

MAYOR OF LONDON

Successfully Developing a Cross-Council Approach to Regulating the PRS

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London's Private Rented Sector

- Home to over 2 million Londoners
- Around a quarter of the capital's private renting households are now spending more than half of their income on rent
- Almost a quarter of privately rented homes in the capital fail the Government's Decent Homes standard
- 45% of private renters (3.8m adults) have experienced stress and anxiety as a direct result of their housing concerns



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GLA – Work in the PRS

The Mayor has developed a 'London Model' of tenure reform to improve security for these renters

- It proposes:
 - introducing open-ended tenancies
 - scrapping 'no-fault' evictions, so landlords can't evict tenants without a legitimate reason
 - new and improved possession grounds so that landlords can continue to let their properties with confidence

The Mayor continues to call on Government to give him powers to design and implement an effective system of rent control in London.

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Covid-19

The Mayor's work on the PRS in light of Covid-19 has revolved around keeping renters in their homes. We are now working to review these asks as the economic and health context changes.

To date, the Mayor has called for direct support to help renters – via a 'triple lock' of protections:

- Increased welfare support for renters
- Preventing landlords from evicting tenants who have accrued arrears as a result of Covid-19 by making section 8 (the arrears ground for eviction) discretionary in court proceedings
- Scrapping section 21 'no fault' evictions (as an alternate route to section 8)

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Licensing and Enforcement in London

The Mayor supports landlord registration and universal property licenses and believes it is a key method to regulate standards and conditions in the PRS, as well as to address issues of rogue activity.

- There is an increasing prevalence of additional and selective licensing schemes across London – in addition to the mandatory HMO scheme
- Under the current system, councils need to secure approval from Government to establish licensing schemes – this results in inconsistencies across London and a ‘patchwork’ of different schemes and conditions

Newham Council have prosecuted over 1225 landlords and recovered over £3.5 million of unpaid Council Tax

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The Mayor's PRS Partnership

A strategic and high-level group of PRS enforcement and Trading Standards teams from across London.

- Identifying and sharing experiences of existing or emerging issues in the PRS
- Advising on necessary upskilling training and resource and capacity challenges across local authority PRS departments
- Sharing best practice and working collaboratively to improve standards and conditions and tackle rogue landlords

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Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker

Designed to empower London's renters to check their landlords and report issues with licenses, standards and conditions within the PRS.

- Live since 2017 – 592 cases added in 2019/20
- Over 42,000 rogue landlord records were checked by Londoners
- 854 instances of rogue landlord and agent behaviour reported to the authorities through the site

2020 will see the creation of a Property Licence Checker – this will be open to the public to view a property's licencing history or requirements

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The Mayor's Better Renting Project

In 2019, the Mayor secured funding for the Better Renting project to address skills and capacity issues within boroughs and to support local authorities to combat rogue landlords and letting agents.

An advisory group of boroughs and VCS organisations was created to guide the project and a survey of local authority training needs was conducted. The PRS Team worked with the Metropolitan Police and renter support group Safer Renting to develop training for police officers on tackling illegal eviction (over 1000 officers trained to date).

The Better Renting project will see the creation of a new PRS-focussed housing qualification, a suite of upskilling training for existing borough officers, and a new PRS Forum.

PRS Qualification

Aiming to address the lack of qualified environmental health officers and the minimal housing focus of existing environmental health work on PRS housing.

- The course syllabus is currently being developed by CIEH and an advisory group of boroughs and Trading Standards
- The syllabus contains a strong focus on tenancy relations and sustainment – Shelter and Kineara have contributed to its development
- Continually assessing equalities impacts and the changing nature of the PRS in light of CV-19

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Upskilling Training

In addition, existing borough staff can receive upskilling training funded by the Mayor. This training is designed to support the improvement of standards and conditions across London.

- A survey was conducted to understand key areas in need of upskilling within London's 33 local authorities
- The Mayor has responded to the new challenges of CV-19 by training over 120 borough PRS officers in essential landlord and tenant law and rent-to-rent scams
- Further training sessions will focus on gathering evidence for prosecutions and broader enforcement skills

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PRS Forum

Launching in May 2020, the Private Rented Sector Forum is a new bi-monthly seminar and workshop series for borough housing practitioners focused on improving the lives of private tenant communities.

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Topics include: Licensing and enforcement; First Tier Tribunal and effective enforcement during lockdown.

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Questions and comments?

Email Rebecca.bicocchi@london.gov.uk