

Empty Homes Week 2014

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Hundreds of empty homes are being brought back into use every year in Bristol, thanks to action by the local authority.

As we head in to Empty Homes Week (1st-5th December) Bristol City Council are keen to encourage owners of empty homes to bring their properties back into use to help manage the high housing need in the city.

The Council has a host of ways to help property owners refurbish and prepare their properties ready to sell or let.

One recent success story in Bristol involved a property in St Pauls which has recently been let to a family for an affordable rent.

Flats over shops are often left vacant and this empty home was leased from its owner by local housing association Ashley Community Housing (ACH) earlier in the year.

With the support of Bristol City Council, ACH made a successful bid to the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) for funds to refurbish the empty flat.

Councillor Brenda Massey, Assistant Mayor with responsibility for people said: "Demand for housing in Bristol is extremely high and we cannot afford to let homes lie empty while there is such a high housing need.

"The Council has been working hard for many years to bring empty properties back into use – by supporting owners to refurbish and sell or rent these homes and taking firm compulsory purchase action where properties have remained empty for many years and owners have failed to respond to the Council's offers of help.

"The result has been a steady year-on-year fall in the proportion of privately owned homes that are empty in the city – although there is still more work to do."

A few doors along from this property Ashley Community Housing has leased two more poor-condition empty flats and is in the process of renovating them to produce two more affordable rented units, once again using HCA empty property funding.

As well as working to provide more much-needed housing accommodation in the city, ACH runs training schemes aimed at helping their tenants and individuals from their wider local community get into better paid and more rewarding employment.

Bristol City Council has joined up with ACH to identify appropriate properties for the scheme.

Fuad Mohamed, chief executive at Ashley Community Housing, said: "We're thrilled to have completed the first properties in our empty homes scheme. ACH's aim is to increase the number of houses available for rent for low income families by bringing properties back into use.

"Our tenants take an active role in the improvement and the refurbishment of the empty homes and gain the experience to help them secure employment. ACH have created construction skills training and work placement opportunities for them as part of the renovation and maintenance work.



Eileen Means and Fuad Mohamed from Ashley Housing and Councillor Brenda Massey welcome new tenant Laura Smith to her home

[Download a larger copy of the image](#)

Media enquiries

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"This is an innovative project which combines up skilling unemployed people and providing much needed homes. "

Bristol City Council is a member of the No Use Empty (West) partnership which is affiliated with Kent County Council's No Use Empty initiative.

While the approach of the partnership is to work with owners of empty homes in order to bring private empty houses back into use, where an owner refuses to engage, enforcement action will be considered up to and including compulsory purchase.

Details of help offered through the No Use Empty scheme are available at the No Use Empty (West) website at www.no-use-emptywest.co.uk

If you have a property that is currently sitting empty and would like some advice, please contact the Empty Property Unit on 0117 352 5010 or e-mail private.housing@bristol.gov.uk

Short link: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/node/25561>