

EMPTY PROPERTY (OWNER OCCUPATION) GRANT

A limited number of grants are available – up to 31 March 2008 - to owners who want to use an empty property (or part of an empty property) as their main home and need financial help to make the property habitable.

Can I get a grant?

Preference will be given to applicants who:

- own no other property
- wish to move to a larger property because of increase in family size/inadequate space
- live with family/friends, in social housing, or in the private rented sector

First time buyers: This grant can also be used by potential owners who fit the above criteria and who would like to buy an empty property to renovate and use as their main home.

How much grant will I get?

A maximum of £25,000 subject to a reasonable cost assessment. Whilst approval will take place before works start, the grant will only be paid after the work has been carried out and evidence is provided (see grant conditions below).

If you wish to convert a larger property, and move into one of the units, then grant aid will be given for that unit only.

Key workers will be eligible to an additional £10,000. A key worker for these purposes is defined as ‘an employed person with a local connection i.e. working or living in the area and serving a community in the area or nearby. With a maximum household income of £60K’.

Note: Grant funding will have a 20 year grant condition, so that if you sell the property, or transfer the deeds within this time, the grant must be re-paid. In addition, if you allow the property to fall vacant unreasonably*, the grant will have to be repaid. It will also have a 5 year grant condition, that the property must remain occupied by you or your immediate family within that time.

*Reasonableness will be judged by having reference to The Housing (Empty Dwelling Management Orders) Prescribed Exceptions and Requirements (England) Order 2006.

Further eligibility guidance

- The property must have been empty for at least one year.
- An applicant must be the owner of the property and responsible for all structural repairs.
- The property must fall below the decent homes standard.
- If necessary, the applicant must have planning permission for proposed works or an established use certificate.

What conditions apply to the grant?

- The decent homes standard and additional energy efficiency measures must be met on completion of the works.
- The builder who estimated for the works on application must carry out the works. If you need to change the builder, you should contact the grant officer dealing with the case.
- Interim payments of a minimum of £10,000 or 50% of the works completed can be applied for. Once approved, the grant cannot be increased to cover unforeseen works.
- The council may insist that applicants should employ an architect or surveyor to supervise the project.
- The grant will be re-payable to the council if the property is sold or the deeds transferred within 20 years.
- On completion of the works a final inspection will be carried out to ensure all repairs detailed in the schedule of work have been satisfactorily completed. Invoices for the work carried out will need to be produced to claim the grant. The council does not bear any responsibility for the quality of the work. It is therefore important that the owner monitors the work and takes up any concerns directly with the builder or agent.
- Works should be started within 3 months and completed within 9 months of grant approval. To claim the grant a copy of the builder's final account with all relevant certificates e.g. building control, gas/electrical certificates, roof/damp guarantees etc should be provided on completion.

WORK SHOULD NOT START UNTIL YOU RECEIVE FORMAL APPROVAL IN WRITING.

** all grants are subject to the availability of funding.

To apply for an empty property (owner occupation) grant

You should fill out the 'empty property (owner occupation) grant initial enquiry form', which will be sent to you on request.

Then, if it appears you will be eligible for a grant, an officer will contact you to arrange a visit to ensure your property qualifies for a grant. If it is approved for inclusion in the scheme, a full application form will be sent to you.

Other grants that may be available

There are other grants available if you are registered disabled, for energy efficiency measures and if the property is empty and you want to let it to the council or one of their partners. Contact us for further information.

Contact us:

Environmental Health, Private Sector Housing Team

tel: 020 8359 7997

email: emptyproperties@barnet.gov.uk

write to: Barnet Council, Building 4, North London Business Park,
Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP.