

LANDLORD NEWSLETTER

A newsletter for Landlords and Agents in Haringey

Number 6

New Year 2012

Important housing
benefit update

Additional licensing
for houses in
multiple occupation

Floating support for
tenants

Welcome to our New Year edition of the Haringey Landlord Newsletter.

Included in this issue are important updates about the new additional licensing for houses in multiple occupation (HMO) as well as further details on the welfare reform of April 2011 which will have an impact on housing benefit.

If you have any comments about this newsletter or would like us to include any specific articles in future editions please contact the council by emailing:

privatelettings@haringey.gov.uk

Landlord Forum Wednesday 25 January 2012

Our next forum will be on the 25 January 2012 at the Civic Centre in Wood Green. The forum runs from 6pm to 8pm and we open at 5pm for refreshments and a chance to meet and talk with other agents and landlords.

Agenda and speakers:

- 6pm** Opening remarks – Phil Harris, Deputy Director Community Housing Services.
- 6:10pm** Housing Benefit – implementation of new benefits for under 35s and the end of Transitional Protection – Jim Brady, Benefits & Local Taxation Service Manager.
- 6:20pm** Housing Benefit Hub – how Haringey Council is working with tenants whose benefits will be affected by the changes and how your tenants can access this – Jennifer Gould, Housing Advice and Options Manager.

- 6:30pm** Building control and planning regulations for Houses in Multiple Occupation – Bob McIver, Head of Building Control.
- 6:45pm** HMO standards and property requirements – Steve Russell, Housing Improvement Team Manager.
- 7pm** Green energy and renewables – this is a specific presentation about the new Green Deal. This offers landlords energy efficiency improvements to their properties at no upfront costs – such as new double glazing and insulation. The cost will be paid back through the energy bills and not by a conventional loan or finance – Minka McInerney, Environmental Resources.
- 7:20pm** Private Sector Lettings Team update including tenancy training – Dean Christou, Senior Lettings Officer.
- 7:30pm** Questions.
- 8pm** Close.

Housing Benefit update

There are some important changes being made to Housing Benefit that could affect the amount of rent your tenant is entitled to receive.

The 30th Percentile

Local housing allowance (LHA) rates were reduced in April 2011. Prior to this date housing benefit was set at the median rent of an area. This meant that half the properties in each area were affordable to people receiving Housing Benefit. This was reduced to three in ten properties for rent in the area in April 2011. This is known as the 30th percentile.

How it works

Existing claims from before April 2011 – where there has been no break in claim

1. LHA paid at higher rate until year anniversary of claim and then protected for a further nine months as long as there is no significant change. This is known as transitional protection.
2. From January 2012:
 - a. Transitional protection begins to be removed from claims that have been receiving it for nine months.
 - b. People between 25-and-35-years-of-age will receive a shared room rate only after their transitional protection period comes to an end. This will take effect sooner if they break their claim or have a change of address.

New Claims since April 2011

1. All new claimants have been subject to lower LHA rates since they claimed.
2. From January 2012:
 - a. 25-to-35-year-olds will be subject to shared room rate from their next anniversary date. The anniversary date is 12 months after the Local Housing Allowance rate was last set on their claim. There is no transitional protection for these claims.
 - b. Sooner if they break their claim or have a change of address

Single Clients under 35-years-of-age

The Government has changed the rules that apply to single people living in self-contained accommodation who are aged 25 or more, but under 35. From January 2012 this age group will only be entitled to the lower rate of Housing Benefit for a room in shared accommodation.

Currently (January 2012) the shared room rate is £80 per week in the Outer London North broad market rental area (BMRA) as opposed to the one bed self-contained rate of £175.

How is this being communicated to tenants and landlords?

Mail shots are already being sent out to claimants. This is a rolling programme.

North London housing benefit hub

The North London boroughs – Haringey, Enfield, Barnet, Camden, Islington and Westminster have joined together to provide a specialist support service for claimants and landlords. Two hubs will be set up – one at Islington People's Rights and the other at Apex House in Haringey.

Haringey will host three project workers to provide monetary advice and practical support; lead on negotiations with landlords; and provide practical assistance to help people who have to move.

If you believe you may have a tenant who will be affected by these changes and would like some advice please email:

housingadvice@haringey.gov.uk

Houses in multiple occupation additional licensing scheme

Haringey Council has introduced a discretionary licensing scheme for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), which is additional to the national mandatory licensing scheme for certain prescribed HMOs. The following provides a brief outline on the additional licensing scheme. Further information and relevant documentation can be found on the Haringey Web site at:

www.haringey.gov.uk/additional-hmo-licensing

Which area is covered by the scheme?

Harringay Ward and some adjacent roads within St Ann's Ward:-



Alfoxton Avenue N15	Allison Road N8
Alroy Road N4	Atterbury Road N4
Beresford Road N8	Burgoyne Road N4
Cavendish Road N4	Colina Mews N15
Colina Road N15	Denmark Road N8
Duckett Road N4	Effingham Road N8
Endymion Road N4	Fairfax Road N8
Falkland Road N8	Frobisher Road N8
Green Lanes N8/N4/N15	Hampden Road N8
Harringay Gardens N15	Harringay Road N15
Hewitt Road N8	Lausanne Road N8
Lothair Road North N4	Lothair Road South N4
Mattison Road N4	Park Road N15
Pemberton Road N4	Raleigh Road N8
Salisbury Road N4	Seymour Road N8
St. Margarets Avenue N15	Sydney Road N8
Turnpike Lane N8	Umfreville Road N4
Warham Road N4	Wightman Road N8/N4
Willoughby Road N4	Woollaston Road N4

Why has this area been chosen?

Over the years the Harringay ward has seen a proliferation of illegal conversions with no planning permissions and has changed from a ward comprising predominantly of single family dwelling homes into one comprised largely of flats, studios and HMOs. This has changed the dynamics of the area and resulted in a large number of complaints to council services regarding noise, rubbish and fly-tipping, anti-social behaviour, illegal planning conversions and housing disrepair. This scheme is the first of its kind in Haringey and, if successful, further schemes may be introduced in other areas of the borough where it is established that similar problems exist.

When did the Scheme come into operation?

2008 - 2010

Research into the area, looking at property types, tenures, complaint numbers and types.

October 2010 to February 2011

Consultation with landlords, letting agents and residents.

June 7 2011

The scheme was agreed by cabinet members.

October 1 2011

The scheme came into operation and will continue until 30 September 2016, unless revoked.

What HMOs are included in the Scheme?

The Scheme applies to most HMOs which fall outside of mandatory licensing, including HMOs of fewer than three storeys and those occupied by three or four persons. It also applies to 'Section 257 HMOs' where the building and the individual flats or studios are in the same ownership.

How do I apply?

You can download an application pack (application form and other documents) from the Haringey website at www.haringey.gov.uk/houses_in_multiple_occupation

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Alternatively you can contact the Housing Improvement Team (details below) and request an application pack to be sent by post.

How much is the licensing fee?

A fee is payable on application. The fee is currently £208 per unit of accommodation. In the case of an HMO where the tenants are friends on a single tenancy agreement, the fee is £208 per bedroom. A discount of £100 per HMO is available for an accredited landlord. The Council may apply discounts for timely applications or for the submission of good quality plans. The fee is to assist in running the Scheme and is non-refundable. For an additional charge of £230 per HMO the council can provide assistance with completing the application.

How can I get more information?

Housing Improvement Team (Private Sector), HMO Licensing, London Borough of Haringey, 1st Floor, Apex House, 820 Seven Sisters Road, London, N15 5PQ, Tel. no. 020 8489 5230

You can go on line at: www.haringey.gov.uk/houses_in_multiple_occupation

Floating support for tenants



Free housing related support for Haringey families

HARTS has been supporting families in Haringey since 2003 funded by the council. The service is run by Circle Support and offers tailored support packages to families in relation to housing, benefits maximisation, debt reduction, education, training, employment, and other support services. Support packages are normally offered for up to six months and the service currently has 18 support co-ordinators working with up to 200 families at any one time. Approximately 6000 families have benefited from the service and in 2005 HARTS was awarded the National Housing Federation Local Government Partnership Award. HARTS works with tenants in council and housing association tenancies, as well as private sector tenants and home owners. The team have built up a strong working relationship with Haringey Council and we run advice and information surgeries three-days-a-week at Apex House as well as at other key locations.

Research has shown that early intervention, and in particular investment in housing related support services has a significant impact on reducing overall spending in local communities. A recent report by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) and Circle 'Promoting Independence, The Future of Housing Related Support', highlighted that every one pound spent on preventative housing related support services will save more than two pounds to the national tax payer. For landlords, preventative support at the right time can dramatically improve tenancy continuation and reduce the need for costly legal action where rent arrears or other tenancy breaches occur.

With major changes to housing and benefits taking place, now more than ever tenants need access to quality housing related support and advice. HARTS is a free service and can accept referrals directly from tenants as well as landlords. Where a referral is made on behalf of a tenant we always ask that where possible permission and agreement is sought from the tenant. Applicants are screened and assessed for eligibility/priority and there is no obligation for tenants to accept support.

For a referral form or for more information about HARTS and its work please contact us on 0845 303 2350
harts@circle.org.uk



One tonne of recycled paper saves 17 trees, 32,000 litres of water, and enough electricity to heat an average house for 6 months

