encourage and enforce action in dealing with empty properties, such work is not a statutory function and therefore councils must determine whether resources are best used in dealing with them, or to allocate resources to focus on other corporate priorities.

Often a time and resource heavy process, working with empty home owners and unpicking often challenging circumstances requires a practical and empathetic approach. However, low levels of interest by empty home owners in previous government initiatives, administrative difficulties and the reduction of the empty homes element of the New Homes Bonus calculation, has meant councils are now faced with a reduced incentive to carry out empty homes work, but also face a reduction in terms of their tools and offers of support to owners. This means that councils are left to devise their own strategies, loans, grant schemes and action plans, and allocate resources as they see fit locally.

# Effective resourcing for a silent problem

Local authorities face significant pressures to address increasing housing demands, driving many to explore alternative options to mitigate supply shortfalls. Bringing empty homes back into use can play a key role in meeting housing need. Beyond being a wasted resource, empty homes often attract complaints and contribute to issues such as crime and neighbourhood degradation. However, despite the potential benefits of addressing empty homes, the ability of councils to allocate resources to this work is often constrained.

Unlike some functions, tackling empty homes is not a statutory obligation for councils, which can make it challenging to justify employing dedicated resources. In some cases, the presence of an empty homes officer is viewed as a luxury rather than a necessity. Instead, it should be seen as an essential component of housing strategies. With the right approach, councils can achieve meaningful progress in bringing empty homes back into use, enhancing both housing availability and community satisfaction. This resource-to-benefit imbalance limits their ability to proactively tackle the issue, often relegating it to a reactive approach focused solely on the most urgent cases.

Many councils have successfully adopted proactive measures, using dedicated officers to address challenging cases whilst concurrently cleansing data to reduce statistics. However, these councils are the exception rather than the rule. Many lack the capacity to implement such an approach, resulting in missed opportunities to prevent homes from remaining empty or deteriorating further. Without dedicated officers, these efforts are fragmented and less effective, perpetuating the cycle of empty homes being viewed as a low priority.

While the financial and operational pressures on councils are undeniable, it is crucial to acknowledge the long-term value that an empty homes officer can provide. These roles should not be dismissed as a luxury but recognised as a strategic investment in improving housing supply and community well-being. Dual-role positions, combining empty homes work with related functions, could also offer a cost-effective alternative for councils reluctant to allocate standalone resources.

By leveraging existing tools such as council tax data and empowering officers with enforcement authority, councils can maximise their impact without significantly increasing costs. Additionally, broadening the scope of empty homes work to include properties empty for shorter durations or those exempt from council tax could further reduce the flow of long-term vacant homes.



When assessing the numbers of empty homes, most local authorities often look to properties referred to as 'long-term' empty homes. Based on the previously used Class C exemption or discount, this term describes a property that had been reported as empty and has remained so for a period of six months or longer. However, by using this definition, purposes and genuinely empty properties could be overlooked due to their council tax term, class or exemption. To gain a comprehensive understanding for the number of empty homes both locally and nationally, there are seven definitions or exemptions that should be considered.

- **Less Than (<) 6 Months Empty:** A property that has been recorded as empty by its owner for council tax purposes, and has been empty for a period of less than six months.
- **More Than (>) 6 Months Empty:** Often referred to as 'long-term empty', a property that has been empty for any period of 6 months or longer.
- **Long Term Empty Premium:** An empty property currently charged any level of empty homes premium. With its implementation at the local authority's discretion, few have chosen not to introduce the premium, whereas other local authorities have applied the premium after 12 months, and some after 24.
- **Second Homes:** Often referred to as furnished empties, these are properties where the owner or primary resident has their main or primary residence elsewhere. There are no limitations as to where a second home can be and shouldn't be assumed that these are holiday homes.
- **Unoccupied Exemptions:** A property where the reason for inoccupation determines its eligibility for an exemption, such as properties going through probate, the liable party is in prison, or the owner has moved to receive or provide care etc.
- **'Occupied' Empties:** A known empty property, where the council tax account is showing the property as being occupied by the owner or a liable party.
- **Delisted Property:** An empty property where the owner has been successful in having the property delisted from Council Tax, through an application to the Valuation Office Agency.

Nationally, the statistics on the numbers of empty homes are reported annually through a local authority’s submission of the Council Taxbase. Providing a snapshot of data and released in early November, the Council Taxbase provides a key dataset in relation to properties subject to council tax, supplies insight into housing trends, and enables policy and statistical analysis across a range of criteria to inform policy and forward planning.

Also broken down into local authority level data, the Council Taxbase reports on empty homes statistics across all definitions, exemptions and premiums, and allows for patterns and trends to be assessed. The statistics show regional variations in housing stock, the effectiveness of policies such as the Empty Homes Premium, and the scale of unoccupied properties nationally. These figures are used subsequently to inform local and national strategies to reduce housing shortages and maximise income generation.

The adjacent table provides a summary of empty homes data in the England from 2020 to 2024, highlighting trends across the definitions, along with a breakdown of the length of time properties have remained empty.

The Council Taxbase 2024 showed that the number of empty homes has steadily increased over the five years, rising from 479,336 in 2020 to 502,263 in 2024. Similarly, the number of Second homes have also seen a consistent increase, from 262,953 in 2020 to 279,870 in 2024. Often ignored, the number of properties falling under an unoccupied exemption for the past five years, have remained relatively stable, peaking at 218,281 in 2023, and slightly decreasing to 217,207 in 2024. In total, the number of empty homes reached 999,340 in 2024, accounting for 2.56% of total housing stock, compared to 2.29% in 2020.

When broken down by length of time, less than 6 months empty homes rose from 200,866 in 2020 to 230,006 in 2024, and those empty over six months continue to rise towards their peak seen in 2020, reaching 272,257 in 2024. The number of properties subject to the empty homes premium have continually risen since its introduction in 2013, reaching 119,606 in 2024. These statistics show a growing issue with empty homes, emphasising the need for policy intervention, increased attention, and a proactive approach by central government and local authorities to reduce numbers.

|                                 | 2024           | 2023           | 2022           | 2021           | 2020           |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Empty Homes                     | 502,263        | 480,845        | 478,928        | 468,070        | 479,336        |
| Second Homes                    | 279,870        | 263,318        | 256,913        | 253,357        | 262,953        |
| Unoccupied Exemptions           | 217,207        | 218,281        | 197,376        | 184,955        | 186,292        |
| <b>Total Empty Homes</b>        | <b>999,340</b> | <b>962,444</b> | <b>933,217</b> | <b>906,382</b> | <b>928,581</b> |
| <b>% of Total Housing Stock</b> | <b>2.56%</b>   | <b>2.45%</b>   | <b>2.35%</b>   | <b>2.26%</b>   | <b>2.29%</b>   |
| <b>Breakdown</b>                |                |                |                |                |                |
| <6 Months Empty                 | 230,006        | 211,450        | 222,101        | 221,426        | 200,866        |
| >6 Months Empty                 | 272,257        | 269,395        | 256,827        | 246,644        | 278,470        |
| Empty Homes Premium             | 119,606        | 75,803         | 72,341         | 71,630         | 69,201         |

The table below provides a breakdown of unoccupied exemptions for various property classes from 2020 to 2024. A notable observation is the consistently high number of properties exempt due to the property going through the probate process (Class F). In 2024, this category accounts for 132,883 properties, 61% of the total exemptions reported. This figure has steadily increased over the years, from 110,472 in 2020 to 135,698 in 2023, indicating a growing number of properties left unoccupied following the owner's death.

Other key exemption categories include properties where the owner is receiving care (Class E), which grew from 33,590 in 2020 to 38,627 in 2024, and properties where occupation is prohibited (Class G), which rose from 6,861 in 2020 to 9,617 in 2024. Exemptions for properties owned by charities (Class B) have shown a slight decline, from 25,419 in 2020 to 24,775 in 2024.

The total number of exempt properties peaked at 218,281 in 2023 before falling slightly to 217,207 in 2024. This highlights the continuing need for focus outside of the usual long-term empty homes, particularly in targeting long-term exemptions such as those linked to deceased owners to address underutilised properties.

| Exemption Class | Exemption Definition           | 2024           | 2023           | 2022           | 2021           | 2020           |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Class B         | Owned by a charity             | 24,775         | 25,675         | 25,453         | 26,775         | 25,419         |
| Class D         | Owner in prison                | 2,316          | 2,213          | 1,838          | 1,844          | 1,704          |
| Class E         | Owner receiving care           | 38,627         | 37,758         | 32,786         | 31,023         | 33,590         |
| Class F         | Owner is deceased              | 132,883        | 135,698        | 121,900        | 110,654        | 110,472        |
| Class G         | Occupation prohibited          | 9,617          | 8,754          | 7,961          | 7,470          | 6,861          |
| Class H         | Left by a minister of religion | 1,203          | 1,226          | 1,054          | 1,006          | 1,121          |
| Class I         | Owner moved to receive care    | 2,766          | 2,782          | 2,729          | 2,996          | 3,353          |
| Class J         | Owner moved to provide care    | 793            | 765            | 809            | 865            | 884            |
| Class K         | Last occupied by a student     | 117            | 153            | 206            | 245            | 196            |
| Class L         | Property repossessed           | 3,554          | 2,757          | 2,154          | 1,544          | 2,144          |
| Class Q         | Property owner bankrupt        | 556            | 500            | 486            | 533            | 548            |
| <b>Total</b>    |                                | <b>217,207</b> | <b>218,281</b> | <b>197,376</b> | <b>184,955</b> | <b>186,292</b> |

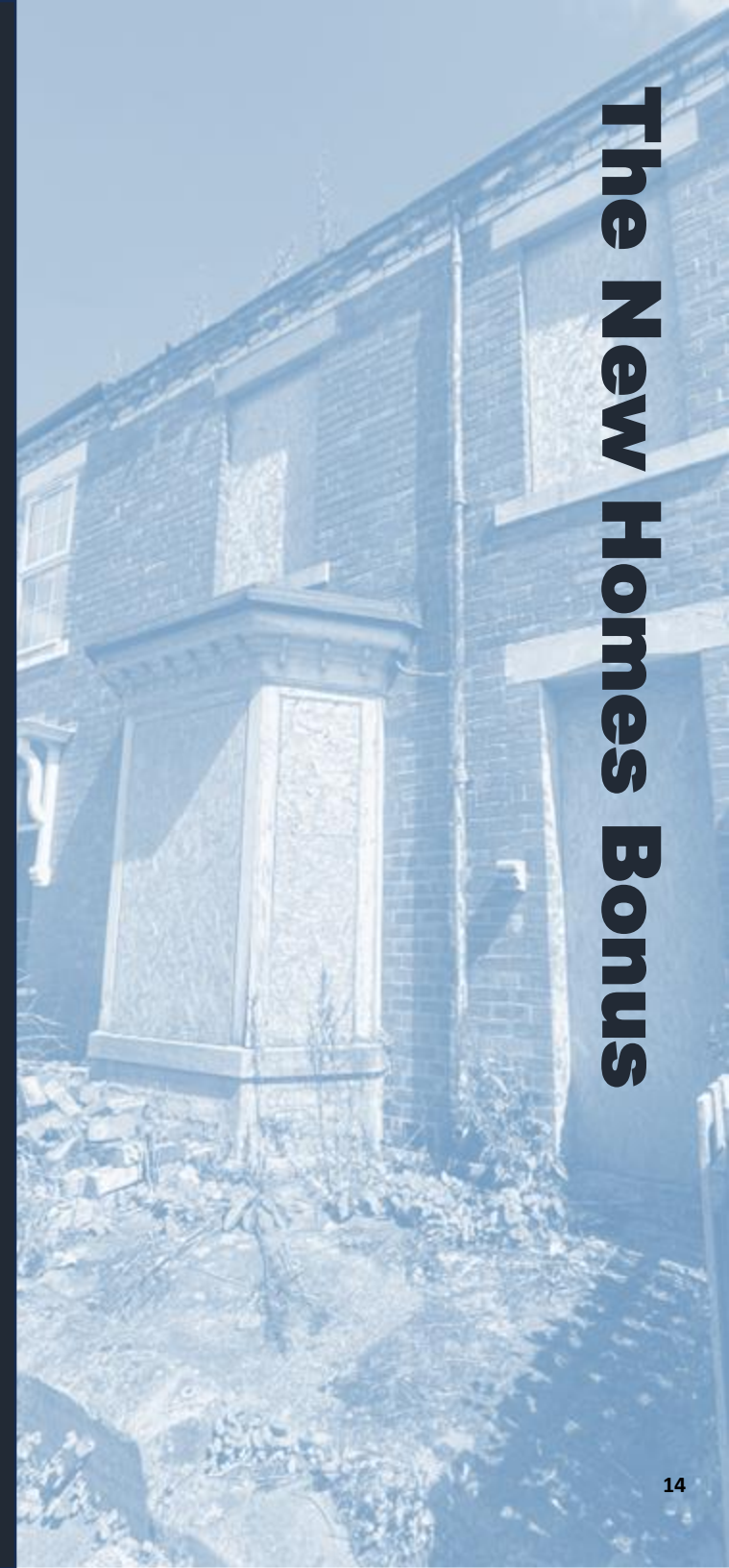
The New Homes Bonus (NHB), introduced in 2011, is an incentive created by the UK government to encourage local authorities to increase housing supply. It rewards councils for building new homes, bringing empty properties back into use, and adding affordable housing. The bonus aims to address the dual challenges of housing shortages and underused stock, including empty homes. Under the scheme, councils receive payments based on the additional council tax generated from new homes and long-term empty properties brought back into use. Initially, these payments lasted for six years, later reduced to four years in 2017 to manage costs. An additional premium was included for additions to affordable housing.

One of the NHB's key elements is its link to empty homes. Properties that had been vacant for over six months but were then reoccupied, contributed to the bonus for councils. This feature recognised the value of utilising existing housing stock to alleviate housing demand without requiring new construction. Local authorities were incentivised to implement targeted strategies, such as grants for renovations, enforcement action like Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs), and council tax premiums on longer term empty homes.

Despite its intentions, the NHB has faced criticism. Critics argue it disproportionately benefits areas with high housing demand, often wealthier regions, leaving deprived areas with fewer opportunities to gain from the scheme. Furthermore, some councils claimed the NHB funds were insufficient to cover the costs of addressing empty homes or building significant new housing stock. These limitations raised concerns about its efficacy in resolving housing supply issues.

In terms of addressing empty homes, the NHB has had some measurable impact. It encouraged councils to focus on reoccupying long-term vacant properties, a priority that might not have existed otherwise. However, broader systemic challenges such as regional housing imbalances, economic decline in some areas, and resource constraints for enforcement, limited its potential. In recent years, many councils have explored complementary measures, such as compulsory purchase orders and partnerships with housing associations to tackle empty homes more effectively.

Whilst the NHB has offered a useful incentive for bringing empty homes back into use, the recent reduction of the empty homes element of the bonus, coupled with the expectation that the bonus will potentially be removed, has meant councils are less inclined to increase resources based on the potential of NHB receipts.



# Justifying Empty Homes Resource

The issue of empty homes presents a complex challenge for councils due to competing priorities and the perception that addressing empty properties is less critical than other housing and resource needs. However, the acute need for housing and the financial impact of lost revenues highlight the potential benefits of prioritising empty homes as part of local strategies. Historically, the New Homes Bonus has been a key incentive for councils to invest resources in bringing empty homes back into use. However, changes to the NHB formula in recent years, alongside the potential removal of the bonus entirely, have made it increasingly difficult for councils to justify the resources allocated to tackling empty homes. As this justification diminishes, local authorities must find new ways to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of their efforts in this area.

To maintain or enhance the value of empty homes work, councils are encouraged to explore alternative financial and strategic approaches. These include focusing on cases of empty properties with significant outstanding council tax arrears, which represent a direct and substantial financial loss to local authorities. Addressing such arrears can generate revenue while simultaneously incentivising property owners to bring homes back into use. Additionally, councils are advised to investigate unoccupied exemption cases, especially those classified under exemption categories that allow properties to remain exempt from council tax indefinitely. For example, Class F exemptions, which apply to properties left empty due to probate, often persist long after legal processes are concluded. Conducting appraisals of these exemptions can uncover opportunities to bring properties back into active use and restore them to the council taxbase.

To succeed, councils must develop robust methodologies for identifying, appraising, and prioritising empty homes. These should include assessments of their financial impacts, such as council tax arrears, and proactive engagement with owners to understand and address their barriers and hurdles. Collaboration across departments and with external partners can be critical in ensuring that empty homes work delivers benefits that match or exceed those provided by the NHB. While empty homes are not illegal and may not rank highly on councils' agendas, the need for housing and lost revenue opportunities make them an important focus.

The potential removal of the New Homes Bonus challenges councils to justify their efforts in new ways, and by exploring outstanding tax arrears, unoccupied exemptions, and other revenue-generating opportunities, local authorities can ensure that their empty homes strategies remain cost-effective and impactful, contributing meaningfully to housing supply and financial sustainability.



**Part Two |**  
**Areas of Focus**

**Council Tax arrears** | Investigating properties with significant Council Tax arrears is a critical task for councils and their empty homes officers. Such arrears often indicate properties that are long-term empty or have unclear ownership, making them costly for councils in lost revenue and detrimental to local communities. Addressing these cases enables councils to recover owed funds which can be reinvested in vital public services. Ultimately, investigating large council tax arrears helps councils meet financial, housing, and community revitalisation goals while addressing the broader implications of property neglect.

**Unoccupied Exempt Properties** | Councils should actively encourage owners of empty homes with unoccupied council tax exemptions to bring these properties back into use to address housing shortages, improve community well-being, and ensure revenue loss is minimal. Returning such properties to occupancy helps meet local housing demand, alleviates pressure on public resources, and revitalises communities. Moreover, owners benefit from reduced financial burdens and liabilities associated with long-term vacant properties. By engaging with owners through support and incentives, councils can foster partnerships that transform underutilised housing stock into valuable and much needed supply.

**Probate Cases and Class F Exemptions** | Empty properties may fall under council tax exemptions, such as Class F, but prolonged neglect or unresolved probate can prevent their productive reuse. By investigating these cases, councils can trace owners or beneficiaries and encourage them to clear arrears, sell the property, or bring it back into use. In cases where heirs or owners are uncooperative, councils can collaborate with probate specialists Fraser & Fraser to manage legal complexities, trace beneficiaries, and recover debts. Proactively pursuing these properties not only enhances council finances but also demonstrates a commitment to tackling housing and supply challenges.

**Exemption F Appraisals** | Local authorities can refer properties under Class F Council Tax exemptions to Fraser & Fraser for appraisal. The company assesses property ownership, the existence of a Will, and the status of the Grant of Probate. This helps determine if the exemption should continue or if council tax should be charged. If probate is granted, the exemption ends, and local authorities can initiate council tax charges. Fraser & Fraser's expertise in tracing heirs and managing complex estates ensures that properties are brought back into use promptly, allowing councils to recover lost revenue and address housing shortages.



# Council Tax Arrears

Empty homes officers can play a crucial role in addressing council tax arrears associated with unoccupied properties. These officers are tasked with identifying empty homes, investigating their ownership, and working with property owners to encourage the return of properties to use. Their efforts are often supported by legislation, enforcement tools, and collaboration with other local government departments. By cross-referencing data from various sources, officers can establish patterns of long-term neglect or identify cases where properties are purposefully left empty, and also uncover cases that have significant amounts of council tax debt.

This investigation of such empty home cases, alongside a proactive and supportive approach from revenue and benefits teams can determine the extent of council tax arrears, and enable a prioritisation of cases with the highest debts for action. After identifying arrears, empty homes officers reach out to property owners to establish contact, often involving sending reminder letters, formal notices, or initiating conversations to address unpaid council tax. The approach typically starts with a focus on encouraging voluntary repayment through flexible payment plans or agreements. These efforts are underpinned by clear communication of the consequences of failing to pay, such as legal enforcement.

If voluntary compliance fails, empty homes officers can collaborate with the council's revenue and enforcement teams to escalate action. This might include applying for liability orders through the courts, which grant the council authority to enforce payment. Common enforcement tools include bailiff actions, wage deductions, or charging orders placed on the property. In extreme cases, councils may enforce the sale of the property to recover arrears or begin bankruptcy proceedings against the owner or liable party.

Beyond recovering arrears, empty homes officers often use council tax debt as leverage to encourage property owners to bring homes back into use. For example, some councils may be willing to reduce arrears if owners agree to renovate and reoccupy their properties or lease them to housing associations. This dual approach may serve to mitigate housing shortages while reducing tax debt.

Overall, empty homes officers can act as both debt recovery agents and housing advocates. Their work can ensure councils recover significant funds owed in council tax, while promoting the reuse of empty properties to support housing needs. Through a combination of investigation, engagement and enforcement, empty homes officers can play a vital role in addressing the financial and social challenges posed by long-term empty homes.

A council tax exemption is a provision that allows certain properties or individuals to be exempt from paying council tax under specific circumstances. Exemptions typically apply when a property is unoccupied or used in a way that meets defined criteria set by local authorities. These exemptions are designed to acknowledge situations where it would be unreasonable or impractical to charge council tax, such as when a property is going through the probate process, owned by a charity, or left empty due to legal, health, or personal care reasons.

Each exemption class specifies the conditions that need to be met to qualify, and the exemption status is usually granted after an application and review by the local council. Exemptions may be temporary or permanent, depending on the category and circumstances. The unoccupied classes of exemption are:

*Class A - Properties undergoing significant structural changes or improvements*

*Class B - Unoccupied property owned by a charity, likely used for charitable purposes when occupied*

*Class C - Property left empty for up to six months, typically without penalty during this period*

*Class D - Property unoccupied because the owner or liable person is in prison or detained*

*Class E - Property left empty because the owner is receiving care in a hospital, nursing home, or care facility*

*Class F - Property unoccupied following the death of the owner*

*Class G - Property that cannot legally be occupied*

*Class H - Unoccupied property owned or controlled by a religious minister*

*Class I - Property left empty because the owner has moved elsewhere to receive personal care*

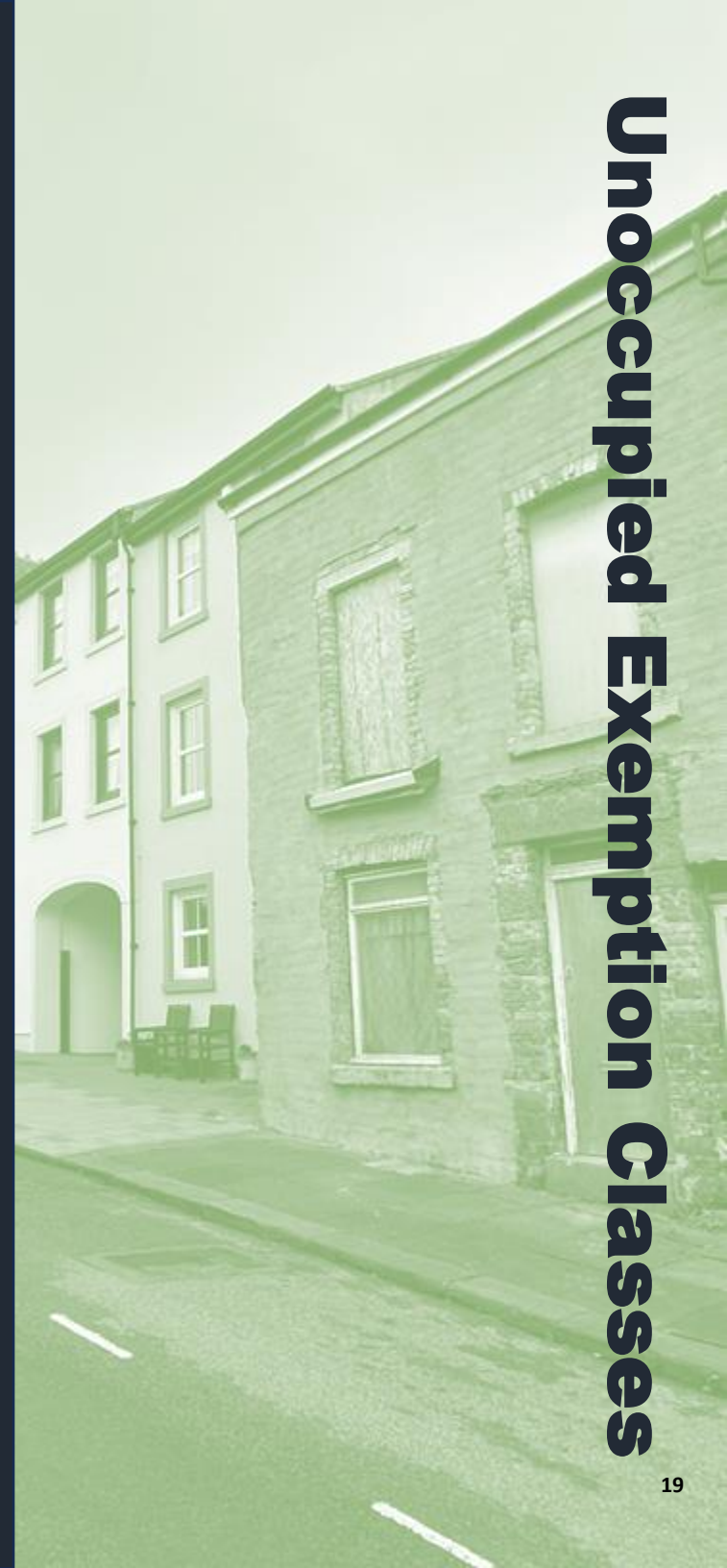
*Class J - Property unoccupied because the owner has moved to provide care to someone else*

*Class K - Property previously occupied by a student, now unoccupied*

*Class L - Properties taken over by a lender, typically unoccupied during repossession*

*Class Q - Property unoccupied due to the owner being declared bankrupt*

In most cases, properties under one of the above classes can remain exempt from council tax for an indefinite period, should they continue to meet criteria based on the owner or liable party's circumstances. Exemptions may also require periodic reassessment to ensure the conditions are still valid. However, their exemption can often remain applied in perpetuity and therefore reduces income generation potential for the local authority, whilst the property itself would remain empty and unoccupied.



# Probate Cases and Class F Exemptions



Encouraging owners or executors of empty homes undergoing probate, particularly those eligible for a Class F Council Tax Exemption, to bring these properties back into use is crucial for councils aiming to address housing shortages, and reduce the potential of revenue being lost indefinitely.

Properties under Class F exemptions are unoccupied due to the owner's death, often leaving them in legal or administrative limbo. These homes can quickly fall into disrepair, becoming targets for vandalism and anti-social behaviour, while also negatively impacting the surrounding community. Councils have a vested interest in ensuring such properties do not remain empty indefinitely, as they can often contribute to urban blight and housing scarcity.

Encouraging executors to act efficiently benefits both councils and communities. Bringing these properties back into use helps reduce housing pressure by increasing the availability of homes, but it also revitalises neighbourhoods, stabilises property values, and improves local environments. From a financial perspective, returning homes to use as early as possible allows councils to re-establish council tax revenue streams, and reduce potential issues associated with derelict properties.

Councils can take a proactive approach by offering clear guidance and support to executors managing estates. Collaboration with Fraser & Fraser can help locate beneficiaries, navigate probate complexities, and resolve disputes. Incentives such as renovation grants, tax relief for development, or assistance with property sales can also encourage executors to expedite decisions quickly and effectively.

Moreover, returning empty homes to use aligns with broader policy objectives, including sustainable urban development and addressing homelessness. It demonstrates a councils' commitment to making effective use of housing stock while maximising potential council tax revenue. Encouraging executors to act promptly ensures that homes are not left vacant unnecessarily and avoiding prolonged exemptions.

Ultimately, by engaging with executors and beneficiaries with practical support and incentives, councils can not only transform underutilised housing into cherished homes again, but also increase their income generation potential by bringing a property back into use in respect of the Council Taxbase.

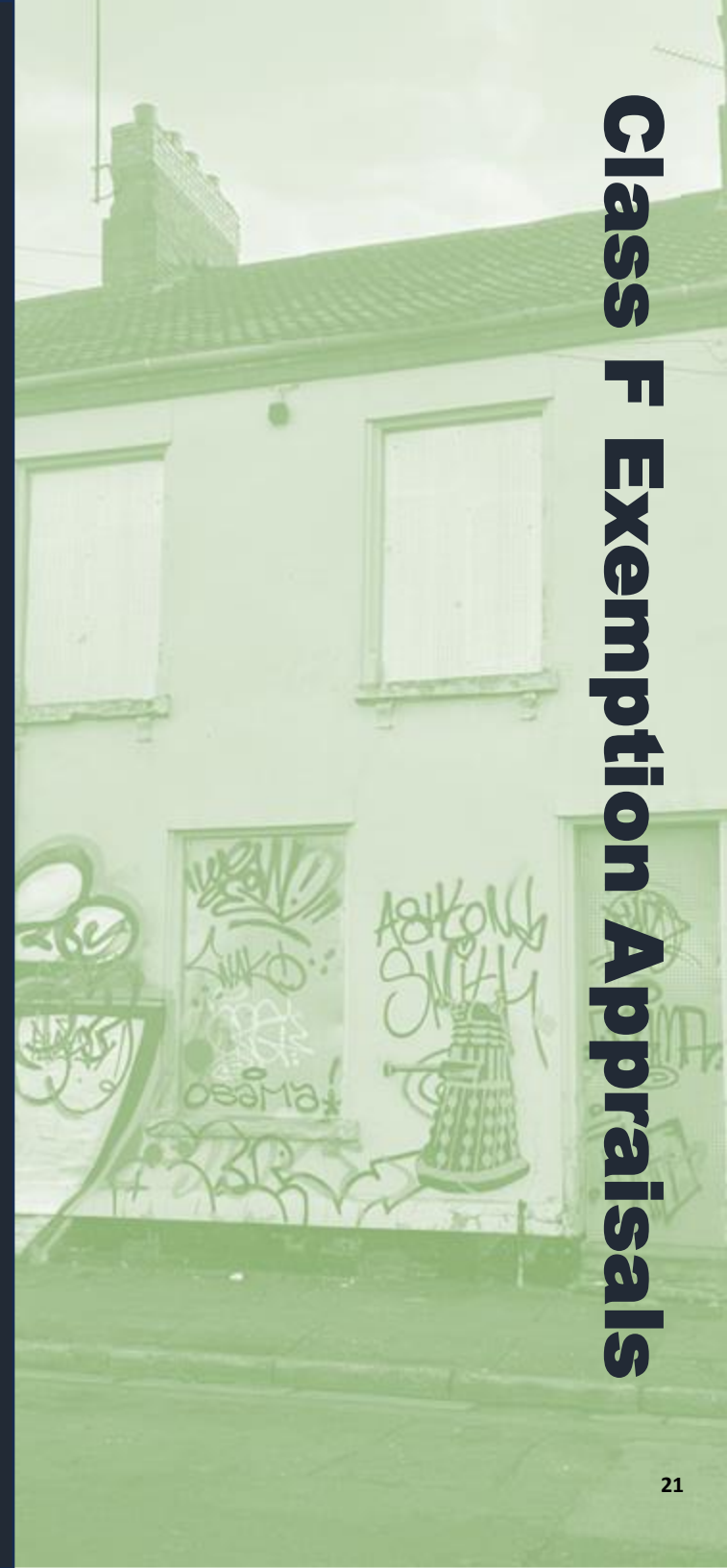
Local authorities can leverage Fraser & Fraser's services to conduct thorough appraisals of Class F Council Tax exemptions, helping them determine if they can begin charging council tax on properties that are currently exempt due to the death of the owner.

Class F exemptions apply to properties that are left unoccupied due to the death of the owner, with council tax exemptions often lasting until the probate process is completed. However, these exemptions can lead to lost revenue if the properties remain vacant for extended periods. By referring large numbers of these properties to Fraser & Fraser, local authorities can efficiently manage cases where the owner's death has resulted in unresolved estate matters.

Fraser & Fraser, experts in tracing beneficiaries and handling probate issues, first assesses the ownership of the property. Their team investigates whether a valid Will exists and identifies the rightful heirs or executors. They also check the status of the Grant of Probate, which authorises the distribution of the deceased's estate. In cases where the estate is still in probate, the company can help expedite the process or identify when it will be concluded, providing the local authority with the information necessary to determine when council tax charges should resume.

If the estate is being managed efficiently and probate is granted, the local authority can then start levying council tax as the exemption under Class F would no longer be applicable. If beneficiaries or executors are difficult to trace or uncooperative, Fraser & Fraser can support local authorities by locating the correct individuals or managing complex estate matters. This reduces delays and ensures properties are returned to the housing market or occupied, which can help alleviate housing shortages in the local area.

Additionally, Fraser & Fraser's expertise in dealing with large volumes of such cases ensures that local authorities can focus their resources on other priorities while knowing that each case is being carefully reviewed. This efficient process not only helps councils recover potential tax revenue but also ensures that properties are brought back into use as soon as practicably possible, by initiating the support, assistance and advice programmes that empty homes officers are able to offer, at the earliest opportunity.





**Part Three |**  
**Examples & Case**  
**Studies**

Empty homes present a unique challenge for local authorities, sitting at the intersection of critical housing need, financial sustainability, and community wellbeing. While owning an empty property is not illegal, these homes represent a significant lost opportunity to provide much-needed housing, improve neighbourhoods, and generate vital revenue for councils. As such, they deserve focused attention from local authorities striving to balance housing strategies with fiscal responsibility.

The following examples and case studies examine how councils have been affected across three key issues associated with empty homes, both in terms of their lost revenue, but also income generated where these cases have been given additional attention. Across the three areas of investigation, the case studies give insight into how councils have implemented processes and shifted attention to justify their empty homes efforts in the face of reduced government incentives.

**Council Tax Arrears** | Tackling such cases offers the dual benefit of recovering essential funds for local authorities and encouraging owners to engage in solutions. These case studies showcase how councils have addressed arrears, from identifying high-priority cases to implementing effective enforcement and recovery strategies.

**Unoccupied Exemption Cases** | Through diligent reassessment and review of these cases, councils can uncover untapped opportunities. The case studies in this section explore examples of authorities identifying and addressing exemptions that have persisted unnecessarily, ensuring both compliance and efficiency.

**Exemption Class F Appraisals** | Many councils have found that appraising these cases post-probate reveals opportunities to return properties to use. This section highlights how councils have approached Class F appraisals, working collaboratively with stakeholders to bring properties back into the housing market or council tax base.

Collectively, these case studies and examples illustrate practical approaches, challenges, and successes in addressing empty homes across these three key areas. They aim to inform and inspire local authorities to adopt innovative and effective strategies that contribute meaningfully to housing provision, community improvement, and income generation.



The following case studies have been compiled using real-life data obtained with the permission of empty homes officers from across the country. Using accurate and relevant data, these case studies illustrate the importance of considering properties within the areas of focus, and the financial implications of targeting such cases at the earliest opportunity. These examples also give insight into the revenue lost by authorities due to indefinite exemptions. The data used has been collected as is accurate at the point of writing, in December 2024.

### **Case Study 1, Council A (East Midlands) | Council Tax Arrears**

An assessment of the Council's rateable dwellings with the highest levels of council tax arrears revealed that four of the top five properties were registered as empty, subject to the Empty Homes Premium, and had accrued significant unpaid debt. Collectively, these properties had been vacant for over 45 years and had been the focus of intensive efforts to return them to use in previous years.

Working collaboratively with the Revenue and Benefits department, the Empty Homes Officer intensified efforts to secure charging orders and liability orders on three of the four properties. This resulted in two of the properties being placed on the market for sale, while the owner's son came forward to settle the outstanding debt on the remaining two, which were subsequently sold on the open market. Through persistent and proactive engagement with the owners, including serving two notices on one of the properties, the Council successfully recovered over £50,000 in council tax arrears. Without this collaborative approach, achieving this outcome would likely have taken considerably longer.

### **Case Study 2, Council B (North-East) | Unoccupied Exemption Statistics**

Data from this local authority indicates that 1,002 properties are currently eligible for unoccupied property council tax exemptions. Of these, 34 properties have been exempt for five years or more, with 31 falling within the Class F category. Based on the average council tax band charges for the area and the current financial year, these exemptions have resulted in a potential loss of approximately £297,500 in council tax revenue over the period of their inoccupancy.

Providing timely support and guidance to executors and beneficiaries in such cases could have mitigated this loss and facilitated a quicker return of these properties to active use.

## Case Study 3, Council C (South) – Unoccupied Exemption Statistics

Statistics indicate that this authority currently has 740 unoccupied properties eligible for exemptions, with the longest example dating back to 2002. Of these, 374 properties fall under a Class F exemption, the longest of which dates back to 2005. Based on the average council tax banding for the area, the Empty Homes Officer estimates that this property alone has resulted in a potential revenue loss of £78,000. Of this, £38,000 could have been charged if probate had been granted earlier, enabling the application of the Empty Homes Premium.

## Case Study 4, Council D (East Anglia) – Unoccupied Exemption Statistics

This local authority currently has 137 properties classified as empty and exempt under categories F, G, and L. Of these, 54 properties have been unoccupied and exempt for over a year, while 83 have been empty and exempt for less than a year. Based on the average council tax band for the area, it is estimated that the annual revenue loss from those exempt over one year exceeds £125,000 to date.

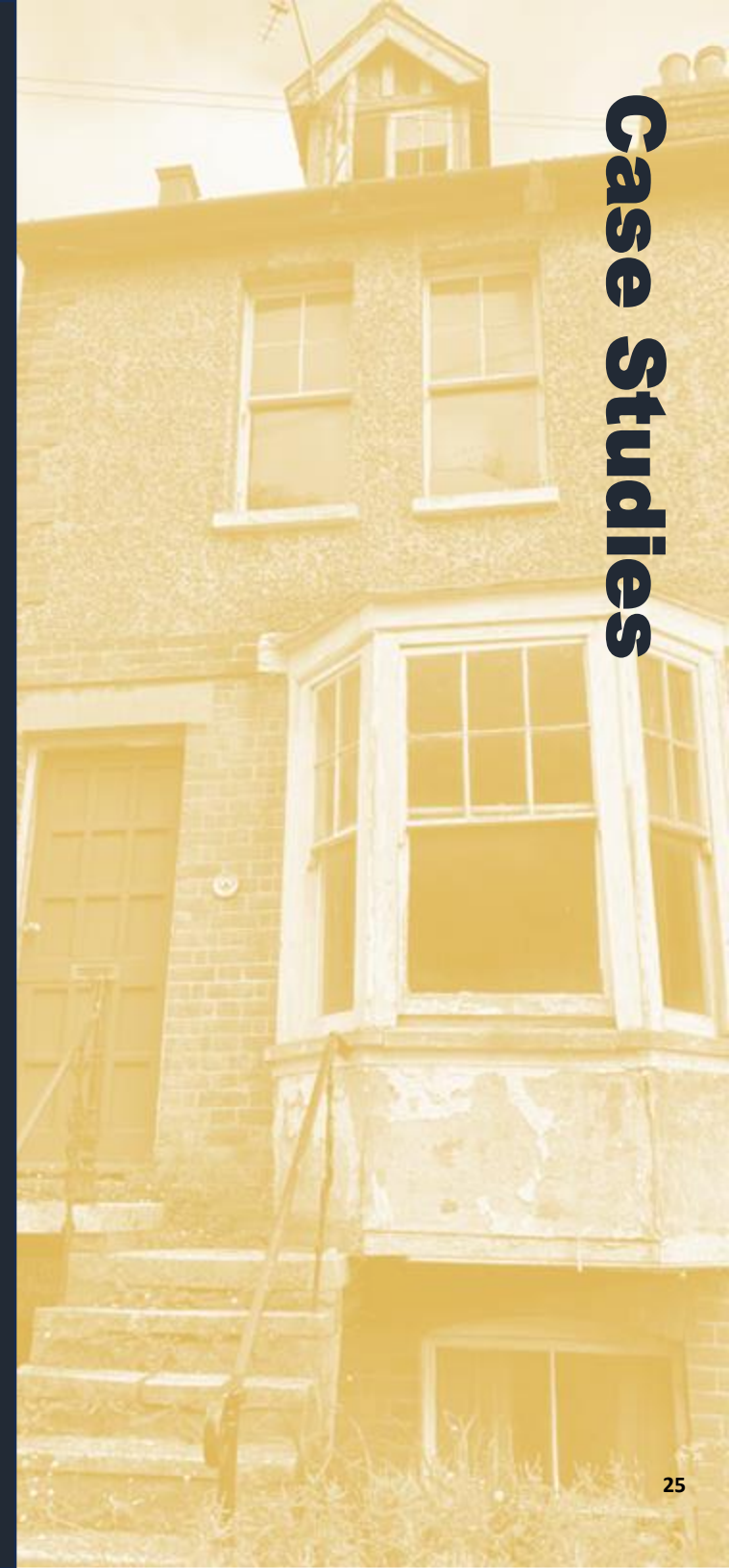
## Case Study 5, Council A (East Midlands)- Unoccupied Exemption Statistics

Following a review of its longest-standing unoccupied exemption cases, this authority identified its single longest case: a property that had been vacant for 294 months, equating to over 24 years. Classified under a Class F exemption, it was determined that the executor of the Will, being the sole beneficiary of the estate, had no incentive to apply for probate. Consequently, no council tax charges were applied, resulting in a revenue loss exceeding £35,000 over the period of this single property's vacancy.

An analysis of the top ten properties on the authority's unoccupied exemptions list revealed that six were classified under a Class F exemption, three under a Class E exemption, and one under a Class J exemption. Collectively, these properties had been unoccupied for a combined total of 1,002 months. Based on the relevant average council tax bands for the area, this equates to a potential revenue loss of £171,800.

## Case Study 6, Council E (West Midlands) – Unoccupied Exemption Example

Two semi-detached properties, owned by the same individual, have been exempt from Council Tax since 1 April 2000. With no ongoing works and no indication that the properties will be occupied in the near future, the local authority has incurred a potential revenue loss of approximately £55,000, based on the current average council tax bands for the area.



### Case Study 7, Council F (South-East)- Unoccupied Exemption Statistics

The statistics obtained from this local authority show that of their five longest-term exempt properties, none of them fall under an exemption F category. With three out of the five falling under a Class E exemption, their top five properties have been collectively empty for 560 months.

Resulting in a potential of lost revenue to the sum of £126,000, these examples are a clear indication that attention should be given to properties eligible to any category of exemption at an earlier stage, both to minimise the period of which properties can remain exempt, but also to maximise the potential revenue generated through the house being brought back into use as soon as possible. Whilst it is understood and accepted that many properties are restricted either by legal processes or financial constraints, it may be the case that owners, family members, executors or beneficiaries, may simply be lacking in time, knowledge or support that prevents these properties from being brought back into occupation sooner. Enabling the engagement process through the employment of an empty homes officer can reduce the time that such properties remain three-year also ensure that any costs incurred through the increased resource to do so are mitigated through the additional council tax revenue generated from initiating support at the earlier stages.

### Case Study 8, Council D (East Anglia) – Class F Exemption Appraisal

Since 2021, conducting annual reviews of Class F exempt council tax cases has proven highly effective in helping this council recover revenue and improve account accuracy. These reviews have enabled the council to identify cases where council tax could be charged, including instances where backdated payments were applicable.

In December 2023, a total of 255 Class F exempt cases were referred to Fraser and Fraser for further investigation. By March 2024, updates on 138 of these cases had been provided with significant results:

- 63 properties were found eligible for immediate council tax charges
- A further 75 cases, where probate had been granted but the exemption still applied, were scheduled for future council tax payments upon their exemption expiry.

This process highlights the importance of proactive property reviews and collaboration with experts like Fraser & Fraser in maximising council tax recovery and maintaining accurate account records.

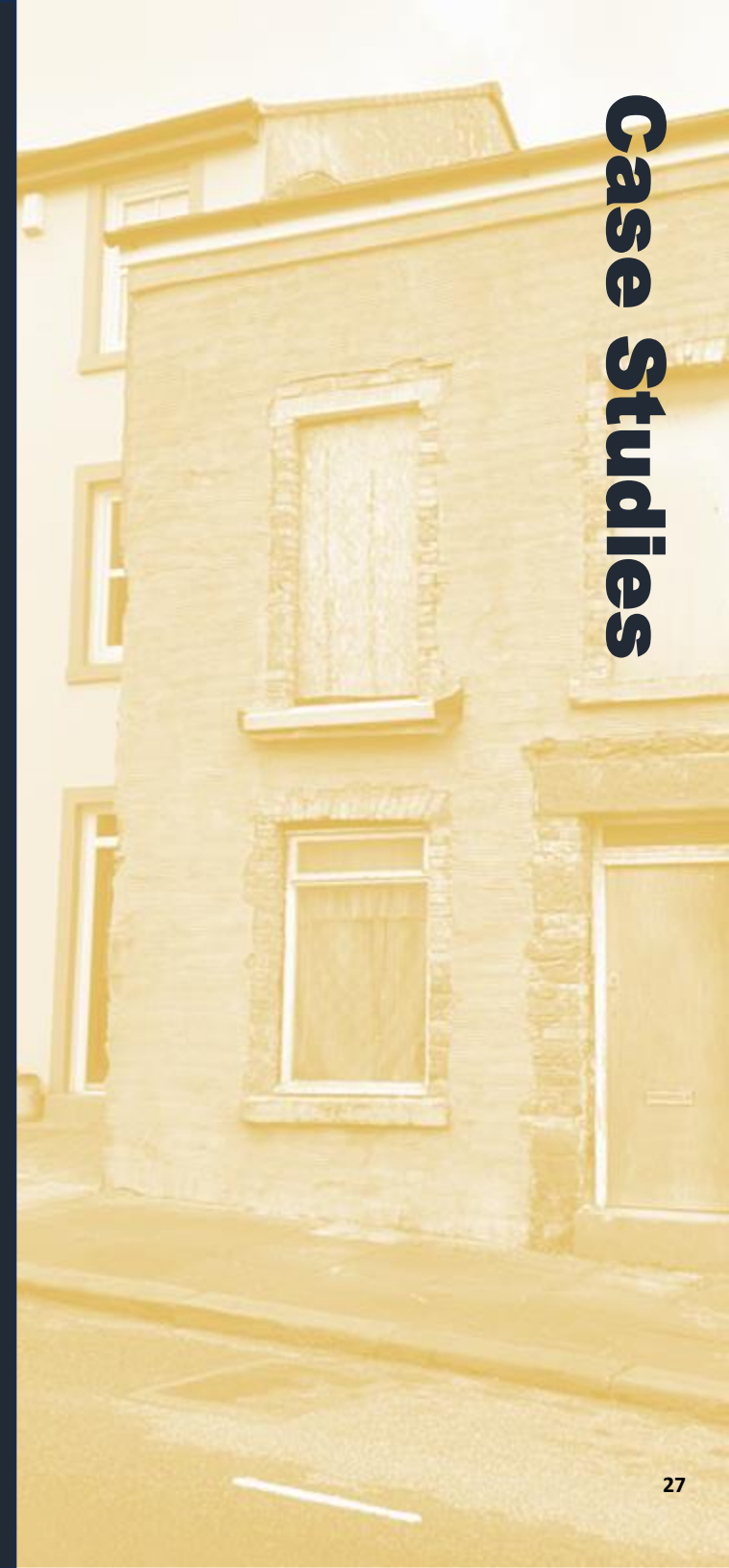
## Case Study 9, Council E (South) – Class F Exemption Appraisal

Over the past 12 months, this local authority have worked with Fraser & Fraser to tackle the issue of long-term empty properties that were not generating council tax revenue due to untraceable owners or unresolved probate matters. A total of 21 properties, identified by council tax departments as unresponsive cases, were referred for investigation. At the time of referral, none of the properties had probate in place. Fraser & Fraser applied their expertise in genealogical research to trace and provide contact details for the executors of all 21 estates. This crucial step enabled the council to engage with the executors and progress the probate process.

The following outcomes have since been achieved:

- Five of the 21 properties have been sold or occupied, becoming chargeable accounts and generating an estimated annual income of £10,000 (£2,000 per property).
- Eleven properties are expected to become chargeable accounts within 12 months, even if unsold, contributing a further £22,000 per year.
- Together, these 16 properties had previously remained empty for a combined total of 67 years
- Three properties are undergoing or have completed enforcement actions under the Housing Act to impose charges or enforce sale.
- One property is now home to a Ukrainian family, providing much-needed housing, although exempt from council tax.
- The final property is under the care of a solicitor handling the estate, but probate remains outstanding, and the property is not yet occupied.
- These five properties represent a combined empty period of 30 years.

In addition, Fraser & Fraser addressed four problematic properties associated with antisocial behaviour, overgrown gardens, and pest issues. These were mistakenly listed as occupied but were found to belong to deceased owners. Having traced the next of kin, obtaining probate and facilitating the sale of these properties, Fraser & Fraser were instrumental in generating £8,000 in annual council tax revenue for the authority. Through Fraser and Fraser's intervention, 21 previously non-chargeable properties, with a combined empty duration of 97 years, have been brought back into use. The resulting minimum annual council tax income of £40,000 highlights the significant impact of proactive property management and expert tracing services on local authority revenue generation and community improvement.



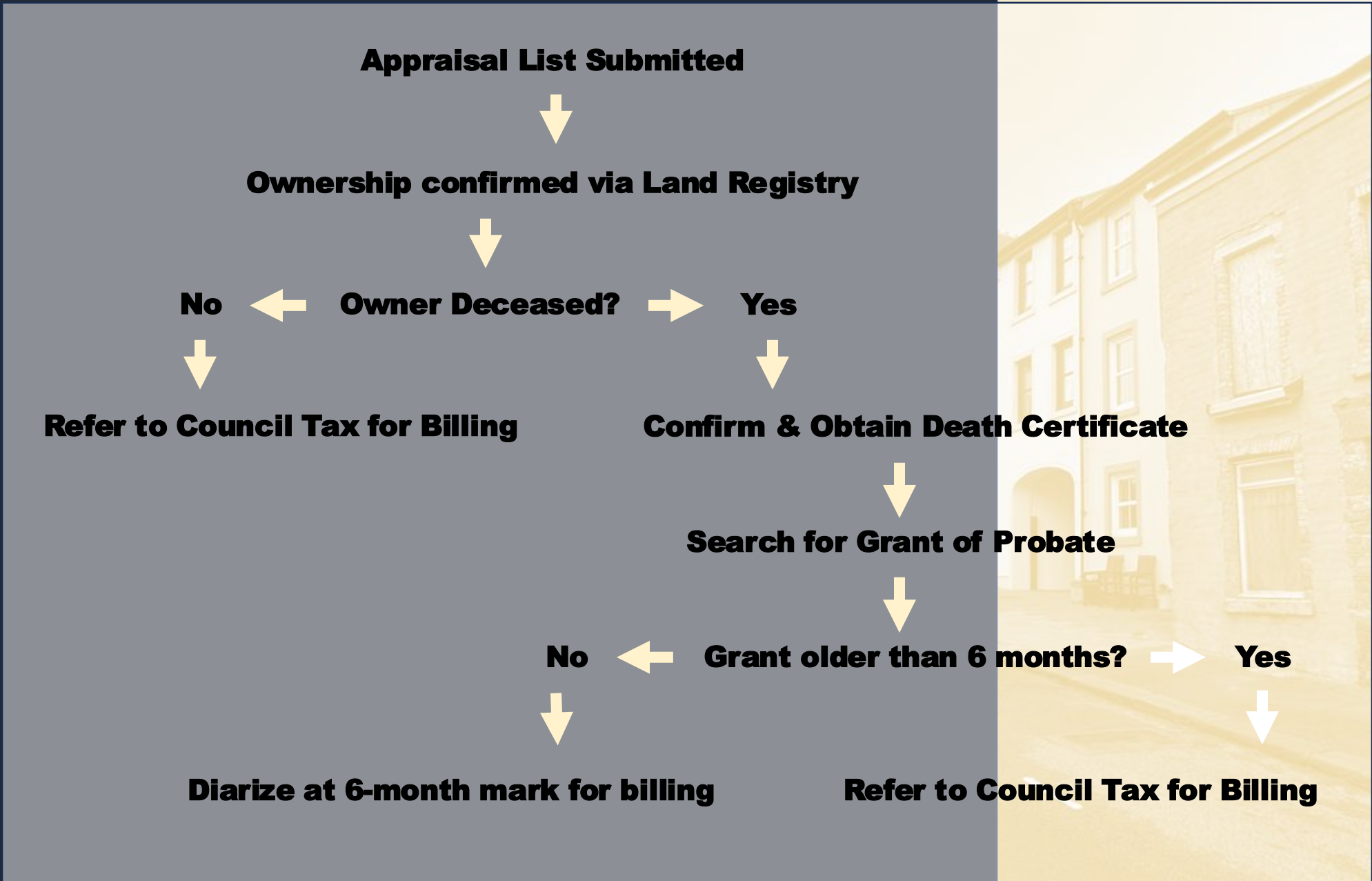
# Prerequisites & Process

Once the local authority has the required agreement in place, which may include procurement approval, data sharing agreement or simple contracted terms, the appraisal process can be undertaken. This includes:

- 1. Information Submission** | The process begins with the council providing a list of properties. The information included can vary widely, from detailed records to a simple address. Although the address alone can be sufficient, additional data such as assumed owner, council tax records or liability dates can be beneficial.
- 2. Ownership Confirmation** | Ownership of each property is confirmed through the HM Land Registry (HMLR). It is not uncommon for HMLR data to be outdated, or for properties to have changed ownership without the council's knowledge. Formal confirmation of ownership is therefore essential.
- 3. Deceased Owner Investigation** | If it is found that the owner is deceased, their date of death is confirmed, and a death certificate obtained. A search is then conducted for any grant of representation, whether probate or letters of administration. Depending on the age of the grant, further steps can be taken. If the grant is over six months old, the details are provided to the council so they can address any council tax arrears. If the grant is under six months old, the six-month mark is diarised for follow-up. The personal representatives (PRs), sometimes referred to as responsible people, are identified. Their contact details are shared with the Council's lead officer to enable further communication.
- 4. Next of Kin Engagement** | In cases where no grant of representation exists, efforts can be made by the authority to identify the next of kin and assess their willingness and ability to address the property. There are various reasons why action may have stalled. These include geographical distance, financial constraints such as the inability to afford clearance or repair costs, misunderstandings about inheriting debts, lack of awareness about the deceased's property, or even their death, family disputes, or hostility towards the council.
- 5. Support Services** | Support is offered to PRs and next of kin to overcome these challenges. This support may include managing the sale of the property, addressing logistical hurdles, or providing cost-effective clearance services. For example, services are offered at significantly reduced rates compared to typical quotes, with upfront costs covered and later recovered from the sale proceeds. Properties are made presentable for sale, with all agreements made in consultation with the personal representatives.

The following diagram represents the process for property undertaking Exemption F Case Appraisals, from the initial list of properties submitted for investigation, through the process to having council tax accounts updated and charges reinstated.

# Procedural Flowchart





**Part Four |**  
**Supporting You**

Local authorities face significant challenges when managing empty homes, particularly those with Class F exemptions. These exemptions, which apply to properties awaiting probate, can remain in place for years, resulting in lost revenue and missed opportunities to return properties to use. Many councils, however, remain sceptical of the process of reviewing these cases and engaging experts like Fraser & Fraser. However, real life case studies show that involving Fraser & Fraser in appraising Class F exempt properties offers substantial financial and operational benefits.

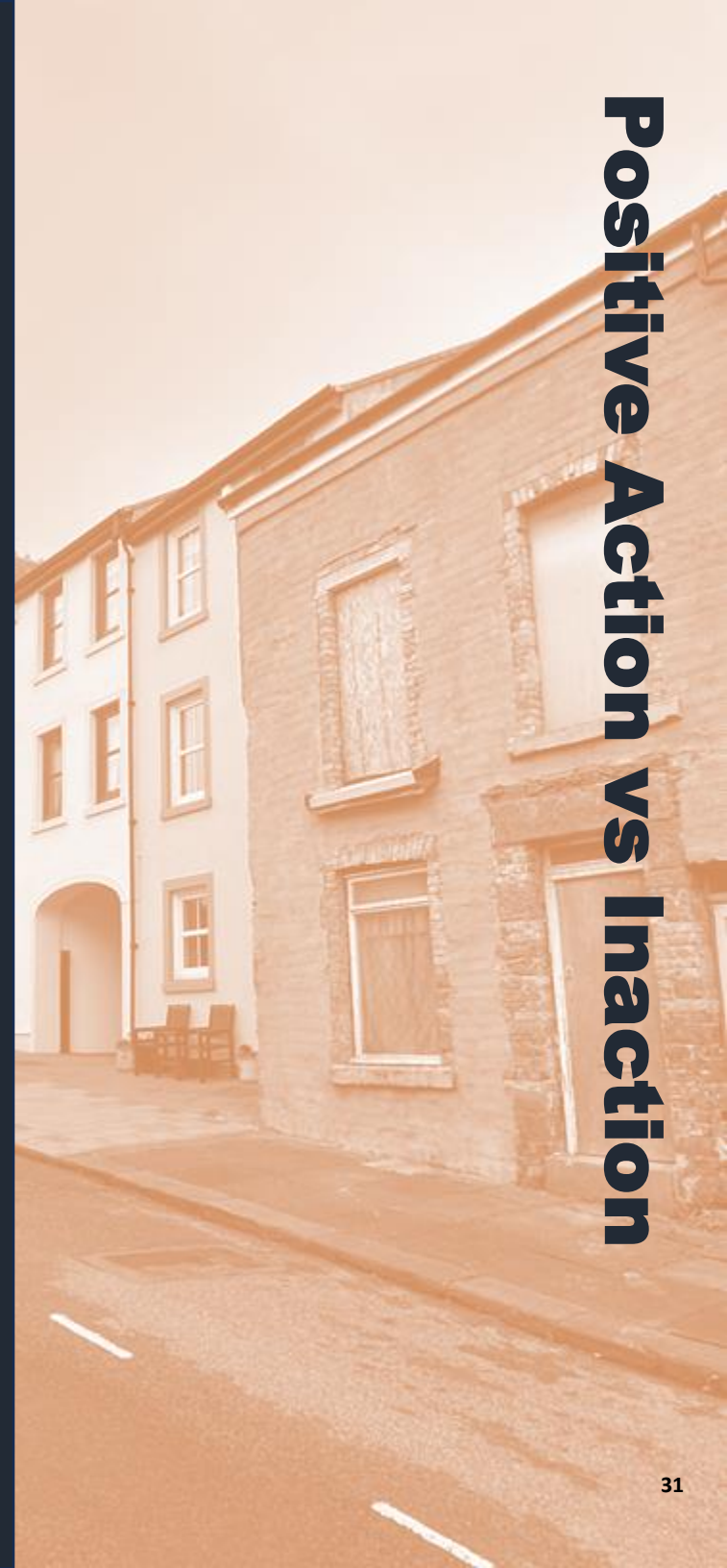
Fraser & Fraser's expertise in genealogical research and property tracing has proven invaluable in identifying opportunities where councils can charge council tax on properties that were previously exempt. In one notable case, a review of 255 Class F exempt properties led to the identification of 63 properties eligible for immediate council tax charges, generating substantial revenue for the local authority. Additionally, 75 properties where probate had been granted but exemptions still applied were scheduled for future council tax payments. This proactive approach ensures that council tax is charged at the earliest possible opportunity.

Financially, the benefits of this process are clear. In one example, 21 previously non-chargeable properties with a combined empty duration of 97 years generated an estimated £40,000 in annual council tax revenue after Fraser & Fraser's research and intervention. This process not only helps councils recover funds, but also ensures that properties are returned to the housing market or council taxbase as soon as practically possible. By addressing Class F exemptions promptly, local authorities can significantly reduce the period during which properties remain exempt, maximising the revenue generated from council tax.

Moreover, Fraser & Fraser's involvement helps local authorities update contact details for property owners and executors, ensuring that accurate records are maintained for future assessments. This reduces administrative errors and enhances efficiency, leading to long-term benefits in both revenue generation and data accuracy.

In summary, local authorities can no longer afford to overlook the value of reviewing Class F exempt properties. With financial losses mounting from extended exemptions, partnering with experts like Fraser & Fraser ensures that councils not only recover lost revenue but also contribute to resolving housing shortages and community issues. Can councils afford not to carry out these processes?

# Positive Action vs Inaction



Fraser & Fraser provides a comprehensive range of services to support local authorities in addressing issues related to empty homes, particularly those falling under Class F Council Tax exemptions, where properties left unoccupied following the death of the owner. Using their expertise in genealogy, probate, and estate administration, Fraser & Fraser assists councils in resolving complex cases involving unclaimed estates, enabling the recovery of council tax arrears and returning empty homes to use. Their key services offered include:

**Collaboration with Local Authorities** | With decades of experience, Fraser & Fraser works closely with councils to tackle long-term empty properties. They provide tailored solutions for cases where properties have been left vacant due to unresolved inheritance issues or untraceable owners. Their partnership support helps councils streamline processes, reduce administrative burdens, and bring properties back into productive use.

**Heir Tracing** | Fraser & Fraser specialises in identifying and locating the rightful heirs or beneficiaries of deceased estates. In cases where a property is exempt from council tax under Class F, they work to find next-of-kin who may have a legal interest in the property. This is crucial in facilitating the sale or transfer of the property, resolving ownership disputes, and enabling its return to use.

**Probate Support** | Properties under Class F exemptions often face complications due to the absence of a will or delays in probate. Fraser & Fraser can assist councils by navigating these legal challenges, including securing court orders when heirs are unwilling to engage. Through their support, Fraser & Fraser ensures that estates can be administered efficiently, allowing local authorities to recover unpaid council tax and address housing issues.

**Exempt F Appraisals** | Fraser & Fraser successfully support local authorities in managing properties eligible for Class F Council Tax exemptions by offering comprehensive appraisal services. Their team investigates the ownership of the property, identifies whether a valid Will exists, and checks the status of the Grant of Probate. This assessment enables the local authority to determine if the council tax exemption should continue or if council tax should be reinstated. Their expertise ensures efficient handling of large volumes of cases, allowing councils to focus on other priorities while ensuring properties are returned to productive use at the earliest opportunity.

**Debt Recovery** | Fraser & Fraser can play a vital role in recovering significant council tax arrears linked to empty properties. They liaise with beneficiaries or act as administrators of the estate, ensuring that outstanding debts are settled. By doing so, they alleviate financial pressure on councils while adhering to legal requirements.

**Reusing Empty Homes** | Beyond resolving financial matters, Fraser & Fraser's work contributes to easing housing shortages. By facilitating the sale or renovation of empty properties, they support councils in revitalising communities and ensuring that housing stock is used efficiently.

**Added Value** | Fraser & Fraser adopts a holistic approach that combines genealogical expertise, legal knowledge, and practical collaboration with councils. Their services not only address the financial implications of long-term empty homes but also help restore these properties to the housing market or community use. This dual focus on debt recovery and housing revitalisation makes them a trusted partner for local authorities seeking effective solutions.

**Our Fees** | Fraser & Fraser provides a range of services to local authorities to support efforts in managing empty homes and Council Tax exemptions, particularly in cases of properties under Class F exemptions due to probate. For local authorities, their services include property tracing, next-of-kin identification, and probate-related assistance, which can expedite the process of identifying heirs or executors and resolving legal obstacles associated with properties stuck in probate. Their support helps local authorities assess whether the properties should continue to benefit from exemptions or be brought back into use.

The costs of using Fraser & Fraser are tailored to the scope of the services required, and they are committed to providing transparency in their pricing with no hidden extras. Their service offerings ensure that local authorities can efficiently address long-term empty homes, particularly those impacted by probate delays, by helping to locate owners or executors, moving probate cases forward, and ensuring compliance with legal obligations. Fraser & Fraser's experience in this field also helps local authorities navigate sensitive issues and regulations, including GDPR, while maximising the recovery of Council Tax arrears where applicable

For more information and to explore how Fraser & Fraser can assist, visit [www.fraserandfraser.co.uk](http://www.fraserandfraser.co.uk)



# The Empty Homes Network | Our Services

The Empty Homes Network offers a wide range of services aimed at supporting local authorities and professionals working with empty properties. From membership benefits and training to consultancy and policy advocacy, EHN is committed to helping organisations improve their strategies, share knowledge and overcome challenges. By fostering collaboration, offering expert advice, and lobbying for better policies, EHN plays a vital role in addressing the issue of empty homes across the UK.

**Our Membership** | EHN offers two types of membership: Corporate and Subscriber. Corporate Membership, priced at £95 annually, provides access for entire organisations, regardless of size. Members benefit from networking with over 900 professionals in the empty homes, housing, and environmental health sectors. Corporate members have full access to a wide range of resources on the EHN website, including templates, guides, and policy updates. Additional benefits include discounted rates for training courses and event registration, as well as access to online forums where members can share ideas and seek advice. For those seeking a more basic level of engagement, Subscriber Membership is free and provides updates on key empty homes news and developments. However, access to the full range of online resources and community features is limited to Corporate members.

**Our Training Services** | EHN offers a comprehensive training programme aimed at developing professionals' expertise in managing empty properties. The cornerstone of the training offering is the "Introduction to Empty Homes" course, a one-day session that covers essential topics such as setting up an empty homes service, managing casework, exploring owner options and understanding enforcement. This course is designed for those new to the field and provides a practical foundation for tackling the challenges of empty homes work.

EHN also offers additional specialised courses, including topics like managing empty dwelling orders, dealing with hoarding disorder, and advanced enforcement strategies. These courses are led by industry experts, ensuring that participants receive high-quality, experience-based training.

**Advocacy and Policy Influence** | As part of its mission to improve the empty homes field, EHN plays a critical role in advocating for policy changes at both the local and national levels. The Network represents its members' views, ensuring that the needs and challenges faced by empty homes practitioners are heard by policymakers. Through lobbying efforts, EHN works to influence government decisions, ensuring that empty homes work receives the attention and support it deserves.

**Our Consultancy Services** | EHN offers bespoke consultancy services to councils that have already established empty homes functions. These services are tailored to address specific needs and challenges, with a focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of existing programmes. One of the key offerings is the Empty Homes Service MOT, which provides an in-depth review of a council's empty homes service. This evaluation identifies areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, helping councils refine their approach and achieve better outcomes.

Additional consultancy services include priority caseload action plans, strategy writing and updates, and service reviews. EHN also helps councils develop "Invest to Save" proposals, which focus on long-term cost savings through improved efficiency and service delivery.

**Support for New and Existing Services** | For councils just starting their empty homes programmes, EHN offers a comprehensive front-to-back service. This includes everything from developing strategies and policies to recruiting staff and setting up fully functional services. EHN's experts guide councils through every stage, ensuring they have the right infrastructure, resources, and knowledge to succeed. In addition to setting up new services, EHN offers job advertising services, helping councils find the right candidates for empty homes officer positions. By utilising EHN's online platforms such as the website and LinkedIn pages, councils can effectively target professionals with the experience needed to make an immediate impact.

For councils experiencing staff turnover, EHN offers officer role infill services. This ensures that temporary cover is available while new officers are recruited and trained. EHN also assists councils in developing and maintaining empty homes databases, helping officers manage casework more effectively by prioritising tasks and tracking progress.

**Our Annual National Conference** | The Annual National Conference is one of the key highlights of EHN's services. It brings together empty homes, housing, and environmental health professionals from across the UK for networking, knowledge-sharing, and learning. With over 150 delegates attending regularly, the conference features expert speakers, including policymakers, industry leaders, politicians, and media figures like Matt Allwright from the BBC.

The event covers current issues in the empty homes sector, shares best practices, and provides valuable insights to help professionals in their work. The conference also offers delegates the chance to collaborate and discuss solutions to shared challenges with colleagues from across the country.



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