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## Landlord newsletter

A newsletter for HMO landlords, managing agents and letting agents in Camden



### Issue 3 – Autumn 2019

Welcome to our third newsletter - as always we have lots of national and local news for you.

We are also preparing for another HMO landlord and agent event on 14 November. This event will focus on **fire safety** but will also include news about additional licensing and related enforcement work. Although at the time of publication the event is fully booked, the presentations and minutes will be sent out with the next newsletter.

We are always looking at ways to improve how we work with our landlord community, so please do let us have any feedback.



## National updates

### Tenant Fees Act 2019 and Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

The Tenant Fees Act and Homes Act have both come into effect. Wendy Wilson, Head of Social Policy Research at the House of Commons gave a very informative presentation at the last HMO landlord event on 4 April in relation to both these pieces of legislation. Her presentation can be found below.

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### HHSRS review

The Government has completed phase 1 of the review of the housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) and will be moving to phase 2 shortly. The outcome of the scoping review report can be found [here](#).

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### Recent consultations

Two consultations have recently been carried out by the Government. One was in relation to tenure reform, looking at removing section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 and ending 'no fault' evictions. The other in relation to the Government's database of rogue landlords, looking at making it public and extending the scope. Both have now ended but we look forward to hearing the results of both of these consultations in due course.

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### Mandatory electrical checks

It will soon be the law for private landlords to have electrical installations inspected every five years, fix any serious problems and give tenants and the council a copy of the report. Councils will be able to issue large fines to landlords who do not comply. At the moment this is a requirement under HMO licensing in Camden and so should not make any difference to our licensed landlords.

Other landlords should be booking in inspections as soon as possible. Competent electricians can be found online and [Electrical Safety First](#) and the [ECP](#) are good places to start.

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## Local updates & information

### Landlord grants



*Before/After*

Camden offers several different grants for landlords to improve their properties. One of these is an energy efficiency and insulation grant for works including cavity and solid wall insulation. This is particularly important as we move into autumn and winter so that tenants can afford to heat their properties. Other grants available for landlords are:

- HMO improvement grant – to upgrade or provide amenities such as wash hand basins, kitchens, bathrooms and toilets to meet minimum HMO standards.
- Security grant – for landlords to improve the domestic security in their properties
- Empty property grant – to bring properties that have been empty for a significant period of time to bring them into residential use.

You can find out more about the grants [here](#). Terms and conditions apply to all grants.

### HMO licensing review and renewal

You might remember an outline of the review of current HMO licensing was presented in the last newsletter. The review has now been completed and the Council is deciding on the continuation of the current additional HMO licensing scheme and whether to progress to a formal consultation regarding renewal for a further five years.

More information on this will be sent out as and when it is available.

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### New rogue landlord task force

The private sector housing team have been successful in obtaining funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to set up a multi-disciplinary 'Rogue Landlord Taskforce' comprising environmental health officers, tenancy relations officers (to deal with harassment and illegal evictions) and a dedicated legal resource to fast track prosecutions. The focus of the team will be rogue landlords and agents exploiting migrant tenants within dangerous and unlicensed HMOs. The team have already been out on numerous enforcement visits to properties which have been identified as unlicensed HMOs by intelligence gained from the public, online rental sites and Council colleagues. The team are already taking enforcement action in the form of civil penalty notices (CPNs) or prosecutions against the

owners and letting/managing agents of these properties.

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## HMO landlord and agent event - April 2019

The minutes of the last HMO landlord and agent event on 4 April can be found [here](#). The presentations were:

- [Overview of the PRS & HMO licensing review \(PSH team\)](#).
- [Rent repayment Orders \(Anthony Gold Solicitors\)](#).
- [Criminal agents/enforcement activity \(PSH enforcement team\)](#).
- [Tenant Fees and Homes Acts \(Social Policy Research Team, House of Commons\)](#)

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## Rogue landlords

### Agent of sub-letting tenants fined £5,000 for unlicensed HMO

The First Tier Tribunal (FTT) dismissed an appeal from a managing agent regarding a CPN relating to the use of a four bedroom flat in Queen's Crescent as an HMO. The tenants had sub-let the whole flat to four other tenants without licensing the property. The FTT agreed the managing agents should have been more alert to the way the property was being occupied and been aware of the need for an HMO licence.



### Managing agent fined £14,500 for failure to licence and management breaches

RentaroominLondon Ltd and the director, Sulamen Hussain, were prosecuted fined for renting out an ex-LBC leasehold three bedroom flat to 5 persons (in 4 households) without a licence. An unannounced visit was made with a warrant and the police. Officers found one broken fire alarm (see photo above) and other fire safety issues. The agent proceeded to gain entry to carry out

## **Rogue letting agents and property companies fined total of £130,000**

Grosvenor Property Investment London Ltd, Knightsbridge Properties London Ltd, Business Home Ltd and their directors were fined a total of £130,000 and ordered to pay Camden Council's legal costs at Highbury Corner Magistrates Court in the summer.

The fines related to an unlicensed house in multiple occupation which came to light in 2017 following complaints about rubbish outside the property, that that been badly converted into 16 flats.

Camden Council served civil penalties notices relating to poor management relating to the fire alarm and failure to license the property as an HMO. Despite this, no valid application was made and the property remained without a licence when officers visited again several months later. Multiple prohibition orders were also served as many of the flats were found to be so small they posed a hazard for occupiers.

£95,000 in fines were given for failure to license the property, £25,000 for failure to respond to statutory notices requiring information and £10,000 for the re-letting of a tiny flat in contravention of a prohibition order.

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### **Contact the team**

If you would like any further information concerning your HMO licence, or to report an unlicensed HMO, please contact the HMO licensing team: [hmolicensing@camden.gov.uk](mailto:hmolicensing@camden.gov.uk) or phone the team on: 020 7974 5969.

work without giving any notice to the tenants and also interrupted the water supply.

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## **Letting agent fails in appeal against financial penalty notice in relation to a failure to display details of fees on website**

A letting agent who stated that a new website was a reason for not displaying relevant fees failed in their appeal to the FTT. The expectation is that the fine should be £5,000. Lack of awareness cannot be a factor as the Consumer Rights Act came into force in May 2015. In this case officers had lowered it to £3,000 for prompt compliance. The FTT therefore refused the appeal in its entirety.

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**If you own, rent or manage an HMO you need to make sure you have an HMO licence and comply with the conditions. Our [webpages](#) contain useful information and if you still have any questions, contact the HMO licensing team (details below).**



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