

## **There's a housing crisis, but the number of empty homes in Enfield is the highest in nearly 20 years**



Government data shows there were over 4,500 empty homes across Enfield at the end of 2025, the highest number recorded in nearly 20 years.

Bringing empty homes back into use is not the one answer to Enfield's housing crisis. But it is one of the few levers that can add homes back into use relatively quickly, especially where homes have been empty for a long time or are owned by the Council.

## The number of empty homes is rising fast

There's been a sharp increase in the number of empty homes in Enfield over the last four to five years. In October 2025 there were:

- Overall vacant dwellings: **4,455** (including short-term empty homes), up from 3,626 the year before, an increase of 829 in a year.
- Long-term vacant homes: **1,943**, up from 1,563 the year before.
- Council-owned vacant homes: **457**, up from 312 the year before.

Some vacancy is normal. Homes can be empty between tenants, during probate, while being renovated, or because someone is moving. The big red flags are the marked increases in long-term vacancy and in the number of empty Council-owned homes.

To put this into context: if long-term and Council-owned empty homes were reduced just back to their long-term average, around 750 homes would be brought back into use. That is a significant number, particularly when around 3,500 households in Enfield are living in temporary accommodation.

Empty homes have been increasing across London. But Enfield is among the worst performers in Outer London. It has the second highest number of long-term empty homes, and the fourth highest level of Council-owned homes sitting empty.

## What the Council said it would do

In 2021, Enfield Council adopted its '**Empty Homes Strategy 2021-2026**', which recognised that bringing empty homes back into use can increase housing supply and reduce the blight associated with properties that have been left vacant for a long time.

*"There is a severe shortage of affordable homes in Enfield. Bringing empty homes back into use makes an important and vital contribution to local, affordable housing supply. In addition, tackling empty homes provides an opportunity to significantly improve neighbourhoods and the lives of local people."* **Enfield Council, July 2021**

The Council's '**Housing and Growth Strategy 2025-2030**' also emphasised the urgency of bringing empty homes back into use.

*“We urgently need to increase supply of good quality, private housing by bringing empty homes back into use. Empty homes are a blight on neighbourhoods and represent a wasted resource at a time of immense housing need.”* **Enfield Council, Enfield Housing and Growth Strategy**

The Empty Homes Strategy was supported by a budget of £200,000 per year. Early Council reports suggested it was helping to bring 40 to 50 empty homes per year back into use. That is better than nothing, but it is only a fraction of the annual increase in empty homes we are now seeing.

### **Has the Empty Homes Strategy been successful?**

Since the strategy was adopted, the number of long-term empty homes and empty Council-owned homes in Enfield have both risen faster than other Outer London boroughs and are now amongst the highest on record.

Despite this, there appears to have been very little public assessment of whether the Empty Homes Strategy has been working and what changes are needed.

This matters because progress was meant to be reported and scrutinised. It is reasonable to expect progress to be reported quarterly through the Council's performance reporting, alongside other key indicators, and then properly scrutinised each year by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel. We have not been able to find public reporting that shows this is happening in a meaningful way.

This is a familiar pattern in Enfield. Strategies are launched with good intentions, but then there is far too little follow-through, transparency, and scrutiny to show whether they are being delivered successfully, including whether they are value-for-money.

## The bottom line

Enfield's housing crisis is huge. There are far too many households living in overcrowded or temporary accommodation and reducing empty homes will not solve that on its own.

But the latest data shows empty homes are rising fast, and Council-owned empty homes have hit their highest level on record. Bringing homes back into use can make a meaningful difference in the short term, while wider solutions are pursued. It is worrying that the Council's Empty Homes Strategy appears to have slipped off the radar at exactly the moment it is needed most.

