

PRIVATE TENANT

Where to get information and advice Special

Housing Advice:

Camden Housing Options and Advice Service



179-181 West End Lane,
West Hampstead
London NW6 2LH

hacnorth.housing@camden.gov.uk

020 7974 8855

Provides advice on all aspects of private renting and private leasehold issues to residents of Camden. Includes a Tenancy Relations Service which may act as an arbitrator between tenant and landlord. Provides home visits to housebound. Provides information on finding accommodation.

Telephone advice available daily from 9.30am – 4pm

Opening times:

Mon, Thurs & Fri: 9.30am -4pm

Tues: 9.30am-1pm, 4pm-7pm

Camden Community Law Centre

2 Prince of Wales Road

London NW5 3LQ

020 7284 6510

Minicom: 020 7284 6535

admin@cclc.org.uk

Mon, Wed & Fri: 10am – 4pm

Telephone advice during weekday office hours.

Specialist areas: Employment, Housing, Immigration, Welfare Rights, Family.

Special advice sessions

(by appointment):

Housing:

Wednesday 6.30pm -8.30 pm

FULL WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

Home visits by arrangement

Central London Law Centre



19 Whitcomb St
London WC2H 7HA

020 7839 2998

www.londonlawcentre.org.uk

Provides a free, accessible, client centred legal advice service to people living or working within its central London catchment area: Covent Garden, China Town, Soho, Fitzrovia, Holborn and West End.

Also provides a telephone advice service across London where there is no other advice service available – Mon to Fri 10am to 5.30pm.

Housing law advice by telephone and advice sessions on Wednesdays between 3pm – 7pm. Please ring first to book an appointment.

The Housing Unit provides advice, assistance and representation to tenants on: defending possession claims, disrepair, homelessness, illegal evictions, tenancy status, and harassment and rent determinations.

The unit is the lead agency for and participates in the **Duty Representation Scheme** at the Central London County Court providing representation to unrepresented tenants on possession action days.

Community Legal Services Direct

National helpline 0845 345 4345

www.clsdirect.org.uk

If you live in England and Wales and want free high-quality legal information to help you deal with your legal problems, Community Legal Service Direct (CLS Direct) can help. On their website you can:

- Read free legal information leaflets or legal help factsheets
- Search for a high-quality local legal adviser or solicitor
- Search for legal information from a selection of the best advice websites in the UK
- Find out if you qualify for legal aid

If you qualify for legal aid you can call their national helpline for free advice about benefits, housing, employment, tax credits, education or debt problems.

The Law Centres Federation

info@lawcentres.org.uk

If you don't live in Camden or Central London, find out where your nearest Law Centre is at the Law Centres Federation's website: www.lawcentres.org.uk or call on 020 7387 8570

Inside this issue ►►►

Tenancy Deposits **2**

Benefits and General Advice **2**

Free Legal Representation for those not eligible for legal aid **2**

For Housing Association Tenants **3**

For Leaseholders **3**

Miscellaneous **4**

News in Brief **5**

Win £15 of shopping vouchers by sending us your feedback 6

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

Shelter

88 Old St
London EC1V 9HU
www.shelter.org.uk
0845 458 4590
info@shelter.org.uk

For advice and support on homelessness, finding a place to live, renting and leasing, repairs, eviction and repossession.

For **urgent advice** call 0808 800 4444 from 8am-midnight, seven days a week. Shelter's website has some handy online assessments to determine your type of tenancy and whether your council has a responsibility to house you. It also has a directory for finding housing advice services in your area.

Tenancy (Rent) Deposits

From 6 April 2007, all deposits taken by landlords for assured shorthold tenancies in England and Wales (this covers the vast majority of new tenancies), must be protected by a tenancy deposit protection scheme. From this date, tenants should ask their landlord about the details of the scheme when signing a new tenancy agreement.

The Government has awarded contracts to three companies to run tenancy deposit protection schemes from 6 April 2007.

Computershare Investor Services plc will run the single custodial deposit scheme, with the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators providing the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) service.

The Dispute Service Limited will run an insurance-based scheme directed primarily at letting agents. It will also run the scheme's ADR service.

Tenancy Deposit Solutions Limited will run an insurance-based scheme, sponsored by the National Landlords Association and administered by Hamilton Fraser Insurance, which will be directed primarily at landlords. The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators will be the principal provider of ADR to the scheme.

If, after this date, your landlord is not affiliated to one of these bodies and asks you for a deposit they are breaking the law and you do not have to pay – there are also

penalties on the landlord if they fail to comply and tenants may be entitled to reimbursement or withholding of rent. Always seek advice.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Norman House
105-109
The Strand
London WC2R 0AA
020 7836 3630
www.ihos.org.uk

The Housing Ombudsman Service piloted a Tenancy Deposit Scheme for the private rented sector in England, which provided free and impartial dispute-resolution assistance to the participating landlords, agents, and tenants. When the pilot ended the Housing Ombudsman did not transfer that function to any other organisation. The Service continues to deal with tenancy deposit disputes involving landlords in its jurisdiction, but they cannot adjudicate disputes involving other landlords.

If you are a tenant and would like to know if they can deal with your dispute with your landlord, please go to the main website of the Housing Ombudsman Service. There you can check if your landlord is in their jurisdiction.

If you are a private landlord and would like to know more about becoming a member of the Housing Ombudsman Service, there is information in the Voluntary Members section of the main website.

Benefits and general advice:

Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Has online information and advice including frequently asked questions in seven languages; **English, Welsh, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu and Chinese**. Also has online directory to find advice in your area.



Kentish Town Citizens Advice Bureau

242 Kentish Town Rd
London
NW5 2AB

Drop in advice times:

Mon – Sat (Wed closed):
10.00 – 12.00

Holborn Citizens Advice Bureau

3rd Floor
Holborn Library
32-38 Theobalds Rd
WC1X 8PA

Drop in advice times:

Tues & Sat: 10.00 – 12.00
Thurs: 17.00 – 19.00

Kilburn Citizens Advice Bureau

200 Kilburn High Rd
Kilburn
NW6 4JD

Drop in advice times:

Mon: 10.00 – 12.00 & 17.30 – 19.30
Tues, Thurs, & Fri: 10.00 – 12.00
For telephone advice ring 08451 202965

Free legal representation for those not eligible for legal aid:

Bar Pro Bono Unit

289-293 High
Holborn
London
WC1V 7HZ
020 7611 9500



enquiries@barprobono.org.uk

The Bar Pro Bono Unit is a charity, which helps find pro bono (free) legal assistance from volunteer barristers.

They can assist with:

- advice, representation and help at mediation
- cases in all legal areas
- cases where legal proceedings have not yet been started
- cases in all tribunals and courts in England and Wales

Pro bono assistance is only available to those who cannot afford to pay and who cannot obtain public funding (Legal Aid). The case must usually also have legal merit

and any single piece of work for which assistance is being sought must not take more than three days. The Unit is a charity with limited resources, and can only help in some cases.

All applications must be made through a Solicitor or advice agency (eg. a CAB or Law Centre); it is also entirely up to each solicitor or advice agency whether or not to make an application to the Unit in any individual case. Applications should also be made as soon as possible as the Unit requires at least three week's notice before any hearing date or deadline.

The College of Law

020 7291 1230

ssadvice.centre@lawcol.co.uk

The College of Law's Legal Advice Centre (LAC) provides free legal advice to people who cannot afford to pay. It operates for the mutual benefit of clients and College students and is committed to enabling students to learn from practical experience. As such the LAC is only open during term time. Students who are studying to become barristers or solicitors give advice, and if appropriate, further help under the supervision of qualified staff. The Centre aims to comply with the professional standards applicable to any solicitor's practice. You will need to contact the Centre giving brief details of your case to see if they can help, and they will offer an appointment if applicable.

For housing association tenants

Housing Ombudsman Service



Norman

House105-109 The Strand
London WC2R 0AA

020 7836 3630

www.ihos.org.uk

Who can use the Service?

All residents in homes managed by a landlord or agent who belongs to the Service. All registered social landlords (housing associations) in

England are included, as are some private landlords and management agents. You can search the members database.

Complaints about public housing (i.e. councils or local authorities) have to be made to the Local Government Ombudsman.

What problems?

Any complaints about shortcomings in the way homes are managed, as long as it is made by the resident affected or an authorised representative.

The Service can also deal with certain disputes which are not about housing management – contact them for more information.

Can a complainant contact the Service directly?

Yes, but the complainant must complete the internal complaints procedure of the landlord or agent before the Ombudsman can intervene.

Is there a charge for using the Service?

No. Complainants do not have to pay to use the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS Ltd)

5th Floor
Trafford House
Chester Rd
Manchester
M32 0RS
0161 868 3500

www.tpas.org.uk

TPAS works to promote tenant empowerment in the social housing sector and provides information, advice, training, consultancy and conferences on all aspects of involving tenants in their housing management.

TPAS has an extensive online directory of its leaflets and factsheets ranging from setting up a tenants association to tenants representation in housing management.

Housing Corporation

0845 230 7000

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

The Housing Corporation is the government agency that funds new

affordable housing and **regulates housing associations** in England.

For Private Leaseholders:

Leasehold Enfranchisement Advisory Service (LEASE)

31 Worship St
London
EC2A 2DX

0845 345 1993

info@lease-advice.org

LEASE provides free advice on the law affecting residential long leasehold property and Commonhold. The website contains lists of Leasehold Valuation Tribunal decisions as well as publications such as Living in Leasehold Flats and more detailed information on Commonhold, freehold purchase of flats, lease extension, service charges, the right to manage plus lists of solicitors and surveyors.

LEASE now offers a Mediation Service – download an application form from their website.

Advisers are available for telephone advice from 9.30am – 3.30pm, Mon to Fri. No drop in – appointments made by phone or email.

Campaign for the abolition of residential leasehold

PO Box 26369,
London,
N8 7ZL

www.carl.org.uk

Carl is leading the campaign to end the infamous leasehold style of residential property 'ownership' that still exists in England and Wales.

CARL publishes a quarterly newsletter – The Leaseholder.

A sharply written review of the politics of leasehold, the latest freeholder scams, and a digest of legal developments and news, is sent free to members. All copies can be downloaded from the website.

CARL is entirely dependent on its membership for its lobbying power and income, and greatly appreciates that support. If you are not a member and share our objectives, then please join the campaign.



Miscellaneous

The Rent Service

5 Welbeck St
London
W1G 9YQ

020 7023 6076

www.therentservice.gov.uk

This is the Central London and Head Office. Check their website to find your local office.

The Rent Service provides professional rental determinations and valuations for Housing Benefit and rent registration of Fair Rents under the Maximum Fair Rent Order 1999. They provide pre-tenancy determinations for tenants on housing benefits to see if the tenant can afford the rent. Their website has FAQs and more information but they do not give legal advice on individual cases.



The Residential Property Tribunal Service

10 Alfred Place
London
WC1E 7LR

General enquiries:
0845 600 3178

London Office:
020 7446 7700

www.rpts.gov.uk

This is the Central London and Head Office. Check their website to find your local office. The RPTS is a quasi-judicial body that has three components, including the Rent Assessment Committees (RACs) and Leasehold Valuation Tribunals (LTVs). The RACs determine disputes brought by either landlord or tenant about Fair or Market rents that have been previously determined by the Rent Service. Before appealing a Rent Service determination on a Fair rent always seek advice.

If you are an Assured or Assured Shorthold tenant and you think that your rent is too high in comparison to similar private sector accommodation in your area, you may apply to the RPTS for a valuation (for shorthold tenants, this must be within the first six months of the tenancy term); seek advice from your local advice service first.



LTVs determine disputes involving leasehold property; typically service charge disputes. There is a scale of fees for some, but not all, types of leasehold dispute which you can view on their website. There is no fee for dealing with disputes about Market or Fair rents. Again, the RPTS does not give legal advice on cases.

The Courts Service

HM Courts Service
Customer Service Unit
5th Floor, Clive House
Petty France
London SW1H 9HSD
020 7189 2000

www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk

The Customer Service Unit can help with procedural advice but cannot give legal advice. You can download information and leaflets on all aspects and stages of making a small claim with a list of fees, and also on possession proceedings. If you receive an application for possession this is because your landlord is asking the court to make an order that you give up possession of the property you live in.

No one can evict you from the premises unless the court says that they can; the court will not make a decision before the hearing date. What you do may affect the court's decision therefore you should take action immediately by:

- Getting help and advice straight away from a solicitor or advice agency

If defending the order:

- Fill in a defence form (downloadable from website) and return it to court within 14 days of receipt of claim form, and
- Attend the hearing, even if you have agreed about repayment of any arrears with your landlord.

Housing information for older women

Women's Link

26 Hanbury Street
London E1 6QR
0800 652 3167

Contact them for a directory on services for older women.

Access to Justice Update – now for the bad news ...

Compared to many areas, Camden has had an admirable advice sector, including three Citizens' Advice Bureaus, two Law Centres (Camden and Central London), the Mary Ward Legal Advice Centre, Camden Tribunal Unit and Housing Aid Centre, and is recognised for its excellence in advice provision and the value for money its voluntary sector provides.

However, the advice sector has been under threat for some time now, with provision in many areas reducing considerably or in some cases disappearing.

Local provision is now under threat on all fronts – not only are there huge cuts proposed to legal aid funding, coming into force partly in April and partly in October 2007, and for family and mental health advice probably a bit later, – but now Camden Council is proposing to cut their contribution towards the legal advice sector by over 40%. At the same time they are proposing to introduce a new way of funding advice agencies through "commissioning".

The huge concern is that with the proposed further reductions in resources for advice agencies over the next year or so, many more will disappear. The result? Unless we fight this, Camden residents will find that getting any legal advice at all will prove next to impossible unless they have bottomless wallets.

What can you do? In relation to the proposed Camden funding cuts, please contact your local councillors to make your views known as soon as possible.

In relation to the legal aid changes (which we believe will result in the continued exodus of advisers), please contact your MP and/or the Access to Justice Campaign which can supply example letters.

Contact:

Access to Justice Alliance
c/o Citizens Advice,
Myddelton House
115-123 Pentonville Road
London N19LZ
accesstojustice2005@yahoo.co.uk

Thanks to Wilma Morrison and Ginny Halley

Central London Law Centre

Camden Law Centre

Local residents have been joined by eminent legal experts in their protest against funding cuts that threaten to end free legal advice at the Camden Law Centre on Prince of Wales Road. Belsize Park resident Dame Helena Kennedy QC, co-founder of the service Michael Mansfield QC and the highly respected human rights solicitor Geoffrey Bindman spoke out against the planned cuts of around £500,000 that could bring about the closure of the service which was established in 1973. The final decision will be reached once the consultation ends in January. *See page 4 for more on cuts.*

Kings Cross challenge

Opponents to the planned developments at Kings Cross have announced their intention to make a legal challenge against the council if their concerns are not properly addressed. The Kings Cross Think Again group oppose the provisional permission granted by Camden council to developers Argent in March which they argue does not provide enough affordable housing, and will cause the destruction of heritage buildings, breach air quality policies and overlook policies on London's canals. Join the campaign or sign their petition on their website www.kxrlg.org.uk



King's Cross—think again

HMO applications overwhelming councils

Many councils across the country have been struggling to process applications for the new HMO licences for landlords, which became a legal requirement in April. HMO licences are required where a private property is rented to multiple occupants in buildings that consist of three or more floors and are occupied by five or more people in two or more

households. The licence is designed to improve living standards for residents who live in properties that have previously frequently been found to have poor facilities and fire safety standards, and are often overcrowded. These types of properties are also often badly managed, with tenants not even knowing who their landlord is.

Camden Update on HMO Licensing

The application process for licensing has developed steadily since April and to date LBC has received 197 applications. The good news is that properties are now being licensed with 21 processed to date, although this includes previously registered HMOs. Licensing Officer Darren Wilsher admitted that LBC did stall during July and August whilst they deliberated the conditions that we would apply to properties, but the Licencing Act itself has required a great deal of interpretation which largely led to the delay. There are still issues of clarity around extended non-mandatory or selective licensing and Camden has no immediate plans to pursue this.

For more information go to www.camden.gov.uk/hmo or call the Licensing Team on 020 7974 2090.

Overcrowding is increasing in private rented sector

A survey of British housing by the National Centre for Social Research for 2004/2005 has shown that overcrowding is on the increase in private rented housing. According to the survey, overcrowding has increased from 6% of private rented homes to 10%, compared with overcrowding among owner occupiers at only 3.5%. Ian Fletcher from the British Property Federation argues that the increase in overcrowding shows that people were making compromises when choosing where to live. He said "people's ability to afford the accommodation they want is leading them into conditions that are more crowded than they would otherwise desire."

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
- 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
- Residential Long leaseholders – A guide to your rights and responsibilities
- Home repair assistance
- 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.

Or why not visit our resource library.

Contact us today, see back page for details.

Camden Federation of Private Tenants **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 Government Departments 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 £10.00 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

**Community
Legal Service**



This Mark means that we offer a Quality Assured Information Service.



Why not become a member of CFPT?

As a member of CFPT you will be kept informed on current housing issues, legislation and campaigns. You will receive our quarterly newsletter to your door, as well as invitations to meetings and notice of relevant consultations. Your membership will also add valuable support to the Fed.

Name _____

Address _____

Tel no. _____

Email _____

- 1 I enclose £1 for membership plus £9.00 subscription fee*
2 I would like to donate £ _____ 3 Total enclosed _____

Signature _____ Date _____

**We can waive the application fee in cases of hardship, please contact the office in complete confidence.*

Please fill in your details and send with payment to:

Camden Federation of Private Tenants
FREEPOST LON12470
London
NW1 2YW

I am an/a: (please tick)

- Regulated Tenant
 Assured Tenant
 Assured Shorthold Tenant
 Other



Send us your feedback free of charge to enter our prize draw to win £15 worth of shopping tokens - what could be easier?

Did you use any information in this issue? Y/N (please comment) _____

Did you contact any of the advice services contained? Y/N (Please indicate which) _____

If not, will you keep any of the information for future reference? Y/N

Tell us what would improve the newsletter or what issues you would like to see covered in future:

To enter the prize draw please add: Name: _____

email address: _____ tel no: _____

Age: _____ Ethnic origin: _____ M/F _____

Tenancy type (please tick): Assured Shorthold Regulated Private Leaseholder Other

Camden Federation of Private Tenants
FREEPOST LON12470
London
NW1 2YW

We would really like your feedback on this newsletter - so tell us!

Thank you!
Closing date: 28 February 2007