



# Empty homes service review

September 2024

Our resident scrutiny group, InFocus, is a volunteer group of LiveWest residents that review and provide valuable feedback to help improve our services.

InFocus members come from across the South West and are led by a resident Chair and Vice Chair. The group examines complaints, performance information, policies and gather views

and experiences from LiveWest staff and residents to produce service reviews. Based on their findings, they create a report with recommendations for improvement. LiveWest service leaders review these recommendations and put them into action, explaining which can be implemented and why others cannot. InFocus ensures recommendations are tracked and actioned, ensuring resident driven improvements are completed.

## Which service was this review about?

As a group, InFocus decided to review how LiveWest deliver services around the empty homes process from when a property becomes empty to when the home is ready for re-let. In the March 2024 performance data for satisfaction with condition of home for re-lets was 81.92% which is below the target of 85%. We wanted to investigate whether the empty homes process is working for both the business and customers and if there are recommendations that can be made by us to ensure this service is the best it can be, which would hopefully increase satisfaction levels.

## Who was involved in the review?

The InFocus service review group carried out the report and spoke to key staff members to gain feedback on the repairs service. They also worked with the Friends of InFocus resident subgroup to gather their feedback and experiences.

## What were the key recommendations for improvements and what has LiveWest changed as a result?

### InFocus recommended:

**Develop data accuracy in the empty home process:** Ensure that all data collected during the empty home process, such as meter numbers and heating system information, is accurately recorded.

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**Provide enhanced training for empty home operatives:** Invest in further training and development of empty home multi-skilled operatives, particularly in electrical works, to create efficiencies.

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**Improve communication between Empty Homes teams and Housing Officers:** Empty Homes teams and Housing Officers need better communication about upcoming empty home work to ensure potential tenants are informed.

### LiveWest did:

Currently, empty home data is available across multiple internal systems. A project is underway to consolidate this data into a single system, Cx Assets, by June 2025.

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We are exploring the possibility of scheduling multi-skilled technicians and electricians together for empty home projects.

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The existing joint inspection process when a home becomes empty, the storage of key documents and information, and weekly catch ups between key colleagues across teams in Property Services and Neighbourhoods will be re-communicated to ensure understanding.



## InFocus recommended:

**Define a policy for handling items left in empty homes:** Have a defined policy on gifting and disposal of items left in the property to ensure consistency across all areas (Decision on bigger roll-out of leaving carpets across all areas needed).

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**Conduct inspections for ready-to-let properties:** Ensure that at least 10% of all ready to let properties are inspected to ensure consistency in meeting the standard, and identify where team members need further training, if necessary.

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**Standardise cleaning procedure for empty homes:** Develop a policy across all areas for the final cleaning of empty homes prior to handing over for re-let.

## LiveWest did:

There is already a LiveWest Gifting Procedure for Non-Standard Items (June 2023).

Decision confirmed following successful pilot in Cornwall that floor coverings and carpets to be left for incoming customer (where reasonably practicable) across all regions.

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We have introduced a target for teams to post-inspect a minimum of 80% of ready-to-let properties.

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An empty homes cleaning specification has been used to re-tender the cleaning contracts and has recently been rolled out.

## Would you like to be involved in the next review and have your say on LiveWest services?

Help us to improve our services by getting involved and working together to make a positive change for all LiveWest residents. Visit our website to find out how you can get involved.



[livewest.co.uk/my-community/get-involved](https://livewest.co.uk/my-community/get-involved)

