



# Landlords Update

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

## Safety of goods in rented accommodation – landlords and letting agencies

Anyone who lets residential furnished accommodation (such as houses, flats, bed-sits), as a business activity must comply with the regulations. This includes letting agents, estate agents and private landlords. Often letting agents, as well as landlords, are liable, if goods supplied with the tenancy are not of the standard required by law.

Upholstered furniture included in lettings must comply with these regulations which impose the same stringent standards as apply to new and second-hand furniture in the shops.

For more information visit <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1988/1324/contents/made>

### Contact LBTH Trading Standards

Tel: 020 7364 5008

Fax: 020 7364 6935

Email: [tradingstandards@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:tradingstandards@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## 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

## 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)

## FORUM NEWS



I would like to start this report by thanking all landlords who attended the Landlord Forum on the 23 February 2011 and taking time out to read this newsletter.

My thanks to Katie Thompson & Gary Norris from the London Fire Brigade whose main aim is to work with both tenants and landlords by reducing accidental fires in the homes and associated injuries and fire deaths. Gary would like us to encourage all Landlords to be involved by contacting him at [gary.norris@london-fire.gov.uk](mailto:gary.norris@london-fire.gov.uk)

A special thank you to Steve Hill Lee Fearon and Clive Buckman from the Housing Benefit Section for sharing their knowledge about the important changes to the Local Housing Allowance rates on 4 April 2011. Due to several requests from landlords the team will join us at the next Forum on Wednesday 15 June 2011.

If you would like a copy of there presentation please email [jamie.jackson@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.jackson@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Housing Benefit Changes What are the impact?

**Existing Claims** – Those whose entitlement started before 4 April 2011 will initially be protected from the caps. The maximum protection period is 9 months from the anniversary

of the claim. However, protection will end sooner if the tenant has a break in claim after 4 April or changes address, or the number of people living in the household changes.

**April 2011 – New Claims** – For HB where entitlement starts on or after 4 April 2011 will be capped from start of their entitlement.

Accommodation size	LHA March 2011	Lower of Cap and 30th Percentile March 2011	Difference
Shared	£100.58	£91.15	£9.43
1 Bedroom	£250.00	£225.00	£25.00
2 Bedroom	£310.00	£280.00	£30.00
3 Bedroom	£365.00	£330.00	£35.00
4 Bedroom	£460.00	£400.00	£60.00
5 Bedroom and above	£560.00	£400.00	£160.00

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



**London and South East Landlords Day**  
Tuesday 19th April 2011

University College London, Gower Street, Bloomsbury, London WC1E 6BT  
To register for this event go to:  
<http://www.unipol.org.uk/london/>



### Tower Hamlets Landlord Forum

Wednesday 15th June 2011  
Room 101, Albert Jacob House, 62 Roman Road, London E2 0PG



### Landlord Accreditation Course

Wednesday 22nd June 2011  
Room 101, Albert Jacob House, 62 Roman Road, London E2 0PG

To book your place go to:  
[www.londonlandlords.org.uk/accreditation/home](http://www.londonlandlords.org.uk/accreditation/home)



# Increase in non-dependant deductions

- Adults who reside with the claimant apart from the partner will receive less housing and council tax benefit.
- Households with large families and non-dependant will be hit by both the local housing allowance caps and the increase in the non-dependant deductions.
- Direct Payment to Landlords will remain for tenants with 8 weeks in arrears, or if the tenant is unlikely or unable to pay rent.
- The existing criteria will extend from April 2011 in circumstances where payment to the landlord helps the tenant to secure or retain a tenancy. However, the new criteria will apply only when the landlord agrees to reduce the rent to a level affordable to the tenant.

Non-dependant Circumstances	April 2010	April 2011
Aged 25 or over and on Income Support/Jobseekers Allowance (Income Based), or aged 18 or over and not in remunerative work	7.40	9.40
In receipt of main phase Employment Support Allowance (Income Related)	7.40	9.40
In receipt of Pension Credit	Nil	Nil
Not in receipt of main phase ESA(IR) rate	Nil	Nil
Aged 18 or over and in remunerative work:		
Gross income less than £122.00 per month	7.40	9.40
Gross income £122.00 to £180.00 per month	17.00	21.55
Gross income £180.00 to £234.00 per month	23.35	29.60
Gross income £234.00 to £310.00 per month	38.20	48.45
Gross income £310.00 to £387.00 per month	43.50	55.20
Gross income more than £387.00 per month	47.75	60.60

# Welfare Reform Project

Many of you will already be aware that the government has announced a number of significant changes to Housing Benefit rules which begin to impact on 4 April 2011. These changes will mean that many private sector households in Tower Hamlets, may no longer receive enough housing benefit to cover their rent and may be at serious risk of homelessness.

Less than 4,000 households in the borough will be affected by the changes and their rents will exceed the benefits payable.

Housing Options Services has set up a small, temporary team to deal with this important work. The key objective of the team will be to ensure that rents are reduced to the level of available benefit wherever possible, thereby minimising homelessness. This will involve establishing the situation for each landlord and tenant and negotiating a way forward in each case. The team is led by Fiona Wellington.



**Landlord's hotline: 020 7364 1416**  
**Tenants Hotline: 020 7364 1413**  
*An officer is waiting to hear from you.*  
**Call Now!**

## Attention all Landlords

*Would you like Housing Benefit paid direct to you ?  
 Would you like an incentive of 4 weeks rent, or would you rather be paid a Deposit?*

If your answer is **YES**, please speak to us about the **Rent Deposit Scheme**.

The Tower Hamlets Rent Deposit Scheme is designed to prevent homelessness by making housing in the private sector more accessible.

An increasing interest in the scheme from homeless families, shows that the scheme is working. Many families find the scheme a more attractive option to temporary accommodation. There are many families currently waiting for properties.

*The Housing Options Team needs your properties.*

Please contact the team on: **020 7364 7343**



The London Fire Brigade are looking to work in partnership with letting agencies

**and landlords within Tower Hamlets to increase fire safety awareness.**

There are a number of ways that a fire can start and the effects can be devastating. For example:

**338 fires occurred in the home last year 60% of which started in the kitchen. These fires resulted in 2 rescues being made, 70 injuries and 4 fatalities.**

How we live and the way we use equipment can significantly reduce the risk of a fire starting. There's no better way of dealing with a fire than preventing it from starting in the first place.

Working together, the London Fire Brigade would like to initiate a scheme, where by Home Fire Safety Visit referrals are generated at the signing stage of a new letting or sale of property. This will reduce fires, helping not only to save lives but will reduce costs to all involved.

For further information above this scheme please contact either:

**Station Manager Gary Norris, Millwall Fire Station;** email: gary.norris@london-fire.gov.uk  
**Watch Manager Paul Hobbs, Tower Hamlets Team;** email: paul.hobbs@london-fire.gov.uk

## London Landlord accredited Scheme 'LLAS'



Twelve keen Landlords attended a full day development course on 2 March 2011. If you wish to be an Accredited Landlord you would need to attend a

Development course. We will refund your fees when you are accredited and register your property with the Rent Deposit Team. *Thank you for the excellent feedback.*

For more information about 'LLAS' speak to Noella Ling or Jamie Jackson on **020 7364 3558**

www.londonlandlords.org.uk/accreditation/home

MARCH 2011			
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
April 2012	<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
	<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