

# PRIVATE TENANT

## Draft Housing Bill offers real changes

LANDLORD LICENSING, RIGHT TO BUY and Home Buyer's Packs are all on the agenda in the proposed Housing Bill out for consultation now. CFPT, after years of lobbying

on this issue, particularly welcomes the recognition that regulation of the private rented sector is needed in the form of licensing, and is also relieved that limits on Right to Buy –

which has decimated affordable housing stock – are finally to be imposed.

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## Sign wars Estate agents defy residents

FOR SALE SIGNS CONTINUE TO MULTIPLY in Belsize Park regardless of objections by residents that they are a blight on the neighbourhood. Belsize Residents Association recently petitioned the Council's Planning Enforcement Scrutiny Panel for a local ban on the signs. They cited estate agents for breaching guidelines by putting several signs on each property, for disfiguring buildings and endangering pedestrians when boards with long nails and metal bands ended up on the pavement. BRA's submission added that the signs served no proper purpose because people don't tramp the streets looking for accommodation these days – they use press and Internet pages. So those boards not authorised by the property owner are just free advertising and plain illegal fly posting.

Last year Camden used Trading Standards laws to haul several major agencies in front of magistrates for falsely offering properties for sale or to let when signs were randomly stuck on buildings around the Borough. Bringing such cases consumed many hours for Camden staff posing as customers and checking agents' listings. The fines of a few thousand pounds probably meant little to agents who can earn thirty grand commission on a single sale. The only visible result is that more signs now read Sold By or Let

By and a few say Let & Managed By or Area Covered By, presumably avoiding technical offences, but demonstrating that the only benefit is to the agency, not the home seeker or property owner.

Enforcement is complicated in an area where most houses are divided as flats and each can display a sign, but residents report that as soon as one legitimate board is erected it's rapidly joined by those of rival companies. Complaints are usually met with reassurances about isolated mistakes by sign erectors. But a tenant in Finchley Road recalled having a Let By sign nailed to his home by an estate agent whose office was a few doors away. The flat had been let since 1997 via another agent. The neighbouring agent had no connection with the property whatsoever, he'd simply

decided that he'd like a sign on a building nearby to promote his business. Warned he might be prosecuted for Trespass and Criminal Damage, the agent agreed to remove the sign, though not before questioning the tenant's rights in the matter and threatening to assault him. Another complainant spoke of twice being woken in the early hours by hammering on the exterior wall of his home as similar 'pirate' signs were put up.

Unfortunately, after hearing such tales, Camden's Executive Member for Planning John Thane had little comfort for those assembled – explaining that a new ban on signs would be beyond the council's enforcement resources. One resident responded that

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CFPT members Pat Bull (right) and Shirley Wallington (left) receive Special Volunteer Awards presented by Mayor Judith Pattison and Chairman Martino Cartella.

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Camden Federation of Private Tenants is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act as The Camden Federation for Private Tenants Limited Registered No: 25086R

# Noise Nuisance

**As a private tenant it is understood that there are certain constraints on where you live and the standard of your dwelling, market forces and the goodwill of your landlord being two of the most obvious. What many people will not often consider, or be aware of, is the level of noise and anti-social behaviour caused by your direct neighbours and in the general area in which you live.**

I have seen the distress that consistent noise barrage in one's vicinity can cause. A friend was recently forced to move out because of a nightly stereo barrage emanating from the next-door flat which was almost adjacent to his room. The whole experience left him "stressed and depressed." He had tried to involve the appropriate authorities and while the support from the Police and the Council's noise officers was welcomed no measuring of the noise levels was carried out, and his record of the nights on which the noise occurred was deemed insufficient. He felt that in the end "nothing else would work, just find a new flat".

There are obvious difficulties with enforcement. Noise is an immediate problem, often with no swift resolution. The Council's noise line is not currently operational on a 24-hour basis, and it is hard to collect evidence. While officers try to visit as soon as possible (the weekend service hopes to deliver a visit on the night of the complaint) resources and the lack of a permanent budget to carry noise-measuring equipment make obtaining proof an obstacle. The noise may in any event have stopped by the time a visit occurs, only to start up again later. Before

taking into account the probable delays and costs of any court or other concrete action there is thus almost inevitably a lengthy time-scale to provide a solution for the person or persons affected.

Unfortunately these sorts of circumstances are not only confined to an individual level. The fall-out for residents of the effects of the burgeoning late night economy in both licensed and unlicensed premises are well documented, and recent cases do not necessarily give grounds for optimism. The situation is likely to be exacerbated when the governments Alcohol and Licensing Bill of 2002 becomes law.

## Lack of clarity in Councils' Licensing Policy

As recently reported in the local press (CAMDEN NEW JOURNAL 20/3/3), police calls to revoke the strip club Spearmint Rhino's late licence collapsed with some pointing the finger at a lack of clarity in the Council's licensing policy, while the Council pointed legal limitations on the way it can seek "to regulate the way entertainment is provided." In a separate case where illegal parties taking place in the Tram Studios were affecting the quality of lives in the Arlington Rd area, it has taken over two months to issue enforcement orders, even after Councillors had voted to outlaw the gatherings.

Council enforcement action can sometimes suffer from a lack of resources in terms of levels and expertise of staffing, financial restrictions and an increasingly complex legal system. Resources may in future not match the rate of growth in the alcohol and leisure industry. What is however very encouraging, is the Council's recognition of some of these problems and their apparent commitment to put together a

concerted and thought out plan to address the areas of concern. They are also taking the lead in launching a campaign to oppose or amend aspects of the forthcoming Licensing Bill which they feel may prove detrimental overall. (see *Camden calls for support*)

The recent Scrutiny Panel Interim Report into noise and licensing makes many recommendations, covering a number of specific areas. For noisy neighbours it proposes investigating the possibility of using Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's) or on the spot Notices against offenders. There is also a call to look at a cost-benefit analysis of equipping teams with noise-measuring equipment, making it easier to report noise and licensing breaches, via dedicated 24 hour lines or the internet.

The panel look to develop a multi-agency approach to the problems to avoid duplication of work and aid evidence-gathering by developing partnerships with the Police and Customs, using so-called Street Wardens and possibly community organisations. All of these bodies could help tackle breaches of licensed and unlicensed activity and accompanying noise pollution and anti-social behaviour that it may bring.

Using these measures, and focusing on positive contributions from citizens and license holders, it is hoped that any existing enforcement gap may be bridged. Crucially however, Camden has taken a pro-active stand in assessing potential future impact. Worrying aspects are whether the Council will have "adequate staffing, financial and IT resources" to ensure that the transferring of the system of licensing from magistrates to Local Authorities works. There are also fears that the bill would not allow the impact of crime and disorder to come into any assessment of issuing

or renewing a license.

Camden has been at the forefront of a campaign against aspects of the Bill, and should be attempting to obtain all possible sources of funding to ensure that enforcement does not become toothless due to lack of finance. In this, Camden is to be applauded. Many of these recommendations and initiatives deserve public support and it will be interesting to follow the outcomes of the work when the Licensing Bill becomes law, and the Planning, Licensing and Noise panel makes its final report.

The Council's weekend noise line can be contacted on 020 7278 4444 between 10pm and 4am Friday and Saturday. Queries on Council licensing policy can be directed to 020 7974 6919.

Thanks to Jim Beam

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Westminster had applied a ban on exterior projecting signs, allowing only those placed flat within windows. She claimed that the ban was self-enforcing – those who conformed to the rules often reported rivals who broke them. The experience in Camden's Conservation Areas was similar – most agents respected the ban on signs and transgressions were easily spotted.

In non-conservation areas like Belsize, Camden should adopt the Westminster approach. Until then others may be tempted like the Camden residents who set out with pliers and crowbars to remove offending signs en masse – memorably taking down a majority of them in the Belsize area over one Christmas holiday. Agents have threatened to sue and individuals

have been warned by Police they were committing Criminal Damage. Freeholders and leaseholders can dismount a sign from their property if it breaches the terms of a lease – and probably then bill agents for the cost of removal, disposal and any damage – particularly in areas like Belsize Park where so many buildings have a stucco finish, easily cracked by nails, or steel bands which crush and stain the coating. Normally, the rest of us pick up the bill as street cleaners have to remove hundreds of signs that end up on Camden's pavements every month.

Estate agents must realise they are not doing their cause any great good in this turf war with rivals and residents. One local firm admits that they could benefit compared to outsiders if all boards were banned. Common sense says that they are disfiguring the very neighbourhoods they seek to promote.

## Planning enforcement:

**ignore**

**A national shortage of qualified planners is robbing Camden of protection from rogue developers and householders who are ignorant of planning regulations.**

The result, according to Residents Associations is that areas of the borough are being ruined as gardens are paved over for parking spaces and buildings in conservation areas altered illegally.

## Developers ignore laws

Many such bodies have testified to the Council's Planning, Licensing and Noise Enforcement Scrutiny Panels, whose interim report is broadly critical of the Enforcers' performance. The Panel concludes that when Camden takes court action against transgressors it invariably wins, but residents' complaints that no one is ever available to investigate or follow up

their reports of breaches. This will continue until more staff can be recruited. Alternatively, the Environment Department is looking into proposals to recruit unqualified staff to act as "barefoot licensing officers" – or a plan proposed by the Heath and Hampstead Society for Camden to train members of the public to act unpaid in a similar role.

## Camden calls for support against all night boozers

THE COUNCIL, HAVING ALARMED PEOPLE who live in Finchley Road and Camden Town by designating them as areas more likely to be granted late drinking licences, is now asking all residents to support opposition to the Government's new later licensing laws. A circular from Anna Woodward speaks of late licensing causing problems of crime, noise, disorder, "litter or worse" (presumably meaning the increased urinating in public now

that virtually all public toilets have disappeared). New laws being proposed by Government will make it harder for local Councils to refuse applications for late licenses, with the risk that many will get permission for 24 hour drinking. Camden hopes that if enough members of the public make their views known, the Bill will be modified. At the same time, the Borough's Licensing staff have concluded (like residents) that

bars, pubs and restaurants have reached saturation point in Camden Town and that very few more licenses can be granted. One of the area's long-suffering residents commented, "it's not a matter of how many more licenses we think should be granted, we think none should be". You can add your voice to Camden's Campaign by contacting [campaign@camden.gov.uk](mailto:campaign@camden.gov.uk) or telephone 0207 974 6019.

# Extra help

## with your housing costs

Marilyn Bramble-Litchmore of Camden's Housing Advice Service gives advice on how to get help with meeting your housing costs.

THE HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE HAS DEALT with many cases where tenants paying market rent find themselves falling into mounting rent arrears and ultimate debts due to housing benefits rent restrictions. Increasingly, tenants have to seek further help in paying their rents by applying for a discretionary housing payment to help with their rent liability. Some tenants struggle to meet the difference in rent payment from their low incomes. One of the main functions of the Housing Advice Service, is to help private tenants keep their accommodation and prevent them becoming homeless. Our experiences in this area highlight the difficulties tenants face and it is clear that, although the payments are time limited, they have assisted tenants to delay or prevent the loss of their accommodation. More importantly, where payments have been made it often gives the tenant more time to find cheaper accommodation. This makes a significant difference, particularly to the single homeless; who have far less chance of being offered council housing.

### What is a discretionary housing payment?

Discretionary housing payments (DHP) are government funded and are paid to local authorities on an annual basis. Local authorities in turn have the freedom to create their own in-house policy on how the money will be spent, the circumstances under which the payments will be made, the period payments will be made, and the amount that will be paid to the claimant. DHPs do not have to be continuous or for any definite period. Payments can be made for a

fixed period, for example, three months, perhaps to allow the claimant time to look for alternative cheaper accommodation. However, discretionary housing payments will not be higher than eligible rent or council tax. Consideration may also be given to backdating payments without the constraints of time limits.

The payments are not 'benefit' payments, but are paid in addition to housing or council tax benefit. These payments specifically relate to rent and council tax liabilities and do not include such liabilities as service charges and water charges. The rules around discretionary housing payments are clearly more flexible than the previous rules relating to claims for additional assistance with housing costs. There is no requirement for the local authority to make payments for the whole housing benefit or council tax period.

To qualify for discretionary housing payments the claimant must already be claiming either housing benefit or council tax payment. There is no time limit to making a claim for discretionary housing payments.

### How do I apply for a DHP?

Again, there is generally no set procedure and local authorities can decide on how claims can be made. Therefore, a phone call or email may be sufficient to start the process. However, claims for discretionary housing payment in Camden are required in writing; giving the full circumstances of the case and specifying the purpose the payment is required for. The request can be made in the form of a letter, but there is a formal application

form to apply for discretionary housing payments and this is the preferred option, as the necessary questions are detailed on the form. The claimant has responsibility to report changes of circumstances that might affect discretionary payments, as they do for housing, benefit and council tax payment.

### Notification, reviews and overpayments

The application will receive a written decision giving reasons. There is no formal review process, other than a judicial review. However, if the claimant requests it, the decision may be reviewed. Local authorities can review their decisions to award discretionary housing payments at any time. Equally, payments can be stopped at any time. Although DHPs are paid in conjunction with housing benefits/council tax payment, where an overpayment has occurred, it will be identified as a separate payment. The overpayment will be recovered at the discretion of the local authority and collected by whatever means the authority considers necessary. However, the overpayment will not be recovered from the claimant's current housing benefit or council tax benefit.

Ms P, is a single women who found accommodation with a private landlord, very soon she began to realise that she would not be able to manage to meet the monthly rent payment through housing benefit payments. She discovered that she had to meet the difference in the

shortfall of housing benefit payment from her income support. Ms P had had to find accommodation urgently for herself and two children. She had gone to great lengths to secure accommodation at a reasonable rent and was the cheapest she could find on the day in question. We advised Ms P to apply for discretionary housing payments.

The application was successful. The additional payment has helped Ms P to stay on in her accommodation and the landlord agreed to offer her another contract.

However, the payment is paid for a limited period. When the payments stop she will need to request an extension. Fresh applications can be made for DHPs, which would be considered anew based on the circumstances of the case. It is essential that the Housing Benefit Section is fully informed of any relevant circumstances that may assist the claim; for example, any medical condition, or the need to remain in a particular area in the borough for support from medical services, family or friends.

The Housing Advice Service has also assisted Mr and Mrs V with a claim for discretionary housing payment. The couple took on a tenancy of a one bedroom flat. Mrs V was pregnant with the couple's first child. Mr V lost his job and Mrs V was currently unemployed. The couple were already receiving assistance with housing benefit payment, but were struggling to meet their responsibility to the rent contribution on the arrival of the new baby. Discretionary housing payments helped to cover the shortfall not met by housing benefit and enabled them to remain in occupation of their home for a considerable period of time.

Another case deals with increased Council Tax due to relocation.

Mr & Mrs T and family were made an offer of housing from public sector housing to a private sector tenancy. They were overcrowded and required larger accommodation. However, it had not been appreciated that there was a significant difference in the council tax banding. The Housing Advice Service appealed the banding on the property for council tax purposes. The appeal was successful, reducing the property to band F. This resulted in a substantial reduction in council tax liability. However, further assistance was still required to meet Mr & Mrs T's council tax liability and a subsequent application for DHPs was also successfully achieved.

A tenant can also apply for a DHP where accommodation falls into council tax band G and above; as in this case, even where a tenant is receiving full Housing Benefit, they will be not be entitled to assistance with council tax benefit at or above

the level of that band.

In summary, discretionary housing payments can be a temporary boon to private tenants, in order to give them a period of grace to look for alternative cheaper housing, or tide them over until their circumstances change. An application for DHP should not be made on the grounds that the tenant/claimant wants to remain housed in the accommodation or area simply because they like it there. More substantial reasons are needed, for example; where there is an obligation under a fixed term contract for rent payment, which cannot be broken without the tenant being liable for breach of contract, or that the tenant/claimant is vulnerable for some reason. Or alternatively, they would be put at a significant disadvantage if they were required to vacate the accommodation at the particular time in question.

If you are a private tenant finding it difficult to meet your housing costs and think that you may qualify for a discretionary hardship payment, contact your local Housing Advice Service, see the box on this page.

*Many thanks again to Housing Advisor **Marilyn Bramble-Litchmore** for this article.*

## Camden Housing Advice Service

**Free, expert advice** for private tenants, leaseholders and people seeking accommodation. You can phone us, come in or email us.

Housing Advice Centre  
North team  
179 West End Lane,  
NW6 2LH  
**Tel:** 7974 8855  
hacnorth.housing@camden.gov.uk

**Opening hours**  
Mon, Thurs, Fri: 9.30 – 4pm  
Tues: 9.30 – 1pm; 4 – 7pm  
Wed: Closed



Housing Advice Centre  
South team  
Bidborough House  
20 Mabledon Place, WC1H 9BF  
**Tel:** 7974 5801  
hacsouth.housing@camden.gov.uk

**Opening hours**  
Mon, Tues, Thurs,  
Fri: 9.30 – 3pm  
Tues: 4 – 6 by appointment  
Wed am: Somali speakers only



Awarded for excellence

# British Gas:

## less than Three Star service

LANDLORDS ARE OBLIGED TO GET gas appliances checked annually for safety, so many have also opted for a repair contract such as British Gas Three Star Service.

As TV consumer programs reveal how honestly-priced (or even honest!) plumbers are hard to find, current British Gas ads are very reassuring. And prices pitched to attract householders are well within the reach of landlords. The service is less endearing to end-users – tenants who put up with days wasted waiting in for engineers who don't arrive. It seems typical of what happens when the person buying a service isn't the one who has to use it.

Tenants say it was often difficult to get through to British Gas this winter and when things went wrong they had to repeat the same customer data and details of the problem to a different operator each time. Worse, once British Gas missed an appointment, instead of the service being treated as now doubly urgent, it seemed to be scheduled like new job (i.e. minimum of two days further delay).

A CFPT member reports being left without any means of cooking for 10 days after an annual safety checker decided that a valve feeding the cooker was leaking slightly. The engineer promised to return within two hours to complete the central heating safety check once Transco (the part of pre-privatisation British Gas responsible for infrastructure) had physically disconnected the cooker. When the engineer failed to reappear, leaving the tenant also without heating and hot water, the phone operator at British Gas calmly assured him that he couldn't return for two

days. She claimed the engineer had phoned the tenant but got no reply – the tenant refuted this because his phone's caller ID feature logs every call. After a frantic call to British Gas HQ, the water heater was restored the same day.

However, the cooker repair was passed to another engineer who seemed barely competent. Arriving without a replacement part, he resorted to tightening the existing valve so much it jammed completely. Attempts to free it, using tools borrowed from the householder, failed. Delays in getting authorisation from the landlord, identifying and finding a replacement part – plus missed appointments – made the job

appeared and no-one phoned as had been arranged. British Gas apparently later told the landlord that they'd called but no-one answered the door – which the tenant felt was an outright lie. The engineer would, doubtless, have tried the phone if the doorbell wasn't answered or left a note saying he had tried to visit.

A third appointment was made (and kept) and the parts installed the day after that – by then the tenant had suffered nine days without running hot water.

Perhaps British Gas should spend less on advertising to gain new customers and more on recruiting and training staff to

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### Perhaps British Gas should spend less on advertising to gain new customers and more on recruiting and training staff to serve existing users.

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stretch on and on. The landlord complains that the part cost 40p but he was charged £140 for labour.

A tenant whose central heating boiler ceased working this freezing February reports that British Gas couldn't send an engineer until two days later. The tenant took time off to stay in and no-one turned up. He rang to say that he'd been hanging around fruitlessly for ten hours and was told that the engineer might still be coming but couldn't be reached on his mobile. An hour later the British Gas operator conceded that their engineer had probably turned his mobile off and gone home long ago (and this was Friday night). Complaining loudly that he now faced at least another two days without heat or water for bathing, the tenant was offered a Sunday emergency callout. He waited in all Sunday but no engineer

serve existing users. To some extent the Three Star Service Contract has been a victim of its own success, at least in London, as British Gas failed to anticipate the boom in buy-to-let landlords, who are more likely to buy cover than owner occupiers. 8AM to 6PM service hours and the firm's reluctance to give specific appointment times are unsuited to Camden's many single households and couples who both work (often for longer hours than that). British Gas engineers complain they can't afford local housing so commute from the suburbs and struggle against traffic going from job to job. Staff shortages result in unrealistic workloads – one engineer spoke of being assigned 10 calls a day – the result is customers get let down.

## Gay couple's victory challenged

Law lords, Lords Nichols, Millet and Walker have allowed a challenge to a Court of Appeal's decision upholding the tenancy rights of same sex couples.

The ruling held that Rent Act tenant Antonio Mendoza's human rights would be breached, if he was not given the same rights to the home he shared with his late partner, as the surviving partner in a marriage would be entitled to.

No reason was given for permitting the challenge – the Law Commission is expected to publish a draft bill this summer on tenancy agreements, proposing that all cohabiting couples be given equal rights.

## Beacon Status for Camden

Camden Council's mantelpieces must now be groaning under the weight of its beacon status awards.

The latest was awarded by Local Government Minister, Nick Raynsford, for Camden's achievements in tackling homelessness, including reducing the number of families in B&Bs, and improving services for families in temporary accommodation.

However, Beacon awards don't allow the Council to sit back admiring its silver; Camden's Draft Homelessness Strategy was recently published and the implementation of the strategy looks to be ahead of schedule of the Governments' deadline for July.

## Affordable homes proposed on smaller sites

London Mayor, Ken Livingston, is proposing a reduction in the threshold for affordable homes in inner London from 15 to just 10 or 5. This would be an enormous boon for boroughs like Camden which has (outside of Kings Cross) very little brownfield site for development.

Much new development in Camden is very small scale, often in infill sites – small plots between houses or other buildings – and used by private

developers for so called 'luxury' housing. These are also often larger units of accommodation and therefore do not make good use of the limited space available.

If Livingstone's proposals were put into practise, it could greatly increase new build of affordable housing within Camden.

## Key-worker housing – wasted opportunities

Both the Police and Fire services in Camden can be accused of wasting their own key-worker housing opportunities.

We learned recently that the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority are defending a decision to turn four derelict cottages in West Hampstead into a 'nerve centre' for Camden's Fire Department (Ham & High 21/3/03). The cottages were formerly used to house serving fire fighters, which begs the question – Why were they left to become derelict? Housing costs must be a key factor in the fire fighters' pay strikes, Camden has a chronic shortage of affordable housing – it just doesn't add up.

The Metropolitan Police Service was also recently exposed by its own tenants because its empty housing had been appropriated by squatters. The police staff and families housed in Adelaide Rd complained that the squatters are causing problems through anti-social (and criminal) behaviour, but the overriding issue is – Why were these properties empty at all? Police spokesmen give a variety of fairly lame excuses, from the usual disrepair to the outrageous assertion that new recruits cannot afford the rents!

The loss of one or two homes here and there may not seem on the surface of it to make much difference, but the slow and inexorable erosion of existing affordable housing adds to the immense housing problems that Camden faces. Camden Council has to work with these housing providers to prevent this loss and poor use of accommodation, and must reject applications for change of use from housing to other purposes in these cases.

## Did you know?

CFPT has a wide range of information leaflets on all issues relevant to private tenants and private leaseholders.

If you would like any of the following free information leaflets, please contact our offices (details on back pg) and we will send you the information free of charge:

- Assured and Assured Shorthold Tenancies
- Regulated Tenancies
- Repairs – a guide for landlords and tenants
- Unfair tenancy terms – don't get caught out
- Deposits – a guide for private tenants
- Long Residential Tenancies – your right to security of tenure
- Long Leaseholders
- Notice that you must leave – a brief guide for landlords and tenants
- Bothered by Noise – There's no need to suffer
- My Landlord Wants Me Out – protection against harassment and illegal eviction
- Right of first refusal – for long leaseholders and other tenants in privately owned flats
- Leasehold flats – your right to buy the freehold of your building or renew your lease
- Lease running out? Security of tenure for long leaseholders
- Applying to a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal - service charges, insurance, management
- Home repair assistance
- A Practical Guide For Protecting & Maintaining Your Home (Age Concern)
- Dealing With Your Debts (Rent)
- DIY Home Energy Check
- Have a warmer, healthier home – grants from the Government's Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

And many more from making a small claim to County Court Fees. Contact us today for your copies.

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The draft Housing Bill was published on 31st March and will be available for consultation for 10 weeks. It includes the proposals to introduce a new mandatory licensing scheme for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). The new rules will apply to larger, high-risk properties (3 storeys or more and occupied by at least 5 people).

There will be discretionary powers to license smaller HMOs where there may be particular problems with this type of accommodation in an area and for selective licensing of private landlords in low demand areas. Areas of high demand like Camden will have to prove a case to the OMDP if they want to take advantage of these further measures.

The Bill fulfils Labour's election manifesto pledge to license HMOs and includes a fine of up to £20,000 for non-compliance. However, as much as we welcome the proposals to introduce landlord licensing, ignoring smaller, sometimes more dangerous properties – many student houses, for example – is disappointing, as is the lack of applying the 'fit and proper persons' standards for landlords. CFPT will be putting forward its response to the draft Bill, if you would like to join us in discussing the Bill we will be meeting on Wed 7th May @ 6pm at our offices, 11-17 The Marr,



Authors Don Johnson and Mike Walsh give a talk to CFPT members and others on their new book *Nicholas van Hoogstraten: Millionaire Killer*. Those attending were also treated to clips from the pairs' *World in Action* documentary on Hoogstraten, the notorious landlord who has recently appealed against his 10-year sentencing for manslaughter of business rival Mohamed Raja. Hoogstraten was infamous mainly for his appalling treatment of his many tenants whilst making a fortune through property, but the extent of his lawlessness knew almost no bounds, indulging in kidnap, assault, fraud and criminal damage before his conviction for manslaughter last year.

Camden St, NW1, next door to The Camden Pub.

**For a free copy of the draft Housing Bill, contact The Stationery Office on 0870 600 5522**

**quoting ref: CM5793. CFPT also has a number of copies for distribution. The closing date for consultation is 23rd June.**

## Camden Federation of Private Tenants

CFPT needs you — needs you —

CFPT is run for and by private tenants. We work on all aspects of tenant issues, providing information and resources, lobbying Government and campaigning on issues both locally and nationally.

We have close working links with other groups such as Shelter and have worked with former DETR on a number of issues.

If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact us. If you would like to see other topics covered, please let us know.

We welcome letters, questions, comments and suggestions. You can become a member or a subscriber. This will put you on our mailing list

and you will receive notice of any meetings, workshops, events, special reports, etc., as well as our newsletter for £7.50 per year.

We also need volunteers to work on the newsletter, contributing to policy work and consultations, attending occasional court cases, and representing us with other organisations and committees.

**Please contact us at:**

11-17 The Marr,  
Camden Street, London NW1 0HE

**Tel:** 020 7383 0151  
**e-mail:** camfpt@lineone.net

CFPT has been awarded the Community Legal Services Quality Mark.

Community  
Legal Service



This Mark means that we offer a Quality Assured Information Service to all our callers.