



## **Response to the Rating of Empty Homes**

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## **Introduction**

The work of Help the Aged is about facilitating and enabling older people to remain in control of their lives. We work through a partnership approach with older people as equal partners. In addition, we also work with other agencies through an age sector approach to influence future policies. The work is aimed towards practical services as well as campaigning and lobbying on a range of issues. Older people are directly involved in this work. The core values which underpin our work are combating poverty, defeating ageism, reducing isolation and promoting quality in care.

## **General Comments**

With regards to empty properties, we agree that allowances such as Housing Benefit, Lone Pensioner Allowance and Disabled Person's Allowance should discontinue.

It is our policy position that an unoccupied property should be exempt from rates when left empty due to the resident needing hospital or residential care as is the case in Great Britain. We welcome the suggestion that this will be the case but would like clarification as to whether any time restrictions will apply in these circumstances.

If unoccupied properties are to be exempt from rates for the above reason, this will need to be highlighted in any publicity regarding the new arrangements. Entering residential care or hospital in itself can be a stressful experience for older people, without the additional worry of paying rates on an empty home.