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'Long term voids' and 'Hard to Lets'

- How the discussion arose?
- What is long term? A definition
- Hard to Let
- Factors
- Time versus work
- Actions



Definition of Long Term

- Are you aware of an official - 21 no / 13 yes
 - DCLG LAHS - DCLG Local Authority Housing Statistics: 2012/13 (stat report guidance)

Vacant dwellings 'available for letting' includes :-

- Stock where previous tenant is no longer being charged rent and no works are required before a new tenant can move in;
- Stock that has been handed over from a contractor or maintenance section on completion of works, satisfactory for letting;
- Stock requiring normal maintenance/re-decoration work between lets including maintenance between tenants out and in.

Vacant dwellings 'not available for letting' includes :-

- Stock previously let, but which requires works before a new tenant which are more substantive than normal maintenance). This includes units where a contract for work has been let and works have not physically commenced and / or the property has not been handed over for letting or re-letting.
- Stock awaiting sale, provided they were not originally developed for sale.
- Stock that is not available for letting due to unauthorised occupation or because it is awaiting demolition.

Vacant dwellings are also split depending on how long the dwelling has been vacant –

- 'a' is for 0-6 weeks;
- 'b' for between 6 weeks and 6 months;
- and 'c' covers those that have been **long-term vacant** (over 6 months).

Definition



- BVPI / BV 212 - same as DCLG LAHS
- HouseMark / CIH – separates out Number of major works re-lets – similar to DCLG LAHS
- Audit Scotland – 2004 report focussing on low demand
- Internal

Internal 1



- Categories for 8,15, 22, 29 & 29 day plus - 29 day plus are longer term voids
- Longer than 3 months
- Over 10 weeks and any requiring major works
- 6 weeks once works completed with no sign of interest
- Requiring one major element or renewal e.g. rewire or kitchen
- unlet property considered unlikely to be re-let within a year – determined by Finance
- 5 refusals or 12 weeks
- Over 3 weeks

Internal 2



- During which the void is squatted; When a property is due to be handed over to the police, and when in use by the police; Where the Home Office takes over a property to use for asylum seekers regardless of whether it is occupied or not
- Over 20 working days
- Awaiting demolition
- Over 16 weeks
- All voids equally managed
- 'Anything not being turned around in the usual manner'

Hard to Let



- 'Long term' and 'hard to let' properties are one and the same
- Property type – bedsit / 1 bedroom – is this still appropriate?
- Bedsits with no parking nearby
- Location
- Refused 4 times or more
- Some have no 'hard to lets'
- We have no 'hard to let areas'
- Choice based lettings
- Neighbourhood / ASB
- Design

Issues / Factors



- Systems – 4 unable to track ‘long term voids’ and/or ‘hard to lets’
– seemed some difficulty in accessing figures
- Difference between void performance and void for rent loss
- Sheltered schemes
- Lettable standards
- Initiatives if area/street/block is emerging as difficult to let

- If long term are split should the same approach be taken for sickness or for costs

Actions



- What can we learn from the responses?
- Report to come out with all results
- Performance Networks definition
- Local definition
- Other requests?

PN Performance



| PI 20a | Average re-let times for local authority dwellings | 46 days |
|--------|--|---------|
| PI 20b | Average total number of days keys held by contractor | 18 days |

Building Maintenance template



- Open to all local authorities
- Submitted in 2014 – NCH, Gateshead, D&G, Kirklees
- No cost to submit – Flintshire, Berneslai, Sheffield, East Riding
- £2055 – Stockport, Warwick, Leeds



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