



The Empty Homes Agency is an independent campaigning charity, which exists to highlight the waste of empty property in England and works with others to devise and promote sustainable solutions to bring empty property back into use.

The Empty Homes Agency Ltd
Downstream Building
1 London Bridge
London
SE1 9BG
Phone: 020 7022 1870
Fax: 020 7681 3214
Email: info@emptyhomes.com

The Empty Homes Agency Volunteer Pack

The Empty Homes Agency : Who We Are

The Agency is a housing association with charitable status, although we neither own nor manage any empty property.

The Empty Homes Agency is an independent campaigning charity, which exists to highlight the waste of empty property in England and works with others to devise and promote sustainable solutions to bring empty property back into use.

The Reason Why We Exist:

We were set up in 1992 in response to the high number of empty properties and the crisis with homelessness - something had to be done!

In the early days we worked on bringing individual empty properties back into use and encouraged local authorities to implement empty property strategies.

What We Do

The Agency as an independent campaigning charity, aims to:

- Raise Awareness of the potential of empty homes in England to meet housing need
- Devise and promote, with others, sustainable solutions that will bring empty homes back into use

We seek to achieve these goals by working at two levels:

- Nationally - by campaigning, lobbying and communicating for policy change

Lobbying the Government and political parties, the Agency presses for changes in housing policy and the law to encourage owners to bring their homes back into use.

Working with the Government, the Agency provides information on the empty homes situation and develops measures to tackle the problem.

Keeping the scandal of empty homes in the public eye, by running campaigns, publishing research, organising seminars and conferences, and holding National and London Weeks Of Action.

Recognising the good work of local authorities and housing associations, by holding annual awards for good practice around the country.



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- Locally - by providing support to local authorities, housing associations, community group, which want to bring empty homes back into use

Aiding the regeneration of communities, by ensuring their economic stability, through our work with local authorities.

Persuading local authorities to adopt Empty Property Strategies and to appoint Empty Property Officers, which over 200 councils have done and they are bringing tens of thousands of empty properties back each year.

Enlisting the support of the community, by launching the Low Demand Community Support project and the London project.

Supporting owners of empty homes, the Agency can advise owners of the available options for putting their homes to use.

How We Do It

Our work can be broken down into the following projects:

- Campaigns - Promoting national campaigns that will help to bring empty homes back into use (eg: compulsory leasing campaign), Building alliances to support our campaigns, Briefing politicians on the policy opportunities of empty homes
- Communications - Maintaining an up to date website, Producing a monthly e-newsletter, Responding to general information requests where possible
- Community - Providing support and resources to communities coping with empty homes in areas of low demand for housing, Disseminating good practice in tackling the problem of low demand
- Local Authorities - Providing information for practitioners and resources on the web site, Offering advice and support to local authorities and Regional Housing Boards
- London Project - Running and promoting a telephone and e-mail hotline for reporting empty property in the capital, Supporting the London Empty Property Officers' Forum
- Refugee Support - Providing support to refugee community housing associations (RCHAs) seeking to use empty homes for their clients, Assisting RCHAs in networking and developing links in the sector
- RSLs - Providing support and advice to RSLs running private sector leasing schemes on formerly empty homes, Encouraging more RSLs to set-up such schemes

All of our projects focus on disseminating good practice to their target audience to help bring more empty homes back into use.



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The Empty Homes Agency - Volunteer Job Description

Job Description for: Volunteer

Reports to: Communications Manager / CEO

Accountable to: Chief Executive Officer

Contract: To Be Decided

Hours: To Be Decided

Remuneration: Travel and lunch expenses

Job purpose:

- To provide administrative assistance and co-ordinate identified tasks in liaison with communications manager.

Duties include:

- **Online Resource maintenance:** To assist in the data entry and maintenance of online resources (training provided)
- **Telephone:** Answer and deal as appropriate with incoming telephone calls.
- **Post:** Assist with any large mail shots, eg briefing notes, franking mail, etc.
- **Enquiries:** Respond to telephone enquiries as appropriate, send out information, eg brochures, publications, HIP figures and photographs.
- **Database maintenance:** Assist in maintenance of ACT 2000 Database (training provided).
- **Other duties:** As requested by the Communications Manager or other senior members of staff. May include for e.g. research, events co-ordination
- **Flexibility:** Willingness to show flexibility in working hours (eg conferences and special events)



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Person Specification

Essential:

- Flexible, willing to help out
- Good telephone manner
- Organisational skills
- Sense of Humour

Desirable:

- Ability to work on own initiative.
- Previous office experience
- IT literate and intuitive with an ability to find solutions to problems
- Experience of general Microsoft Office packages plus database systems, particularly ACT.
- Commitment to campaign

Volunteer Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1. The Empty Homes Agency

The Agency is a housing association with charitable status, although we neither own or manage any empty property. The Empty Homes Agency is an independent campaigning charity, which exists to highlight the waste of empty property in England and works with others to devise and promote solutions to bring empty property back into use. We were set up in 1992 in response to the high number of empty properties and the crisis with homelessness. We work with the Government, Local Authorities, Housing Associations and other empty property practitioners. Our offices are situated at 195-197 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 5NE. Our office hours are 9am – 5pm.

- 1.2** The Empty Homes Agency (EHA) recognises that there can be situations in which Volunteers help can make an appropriate and significant contribution to the work and service objectives of the Empty Homes Agency. This document, the *Empty Homes Agency Volunteer Policy*, defines the term and sets out the principles, practices and procedures which the Empty Homes Agency will follow in the appointment, management and control of Volunteers.



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2.0 Definition

2.1 Volunteers may be described as individuals who put their experience, knowledge and skills at the disposal of an organisation, free of charge, with the primary aim of helping the organisation to achieve its service objectives and or with the primary aim of bringing some benefit to the local community. In this sense, Volunteers are to be distinguished from student, other work placements and secondees, where the primary aim is usually for the student or secondee to obtain certain work experience or to carry out work or research in certain areas.

3.0 Principles

3.1 In appointing Volunteers the Empty Homes Agency will adhere to the following principles:-

- (a) Volunteers will not be used to do the work of paid staff during an industrial dispute;
- (b) current Empty Homes Agency employees will not be engaged as Volunteers at the Empty Homes Agency.

4.0 Recruitment of Volunteers

4.1 Volunteers will be selected through the following process:

4.2 STEP 1:

The following items must be agreed by the Director, in consultation with the trade union, before a proposed Volunteer placement at the Empty Homes Agency is implemented:-

- (a) a *Role Description*, outlining the specific tasks, responsibilities and reporting lines of the Volunteer;
- (b) *terms and conditions* including the duration, hours, expenses, insurance, etc., relating to the placement;
- (c) a *Specification*, outlining the relevant experience, skills, knowledge, abilities and equal opportunity awareness necessary to carry out the role effectively.

4.3 STEP 2:

The prospective Volunteer will be invited to a informal meeting with the intended line manager and the Director or her/his representative. Using the *Role Outline* and the *Specification* the parties will engage in a two-way discussion of the proposed role, of its requirements and of each other's expectations, with a view to assessing mutual suitability. Following the meeting the two Empty Homes Agency representatives will make a decision within one week regarding the individual's suitability for the particular role.

4.4 STEP 3:

Prior to commencing their placement at the Empty Homes Agency successful Volunteers must



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provide a reference from a suitable person (excluding relations) attesting to their character and suitability for the position.

4.5 STEP 4:

Prior to commencing their placement at the Empty Homes Agency each successful Volunteer shall be formally allocated to a particular employee who will manage and supervise the Volunteer throughout the duration of her/his placement at the Empty Homes Agency. The manager's responsibilities will include ensuring that the Volunteer receives the following:

- (i) a planned induction to the Empty Homes Agency;
- (ii) regular supervision and support sessions;
- (iii) positive feedback on their contribution;
- (iv) adequate office accommodation, equipment and services to perform their tasks effectively.

5.0 Equal Opportunities

5.1 The Empty Homes Agency recognises that the activity of volunteering can provide a volunteer with experiences and opportunities for self and career development. In accordance with the Empty Homes Agency's Equal Opportunity Policy, volunteer placements at the Empty Homes Agency will be therefore be open to individuals irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age or marital status. In addition, the *Specification* must set out the equal opportunity dimension and any specific equality requirements of the role. Where, during the informal Meeting (paragraph 4.3) a prospective Volunteer demonstrates hostility to, or a clear lack of support for equal opportunity policy, she/he will be deemed automatically to be unsuitable for a volunteer position at the Empty Homes Agency.

6.0 Termination

6.1 Where appropriate, the role and placement of the Volunteer may be terminated by the Director at one week's notice, or immediately, where behaviour equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred. In all cases the Volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken. The Director will report any such terminations to the Chair of the Executive Committee.

7.0 Discipline and Grievance

7.1 Volunteers will not be subject to the Empty Homes Agency's disciplinary procedures. Correspondingly, Volunteers will not have access to the Empty Homes Agency's grievance procedures. However, Volunteers will be entitled to use the Empty Homes Agency's Complaints Procedure. Where appropriate, the complaint will be investigated fully by the Director or her/his representative.

8.0 Expenses



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8.1 Volunteers will be entitled to travel expenses, and subsistence allowance, but may not receive payment for any reason.

9.0 Insurance

9.1 Volunteers will be covered by the Empty Homes Agency's employers public liability, professional indemnity where appropriate, and personal accident insurance.

10.0 Training and Involvement

10.1 Where a Volunteer is based at the Empty Homes Agency on a day to day basis she/he will be expected to be involved and included in general staff activities, such a staff meetings and to have general access to the Empty Homes Agency offices via the fob system. Such Volunteers may also be eligible for training which will be decided upon by the Line Manager and the Director.

11.0 Monitoring and Review

11.1 It will be the responsibility of the Director to regularly review the operation of the Empty Homes Agency's Volunteer Policy to ensure that it is in accordance with the Empty Homes Agency's Equal Opportunity Policy.

What To Do Next

If you are interested in volunteering please contact the Empty Homes Agency by either:

Writing:

Shashi Ioannides
Communications Manager
Empty Homes Agency
195-197 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 5NE

Email:

Shashi.ioannides@emptyhomes.com

Please include your CV and when you are available to volunteer.