Voids and Allocations Report

Contents

Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of void trends in council-owned housing over the past six financial years (2019/20 to 2024/25), using data from the QL housing management system. The primary objective is to identify patterns in tenancy terminations to inform strategic planning, resource allocation, and service delivery improvements.

Key Findings

- **Decline in Void Numbers**: Total voids have decreased by approximately **50%**, from 526 in 2019/20 to 266 in 2024/25, indicating improved tenancy sustainment and reduced turnover.
- **Primary Cause – Deceased Tenants**: The most common reason for voids remains the **death of tenants**, accounting for **31.5%** of all cases. However, these have declined from 150 in 2019/20 to 82 in 2024/25, likely due to demographic shifts and improved succession planning.
- **Demographic Insights**:
    - Older tenants (aged **63+**) dominate deceased-related voids.
    - A significant proportion of deceased tenants were **single or widowed**, often without successors.
    - The tenant base is predominantly **White British (84%)**, with limited ethnic diversity and notable gaps in demographic data (e.g., 48% unknown marital status).
- **Property Types**:
    - **Flats** (ground and upper floor) account for the majority of voids, followed by **semi-detached houses** and **bungalows**.
    - **Bedsits** and **terraced houses** show lower but persistent turnover, with bedsits facing re-letting challenges due to low demand and compliance issues.
- **Re-let Times**:
    - Average re-let times for deceased-related voids have improved from **74 days in 2019/20 to 55 days in 2024/25**.
    - **Bedsits** have the longest re-let times, while **flats and bungalows** perform best due to high demand and better condition.
- **Neighbourhood Trends**:
    - All five neighbourhoods show a **decline in voids due to deceased tenants**, with convergence in turnover rates across areas by 2024/25.
- **Housing Needs**:
    - Most voids occurred in **general needs** and **mobility-adapted** properties, reflecting the aging tenant population.
    - **Sheltered housing** remains significant, while **extra care** and **wheelchair-adapted** properties show minimal turnover.

COVID-19 Impact

The pandemic temporarily altered void trends due to reduced mobility, delayed care transitions, and operational constraints. These effects are evident in the 2020–2022 data but are not indicative of long-term structural changes.

Recommendations

1. **Enhance succession planning** to reduce delays and void periods.
2. **Invest in accessible housing** and review allocation strategies for mobility-adapted and sheltered properties.
3. **Address bedsit challenges** through redesign, repurposing, or marketing, and review local lettings policies.
4. **Improve data quality** on tenant demographics to support strategic planning and equality monitoring.
5. **Continue reducing re-let times** by prioritizing high-demand property types and streamlining processes.

This report underscores the importance of proactive tenancy sustainment, targeted housing strategies for older tenants, and data-driven decision-making to ensure efficient housing operations and meet future demand.

Main Report

This report explores trends in council-owned properties that have become vacant over the past six years, using data extracted from our housing management system, QL.

We began by identifying all properties that entered void status during this period and examined the recorded reasons for tenancy termination. The table below presents a year-by-year breakdown of these reasons, along with the corresponding number of cases in each category.

The purpose of this analysis is to highlight any emerging patterns in tenancy turnover, with a particular focus on the most common reasons for properties becoming void. This insight will support strategic planning, resource allocation, and service improvement across housing operations.

Void Reason Over the Last Six Financial Years

Row Labels	**2019 /2020**	**2020 /2021**	**2021 /2022**	**2022 /2023**	**2023 /2024**	**2024 /2025**
Deceased	150	144	142	131	102	82
Waiting list transfer	66	40	48	46	34	38
Moved to nursing home	45	38	38	25	42	27
Moving nearer to family & friends	36	22	26	30	15	17
Moved in with family/friend	26	12	11	10	9	14
Refused to say	18	18	23	11	14	4
Moved to sheltered/Extra care	18	12	4	9	8	4
Medical needs	13	12	9	9	8	7
Use & Occupation	12	7	7	15	7	1
Eviction arrears	12	8	9	15	6	3
Moved to housing association	10	5	2	4	1	4
Do not like area	10	9	16	14	4	4
Other private rented	10	6	11	6	4	3
Domestic Violence	10	8	6	6	6	4
ASB	10	6	4	9	4	4
Abandoned	10	10	8	8	12	5
Fear of Crime	7	8	8	1	5	5
Imprisoned	7	3	7	8	9	7
Moving into Supported Accom	7	4	4	3	2	3
Property too small	6	4	8	5	3	5
Relationship breakdown	6	5	2		1	2
Bought own property	6	9	6	9	2	4
License prop no longer needed	5	5	8	4	8	3
Can not afford rent	4	4	2	2	3	2
Problems with neighbours	4	4	4	1	1	1
Assignment	4	3	2	4	1	4
Needs adapted property	3	2	1	1	2	
Abandoned before eviction	2	2	2			
Tenancy created in error	2	1		1		2
No notice, just handed keys in	2	3	2	2	2	
Other local authority rented	2	6	2	1	4	2
Succession	1			1		1
Downsizing due to bedroom tax	1	4	4	7	1	
Prop. in poor state of repair	1	2	4	1	2	1
Illegal Occupants		1				
Vandalism		1				
Racial Harassment				1		
Property too big		1		1	1	
Moving nearer to work		3			3	2
Temporary Accommodation		1	1	1		1
Mutual Exchange			1			
Grand Total	**526**	**433**	**432**	**402**	**326**	**266**

You will see that the overriding cause of tenancies ending each year is that the tenant has passed away. When we look at the four highest reasons overall, we see the following: -

1. Deceased 31.49%
2. Waiting List Transfer 11.40%
3. Moved to Nursing Home 9.01%
4. Moving Nearer to Family and Friends 6.12%

We have previously described that tenants of social housing tend to have an aging tenant demographic as Council tenancies are often held by older residents, meaning that a higher proportion of tenancies naturally end due to death. Consequently, “Deceased” has become a statistically dominant reason for council housing voids. See appendix

When a tenant dies, the tenancy does not always automatically end, unless there is a legal successor (e.g., spouse, partner, qualifying family member) eligible to take over the tenancy. If no one succeeds the tenancy, the estate must formally terminate it, which triggers the property becoming void. This can lead to an extended void turnaround time as probate and estate clearance - including rent arrears, council tax, utilities, and possessions - can take several weeks, during which the property remains empty. Succession assessments can also delay re-letting, particularly if eligibility is unclear or contested. As this is the highest cause of voids it may be prudent to develop more supported succession planning protocols with targeted advise available for families with older household members.

There are further implications for void management that become apparent for these properties that we will examine later.

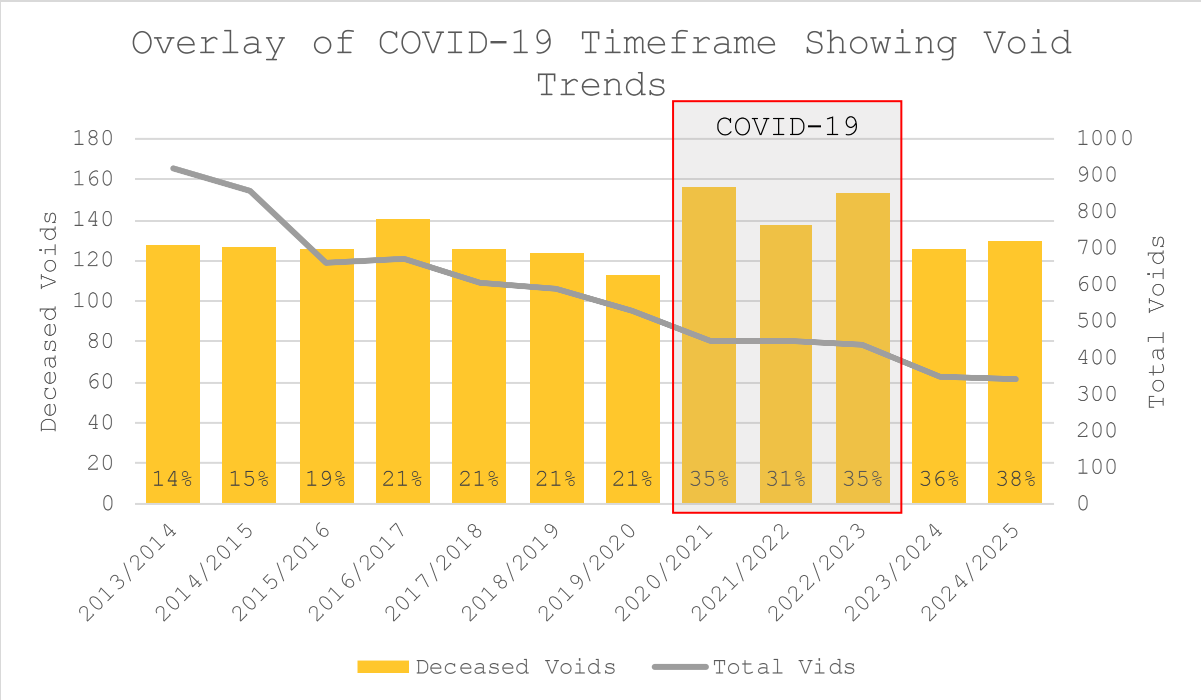
Note of Caution - Impact of COVID-19 on Void Trends

The COVID-19 pandemic had a notable impact on tenancy turnover and void trends. During the peak pandemic years (2020–2022), several factors contributed to changes in tenant behaviour and housing operations:

Reduced mobility and relocation: Lockdowns and travel restrictions led to fewer tenants moving for reasons such as proximity to family, employment, or dissatisfaction with the area. Delays in care transitions: Moves to nursing homes or supported accommodation were affected by health concerns and service disruptions, resulting in lower numbers in these categories.

Increased tenancy sustainment: Economic uncertainty and public health guidance encouraged tenants to remain in place, contributing to a temporary decline in overall void numbers.

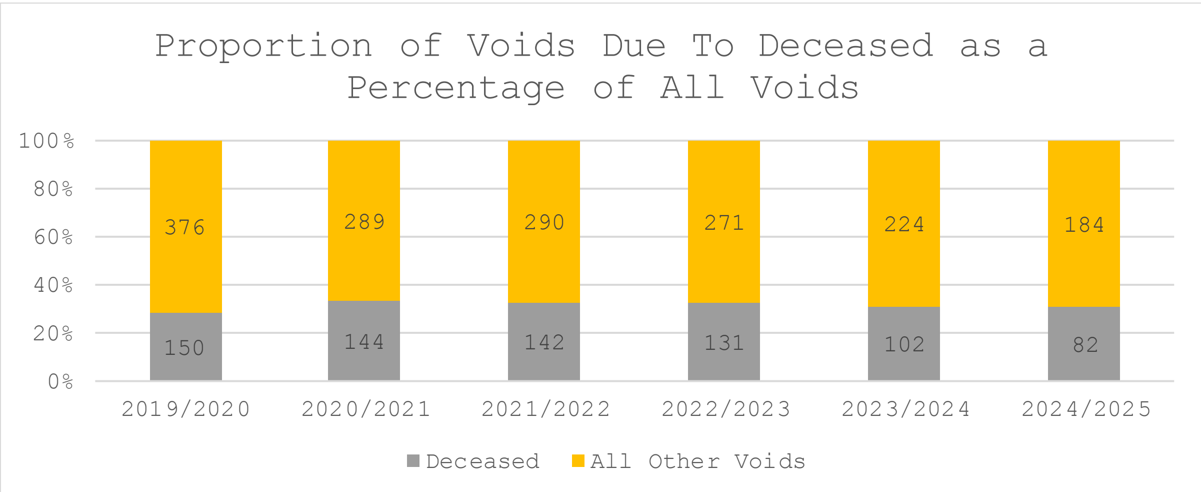
Operational constraints: Housing services faced challenges in processing voids due to staffing limitations, safety protocols, and access restrictions, which may have extended void durations.
These pandemic-related factors should be considered when interpreting trends from this period, as they represent a temporary shift in housing dynamics rather than long-term structural changes.



Series labels in the chart above show the voids due to deceased as a percentage of all voids

Trend Analysis

The most consistently reported reason for properties becoming void is the death of the tenant, accounting for approximately 30% of all cases each year. Although this category remains the highest, the number of deceased-related voids has steadily declined from 150 in 2019/20 to 82 in 2024/25. This trend may reflect a gradually reducing older tenant population, improved succession planning, or the availability of alternative housing pathways. The chart below shows a breakdown of voids due to deceased by the five neighbourhoods



Data labels show actual number of cases; percentages can be read from the left vertical axis.

Waiting list transfers represent the second most common reason for voids. While figures fluctuate, there is a general downward trend from 66 cases in 2019/20 to 38 in 2024/25. This could suggest fewer internal moves or more effective matching during the allocation process.

Moves to nursing homes have also declined, from 45 to 27 over the same period. This may overlap with the Deceased category or indicate better support for tenants to remain in their homes.

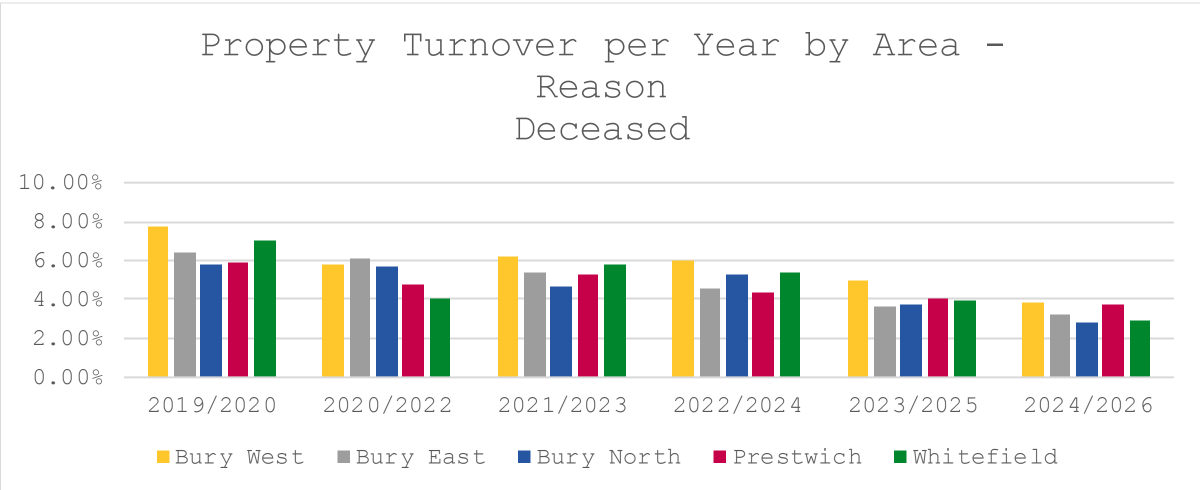
Family-related moves—such as relocating nearer to family and moving in with family or friends—have decreased, potentially due to cost-of-living pressures or reduced mobility.

Void reasons such as eviction due to arrears and abandonment remain low but consistent, with no significant spikes, suggesting stable tenancy sustainment.

Less frequent categories, including fear of crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB), domestic violence, and medical needs, are present but not dominant. Reasons like buying a property or dissatisfaction with the area are also low, possibly reflecting affordability challenges.

Overall, the total number of voids has decreased by approximately 50% over the six-year period. This suggests improved tenancy sustainment, fewer transfers, and potentially reduced turnover due to broader housing pressures.

Neighbourhood area breakdown



This chart illustrates percentage turnover across five areas: Bury West, Bury East, Bury North, Prestwich, and Whitefield. Turnover is measured by calculating the number of voids in relationship to the total number of properties in that area. In this way we can compare areas with differing numbers of properties by how many have become void.

Trend analysis

- Overall Decline: All areas show a downward trend in turnover due to deceased tenants from 2019/20 to 2024/26, aligning with the overall reduction in voids.
- Highest Initial Rates: Bury West consistently recorded the highest turnover at around 8% in 2019/21, gradually falling to approximately 4% by 2024/26.
- Whitefield Variation: Whitefield started high (around 7%) but experienced a sharper decline, reaching below 3% by the final period.
- Convergence of Areas: By 2024/26, all areas cluster between 3% and 4%, indicating a levelling effect across the borough.

- Possible Drivers: The decline may reflect demographic changes, reduced mortality rates post-pandemic, and improved succession or housing support strategies.

This area-based insight reinforces the borough-wide trend of decreasing voids due to deceased tenants and highlights the need for localized planning to address future housing demands.

Tenant Sustainment Strategy – an operational perspective

In 2023, we launched the Tenant Sustainment Strategy, placing a greater emphasis on providing dedicated, proactive support for our tenants. We recognised that tenancy sustainment is fundamental to ensuring housing stability and improving outcomes for individuals and families. By helping tenants maintain their homes, we prevent eviction and homelessness, which in turn promotes better physical and mental wellbeing.

Our approach focuses on enabling tenants to access the right support at the right time—whether that involves financial advice, health services, or assistance with daily living. This holistic support empowers tenants to live independently and with confidence.

From a service perspective, tenancy sustainment delivers significant operational benefits. It reduces rent arrears, legal costs, and the number of void properties. By intervening early and working proactively, we minimise the need for crisis responses and ensure that preventative measures are embedded within our processes.

Over the past 12 months, we have observed a reduction in the number of cases recorded. While this is encouraging, we are committed to ensuring that the support provided is accurately reflected in our data and that this offer continues to be fully embedded within the team. Continuous monitoring and improvement will remain a priority to maintain the positive impact of this strategy.

Overall Pattern

We wanted to understand if there was an effect on the Void reasons, particularly those due to deceased so we went back to the data and produced the same report for pre and post covid timeframes, both periods show that older age groups dominate deceased-related voids, but there are notable shifts in distribution and trends.

Pre COVID-19

Age group	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
93+	12	8	8	10	5	4
83-92	39	30	28	37	29	30
73-82	30	31	41	35	35	24
63-72	18	29	20	24	25	30
53-62	10	16	12	17	19	16
43-52	9	10	13	13	10	13
33-42	7	1	1	2	0	6
23-32	0	1	1	1	1	0
<23	0	0	0	0	1	0

Pre-COVID (2013–2019)

- The 83–92 age group consistently recorded the highest numbers, ranging from 28 to 39 cases annually.
- The 73–82 age group was also significant, peaking at 41 cases in 2015/2016 and remaining above 30 in most years.
- The 63–72 age group fluctuated between 18 and 30 cases, while the 53–62 group ranged from 10 to 19 cases.
- Tenants under 43 years accounted for very few cases, with under-33 groups almost negligible.
- Overall trend: Stability in older cohorts with slight growth in mid-older groups (73–82), reflecting an aging tenant base.

Post COVID-19

Age group	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
93+	7	8	7	6	6	6
83-92	26	28	24	28	19	17
73-82	44	36	44	32	28	18
63-72	32	29	28	26	21	14
53-62	19	21	18	17	16	16
43-52	13	16	12	13	7	6
33-42	5	5	7	7	1	3
23-32	2	1	2	2	4	1
<23	1					1

During and post-COVID (2019–2025)

- The 73–82 age group became the dominant category, peaking at 44 cases in 2019/2020 and 2021/2022 before declining sharply to 18 cases by 2024/2025.
- The 83–92 age group remained high but slightly lower than pre-COVID levels, ranging from 24 to 28 cases early on and falling to 17 later.
- The 63–72 group continued to be significant but declined from 32 cases to 14 over the period.
- Younger groups under 43 remained minimal, though slightly more visible than pre-COVID (e.g., 33–42 years reached up to 7 cases).
- Overall trend: A sharp decline across all older groups after 2021/2022, aligning with the overall reduction in voids and possibly reflecting demographic changes and pandemic-related impacts.

Key Insights

- Pre-COVID patterns show stability and gradual growth in older cohorts, while post-COVID trends reveal an initial spike followed by a marked decline.
- Mortality-related voids remain concentrated among tenants aged 63+, but the pandemic period introduced volatility and accelerated reductions in later years.
- Younger age groups continue to have negligible impact, reinforcing the need for housing strategies focused on older tenants and succession planning.

Other Demographics

Marital Status

Marital status	Numbers	Percentage
Unknown	368	47.98%
Single	181	23.60%
Divorced	78	10.17%
Widowed	77	10.04%
Married/Civil Partnership	32	4.17%
Separated	20	2.61%
Prefer not to say	8	1.04%
Cohabiting	2	0.26%
Living with partner	1	0.13%

Analysis reveals that nearly half of records (48%) have an unknown marital status, highlighting a data quality gap which we aim to address with the data cleanse and refresh exercise.

Among known cases:

Single tenants represent the largest proportion (24%), followed by widowed (10%) and divorced (10%). Married or in civil partnerships account for only 4%, and other categories such as separated or cohabiting are minimal. This suggests that many deceased tenants lived alone, which may have implications for succession planning and support services.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Numbers	Percentage
White British	645	84.09%
Unknown	67	8.74%
White Irish	17	2.22%
White Other	14	1.83%
Pakistani	5	0.65%
Black African	4	0.52%
Other	4	0.52%
Refused to answer	4	0.52%
Indian	2	0.26%
Black Caribbean	1	0.13%
Chinese	1	0.13%
Mixed White Black African	1	0.13%
Mixed White Other	1	0.13%
White European	1	0.13%

The tenant base is predominantly White British (84%), with small proportions of White Irish (2%), White Other (1.8%), and minority ethnic groups collectively representing less than 7%.
An 8.7% “unknown” category again indicates incomplete demographic data. The limited diversity reflects the historical composition of the housing stock and local population.

Key Insights

Deceased-related voids primarily involve older, single tenants, often without immediate successors. Data gaps in marital status and ethnicity amongst other categories, reduce the ability to fully understand demographic patterns. Operationally, these findings underline the importance of targeted support for older tenants and improved data collection to inform future housing strategies.

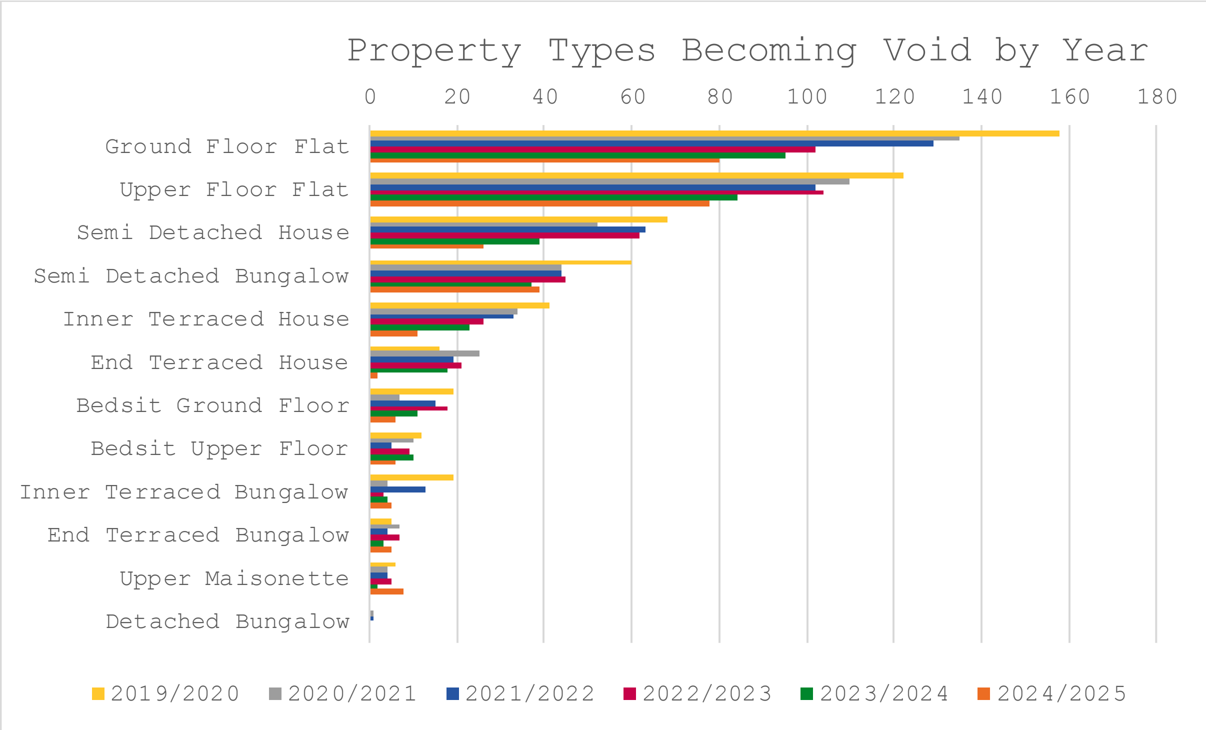
Property types becoming void

Overview

The data shows the number of properties becoming void by type over six financial years. Flats dominate void activity, followed by semi-detached houses and bungalows, with terraced houses and bedsits contributing smaller numbers. For the purpose of this analysis we have combined Upper and Lower flats full details can be seen in the table and chart below.

Property Type	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Ground Floor Flat	158	135	129	102	95	80
Upper Floor Flat	122	110	102	104	84	78
Semi Detached House	68	52	63	62	39	26
Semi Detached Bungalow	60	44	44	45	37	39
Inner Terraced House	41	34	33	26	23	11

End Terraced House	16	25	19	21	18	2
Bedsit Ground Floor	19	7	15	18	11	6
Bedsit Upper Floor	12	10	5	9	10	6
Inner Terraced Bungalow	19	4	13	3	4	5
End Terraced Bungalow	5	7	4	7	3	5
Upper Maisonette	6	4	4	5	2	8
Detached Bungalow		1	1			



Combined Flats (Ground and Upper Floors)

Although numbers decline steadily, flats remain the most significant property type for voids, reflecting their association with older or single tenants.

Semi-Detached Houses and Bungalows

Semi-detached houses show a downward trend from 68 cases to 26, while semi-detached bungalows remain relatively stable, ranging from 60 to 39 cases. These property types are often linked to family households and older tenants, suggesting reduced turnover and sustained demand for accessible homes.

Terraced Houses

Inner terraced houses decline from 41 to 11 cases, and end terraced houses drop sharply from 16 to just 2 cases by 2024/2025. This indicates reduced movement in traditional housing stock, possibly due to affordability pressures or long-term tenancy sustainment.

Bedsits and Other Types

Bedsits and smaller units show low but persistent turnover, with minor fluctuations. Terraced bungalows and maisonettes remain minimal, and detached bungalows appear only in isolated years, indicating rarity in the stock.

Overall Trend

All property types show a decline in void numbers over the six-year period, consistent with the overall reduction in turnover. Flats dominate void activity, followed by semi-detached houses and bungalows, while terraced houses and bedsits contribute smaller proportions.

Implications

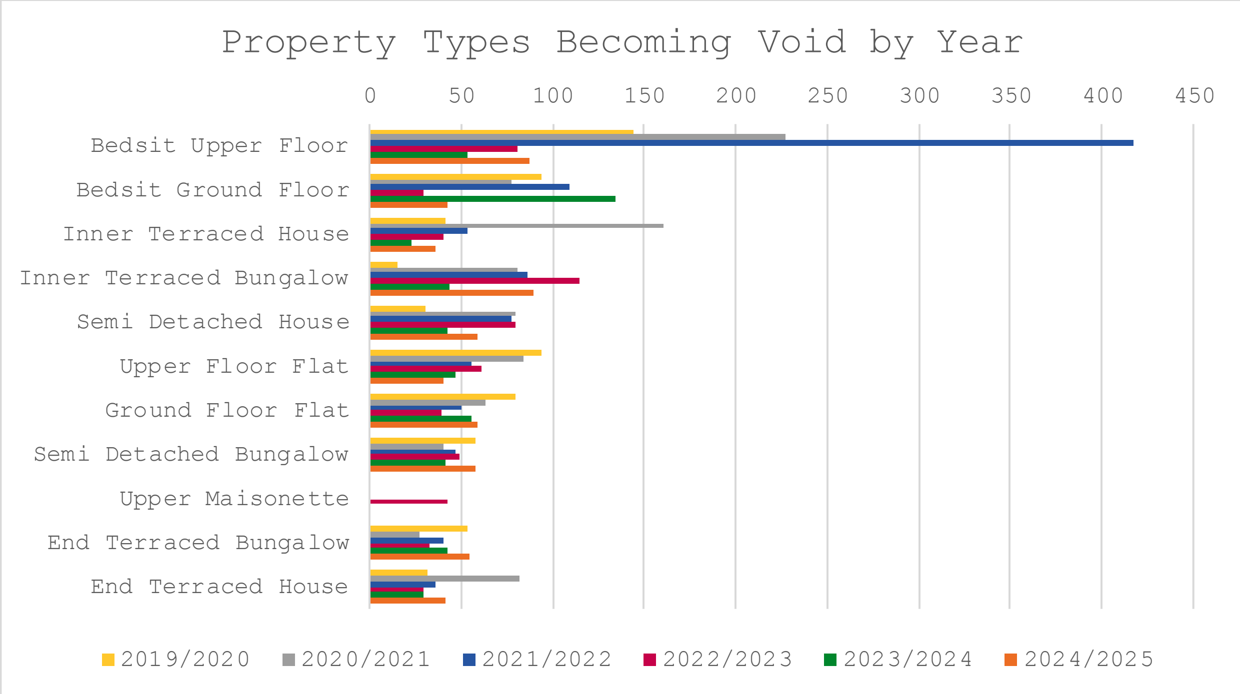
- Flats require targeted management strategies as they account for the majority of voids.
- The decline in family-sized homes suggests improved tenancy sustainment or reduced mobility among households.
- Bedsits and smaller units, while fewer in number, indicate ongoing demand from single-person households.

Re-let Times

Overview

The table shows the average number of days taken to re-let properties that became void following the death of the tenant. Across all property types, the overall average has improved significantly, falling from 74 days in 2019/2020 to 55 days in 2024/2025. This indicates better turnaround performance for deceased-related voids.

Row Labels	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Bedsit Upper Floor	145	227	418	80	54	87
Bedsit Ground Floor	94	77	110	29	134	43
Inner Terraced House	41	160	54	40	23	36
Inner Terraced Bungalow	15	81	87	115	44	90
Semi Detached House	30	80	78	80	43	59
Upper Floor Flat	94	85	56	61	47	40
Ground Floor Flat	80	64	51	39	56	59
Semi Detached Bungalow	58	40	47	49	41	58
Upper Maisonette				43		
End Terraced Bungalow	54	27	40	33	43	55
End Terraced House	31	82	36	29	29	42



Key Findings

1. Overall Trend
   - The grand total average dropped from 74 days in 2019/2020 to 51 days in 2023/2024, before a slight increase to 55 days in 2024/2025.
   - This represents a 26% improvement over six years, suggesting enhanced operational efficiency in managing deceased-related voids.
2. Property Types with Longest Re-let Times
   - Bedsit Upper Floor stands out with extremely high averages, peaking at 418 days in 2021/2022 and averaging 175 days overall. These will be hard to let in sheltered schemes we had a number of schemes we were not letting due to compliance works needed with the schemes. When these came back into our stock to let due to the backlog and low demand these took some time to let. The team have worked hard over the past few years to reduce the number of voids and this is seen within the data.
   - Bedsit Ground Floor also shows variability, with a spike to 134 days in 2023/2024. These will have been affected in the same way as the upper floor bedsits.
   - These figures indicate persistent challenges in re-letting bedsits, possibly due to low demand or suitability issues.
3. Property Types with Shortest Re-let Times
   - Ground Floor Flats and Semi-Detached Bungalows consistently perform well, averaging 58 and 48 days respectively.
   - These property types show steady improvement, reflecting properties coming back in good condition and effective allocation processes. High demand for these properties due to those waiting for accessibility properties
4. Volatility in Certain Categories
   - Inner Terraced Houses and Inner Terraced Bungalows show large fluctuations, with Inner Terraced House reaching 160 days in 2020/2021 these may have been on hold due to covid) before stabilizing at 36 days in 2024/2025.

- Such variability may relate to location-specific demand or property condition.

Implications

- Bedsits require targeted strategies to reduce void periods, such as redesign, repurposing, or marketing initiatives. Work is ongoing to review the low demand schemes and to try and increase interest including removing the local lettings policy where needed to allow us to allocate to those under 55 with high housing need such as homeless applicants.
- Flats and bungalows remain high-demand and should continue to be prioritized for quick turnaround.
- Monitoring terraced properties for condition and demand factors could help reduce volatility.

Property Needs Category

Overview

The data illustrates the types of housing needs associated with properties that became void following the death of a tenant. It highlights which categories are most affected and how trends have evolved over six financial years.

Key Findings

1. General Needs
    - This category consistently accounts for the largest share of deceased-related voids, starting at 71 cases in 2019/2020 and declining to 28 by 2024/2025.
    - The steady reduction mirrors the overall decline in voids and suggests fewer deaths among tenants in standard housing stock.
2. Suit for Poor Mobility
    - Significant throughout the period, peaking at 57 cases in 2020/2021 and gradually reducing to 31 by 2024/2025.
    - This indicates that a substantial proportion of deceased tenants lived in properties adapted for limited mobility, reflecting the older age profile of tenants.
3. Sheltered Housing
    - Numbers fluctuate but remain notable, ranging from 21 to 35 cases early on and falling to 18 by 2024/2025.
    - This confirms that sheltered schemes continue to house vulnerable older tenants, though overall turnover is declining.
4. Extra Care Schemes
    - Very low numbers, with a peak of 8 cases in 2021/2022 and only 2 cases by 2024/2025.
    - Suggests limited stock or strong tenancy sustainment in these schemes.
5. Furnished Properties
    - Minimal impact, with 1–4 cases annually.
    - Indicates that furnished units are not a major component of deceased-related voids.
6. Fully Wheelchair Adapted Properties
    - Consistently very low, with 2–4 cases per year.

- Reflects the small proportion of highly adapted properties in the stock.

Overall Trend

All categories show a downward trend over the six-year period, consistent with the overall reduction in deceased-related voids. General Needs properties dominate, followed by homes adapted for poor mobility and sheltered housing. Extra Care, furnished, and fully wheelchair-adapted properties contribute only marginally.

Implications

- The high proportion of voids in mobility-adapted and sheltered housing highlights the need for ongoing investment in accessible homes for older tenants.
- Declining numbers suggest demographic changes and improved tenancy sustainment, but succession planning remains critical for these property types.
- Low turnover in Extra Care and wheelchair-adapted properties may indicate strong demand and limited availability, requiring careful allocation management.

One other factor should be noted when analysing the needs categories of the properties coming back into use after a void is that if there are any adaptations to the property it will be part of an assessment by an Occupational Therapist (OT) which could lead to a further delay in re-letting the properties as housing services can only access the services of one OT at the moment.

Conclusion and Action Points

This analysis confirms that the most significant driver of void properties is the death of tenants, accounting for around 30% of all cases over the review period. While this remains the dominant reason, the number of deceased-related voids has steadily declined, reflecting demographic changes, improved tenancy sustainment, and possibly enhanced succession planning. Overall void numbers have reduced by approximately 50% in six years, indicating positive progress in housing stability.

Key findings include:

- Older age groups (63+) dominate deceased-related voids, with the 73–82 cohort most affected post-COVID.
- Flats, particularly ground and upper floor, represent the largest share of void properties, followed by semi-detached houses and bungalows.
- Properties adapted for poor mobility and sheltered housing feature prominently among deceased-related voids, underlining the link between aging tenants and specialist housing needs.
- Re-let times have improved overall, but bedsits and some terraced properties remain challenging to let, often due to low demand or compliance delays.
- Data gaps in marital status and ethnicity highlight the need for better demographic recording to inform future planning.

Action Points:

1. Strengthen succession planning protocols and provide targeted advice for families of older tenants to reduce delays and void periods.
2. Continue investment in accessible housing and review allocation strategies for mobility-adapted and sheltered properties.
3. Address persistent challenges in letting bedsits through redesign, repurposing, or marketing initiatives, and review local lettings policies where appropriate.
4. Maintain focus on reducing re-let times by prioritizing high-demand property types and improving processes for properties requiring adaptations.
5. Enhance data quality on tenant demographics to support evidence-based decision-making and equality monitoring.
6. Monitor void trends by property type and needs category to ensure resources align with demand and strategic priorities.