

Email exchange between IPF and NAEPP

December 2008

From: Slattery, Eleanor [mailto:eleanor.slattery@ipf.co.uk]

Sent: 15 December 2008 11:38

To: admin@naepp.org.uk

Subject: Housing Enquiry - BV64

To Whom It May Concern

I am enquiring into whether NAEPP plan to collect the discontinued BVPI BV64 in 2008/09.

The reason for my enquiry is because I run the Housing statistics at CIPFAStats which involve three housing questionnaires. Annually we hold working parties to review these. In this meeting the BVPIs which have been discontinued were discussed. It was agreed necessary that BV64 should still be collected and in the interests of reducing the burden I wanted to check that if you collected this before adding this to our questionnaire, please see action point 4 of the minutes attached.

It would be much appreciated if you could look into this.

Kind Regards,

Ellen

Ellen Slattery

Data Analyst

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(NAEPP REPLY)

From: NAEPP admin [mailto:admin@naepp.org.uk]

Sent: 18 December 2008 07:48

To: 'Slattery, Eleanor'

Subject: RE: Housing Enquiry - BV64

Dear Eleanor

Thanks for contacting NAEPP and for your interest in the collection of empty homes activity data.

The short answer to your question is that NAEPP is very keen for statistical information about the efforts of local authorities to tackle empty homes to be collected. We have made representations to CLG to this effect and requested them to include relevant fields on the revised HSSA form.

(We also challenged the removal of the BVPI64 field from the 2007-08 return as this was clearly premature. The CLG actually gave completely spurious grounds for removing the field from the 2007-08 return, claiming that the BVPI was no longer being collected when clearly it was. I pointed out that the decision had no basis in fact during the brief consultation period on the 2007-08 return - but to no avail. The knock-on effect was that the much wider and more thorough consultation involved in the major review of housing forms was able to proceed without the question of reporting LA activity on empty homes needing to come up: there was no need to present a proposal to remove statistical reporting of empty homes activity as the relevant field had already been removed from the HSSA form. It is difficult not to see this episode as indicative of some element of institutional bias against empty homes work within some quarters of the CLG, given that no other data was treated in this way despite the fact other BVs were also being removed. But clearly other parts of the CLG are committed enough to the empty homes agenda as we have seen through many policy initiatives over recent years.)

We are not in the position where we can "collect" statistics ourselves in a systematic way - as we do not have the authority or status to do so and it might adversely affect our position if we attempted to arrogate to ourselves such a role. Nevertheless we are promoting the use of the old BVPI Guidelines (modified as may be) as the basis of reporting empty homes work and it is clear that some NAEPP members are going to continue to collect the relevant information. We have considered benchmarking and an initial paper was produced a fair while ago but has not been followed up: we will revisit this shortly. It seems to us self-evident that empty homes stand prominently enough in the public eye to warrant local authorities reporting what they do about them; and the government's view that empty homes work should be given priority in local housing strategies would tend to suggest that the government ought to be the one collecting relevant statistics as they do through Pie HSSA BPSA etc etc in respect of other housing activities.

I would like to do provide more detail than what is outlined above but I am caught up in the pre-Christmas rush at the moment. Is there a deadline by which a fuller reply might be given touching on some other aspects (this might still be within the next few days)? I am copying this to my colleague Graham Everett of Watford Borough Council as he has a special remit within NAEPP around BVPI64 (and its successors!)

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

David Gibbens

National Association of Empty Property Practitioners (Admin)

Web: www.naepp.org.uk
