

Landlord newsletter

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



Issue 2 – Winter 2019

A warm welcome to the second issue of our newsletter. We have lots of news and information for you below and we hope you find it useful and informative. We are nearing the end of our review of the licensing scheme and will be publishing the results in the coming months. The results (or at least the preliminary ones) will be available in time for the next HMO landlord and agent event in the Spring. We know lots of you will be interested in attending this event - bookings must be made through the *Eventbrite* invite which we will send out in the next few weeks.



National updates

Tenant fees

The [Tenant Fees Bill](#) had its third reading in the Lords on Tuesday 15 January. The bill now returns to the House of Commons for consideration of Lords amendments, which included lowering the deposit cap to no more than five weeks' rent for properties with an annual rent of less than £50,000.

Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

The private member's Bill received Royal Assent on 20 December and will come into force on 20 March this year. [The Act](#) applies to both the private and social rented sectors and puts an obligation on landlords to keep their property fit for human habitation from the outset and strengthens tenants' rights.

National housing complaints redress scheme

A new [housing complaints resolution service](#) will make redress scheme membership compulsory for all private landlords. The government intend to create a single housing complaints service to help people battling with their landlord - mirroring the current

Gas Safety Regulations

The Gas Safety Regulations 2018 give landlords the option to renew their property's gas safety certificate up to two months prior to the expiry date i.e. 10 months after the

requirement for letting agents and property managers.

previous check, whilst still preserving the original expiry date. [Read more.](#)

Tax

HM Revenue and Customs has published a [free guide](#) to property letting.

HMO webpages

Some of you may have noticed some teething problems with the Council's new website in the last few weeks, but we are pleased that the HMO licensing pages are now working properly and can be found [here](#).



Local updates & information

Use of electrical extension leads



Extension leads can create tripping hazards and overload sockets, leading to overheating and fires. With the huge growth in household gadgets needing charging, there is a good reason why Camden ask for a minimum number of double sockets suitably located in bedrooms (four) and kitchen (five, with three at work top level)

A plug block adaptor is particularly hazardous as the weight of the plugs and leads attached to it can put strain on the pins, causing it to pull out of the socket, creating a poor connection, overheating and fires. This is worsened by the fact these adaptors tend to be used in kitchens for multiple power-hungry items such as the kettle, toaster and microwave.

Ideally all electrical appliances should be plugged directly into wall sockets. Where tenants are found using plug adaptors, extension leads, or overloading sockets, you

HMO licensing review

We have now closed the survey for landlords and tenants, and have inspected many of the properties licensed in the early days of the scheme to look at compliance with the works required.

The results of the review will be published in the coming months. However, in advance of this, we just want to remind landlords and agents of a couple of important points:

- Read the HMO licence in detail, including the licence conditions, the schedule of work and the room tables showing the permitted number of occupants for each room
- The licence holder must let the Council know as soon as possible if the property is sold or if there is a change of manager.

Licence holders and managing agents are reminded that if future compliance inspection are carried out where works have not been carried out within the time periods specified, or undersized rooms are being occupied by new tenants (those who were not in occupation when the final licence was issued) then it is likely that enforcement action will be taken.

should educate tenants on the dangers and work with them to find alternatives:

- Unplug devices not in use
- Relocate appliances to avoid the need for adaptors and extension leads – especially high-power items. Heaters should be hard-wired.
- Provide more suitably located sockets

During routine landlord inspections, look out for scorching, damaged wiring/equipment and signs of overloading. If extension leads are absolutely necessary, replace with fused multipoint extension leads and ensure they are suitably rated for the load. Position so as not to cause a tripping hazard.

Electrical Safety First has good advice on [preventing electrical fires](#) and a [socket overload](#) calculator.

Preventing homelessness - give us your views

The Council would like to hear your views on their homelessness and rough sleeping proposals, which includes support to help people stay in their homes. The survey closes on 18 February, so why not comment today? [Read more](#).

Rogue landlords



Sub-letting agent fined £15,000 for dangerous unlicensed HMO

An early morning raid uncovered 9 bed spaces in a former 2 bedroom flat in

HMO licence fee increase

As part of the Council's financial planning it is necessary to review the HMO licensing fees from time to time. This exercise was carried out recently and a fee increase is necessary to cover the costs of the scheme.

The HMO licensing fees are due to increase on 1 April, to £750 for a flat or house plus £60 for each bedroom or unit let within the property.

This means a four bedroom flat in multiple occupation would cost £990 to licence (as opposed to £763 currently). A discount of £95 will still be applied for accredited private landlords.

Even with this increase the cost of an HMO licence in Camden remains cheaper than most other local authorities in London.

£26,000 fine for poorly managed licensed HMO

The re-letting of a bedroom off a kitchen at a licensed HMO on Abbey Road has landed two letting agents with large fines. Camden Council officers found a room that was let in contravention of the HMO licence conditions and posed a fire risk. The managing agent who issued the tenancies, Enox UK Ltd., was given a £20,000 civil penalty notice (CPN) and the HMO licence holder, Katryan Property Services Ltd., a £6,000 CPN.

Goldington Crescent. There was no working smoke alarm present and bunk beds were being used to pack tenants in. The agent sub-letting the property was fined £15,000 for management regulation failings and for failing to apply for a HMO licence. The property owners and their agent were also fined for failing to apply for a HMO licence.



Camden landlord ordered to pay back housing benefit on unlicensed HMO

The Council has obtained a Rent Repayment Order from Finchley Properties Ltd, requiring them to hand back £22,438 of their profits gained from renting poorly converted flats in an unlicensed HMO on Finchley Road between March and November 2017.

✉ 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 or phone the team on: 020 7974 5969.



Referral from fire brigade results in fine of £12,000

Storegroup Ltd. and its two directors pleaded guilty to Housing Act offences relating to a dangerous unlicensed HMO in Somers Town. Council officers were alerted to the property following a tipoff from London Fire Brigade officers over the living conditions. The house had been poorly converted from previous office use and two people were found living in a windowless bedroom. Dangerous wiring, disrepair, fire safety and other hazards were found. A prohibition order was served on the bedroom. Works have now been carried out.

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).

