

Camden – HMO Landlord & Agent Event

Fire Safety



Darren Wilsher – Private Sector Housing Manager

Jack Kane – Operations Manager

Janet Wade – Principal EHO

Judith Harris – Principal EHO

Agenda

10:00	Welcome and HMO licensing update
10:15	Fire safety overview
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Means of escape• Cladding and balconies
10:30	Fire Safety – Fire doors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation by Fire Door Alliance, BWF• Q&A session
11:15	Refreshment break
11:30	Fire Safety – Fire alarms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation by Aico• Q&A session
12:15	Enforcement update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview• Rogue landlord taskforce
12:30	General Q&A session
13:00	End session

Camden Plan

The Council's response to Camden 2025; under Homes and Housing:

- We will strive to make homes in Camden safe, well-managed and well-maintained, and make sure that people's homes meet their needs. We will play an active role in shaping a **private rented sector** that works.

Deliver this by:

- Bring people and agencies together to get things done
- Open up the Council so all citizens can have a say
- Better and less expensive to prevent problems and intervene early

Why license?



Sunken bath with restricted headroom and smooth floor tiles. Likely to result in trips/falls.



Shower mixer controls located outside of shower cubicle + dangerous wiring.



Tenant needs to step across shower cubicle to access WC.



Wash hand basin located inappropriately within shower cubicle.



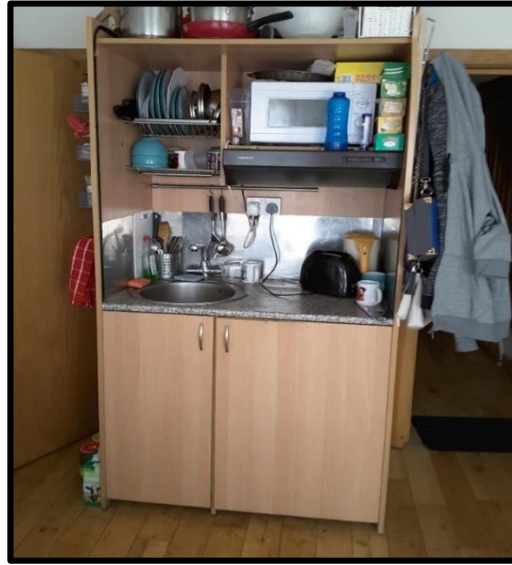
WC cistern for flat located in common parts due to space limitations, resulting in breach of fire separation of wall.



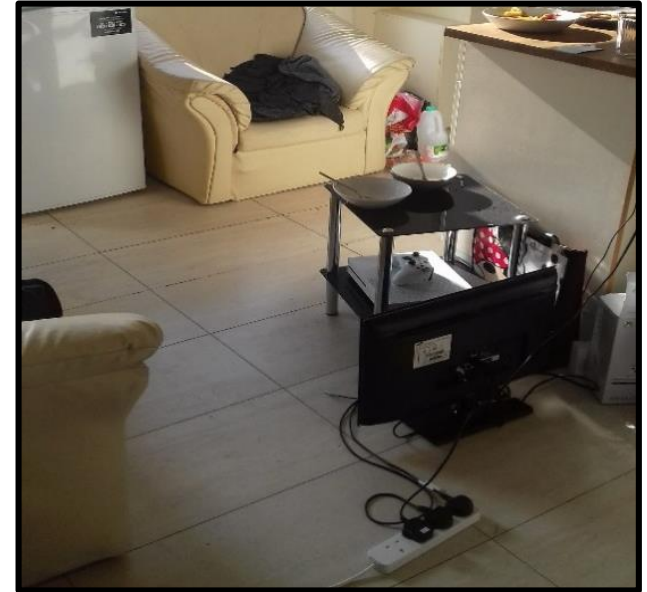
Inappropriate stacking of floor standing fridge freezer above washing machine.



Open plan kitchen to means of escape stairs.



Inappropriate compact kitchen unit for use by tenant.

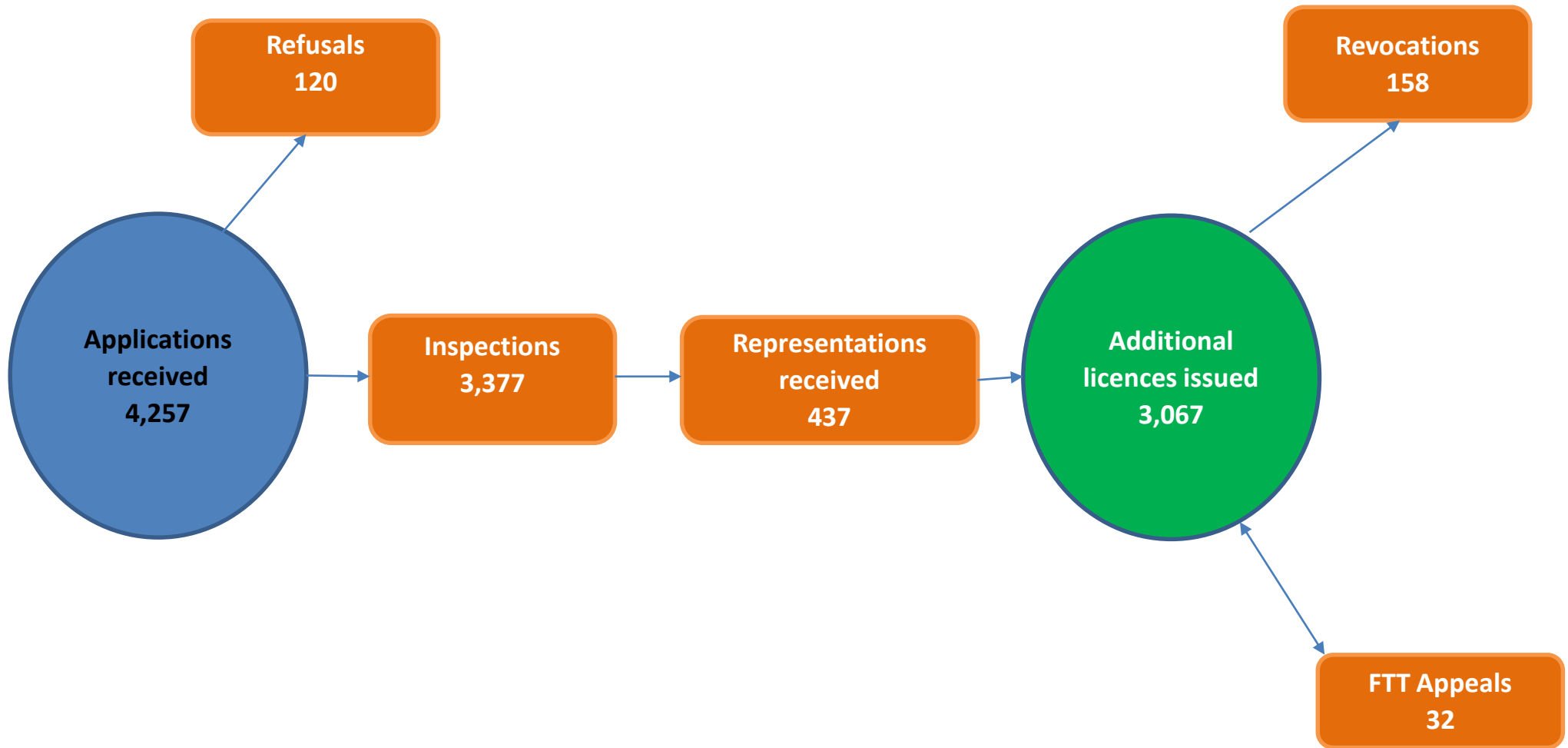


Trailing extension cable across floor and overloading of sockets creating trip and fire hazards.



Inadequate room sizes – proximity of cooking facilities to bed.

Additional HMO licensing



As at 12 November 2019

HMO licensing update

- Review of scheme outcomes to date completed
- Consultation on renewal of additional HMO licensing scheme – 16 December 2019
 - Cabinet report to be considered 14th November 2019
 - Papers can be found on www.camden.gov.uk
- Do please respond to the consultation. Newsletter will be circulated mid-December with further details.

Fire Safety Overview

Judith Harris

**Principal Environmental Health
Officer**

Principles of fire safety

- Safe protected escape route to place of safety
- Early warning of fire
- Fire fighting equipment

Safe protected escape route to place of safety

- Escape route within the dwelling (house or flat)
- In a block containing flats or studios - common parts escape route

Designed to stay free of smoke and fire for long enough to allow occupants to escape from the building

Escape route within the dwelling (house or flat)

- Separation – partitions and glazing
- Fire doors
- Automatic fire detection
- Open plan arrangements
- Locks on doors (thumb turns)
- Storage and obstructions
- White goods

(Precise levels of fire separation and detection is dependant on the number of storeys in the dwelling. See LACORS guidance)

Protected escape route (COMMON PARTS – converted building) (1)

- Should have 30 minutes fire protection – walls, floors, ceilings and doors should be 30 minutes – solid no holes
- Surface finishes – not flammable (panelling, flock wallpaper)
- Glazing – (transoms) must be fire resisting glazing
- Floors above basements – should be underdrawn
- Dwellings above/adjacent to commercial premises – imperforate and 60 minutes separation

Protected escape route (COMMON PARTS – converted buildings) (2)

- Locks on flat and final entrance doors – openable without the use of a key from the inside
- Emergency lighting – necessary where no borrowed light to the staircase or the route is complicated
- Storage – nothing flammable
- Electric meters and fuse boxes – need to be enclosed in fire resisting construction

Fire fighting equipment

- Would require a fire blanket to be provided
- Fire brigade now do not recommend the use of other fire fighting equipment such as fire extinguishers – problems with how to use them and maintenance.
- The advice is to get out of the premises – don't stop to fight the fire

Open plan kitchens and living rooms

- Inner rooms – Ideally all rooms should open onto a hallway, you should not have to pass through another room to get to the front door.
- Particularly bad if the room you have to pass through is a kitchen or living room – an area of higher risk.
- May be acceptable if there is a door in the inner room leading to the escape route, or if there is a suitable escape window. There should always be a suitable automatic fire detection system in place and the door between the inner and outer room should be a fire door.
- We would ask for a suppression system to be fitted – water misting or sprinklers – BS 9251:2014 and BS9991:2015 say the suppression system to be fitted to all rooms in the flat, not just the outer room.

Escape windows

- Only suitable if less than 4.5m above ground level
- Bottom of window no more than 1.1m above floor level of room
- Look out for basement wells or railings or conservatories
- Need to be minimum of 450mm x 450mm with an unobstructed openable area of 0.33 sq m
- Window is openable from the inside without the use of a removable key
- Should lead to a place of safety – Ground below it should be level and free of obstructions
- Consider the persons using it – occupiers should be able bodied who could be reasonably expected to escape through the window

Place of safety

- This would ideally be the street at the front of the property
- Rear gardens not considered a place of safety unless there is a way out to the street or the garden is at least as deep as the building is high.
- Roof terraces also not a place of safety.
- Escape through other properties is not acceptable

Galleries

- High level beds or double level living areas – mostly in studios
- Distance of travel from the foot of the staircase to the door should not be less than 3m
- Cooking facilities within the room should be sited away from the exit door and the foot of the stairs
- Also look at the stairs themselves (not fire but falls) ladders are not acceptable

Cladding and balconies

- Post Grenfell – other issues raised.
- If buildings are clad – question the type of cladding – has it been tested – is it ACM (aluminium) or HPL (high pressure laminate)
- Balconies – couple of balcony fires, one here in Camden and one in Barking recently – some decking to balconies is flammable
- Worcester Park fire – Timber framed buildings with cladding

Thank you very much

If in doubt – refer to LACORS fire guidance

If you have questions please save them until after the next presentation

Presentation by Peter Clifton, Fire Door Alliance, BWF

Private Rented Sector Housing

Rogue Landlord Taskforce -

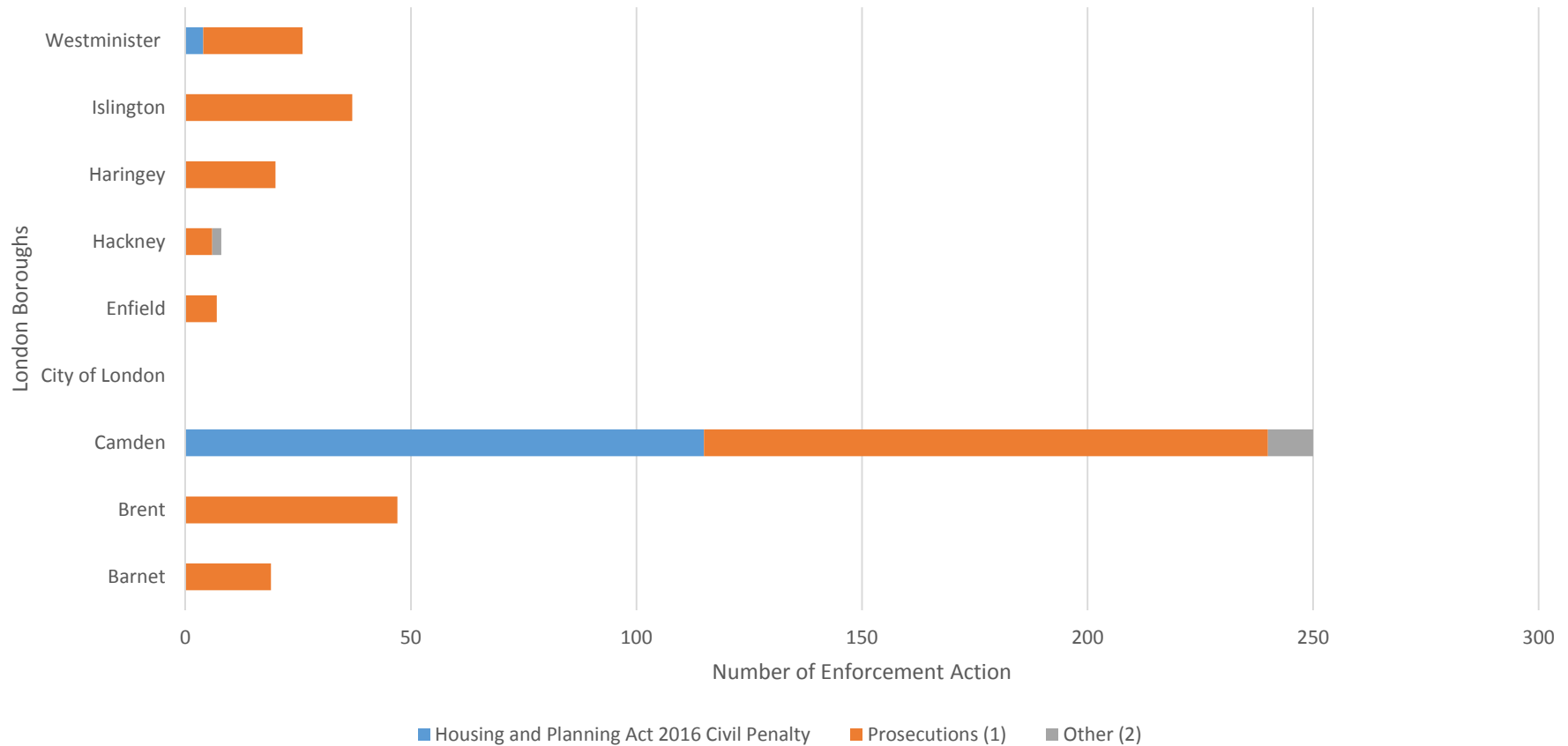
Enforcement update

Darren Wilsher – Private Sector Housing Manager
Jack Kane - Operations Manager



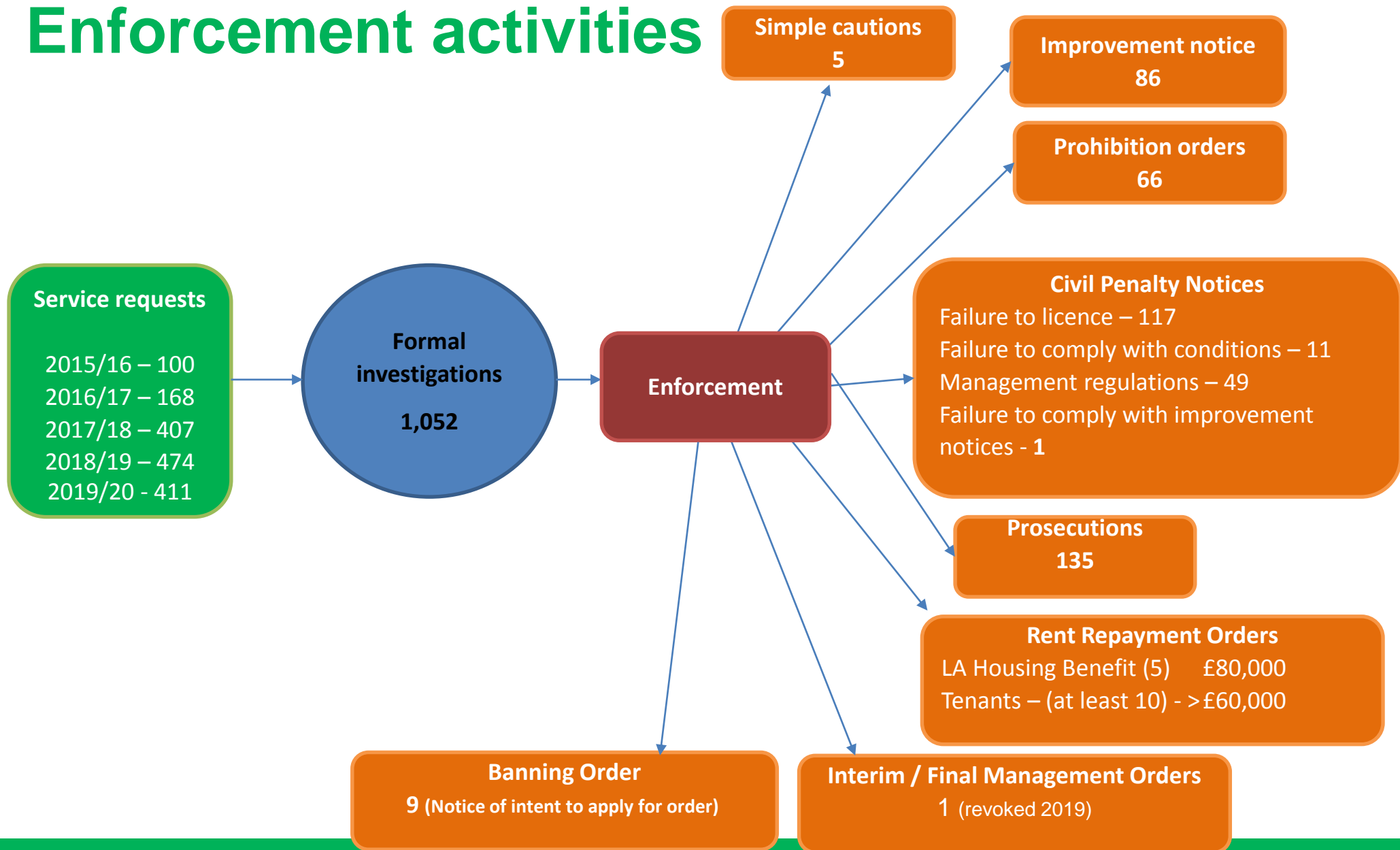
Enforcement overview

Neighbouring boroughs private sector housing enforcement



Source: Private Tier GLA Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker [15 August 2019]

Enforcement activities



Joint working with Trading Standards

- Consumer Rights Act 2015 – Served 6 notice of intents and 1 final notice (£55k)
- Letting agent questionnaire sent July 2019 – 383 sent out, 67 responses
 - Sampled 10 where responses not received – 50% not compliant

Prosecutions

- Company fined £1,000 with £1,500 costs for issuing sham licences instead of AST's (all pleaded guilty)
- Fine of £2,000 with £500 for not advising tenants it was an unlicensed HMO which affected decision to take property

Rogue Landlord Taskforce

Setup to address rogue landlords and lettings agents within Camden exploiting migrant tenants living in unlicensed and dangerous HMO's

Multi-disciplinary enforcement team consisting of:

- EHOs
- Tenancy Relations Officer
- Solicitor

Also working with Trading Standards, Planning, Building Control, Universities, Tenants Groups

Rogue Landlord Taskforce

- 17.7% of Camden's population arrived in the UK in the preceding ten years, compared to 6% nationally
- 25% Camden residents aged between 18 and 29
- 40.6% Camden's households are single person households
- High proportion of migrant and younger households in PRS in Camden
- Estimated that 75% of HMOs have at least one migrant tenant
- Migrants often unaware of tenant rights, licensing and sometimes the Council!

Rogue Landlord Taskforce

Will focus on 3 core themes:

Intelligence: build on existing intelligence sources to identify rogue landlords/agents

Awareness/Education: target at risk migrant group through outreach events/universities

Enforcement: pro-active enforcement of unlicensed/dangerous to improve standards

Rogue Landlord Taskforce

- Identify unlicensed HMOs through complaints or intelligence gathering
- Unannounced visits carried out to properties
- If no access – can obtain warrant from Magistrates Court
- Inspect properties and advise tenants re their rights
- Gather evidence with a view to taking enforcement action for operating unlicensed HMOs, breaching HMO management regulations and harassment/illegal evictions

Rogue Landlord Taskforce

Any person/company who receive rent from the property, even if they then pass this on, may be liable for licensing offences and breaches of HMO Management Regulations

LA may take enforcement action against several persons/companies at the same property for the same offences

Rogue Landlord Taskforce

Enforcement options - Prosecution

Licensing offences and breaches of HMO

Management Regulations are criminal offences

Offender can be prosecuted in Magistrates Court

Unlimited fine if found guilty



Rogue Landlord Taskforce

Enforcement options - Civil Penalty Notices

Housing and Planning Act 2016 – started April 2017.

- Alternative to prosecution, not a criminal conviction.
- Variety of Housing Act offences – mainly licensing and HMO man regs for RLT
- LA set fine level, maximum of £30,000 per offence
- 2 stage process, policy to ensure consistency

Rogue Landlord Taskforce

Work so far...

- Over 40 properties being investigated for potential licensing offences
- Many properties sub-divided to create additional bedrooms
- 2 x warrants of entry to be applied for imminently
- Evidence of 12 unlicensed HMOs obtained – enforcement action ongoing
- CPNs totalling £121k approved and in process of being issued
- One prosecution and one RRO application in progress

Rogue Landlords Taskforce

Work so far...

- Meetings with universities and local tenants groups
- Working to promote work of team
- Assisting tenants with Rent Repayment Orders (RROs)
- Looking into setting up tenants forum/focus group

Rogue Landlord Taskforce

Additional HMO licensing was introduced almost 4 years ago

Weekly visits being carried out by the team to suspected unlicensed HMOs – no requirement to give notice

Section 257 HMOs – often overlooked but must be licensed

HMO licences cost around £900 – less than a months rent from one room in many Camden shared properties!

Ensure all your HMO properties are licensed to avoid enforcement action

Q&A Session

Thank you

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