

## Landlord's Most Hated Laws

The latest findings from research agency BDRC's quarterly survey of 500 private landlords, show that Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) and Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are the two least popular pieces of legislation with them.

SDLT is the transfer tax charged on land transactions, and EPCs estimate the energy efficiency of a home; much like they do with things like fridges, washing machines and other electrical appliances.

According to BDRC, "For the first time the survey probed what legislation landlords would like to see removed if they could influence the government".

Worryingly for private tenants keen not to unfairly lose their deposit when

they move home, the tenancy deposit protection schemes introduced by the government in April 2007, are in third place.

While it's fair to say that awareness amongst tenants of energy performance certificates and the three tenancy deposit schemes should be much higher than they are – this is down to the fact that they are not publicised enough. To lose them would be a major step back in trying to improve standards in the private rented sector.

Also of concern is the loathing shown by landlords towards the protection from eviction legislation introduced in 1977, and the gas safety and electrical equipment safety laws. These are

a crucial part of the limited range of measures currently available to safeguard this country's private tenants – who are some of the least protected out of all the major European nations.

Anybody who thinks all is well in the private rented sector and that it should just be left alone to run itself, should take a more detailed look at this survey.

They should also bear in mind the words expressed by a group of visitors from Sweden who came here on a fact-finding trip. When it was explained to them how things worked here for private tenants, they declared, "Your system is barbaric!"

# Tenants Are First Casualties In Planning War

Last year the new owner of two adjoining properties in Hilltop Road, West Hampstead, decided to flout planning law and start building works to double the size of the properties. He also converted existing floor space to multiple occupation (instead of single family use) in breach of covenants he'd agreed to when buying the houses from Camden Council.

But Nader Golesorkhi, who used to run an estate agency in Finchley Road (and seems to be also known as Ned Nader), has fallen foul of the old real-estate mantra "location, location, location".

When buying the houses, former convalescent homes run by a Barnet's health authority but owned by the council, he overlooked the fact that Hilltop Road is located in Camden Council Leader Keith Moffitt's ward. He also reckoned without neighbouring residents like outspoken actor Stephen Fry – and a barrister who specialises in planning cases.

In short order the residents had arranged press coverage of a site meeting with Councillor Moffitt. This gained the attention of Camden

Conservative leader Andrew Marshall, also on the Council's Development Control Committee, who wrote to the local Hampstead & Highgate Express assuring residents of his determination to see that planning law is followed.

Golesorkhi, who now runs a property empire from the back of his brother Asher Golesorkhi's disco equipment shop, was served with an order to demolish the extensions within 90 days following a Camden Development Control Committee meeting in May. He has issued an appeal to the

Government's Planning Inspectorate – which has now also received 70 letters from locals opposing the project.

Prior to the decision in May, no doubt Mr Golesorkhi wished to demonstrate to the committee what a co-operative and reasonable fellow he was. So he also took steps regarding the conversion to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

Unfortunately, according to local residents, his corrective action was simply to evict all the tenants.



## A New Decade And A New Home

A new decade is now upon us. The first term for students at University College London (UCL) is already over, which will come as a shock to new students at UCL in particular!

Many of these new students will now be starting to look for accommodation, as a number of them live in university accommodation for their first year but will then be venturing out to find their own place to live.

Camden is the district of London with the largest number of UCL students, and so you're likely to come across many students searching for accommodation around the borough. I would encourage you to be friendly and welcoming both when students are looking for housing and when they are moving in later in the year, as this will enable them to feel safe and secure and will hopefully create a good community environment. Those who are living in

private accommodation for the first time are likely to feel vulnerable, and they would appreciate people from the wider community looking out for them.

Students are a target for a variety of crimes; particularly burglaries as young people aged 16-24 are around three times more likely to be the victims of burglaries than those in other age groups. Because of this, I would urge



you to be particularly vigilant – please do look out for your student neighbours, and make sure to report any suspicious behaviour in your area.

As a students' union we are encouraging students to be more involved than ever in the local community, and the UCL/ UCLU Volunteering Service is working hard to promote volunteering in and around Camden to our students. Last year there were around 1000 students involved in a variety of volunteering projects, and we are hoping to increase this number during the course of this year.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or comments on 0207 679 7930 or email: [w.officer@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:w.officer@ucl.ac.uk)

**Nicki Challenger**  
UCL Students Union  
Welfare Officer

**UCLU**  
University College London Union

# News in Brief

## LONDON RENTS MAP

London's private tenants will, for the first time, be able to compare average rent levels for homes across the capital, using a new interactive website set up by London Mayor, Boris Johnson.

The London Rents Map shows the average rents for private accommodation for each postcode area in the capital. Unlike existing search portals, which show asking prices posted by estate agents and individuals rather than rents achieved, it is based on actual market rents.

It shows the average cost of renting a one-bedroom property in Camden is £280 per week compared to the London average of £185.

The Mayor said "The map will enable tenants and landlords in Camden to make sensible choices".

To use the map go to: [www.london.gov.uk/rents/](http://www.london.gov.uk/rents/)



Weighted average weekly rent (£)

- 422 to 979
- 293 to 422
- 236 to 293
- 190 to 236
- 133 to 190
- No data

## New Guide Helps Tenants Avoid Dodgy Landlords



Students, young people and, indeed, all private tenants need to be very careful when renting a home and follow a new ten-point guide produced by LACORS.

Councillor Paul Bettinson, LACORS Chairman said "Although protection for tenants is greater now than ever before, it still pays to proceed with caution so that deposits are protected, fair tenancy agreements are signed, and people are aware of their rights and responsibilities".

To download a copy of the guide go to the Info & Advice section of our website [www.cfpt.org.uk](http://www.cfpt.org.uk) and you will see it in the Leaflets for Tenants section under the LACORS heading.



The Camden Federation of Private Tenants is now on Facebook – so come and join us!

## RenterGirl Blog

This is how RenterGirl describes herself and life as a private tenant:

"I write about everything to do with renting and the buildings tenants live in. We didn't all make it onto to the property ladder. Thirty per cent of the UK population live in rented accommodation. There are roughly one million landlords in the UK.

We don't all have a dream home. We move from rented flat to rented flat, dealing with lazy landlords and neighbours, good and bad.

We endure the tribulations of new-build housing complexes, and the insecurity of never knowing how long you can stay in one place, or indeed, if you want to."

<http://rentergirl.blogspot.com/>

## Camden Tenants – Know Your Rights

We have also produced our own simple five-point "Know Your Rights" poster, which also has details of where to go for help and advice in Camden if you are having a problem with your landlord or home.

To get a copy of it go to the home page of our website at [www.cfpt.org.uk](http://www.cfpt.org.uk)

The image shows a poster titled "Camden Federation of Private Tenants - Tenants - Know Your Rights". It lists five key points for tenants to know their rights and responsibilities. At the bottom, it provides contact information for Camden Council's Housing Options and Environmental Health Team (Private Tenants).

- Read your tenancy agreement carefully, so you know your rights and responsibilities.
- Make sure your deposit is put into one of the three government approved schemes (this is a legal requirement).
- Make sure the landlord/letting agent gets your gas appliances checked on a yearly basis (this is a legal requirement).
- Always use e-mail or write letters so you have a written record of anything that is said or agreed between you and your landlord or agent.
- Get help, advice and support if you have a problem.

Camden Council - Housing Options  
020 7974 8833 (Out of hours emergencies 020 7974 4444)  
Camden Council - Environmental Health Team (Private Tenants)  
020 7974 3890

Camden Federation of Private Tenants  
11:17 The Mall  
Camden Street  
London  
NW1 5PL  
020 7933 8151  
admin@cfpt.org.uk  
www.cfpt.org.uk



# To Regulate Or Not To Regulate?



Around 100 people with a wide variety of interests recently attended a conference called "The Private Rented Sector: Renting in Transition", which was organised by Shelter's ROOF magazine.

Throughout the day a range of topics were analysed and discussed including: working together with landlords, young people and renting, encouraging institutional investment, through to improving conditions and housing homeless families.

The day ended with a traditional-style debate on the thorny subject of regulation and whether the government's plan for a landlord register was a good idea.

While there was broad agreement that there was not enough enforcement of the existing legislation, the "fault lines" between the tenants' perspective and that from the landlords' side soon opened up.

Susanne Chambers from the National Landlords Association (NLA) started by boldly stating that "tenants in privately rented

accommodation have never had it so good".

Robert Taylor who is both a private tenant and co-ordinator of the Camden Federation of Private Tenants responded from the audience by saying "I don't feel more protected than I have ever been – in fact, I feel more vulnerable. As tenants we are only ever two months away from potentially losing our homes".

Other contributions were made by Ian Potter from the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA) who made the point that the existing legislation was not being properly enforced, and Green Party Councillor Bill Randall who stated that "You need a licence to clip a poodle in this country but you don't need one – unless you own a HMO – to be a landlord".

Penny Anderson, private tenant and author of the RenterGirl blog was of the opinion that "Too often tenants are treated like an infestation while rented properties are treated like delicate, house-shaped piggy banks."

The debate, as they say, continues.

## Reviewing The Year

Camden Federation of Private Tenants held its Annual General Meeting in October, after another positive and productive year.

John McMillan, chair of the management committee highlighted in his report some of the ups and downs we had experienced in the last 12 months – a major high being our very successful conference in March – and a major low being the "Warm and Well" event we had to cancel in February – due to the worst snow in many years.

He also outlined our determination to work together with the council to keep services for private tenants as accessible and responsive to their needs as possible; and acknowledged the undoubtedly difficult times that lay ahead. However, CFPT is nothing if not a resilient organisation and we will continue to represent private tenants (who make up over a quarter of the borough's households) as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The second half of the meeting was then handed over to Nicholas Kissen, Senior Legal Adviser and Thomas Frith, Legal

Adviser, from the Leasehold Advisory Service.

They did a presentation on the often complex and confusing legislation affecting leaseholders. Usefully they then went on to explain what their organisation can do to help – and to answer questions from members of the audience.

Nicholas Kissen said "We operate a telephone advice service between 9.30am to 5.00pm. Whether you are a freeholder or a leaseholder, public or private sector, feel free to get in touch with us for advice."

"Also if you are having an on-going dispute with your landlord or your neighbours and do not want to go to court or tribunal give a thought to using our mediation service to sort matters out."

Lease can be contacted on: **020 7374 5380**, emailed at: **info@lease-advice.org** or you can visit their website at: **www.lease-advice.org** for more information.



## Energy Saving Made Easy

If you live in parts of Belsize, Frognal and Fitzjohn's, Gospel Oak, Hampstead Town, Haverstock and Swiss Cottage council wards you may be able to benefit from a free home energy visit. This could help you cut carbon and save you up to £100 per year on your bills.

### What happens during a Small Steps home energy visit?

The visit takes around 2 hours. A trained advisor will provide practical advice on saving energy at home and will install a range of energy and water saving measures – worth £120 – **FREE** of charge. These include:

- Real time displays, which help you keep track of the electricity that you are using and what it's costing you
- **Standby switches**, which allow you to turn off appliances at the flick of a switch
- Reflective radiator panels, which are installed behind the radiator to reduce heat loss through external walls
- Low energy light bulbs
- Water saving showerheads and tap fixtures, which help to reduce water and the energy needed to heat it
- A hot water tank jacket, which stops heat escaping from your tank

To find out more or to book a visit call the Small Steps Helpline on: **0800 801 738** or email: **info@smallstepenergyvisits.co.uk**

Please note: This new programme is available for a limited time only and for certain households in the Camden area.

## Energy saving made easy

Our **free** small steps home energy visits can help improve the energy efficiency of your home, **save you up to £100** per year on your bills, and help cut tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Book today and receive:

- a free visit from a home energy advisor
- practical advice on saving energy at home
- a range of free energy and water saving measures



This service is available for a limited time only.

To book your home energy visit call freephone **0800 801 738** or email **info@smallstepenergyvisits.co.uk**

Small steps, big difference



## Energy Efficiency Is A Major Factor When Renting A Property

Research conducted by the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes (EEPH) shows that 85% of private tenants are concerned by increases their in fuel bills.

Clearly feeling the squeeze caused by rising costs 9% of respondents have taken matters into their own hands and found a new more energy efficient home to rent.

When asked about the perceived value of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)\*

88% said they thought it would be useful when looking for somewhere to rent and 32% said it would be very useful.

Nine out of ten tenants said the EPC would have an impact on their choice of property, and the research showed that energy efficiency was rated just behind key aspects such as location, rent and type of property.

- \* From 1st October 2008 a landlord or letting agent must provide **FREE** of charge an Energy Performance Certificate to prospective tenants at the earliest opportunity and they must provide a copy to whoever takes up the tenancy.

For more information about EPCs go to **www.energysavingtrust.org.uk**

## Warm your home Cool your bills

Our warmer, cheaper, greener programme provides a wide range of grants to help make your home more energy efficient, cut tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and save you hundreds of pounds a year – many will cover the full cost of insulating your home.



To find out more, call Camden's energy advice helpline on **0800 801 738** or visit **camden.gov.uk/energygrants**

Small steps, big difference

camden.gov.uk/smallsteps



# Need A New Boiler?

Up to 125,000 households\* in England with working G-rated\*\* boilers can now apply for a voucher which will get £400 off the price of a new, modern A-rated boiler or a renewable heating system like a biomass boiler or a heat pump.

\*Only householders and landlords who privately own and rent homes are eligible to apply for a voucher.

## \*\*How can you tell if your boiler is G-rated ?

A good quick test for gas boilers is to see if it has a permanent pilot light -if it has then it is very likely to be G-rated. If it is gas fired and over fifteen years old it is likely to be eligible. If it is oil fired and over twenty-five years old, it is also likely to be eligible.

### Please note:

- If you are a householder (including tenants) under 60 you can only apply for the scheme if the boiler you are scrapping is in working order and is the main boiler used to heat the home.
- If you are a householder (including tenants) and 60 or over you can apply for the scheme regardless of whether the boiler you are scrapping is in working order. However, it still needs to be the main boiler used to heat the home.

The Energy Saving Trust is responsible for the administration of the scheme. You can find out more about it and register for a voucher by calling the Energy Saving Trust's advice line on **0800 512 012** or by logging on to their website at: **www.energysavingtrust.org.uk**



## Landlord Watch

### Overheard At Camden Landlord's Forum

After the Tenancy Relations Officer had finished helpfully outlining the in and outs of legally evicting tenants, he was probably surprised to be immediately rounded on by a man who demanded to know whether Camden was in the habit of representing tenants in the courts for free – when a landlord would have to pay for legal representation.

Sadly, the officer missed the opportunity to point out that tenants as a group not only pay much more council tax than landlords but also live in the borough. Many landlords of properties here don't live in the UK – or even in the European Union.

Another elderly questioner asked whether she was entitled to penalise tenants who left a (say) 6-month tenancy after 3 months by retrospectively increasing their rent and deducting the difference from their deposit. Her logic was that she had given them a lower rent because it was a long let but they had turned it into a short let, which should have been at a higher rent. Again the officer replied that he hadn't heard of such practice before – probably because it was unlawful.

In fairness to those landlords present, they had given up half a day of their time to listen to talks on topics like fire safety and Council Tax. Nevertheless, a staff member from another local authority who was in attendance was heard to murmur "and these are the good ones!".

### Nobody Loves Us

The National Landlord's Association (NLA) press officer recently wrote in their snappily-titled magazine UK Landlord that "For us landlords it often feels like everyone's got it in for us, particularly the press. If bankers and estate agents are the most hated professions, I'm sure landlords come a close third. In the NLA Press Office you'll find us working hard to counteract those negative views and squeezing in some positive stories too".

Paranoia levels also seem high – The Guardian is accused of taking "a swipe at landlords" and "comprehensive landlord bashing" via their "RenterGirl" blog (see page 3 for details of this).

Given the tone of comments made at Camden's Landlord Forum, we would imagine that 2010 is going to be a very busy and difficult year indeed for them.



## Where to go for Housing Advice in Camden

### Camden Council Private Sector Housing Advice

Town Hall Extension, Argyle Street  
WC1H 8NJ

Tel: 020 7974 5801

Email: [housingneeds@camden.gov.uk](mailto:housingneeds@camden.gov.uk)

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Friday 9.30am – 3.00pm

Wednesday 9.30am – 12.00pm

(Somali speakers only)

Appointments 4.00pm – 7.00pm

(private tenants)

Outreach drop in and appointments:

Kilburn Citizens Advice Bureau  
200 Kilburn High Road, W6 4JD

Monday 1.00pm – 4.00pm

### Camden Community Law Centre

2 Prince of Wales Road, NW5 3LG

Tel: 020 7284 6510

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

(10.00am–4.00pm, drop-in)

Wednesday evening (appointment only)

Camden Town Neighbourhood Advice Centre

### Mary Ward Legal Centre

26-27 Boswell Street, WC1N 3JZ

Tel: 020 7831 7079 (call for more information about housing advice availability)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

(10.00am–1.00pm, 2.00pm–5.00pm)

Wednesday (open to existing clients only)

### Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association

39 Tottenham Street, W1T 4RX

Tel: 020 7580 4576

Tuesday (10.00am–1.30pm, open door advice service)

### The College of Law – Legal Advice Centre

14 Store Street  
WC1E 7DE

Tel: 01483 216528

(call to make an appointment)

### BPP Law School – Legal Advice Clinic

68–70 Red Lion Street, WC1R 4NY

Tel: 020 7430 5668 (call to make an appointment)

### Shelter London Housing Advice Line

Tel: 020 7014 1540 (telephone advice only)

Monday – Friday (10.00am–1.00pm)

# Problems with Post-Xmas Debt?

## The Consumer Credit Counselling Service



Is a registered charity whose purpose is to assist people who are in financial difficulty by providing free, independent, impartial and realistic advice. You can speak with a freephone helpline counsellor who performs an immediate assessment of the situation ending in emergency help, self-help material or the offer of a counselling interview.

Call **0800 138 1111** or visit [www.cccs.co.uk](http://www.cccs.co.uk)  
(open 8.00am to 8.00pm, Monday to Friday)

## National Debtline

Is a national telephone helpline for people with debt problems in England, Wales and Scotland. Again, the service is free, confidential and independent. The organisation is committed to discussing your debt problems and the options available to you. The specialist advice given over the telephone is backed up with written self-help materials which are sent out to you for free. In certain circumstances, the organisation can assist in setting up a free debt management plan for you.

Call **0808 808 4000** or visit [www.nationaldebtline.co.uk](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk)  
(open 9.00am to 9.00pm, Monday to Friday and  
9.30am to 1.00pm Saturday)



## Payplan

Is one of the UK's leading debt management companies, assisting individuals who have unmanageable debts and working closely with charities such as National Debtline. Unlike most debt management companies, Payplan provide a free debt management service and are an independent company whose aim is to help people set up and keep to a manageable repayment plan.

Call **0800 085 4298** or visit [www.payplan.com](http://www.payplan.com)  
open 8.00am to 8.00pm, Monday to Friday)



## Housing Advice for Leaseholders

### Leasehold Advisory Service

Provides free legal advice to leaseholders, landlords, professional advisers, managers and others on the law affecting residential leasehold and commonhold.

Monday-Friday  
(9.30am-5.00pm)

Tel: 020 7374 5380

Email: [info@lease-advice.org](mailto:info@lease-advice.org)

Website:  
[www.lease-advice.org.uk](http://www.lease-advice.org.uk)

### Private Sector Housing Advice Team

(see box on the left for their details).

## Are You A Local Business?

Need To Reach More Potential Customers In These Difficult Times?

Then Why Not Advertise In This Newsletter ?

It's low cost, effective and goes out a wide variety of individuals and organisations across Camden

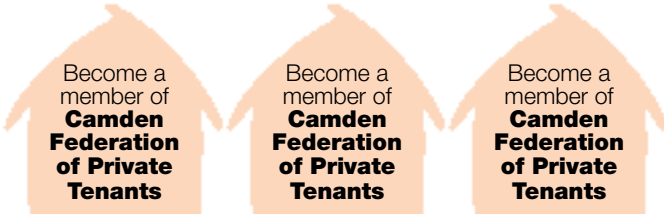


Contact Robert Taylor for more about our circulation and competitive advertising rates

# MEMBERSHIP FORM



# CFPT needs you



Become a member of **Camden Federation of Private Tenants**

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Become a member of **Camden Federation of Private Tenants**

## CFPT is the voice of private tenants in Camden

- We work with and support private tenants in Camden to organise and campaign for better protection, rights and services.
- We lobby the government, the council, landlords and a variety of other bodies and organisations to get things changed and improved.
- We work closely with other local community groups, organisations and national charities such as Shelter.
- We also signpost people to advice agencies, and provide information, support and basic advice on a wide variety of tenancy-related issues.

## If you are interested in getting involved with us you can:

- Become a member (see the left hand side of this page for details of how to join)
- Become a volunteer (visit our website for more about this)
- Join the Management Committee (call or email us about this)

## Translation

**CFPT est la voix des locataires dans le secteur privé de la municipalité de Camden.** Nous travaillons avec les locataires du secteur privé de la municipalité de Camden et nous les soutenons pour qu'ils s'organisent et mènent une campagne afin d'obtenir une meilleure protection, le respect de leurs droits et une prestation de services.

**CFPT es la voz de los inquilinos del distrito de Camden.** Trabajamos con los inquilinos del distrito de Camden y les ayudamos a organizarse y a conseguir más protección, derechos y servicios.

**CFPT é a expressão dos inquilinos privados em Camden.** Nós trabalhamos com os inquilinos privados em Camden e lhes damos apoio para organizar e fazer campanha por melhores direitos, serviços e proteção.

**CFPT waa codka gaarka ah ee ijaartayaasha xaafada Camden.** Waxaan la shaqaynaa oo ka caawinaa ijaartayaasha Camden in ay is habeeyaan uuna ololeeyaan kobcinta amaanka, xaquuqdooda iyo adeega.

আমাদের সদস্যদের: সরকারি বা বেসরকারি নিয়ন্ত্রিত বা অন্য কোনো প্রকারের।  
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من صوت العيشاء في كامن. العيشاء في كامن. العيشاء في كامن. العيشاء في كامن. العيشاء في كامن.  
للقوام بتنظيم وإدارة حملة من أجل الحصول على حماية. نحن نعمل مع العيشاء في كامن.  
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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  
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**Tel:** 020 7383 0151 **Email:** admin@cfpt.org.uk **Web:** www.cfpt.org.uk

Editor: Robert Taylor

Design: www.intertype.co.uk

- As a member of CFPT you will receive the quarterly newsletter, be kept informed of current housing issues, changes in legislation and relevant campaigns.
- You will also receive invites to meetings, events and have free access to our office resources.
- By joining, you are helping to make us a bigger, stronger and more effective organisation.

1 Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone no \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

2 I/We wish to have annual membership of CFPT as an:

- Individual member £10
- Individual student member £5
- Group member\* £30

Name of group\* \_\_\_\_\_

3 I am a: (please tick one)

- Regulated Tenant
- Assured Shorthold Tenant
- Assured Tenant
- Housing Association Tenant
- Leaseholder
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

4 I would like to make a donation of (optional) £ \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount paid £ \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please fill in your details and send (no stamp required) with payment to:**

Camden Federation of Private Tenants  
FREEPOST LON12470  
London  
NW1 2YW