

# Private Rented Sector

The Government is keen to encourage responsible lettings through the use of voluntary accreditation schemes for landlords and letting agents. These can offer landlords the benefit of a market advantage and tenants a guaranteed standard of accommodation and service.

They are working with the leading industry bodies to examine how to increase the use of voluntary schemes by landlords and agents.

Councils have a wide range of powers at their disposal to tackle the minority of rogue landlords who fail in their responsibilities.

These include:

- Requiring landlords to take action to rectify hazards in their property.
- The ability to carry out improvements and charge the landlord where landlords resists.
- Discretionary licensing powers to tackle areas blighted by poorly managed privately rented stock.

Landlords usually receive a letter from Environmental Health outlining the tenants concerns and asking them to respond in 14 days, or they may inspect and could serve the appropriate notices.

Any notice served will result in a charge. Unpaid charges are followed up.

On inspection any category 1 hazards found usually result in a notice. Not complying with these notices can result in prosecution and/or works in default.

Any works in default will be charged to the landlord.

To avoid going down the formal route it is important that landlords respond in writing as soon as possible.

**For more information visit:**

<http://www.communities.gov.uk>

or [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)



## Accreditation Scheme

*Going the extra mile*

Many Tower Hamlets Landlords are now accredited, but if you are not accredited - Register for the one day course now.

Tower Hamlets will refund your fees for this accreditation course when you register your property with the Housing Options Team. If you are interested speak to Noella or Geoff on **020 7364 3558** or visit [www.londonlandlords.org.uk/accreditation/home](http://www.londonlandlords.org.uk/accreditation/home)

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES 2011

### Landlords Forum

Wednesday 12th October 2011

### Accreditation Courses

Wednesday 19th October 2011



## Calling All Landlords

We have families waiting for properties.

We currently pay an incentive.

Do you have an empty property?

Don't delay please call Susan Hughes on 020 7364 7343



## CONTACT DETAILS

Landlords Update, Noella Ling,  
Housing Options Service  
Albert Jacob House, 62 Roman Road,  
Bethnal Green, London E2 0PG.

Telephone: 020 7364 3558  
e-mail: [housing.advice@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:housing.advice@towerhamlets.gov.uk)  
website: [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)



# Landlords Update

*Newsletter of Tower Hamlets Landlords Forum. Building a better future for both landlords and tenants!*

## 'Fire Kills' campaign appoints Fire Safety Champion for Landlords

### NEWS from Communities and Local Government

Councillor Mark Healey, Chair of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority and a landlord himself has joined the **Fire Kills campaign** as a champion for fire safety in rented homes, encouraging landlords to make their properties as safe as possible for their tenants.

Since its beginnings in 1988, the **Fire Kills campaign** has seen the number of yearly fire related deaths and casualties reduce dramatically, and ownership of smoke alarms has increased from just 9% in 1987 to 86% last year. Despite this rise in ownership, evidence suggests that those renting properties without an alarm are often among those most vulnerable to the risk of fire such as older people or single parent families.

### Request a home fire safety visit from the London Fire Brigade

Tenants can request for a Home Fire Safety visit from the London Fire Brigade to offer advice on how to make their properties safe and where appropriate fit a smoke alarm for free.

#### What is a home fire safety visit?

We will visit you at home to offer advice on how to make your home safe and where appropriate fit a smoke alarm for free.

#### Who is eligible?

We target our visits in areas and situations where we know there is a higher risk of fire, including the homes of older or disabled people, but anyone living in London can request a home fire safety visit.

As an advocate for the **Fire Kills campaign**, Councillor Healey will remind private landlords that it is good practice to install and maintain smoke alarms in the properties they are renting out. He will also encourage them to help protect their tenants and their property from the devastating effects of fire by fitting long-life smoke alarms like 10-year battery devices or hard-wired systems in every home they rent out.

Councillor Healey said:

*"As a landlord myself, I know how important it is to install working smoke alarms in the properties I am responsible for. I am therefore pleased to have been asked to help support the Government's Fire Kills campaign and urge all landlords to consider installing either 10 year battery alarms or hard-wired detectors in their properties."*

#### Why request a visit?

If you are concerned that your home may be at risk of fire or know someone who you think needs our help then please arrange a visit.

Certain insurers may offer a discount for a hard-wired fire alarm, which is mandatory for some types of properties.

To find out more visit:  
<https://www.londonfire.gov.uk/HomeFireSafetyVisit.asp>



2008 - 2009  
Producing the-offending



2003 - 2008  
Winner of 6 previous  
Beacon Awards



CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE





# News from the Forum 15 June 2011

**“A special thank you to all landlords, agents and speakers who attended the Forum on the 15 June 2011.**

I would also like to thank Jonathan Baston Environmental Health Officer and Clive Buckman, Housing Benefit Team Manager and Sue Hayes, Housing Options Team Manager who contributed to this newsletter.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jamie Jackson for his invaluable contributions to the Landlords Forum and newsletters for the last five years. Good Luck in your new post”.  
Noella Ling - Chair of the Landlords Forum

## Local Housing Allowance (LHA)/ Welfare Reform

Update from Lee Fearon and Clive Buckman. This is the third presentation done by Lee and Clive and without fail the temperature in the room raised few degrees prompting a quick adjustment to the air conditioning.

Understandably these are burning issues for landlords. Housing Benefit is the hottest subject of the Forum, but our dynamic duo are proving very popular with all. With years of experience and knowledge they reassured all that the Council is looking at every option available to minimise the impact of LHA on both tenants and landlords.



Pictures taken at the Landlords Forum on 15th June.  
The Landlords were addressed by Lee Fearon and Clive Buckman (top right)

## Changes from April 2011

New housing benefit claims from 1 April 2011 will be affected straight away. Existing customers will normally be affected from 9 months after the anniversary of their claim after 1 April 2011.

They may be affected sooner if:

- There is a change in the size of their household that affects the size of dwelling they are entitled to, or
- If they move.

## Changes from April 2011 to April 2013

Non dependent deductions made from Housing Benefit will be gradually increased if there is an adult living in the household who your tenant does not claim benefit for. An example would be a grown up child.

## Changes from January 2012

New Housing Benefit claims from single tenants aged 25–34 made on or after 1 January 2011 will attract the shared accommodation rate of LHA from the start of entitlement.

There is transitional protection for existing claimants aged 25–35. If they were getting Housing Benefit before 1 April 2011 they will be protected for 9 months from the next anniversary date of their claim after this date.

If they first claimed between 1 April 2011 and 31 December 2011 they are protected up to the next anniversary date of their claim. Thus, protection will end at some point in 2012.

## Changes from April 2013

**Introduction of a universal benefit cap:**

- £350.00 per week for single unemployed claimants
- £500.00 per week for workless couples and lone parents.

- Couples with 2 or more children living in privately rented accommodation will be affected as will lone parents with three or more children in privately rented accommodation.
- Couples can avoid this change by securing work - even if only one of the couple (or the lone parent) is in part-time work this cap will not apply.
- Council Tax Benefit is due to be abolished. Each local authority will need to have their own scheme paying out, in total, 90% of the amount that would have been paid under Council Tax.

## Annual increases in payments

Local Housing Allowance rates will be up rated in line with the Consumer Price Index.

The Consumer Price Index measures the average changes in the prices of consumer and services in the UK from month to month.

It is the main measure of inflation in the UK used by the government for its inflation target.

## Circumstances in which HB can be paid to the Landlord

**Where the tenant:**

- Has deductions being made from IS/JSA.
- Is in 8 weeks rent arrears.
- Has difficulty managing finances. (Incapacity)
- Is unlikely to pay the rent, (may have other debts).
- Or where rent has been reduced to an affordable level in order to enable the tenant to retain or secure a tenancy.

**For existing tenancies**

- Evidence of rent reduction must be seen.
- Variation of tenancy agreement.
- Tenancy renewed at a lower rate of rent.



## The Housing Benefit Project Team

With so many tenants being affected by these changes a Housing Benefit Project Team was set up to consider the potential impact of our residents. It is led by Fiona Wellington, Team Principal, Housing Options.

The key objective of the team will be to ensure that rents are reduced to the level of available benefit wherever possible thereby minimising and preventing homelessness. This will involve establishing the situation for each landlord and tenant and negotiating a way forward in each case.

Lynne Duval informed the Forum of the Landlord's survey conducted by the team to gauge the impact of LHA on availability of private rented sector properties.

An interesting finding from the survey is that 43% of landlords said that they would accept rent to LHA level to receive direct Housing Benefit payments.

Also interesting was that 55% of Landlords said that they would lower rent to LHA levels when the time came to renew tenancy agreements.

As discussed at the Forum more Survey forms were sent on the 16 June 2011 to all landlords/agents. Please make sure that you complete your form; your participation and feedback are invaluable.

If you would like to request a form or would like to speak to Project Officers, Brian or Sunday please contact them on the Landlords Hotline:

**020 7364 1416**

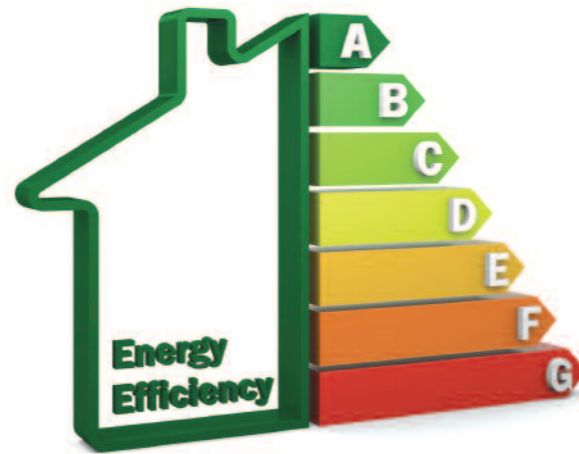
## London Warm Zone (LWZ)



working together for warm homes

Emma Adams told the Forum that LWZ through their partnership with EDF, local authorities and other non-profit partners, are able to provide help for homeowners and tenants of private landlords who are in receipt of income or disability benefits. An integrated income maximisation service to tackle fuel poverty in a way that cannot be achieved by heating and insulation improvements alone.

Emma Adams also informed the Forum of **RE:NEW**, the London-wide initiative working with London Boroughs to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in London's domestic sector through retrofitting energy and water efficiency measures.



### What are the Benefits?

- High energy performance rating of property to meet re-letting guidelines
- Higher property value
- Tenants live in warmer home
- Helps tenant to pay reduced energy bills
- Lower maintenance costs through reduced condensation, damp and mould problems

- Landlord's Energy Saving Tax Allowance (LESA) allows individual and corporate landlords to claim up to £1,500
- Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) allows corporate landlords to claim a 100% first year capital allowance for certain energy efficiency improvements
- Insulation Improvements: Full insulation improvements for homeowners and tenants of private landlords. All work is FREE for residents over the age of 70 who are in receipt of income or disability benefits.
- Heating improvements such as replacement of: old inefficient boiler; boiler repairs; new central heating systems; heating controls upgrades, such as thermostats, TRV's.

Full landlord approval is required before any works go ahead.

### FOR FREE INSULATION ASSESSMENTS

Contact Saving Energy on  
**0800 954 9689**

### FOR HEATING IMPROVEMENTS

Contact Broadway Chambers,  
530-542 High Street North, Manor Park  
London E12 6QN  
Telephone **020 8477 1960**  
or **0800 389 7286**  
or apply on-line at  
[www.londonwarmzones.co.uk](http://www.londonwarmzones.co.uk)

### GAS SAFE

(previously known as CORGI) – John Byrne Gas Safe Register is the official list of gas engineers who are legally allowed to work on your gas appliances. The Register is there to protect you and your tenants from unsafe gas work.

- Focus on gas safety and awareness
- Improve consumer safety through education
- Be open and accountable
- Listen and consult
- Work with others

## Duties of landlords

Under the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations 1998, Regulation 36 imposes two main duties on landlords:

1. Annual safety checks on gas appliances and their flues, and
2. Ongoing maintenance on gas pipework, gas appliances and their flues.

Effective maintenance normally involves an ongoing programme of regular inspection.

Gas pipework:

- visual inspection
- checking its condition
- protection against corrosion
- support, etc.

Gas appliances, and where applicable their flues:

- procedures are often defined by the appliance installation and service/maintenance instructions.

- Landlords have a duty to ensure that all gas work is carried out by a business that is registered with Gas Safe Register.
- Landlords have a duty to have relevant gas appliances, and any flue that they are connected to, checked for safety at intervals of not more than 12 months.
- A record of the safety check must be retained for a period of two years from the date of the safety check.
- Provide a record of the check to the tenant within 28 days of the inspection taking place.
- Ensure that any new tenant is provided with a copy of the safety certificate.



To ensure that your work is being undertaken by a registered Gas Safe engineer please visit

<http://www.gasSafeRegister.co.uk>

# LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE CHANGES

WHEN	WHAT'S CHANGING	DETAILS OF THE CHANGE	PEOPLE AFFECTED
April 2011	<b>Local Housing Allowance (LHA) capped for:</b> • All new tenancies from April 2011 • Existing tenancies 9 months after review date	→ Capping of local housing allowance (LHA) rates at: • £250 p.w for a 1-bedroom property • £290 p.w for a 2-bedroom property • £340 p.w for a 3-bedroom property • £400 p.w for a 4 (or more) bedroom property	→ Private Rented Sector (PRS) tenants claiming LHA, particularly in more expensive areas
	<b>5+ bedroom rate ends</b>	→ Ending of 5-bedroom rate - 4-bedroom rate will apply to all larger properties	→ All households currently claiming the 5-bedroom rate of LHA
	<b>Non-dependant deductions increase</b>	→ All non-dependants will have to contribute a larger share of the rent	→ All households claiming LHA that include other adults such as grown-up children, elderly parents or siblings
	<b>£15 weekly excess ends</b>	→ Housing benefit claimants no longer entitled to keep up to £15 weekly 'excess' above actual rent	→ LHA claimants whose rent is below the current LHA rate
	<b>LHA set on 30th percentile</b>	→ Basis for setting LHA rates to reduce from the average to the lowest third of local market rents	→ All PRS tenants claiming LHA
	<b>More flexible direct payments to landlords</b>	→ Increased flexibility to have rents paid direct to landlords	→ PRS tenants whose landlords reduce their rent to the new LHA rates
April 2012	<b>Shared room rate applies to under 35's</b>	→ The threshold for the shared room rate will rise from 25 to 35 years of age	→ All single adult PRS tenants up to the age of 35, without children, living in 1-bedroom properties
April 2013 (planned)	<b>Maximum cap to all benefits</b>	→ A maximum cap will be imposed on the amount of benefits a household can claim. This is expected to be around: • £500 p.w. for couples and lone parents • £350 p.w. for single people	→ Larger families, and families living in more expensive areas in the private rented sector
	<b>LHA linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI)</b>	→ LHA rates to rise by the CPI rate of inflation rather than in line with local rent rises	→ All LHA claimants



- We want your properties now!
- We have dozens of families waiting for properties in the private sector
- Call today **020 7364 7271/7343**

## HB CHANGES ADVICE HOTLINE

Call: **020 7364 1416**

or email

[hbchanges@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:hbchanges@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Open Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm



## Using a cowboy plumber?

The gas boiler needs replacing you appoint a plumber who you believe is Gas Safe because he provides you with an ID card with the Gas Safe logo on it – you are given a quote you choose a Top of the Range Boiler – you sit back and look forward to winter? What could go wrong?

You are left without hot water and heating for weeks, no boiler, leaking pipes, flooding, harassment and out of pocket. This is just the beginning – then you found yourself being driven by force to a cash point to withdraw money, being dumped in the middle of nowhere when you refuse to part with cash for a job not done.

This is exactly what happened to a landlord when she decided to replace the old boiler using a plumber her brother found on the Internet site 'Rated People'.

The landlord ended having to pay a qualified plumber who was in fact Gas Safe registered to carry out all remedial work, replacing the pipes that the unqualified plumber removed and most importantly ensuring the correct boiler is installed and safe to use.

The matter is being currently investigated by Trading Standards and Gas Safe. The Health and Safety Executive have informed the plumber that he is not allowed to work with anything related to Gas and he is due to be questioned by them and could face criminal prosecution.

Thanks to Miss Mhordha for sharing this terrible experience with our readers. Ms Mhordha said that if she knew about the Forum she would have avoided being in her situation. She also added by attending the Forum she was able share her experience and learnt from other landlords. She praised the speakers for their expertise and found in particular the GAS Safe presentation informative and helpful. She said the Forum was very well organised and urged landlords to attend regularly.

## Councilhotlines

Contacting Tower Hamlets made easy

Contact the service you need direct on the following numbers:

- 020 7364 5001 – Housing Benefits
- 020 7364 5002 – Council Tax
- 020 7364 5003 – Parking Services
- 020 7364 5004 – Streetline (including recycling and refuse)
- 020 7364 5007 – Pest and Noise Nuisance
- 020 7364 5008 – Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Licensing
- 020 7364 5009 – Planning and Development
- 020 7364 5010 – Business Rates
- 020 7364 5011 – Recruitment Line
- 020 7364 0872 – Electoral Services
- 020 7364 5016 – Healthline (to find a GP and other health services)

### Useful Housing Numbers

- 0800 376 1637 – Housing Repairs (for Tower Hamlets Homes tenants)
- 020 7364 5015 – Tower Hamlets Homes

### Report it

- If you need to report an incident, use one of our 24-hour freephone numbers:
- 0800 917 5918 – Anti-Social Behaviour
  - 0800 138 0521 – Hate Crimes

### Switchboard

If you know the name of the person you need to speak to or the department you need to contact, call the Switchboard on: 020 7364 5000

### General Enquiries

For other council enquiries you can call the General Enquiry line on: 020 7364 5020

### Website

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)  
Find information and contacts, request services and make payments