



Property Licensing – Consultation Support Report (DRAFT)

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

This introduction provides a brief overview of the project that the Bridge Renewal Trust was commissioned to run on behalf of the London Borough of Haringey (LBH). In addition, it details a simple methodology that highlights how the Bridge collected the data and which community groups were involved (including the number of participants in each focus group). The focus groups comprised people living in Houses in Multiple Occupations (HMOs). The research undertaken guaranteed the anonymity of participants. Given the nature and type of issues gathered this was critical to their contributions because they were frightened of their landlords in most instances. This fear related to concerns regarding summary eviction for complaints regarding matters of health, safety and Anti-Social behaviour (ASB).

1.1 Background - Property Licensing of Private Sector Housing

LBH is considering introducing a borough wide additional licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and a selective licensing scheme covering 20% of the borough for properties occupied by a single household. The proposed scheme is being developed to ensure that all privately rented properties are well managed and to compliment the work the authority is already doing to regenerate the area and combat problems of crime, ASB and poor housing. The Council recognises the crucial contribution the private rented sector makes in providing good quality, much needed accommodation, and that many landlords manage their properties well. We also know, through evidence gathered from the Council's mandatory and ward based additional licensing scheme, that there is an issue with rogue and absentee landlords. There are also well-intentioned landlords, who are not aware of their responsibilities or the problems their tenants have or may be causing.

It is intended that the scheme will require landlords to put in place arrangements for dealing with general tenancy issues, anti-social behaviour and safe property standards through adhering to a set of conditions. A licence fee for each property will be payable for a licence lasting up to 5 years. With the implementation of the 2004 Order mandatory licensing will apply to HMOs that are below three storeys (if they are occupied by five or more persons in two or more separate households) as well as to those of three or more storeys; this means many more HMO's become subject to

mandatory licensing, this will cover many thousands of properties across the Borough. So as LBH tackles improved landlord management and ensures tenants' welfare there will be a range of new orders and guidance coming into place, which will affect a wider range of HMO's than those of three stories or over.

1.2 The Role of The Bridge Renewal Trust

LBH launched a 12-week public consultation exercise on 11th December 2017 to seek views on a proposal to introduce two property licensing schemes. As part of the consultation exercise, LBH were keen to hear views from partners who support households and hear first-hand from private tenants their experience of living in private rented properties within Haringey. The consultation exercise ended on 5th March 2018.

To support the on-line questionnaire, public meetings and numerous drop in sessions were arranged across the borough.

The Bridge Renewal Trust was asked to engage and seek views from:

- External partners, particularly partners who provide services/advocacy to tenants.
- Tenants from specific groups: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Disabled, lone parents, LGBT, refugees etc.

Specific outcomes from the above included:

- Experience of the private rented sector in Haringey – with examples of good and bad practice.
- Advantages and disadvantages of a licensing scheme.
- Top 3 issues identified as priorities for the licensing schemes to address.

1.3 Methodology

In total, the Bridge Renewal Trust conducted five focus groups between early February and 5th March 2018. Each focus group was kept relatively informal to ensure that people felt relaxed and

comfortable in sharing their experiences. Nevertheless ‘ground rules’ were enforced, which emphasised anonymity to every participant and ensured all could easily contribute their experiences and feelings. Focus groups were conducted in both the East and West of Haringey to reflect the Borough’s diversity. Two focus groups involved use of interpreters for some of the participants (Spanish and Turkish). One other focus group, conducted with refugees, involved some translations from English to Somali.

Focus groups were made up of 6 -17 participants. It was easier for smaller groups to share their experiences and ensure issues were discussed in detail and all contributed.

The majority of focus groups lasted around 1 hour. The participants that took part in the focus groups were either tenants of HMOs or external partner agencies; these are set out in Table 1 below:

Community Group	Venue	Number of Participants
Latin American and Spanish speaking	Hut Community Centre	17
Refugees and other unemployed	Chestnuts Community Centre	10
Turkish speaking	Turkish Women Project Centre	6
Voluntary and Community groups	Chestnuts Community Centre	7
Voluntary and Community groups	Mind in Haringey	7
Key partner agencies	Telephone interviews	8
Total		55

Table 1: Breakdown of Tenants of HMOs and partner agencies

We did not bring attention to changes occurring through April, which will extend legislative provisions regarding HMOs to those under three stories in certain circumstances. A range of other matters coming into law and guidance were not easy to discuss given their current problematic issues. We did, however, mention the roll out of the Rogue Landlords website set up by the London Mayor with support from the Criminal Justice System and London Boroughs.

The gender, age and ethnicity of participants is shown below. We also gathered information on those with a disability and homes by post code to show the coverage geographically.

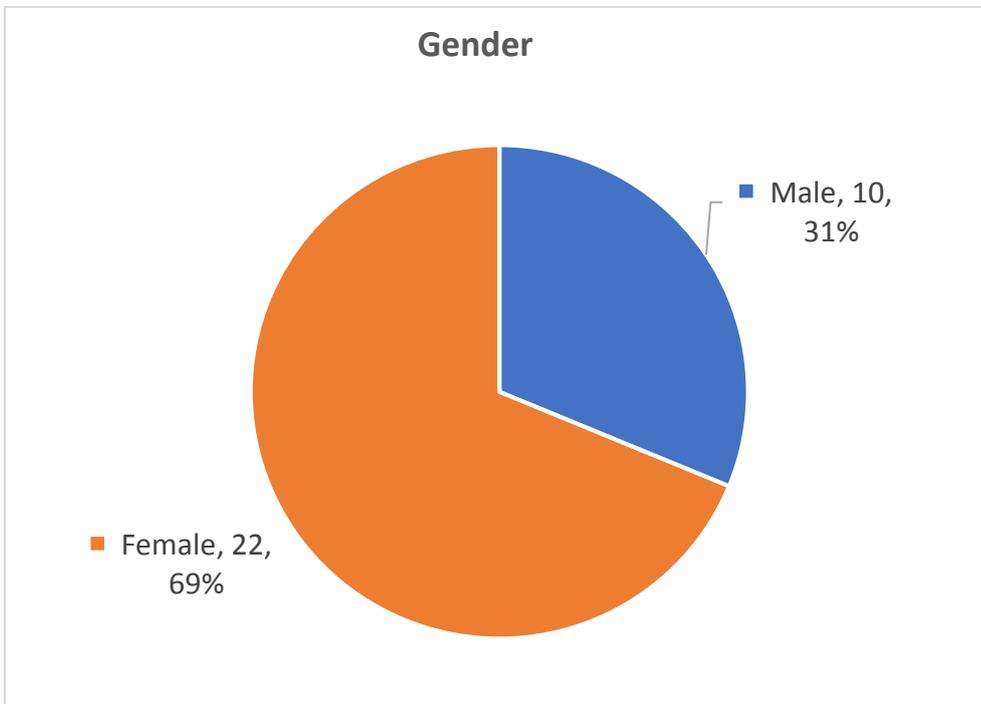


Figure 1: Gender breakdown

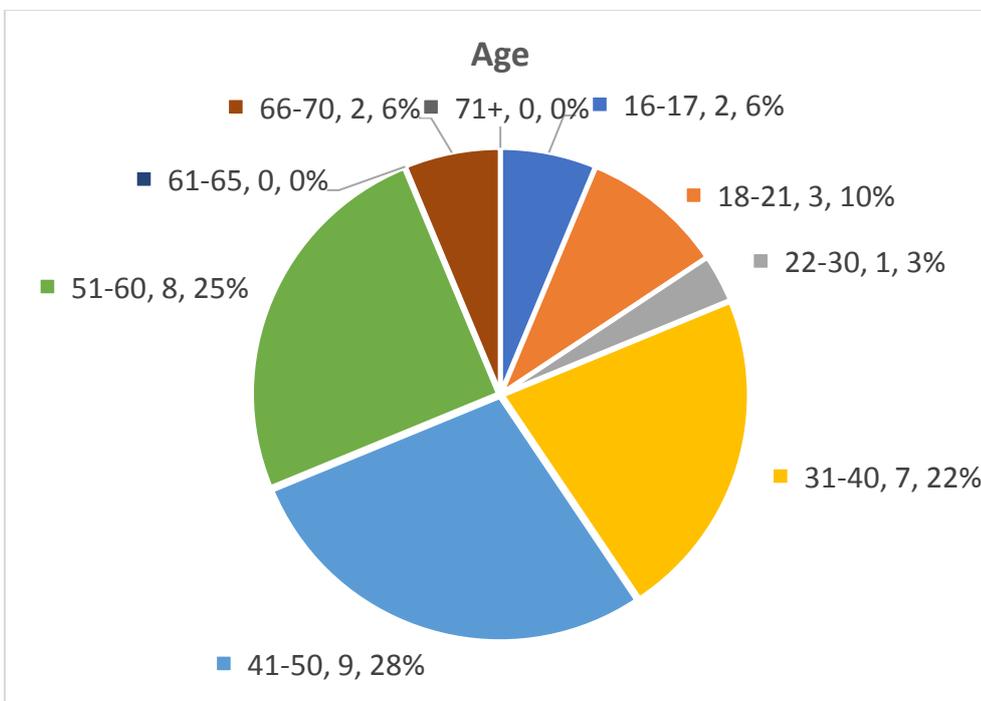


Figure 2: Age breakdown

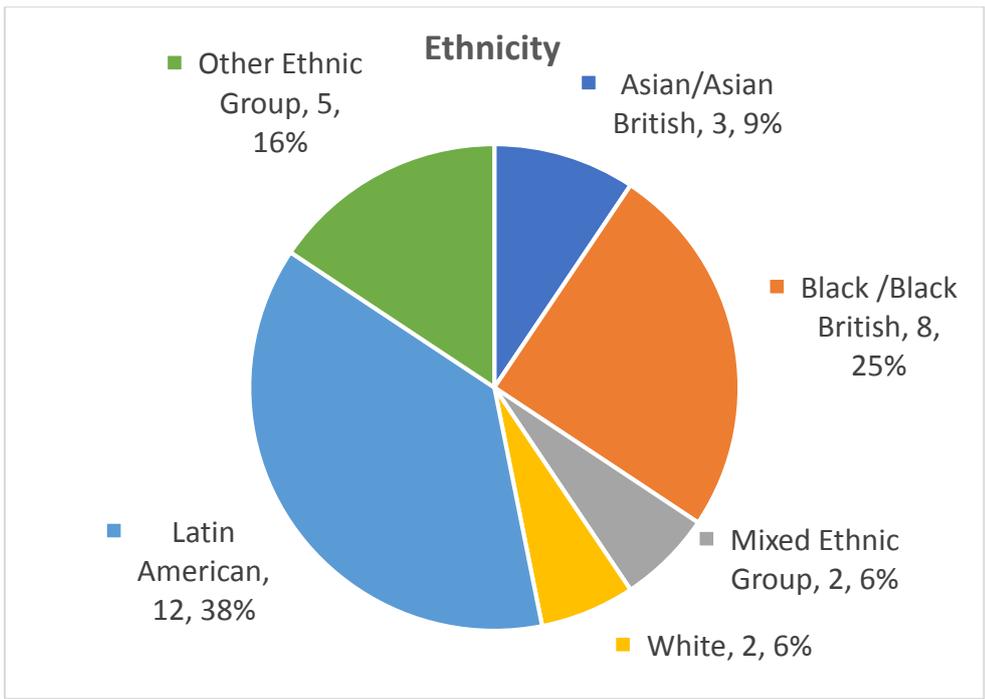


Figure 3: Ethnicity breakdown

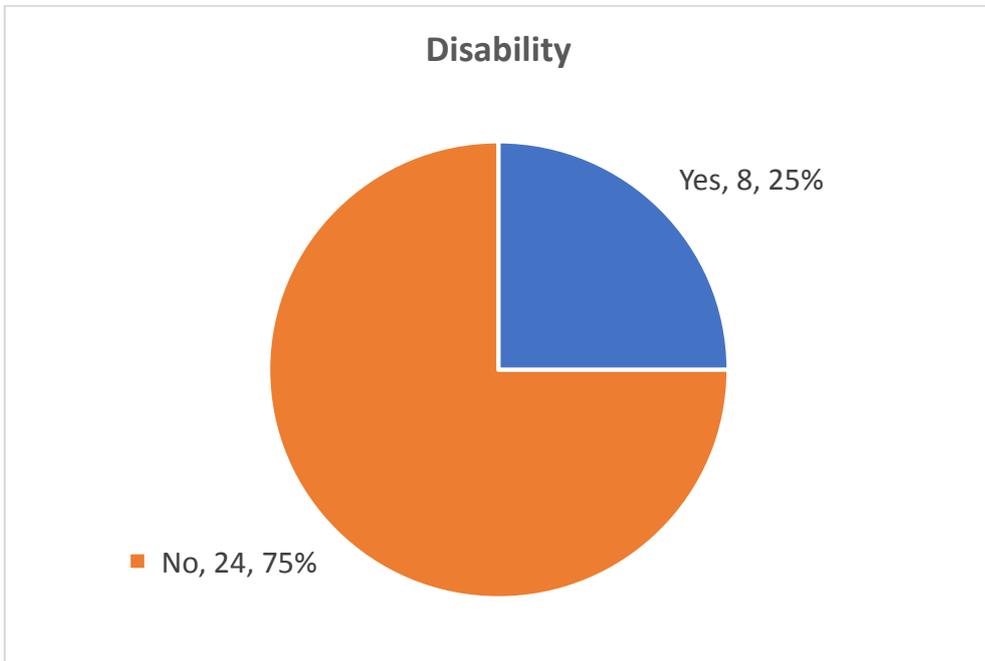


Figure 4: Disability

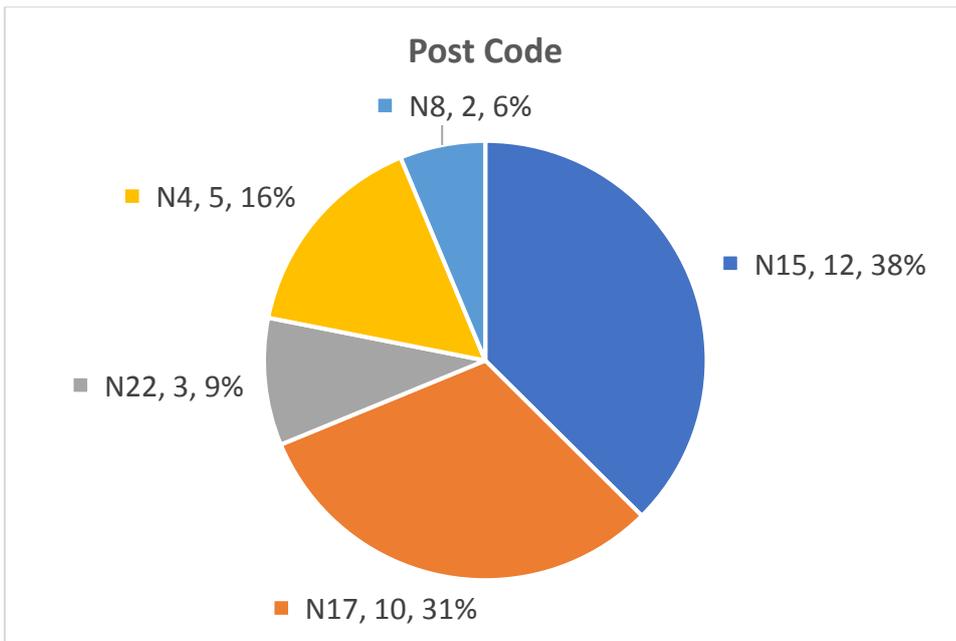


Figure 5: Post Code breakdown

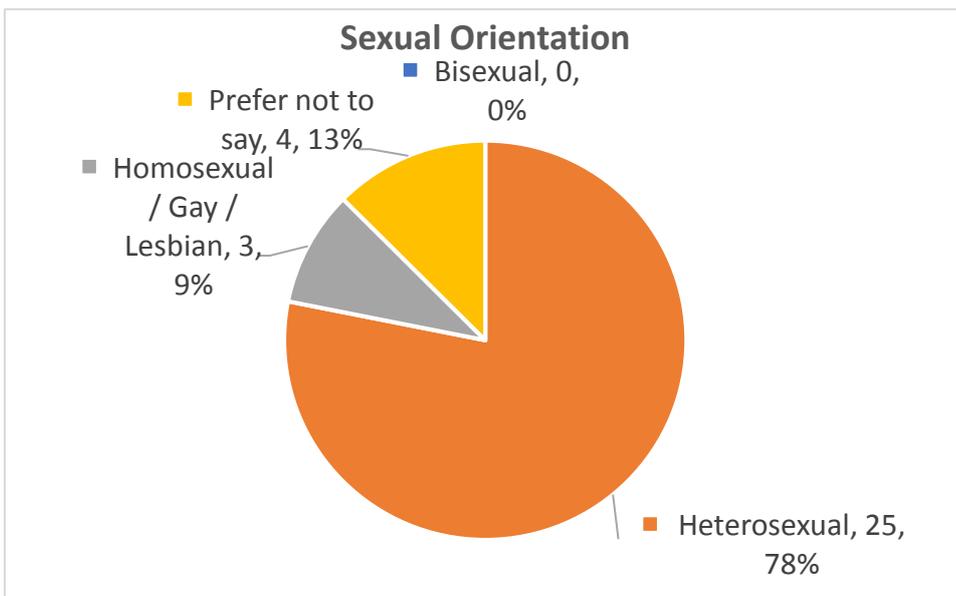


Figure 6: Sexual orientation breakdown

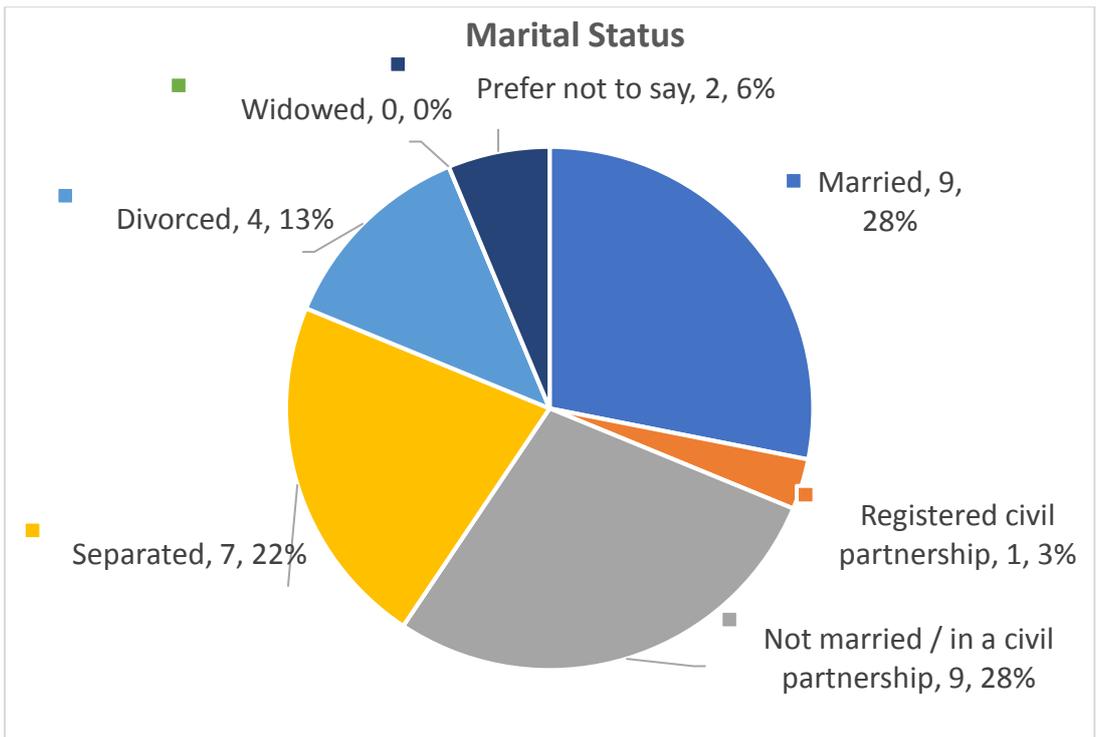


Figure 7: Marital status breakdown

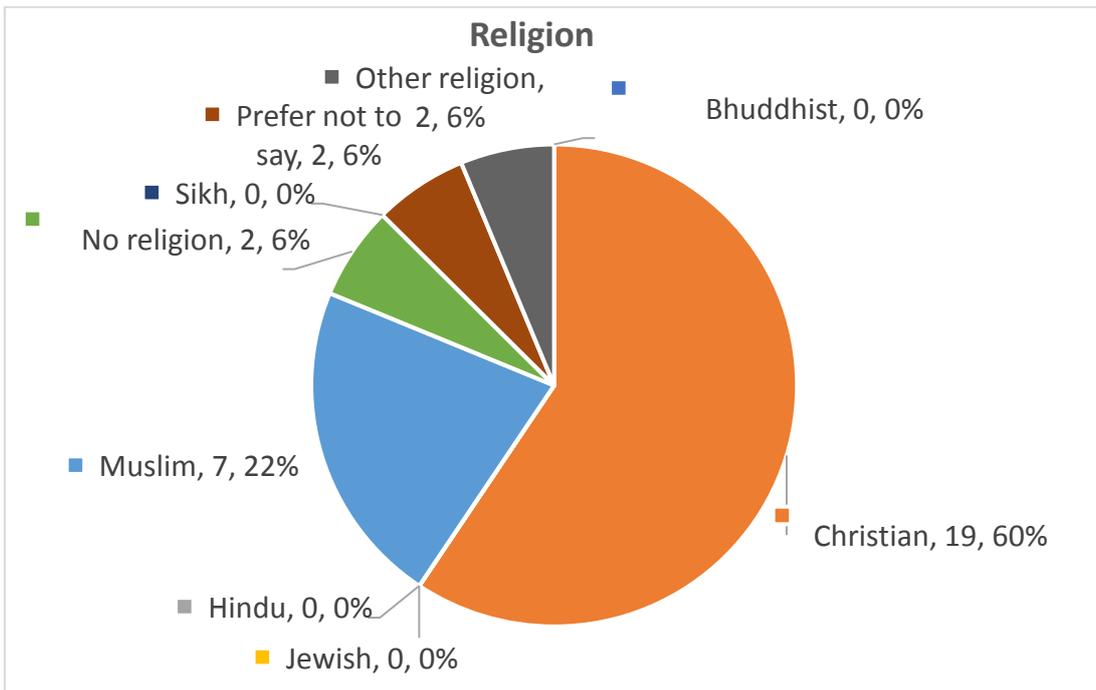


Figure 8: Religion breakdown

External partners	Role/Service
Mind in Haringey	Advocacy and support for mental health service users
Citizen's Advice Bureau Haringey	Impartial advice to people living and working in Haringey.
Selby Trust	Wide range of advice on housing and homelessness with specific support for ex-offenders
Markfield Project	Information, advice and guidance to disabled children and families
Haringey Law Centre	Independent legal advice and representation to people living and working in Haringey
Federation of Haringey Residents Association	Supports residents' associations to take issues that are important to their local communities
Department of Work and Pensions / Job Centre (Haringey)	Supports people into work including sign posting them into other support services
Haringey Housing Action Group	Mutual peer support group of residents

Table 2: Details of External Partner Agencies

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO) Definitions at the time of research

A home is a house in multiple occupation (HMO) if both of the following apply (source:

<https://www.gov.uk/private-renting/houses-in-multiple-occupation>):

- at least 3 tenants live there, forming more than 1 household
- you share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities with other tenants

A home is a large HMO if all of the following apply:

- it's at least 3 storeys high
- at least 5 tenants live there, forming more than 1 household
- you share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities with other tenants

A household is either a single person or members of the same family who live together. A family includes people who are:

- married or living together - including people in same-sex relationships
- relatives or half-relatives, for example grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings
- step-parents and step-children

The groups of tenants who took part in the focus groups lived in small and large HMOs and some belonged to single or family households. Financial issues were raised often in terms of rent levels being high for poor quality properties, and changes to circumstances. The latter are well known to the Council, and the ways they affect HMO residents. Examples such as: transfers from Incapacity Benefits to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) providing a financial gap to bridge of 4 weeks as is the move to Universal Credit, which can have a 6-week delay. Such shifts in circumstances were difficult to manage for many and they were not clear of where to get support during the transition.

2. EXPERIENCE OF THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR IN HARINGEY

2.1 Introduction to Tenant Experience

The experiences of the focus group participants from the different community groups were remarkably bleak and overwhelmingly unsatisfactory. This perspective was reinforced by the feedback received from external partners. These partners provided a range of services including advocacy and welfare advice. The main concerns expressed by partner and tenant participants were:

- Poor conditions of properties and a poor response rate to necessary changes by landlords
- Overcrowding within the rooms throughout the dwelling
- Harassments including threats and illegal evictions
- Lack of housing and welfare advice and recognised low awareness of rights
- High rents for poor quality property
- Lack of agreements and sometimes inability to read the agreements/understand how their content should affect their behaviour and relate to landlords' responsibilities.
- A sense by tenants of poor security of tenure
- Landlord behaviour regarding personal safety with regard to instances of ASB
- Housing advice agencies need more support
- Very poor adherence to health & safety requirements by landlords
- Difficulties in getting support during changes of circumstances

2.2 Poor Conditions of Properties and Poor Response Rate from Landlords

Tenants who participated in the focus groups were extremely concerned about the poor conditions that often seriously affect their health and their safety. Participants revealed in detail that many private landlords did not ensure that the properties were kept in a reasonable state of repair nor were they safe places to live in. Common problems included damp; inadequate fire safety measures, such as no smoke alarms; no annual gas safety checks; lack of sufficient / poor cooking and bathroom facilities, such as lack of kitchen sinks; water leakages; internal structural problems, such as damaged walls, ceilings and window frames; poor and sometimes faulty electrical wiring; leaking gas pipes; heaters not maintained and poor arrangements for sharing kitchen and bathroom

facilities. Tenants we met, who were placed in accommodation by the Council, still felt the landlord could easily evict them if they found someone who would pay more. They did not feel the Council would be responsive to their complaints.

A woman with a young daughter explained how she was obliged to work around the fact that the property had no kitchen sink and no cooker, and she had to wash dishes in the toilet sink. She had no rent agreement and suspected that the landlord could be illegally letting out the properties. Others raised similar experiences; all were loath to inform authorities about their conditions in case the landlord evicted them.

There were overwhelming feelings that most of the landlords did not care enough to undertake the necessary repairs or in a timely way. For example, a Latin American woman said, *“The Cooker is very old and when it smelt of a gas leak, it took 3 days to get it fixed.”* The same woman also complained about having to open windows, which made the flat cold, so the children were often falling sick. She understood from discussing her problems that they have no rent agreement, that they are sub-tenants and the equipment such as boilers and cookers have never been checked, nor were they likely to be checked.

A middle-aged man was concerned about persistent dampness in the property. He complained of fungus growing on the walls. Despite repeated requests, the landlord never came to undertake the necessary repairs. This experience was echoed by many participants. A man who lived alone and was living on the third floor of an HMO was concerned about the poor state of his property. The problems began with a continually damp wooden floor in the hall from the front door. There was a bad smell from damp and the dead bodies of mice that have heavily infested the property. Despite numerous reports, the landlord has failed to address the problems. A Turkish mother reported that her children were having physical and emotional problems from living in a poorly heated property with severe damp and water leaking from the flat above. The children often have to be taken to hospital with breathing difficulties. The landlord has done nothing to address the heating or damp problems.

The problems relating to a poor state of repair were fully supported by the external partner agencies who participated in the consultation. The agencies had great concerns about the risk to

health and safety in many of the HMOs. Problems noted included unsafe kitchens where cookers are placed on top of fridges. Further vulnerable families seemed to find or be placed in unsafe buildings. One tenant stated she was living in a flat where external shutters are fixed shut with advice to the tenant requiring the Fire Brigade to be called in case of fire. (We did suggest she contacted the fire brigade at once on this matter given its seriousness).

However, examples of good practices by a landlord were occasionally encountered. These included the experience of a woman who reported satisfaction with her landlord. The property and equipment were in good condition and well maintained. There was agreement in place amongst the tenants to keep the shared facilities clean. A partner agency also reported similar examples of good practice by landlords. As a result, the partner agency was always happy to recommend the landlord to its service users. This agency always worked through the Agreement with new tenants and had a standard checklist they provided identifying tenant and landlord responsibilities. Partner agencies were aware of many landlords who managed properties well.

2.3 Overcrowding

Both tenants and partner agencies reported that a number of unscrupulous landlords have taken advantage of the homelessness crisis by renting out properties that did not provide adequate sized units and poor shared facilities for the number of people living in them. Common concerns included conversion by landlords of existing space to provide for more units – such as three units into six units leading to smaller living and, tighter shared spaces, and insufficient facilities. Several families experienced this practice and did not complain to the Council.

A woman who lives on the third floor of an HMO with five family members complained about lack of facilities to cater for the needs of the family including having no lift on the premises. Another Turkish elderly couple said that since the husband was disabled and had mobility and heart problems, they often felt anxious in their property due to lack of proper means of escape in case of fire, they had to exit down a flight of very narrow stairs.

All the participants wanted the Council to do more to inspect and ensure minimum room sizes and facilities are provided to meet legal requirements, by landlords.

2.4 Harassment and Illegal Evictions

Tenants and partner agencies reported numerous incidents of harassment and threats of illegal evictions by landlords. This was particularly concerning as in all sessions many of the participants involved described their circumstances in ways that defined them as vulnerable (people with learning disabilities or other permanent or long-term disabilities, those on a low income, people with low literacy levels, or within communities which have cultural and language barriers to market participation).

They felt open to exploitation by landlords. When tenants reported repairs, their landlords often refused to deal with the problems and instead threatened them with eviction. The affected tenants said that they felt that they were forced to refrain from exercising their legal rights and remedies associated with their tenancy. In many instances, the participants did not have tenancy agreements in place and were additionally fearful of being evicted and becoming homeless. Some of the tenants were not provided with alternative accommodation during temporary repairs. Many participants had heard stories of the financial complexities of being on benefits and becoming homeless, for those just able to meet their household needs this was part of the fear of being evicted. There were overwhelming feelings that unscrupulous landlords often prevented the tenants from exercising rights such as reporting disrepair or serious health and safety concerns to the environmental/public health officers. When they had the courage to complain they found it difficult to find the right person to complain to, often making many telephone calls and making visits to Council offices. All the while they were frightened of the landlords finding out they were trying to get a remedy from the Council.

One man complained that his landlord had behaved in a racist manner and shouted unacceptable comments at him. He said that the landlord had recently started an eviction process to get rid of him and he has struggled to get proper and accessible advice.

Numerous cases of Anti-Social Behaviours (ASB) from other tenants within the HMOs were also reported by participants. The focus group discussions showed that some landlords did not address this problem. This problem appeared to be particularly acute where the households within the HMOs belonged to different age and/or cultural backgrounds. One flat within an HMO thought to

be used as a drug den and a possible brothel, the complainant was subject to personal threats to herself and to her family who lived nearby.

A woman reported that a young woman who moved into the property started verbally abusing her and also became physically violent and attacked her. She thought the young woman who was threatening to kill her was taking drugs. When she reported the matter to the landlord, the landlord told her that it was a matter for the Council to deal with. This was stated by the landlord to be due to the perpetrator being a Council Social Services placement.

It was also clear from the focus group discussions, that some landlords did not follow prescribed eviction procedures. Many of the participating tenants did not know their rights and felt intimidated and anxious by these actions.

A single man said that his landlord had not given him a rent agreement and the landlord was now trying to evict him to get a tenant who could pay higher rent in his place. He appeared anxious and distressed as he recounted his experience and his unsuccessful attempts to get advice from the Council and find alternative accommodation.

Partner agencies also reported a rise in cases of harassments and illegal evictions. One partner agency said that they work with vulnerable tenants who often tolerate bad landlords because of the fear of eviction. Another partner agency said that people who are most affected include people with mental health problems, poor or little English language skills and refugees who have no access to public funds who are sometimes exploited by such landlords.

The eviction, of itself, affects benefits payments and the ability to get employment, which requires an address. The threats with loss of the address to health physical and mental health are high. In a time of extension of regulation of HMOs across private sector housing, changes ISS to ESA and Universal Credit, the changes, when combined with eviction, will increase the need for support services to provide for increasing numbers of individuals becoming more financially vulnerable.

All partner agencies called for rights awareness training on evictions for tenants and landlords to help stem the rise in illegal evictions and exploitation of vulnerable tenants. It was reported that

there had been a rise in 'amateur' first time landlords who need active Council support to do things correctly from the start. The participants who had experienced an eviction said they found it a complex activity and they found working with all the different parts of the Council and other agencies became increasingly stressful through the eviction process.

2.5 High Rents and Lack of Housing

All participants were concerned about the high rents charged by the private landlords. Both tenants and partner agencies felt that renting in Haringey had become very expensive, reflecting what they saw as a rising trend across London.

Lack of genuinely affordable homes to rent was seen as one of the biggest problems faced by tenants and the lack of sufficient new homes being built was being exploited by some landlords to increase rents. This problem was exacerbated by the practice of sub-letting, where an estate agent or primary landlord would rent the unit to an individual, who would then sublet to others, and so on. It was reported that most of these subletting activities were often done without any formal agreements or documentation. Furthermore, each person subletting will add a percentage on to the rent to make a profit. As a result, the vulnerable tenant has to pay a high rent above and beyond the original price.

One man said: *"I have no direct link with the main landlord and no one comes in to check the cooker and central heating."*

A woman reported similar experience of the sublet market. She said that the person she dealt with was not the main landlord and all she had was a verbal agreement. She worried that this makes her open to abuse and exploitation, but said she has no other options.

Participants recognised that the lack of housing was a significant contributory factor to the high level of rent and this was a London-wide problem. They called for a comprehensive solution that included building more social housing properties that are genuinely affordable. Some queried whether the Council could step in to help cap or control the high level of rents being asked by landlords.

2.6 Lack of Agreements, Security of Tenure and Rights Awareness

Many participants reported that they did not have formal tenancy agreements and were constantly in fear of being evicted due to the lack of security of tenure. Many of the participants said that they find themselves in this situation because they cannot afford to provide the high level of deposits that are normally charged by the estate agents or main landlords and therefore are forced into the subletting market.

The problem of a lack of agreements and subletting appeared to be most prevalent amongst tenants with language barriers – notably Latin American women, refugees and Turkish-speaking communities. There were several reports of some main landlords not providing tenancy agreements and not honouring their obligations such as providing alternative accommodations during refurbishment works. A Somali refugee man said: *“I have no agreement with my landlord. He asked me to leave when he was working on the house.”*

Even people who had tenancy agreements often said they did not know what was in the agreements. The main reasons given for this were language barriers and feelings of powerlessness in defending themselves. One participant said that having a tenancy agreement made no difference because she has complained to the landlord and the council about the poor living conditions in her property” but no one cared”. She added that when you push the landlord too far then he/she will threaten you with eviction. The role of LBH in providing support in these personally extremely uncomfortable situations was not clear to most participants with these issues. With new orders in place these contexts are likely to come to LBH attention more frequently.

Participants suggested that there needs to be more information, advice and guidance provided to new and existing tenants to empower them to understand their rights and prevent exploitation and abuse which are prevalent in the HMO sector. Many of them suggested that the support could include things such as a “telephone advice line, community workshops and ‘one to one’ surgeries held in the community”. There was also strong support for greater inspection of HMOs and enforcement by Council officers. Some people felt that the Council’s dual role of placing homeless people in HMOs and enforcing housing standards could result in a conflict of interest. Participants recognised their problems as examples of what is happening to many households with similar issues across a Borough with increasing demand for private rented housing.

2.7 Landlord Behaviour

It was noted in sessions that an ever-increasing number of tenants are now renting in HMOs and that they need protection from irresponsible landlords. Participants made a distinction between landlords who are either new to renting and want to do the right thing need help ('good' landlords) from those who are unscrupulous and have the intention to make money by whatever means possible ('bad landlords). This matter is well known at national level with Parliament actively bringing forward legislation to address bad landlords. The Mayor of London has established Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker – London's first online 'name and shame' database to help private renters.

Participants said that the 'good' landlords should be provided with guidance and support by the Council. The guidance should include dissemination of good practices including understanding of landlord's obligations in terms of tenancy agreements, expected property standards, health and safety and other requirements. New regulations and guidance this year are in place to remedy this.

Several examples of practices by 'bad landlords' were given including fly tipping (such as dumping of furniture), overcrowding and poor living conditions such as non-maintenance of shared spaces and facilities (kitchens and toilets to gardens), retaliatory eviction and harassments.

Participants called for a full public register of landlords and properties which should be made accessible to the public. This again will be available through the Rogue Land Checker as LBH feeds information alongside the courts into the Checker.

2.8 More Support to Housing Support Agencies

Many of the partner agencies who participated in the consultation exercise expressed the need for a joined-up approach for the voluntary and community sector, statutory and private sector to work together to support tenants and landlords to address the issues.

Partner Agencies suggested the following support measures to help in their work:

- Creating a single point of contacts for queries regarding HMOs, partner agencies were surprised at the complexity of different functions and professions engaged in delivering

support and enforcement services. (We used the diagram provided by the Council in its HMO strategy briefing (above) to show the routes to support. There are around 50 staff in the nine different professional technical areas. Simplification of access to the right service would more swiftly tackle problems, which, when left, become significantly more difficult to resolve.

- Sharing information that can be used by front line staff in partner agencies, such as changes to Universal Credit, guidance about standards required of accommodation and examples of tenancy agreements. Catch up on the impact of new legislative changes in 2018. Briefing on the impact of new policy initiatives by LBH.
- Up to date information, advice and guidance, communications in plain English and some community languages.

Types of enforcement activity related to residential properties

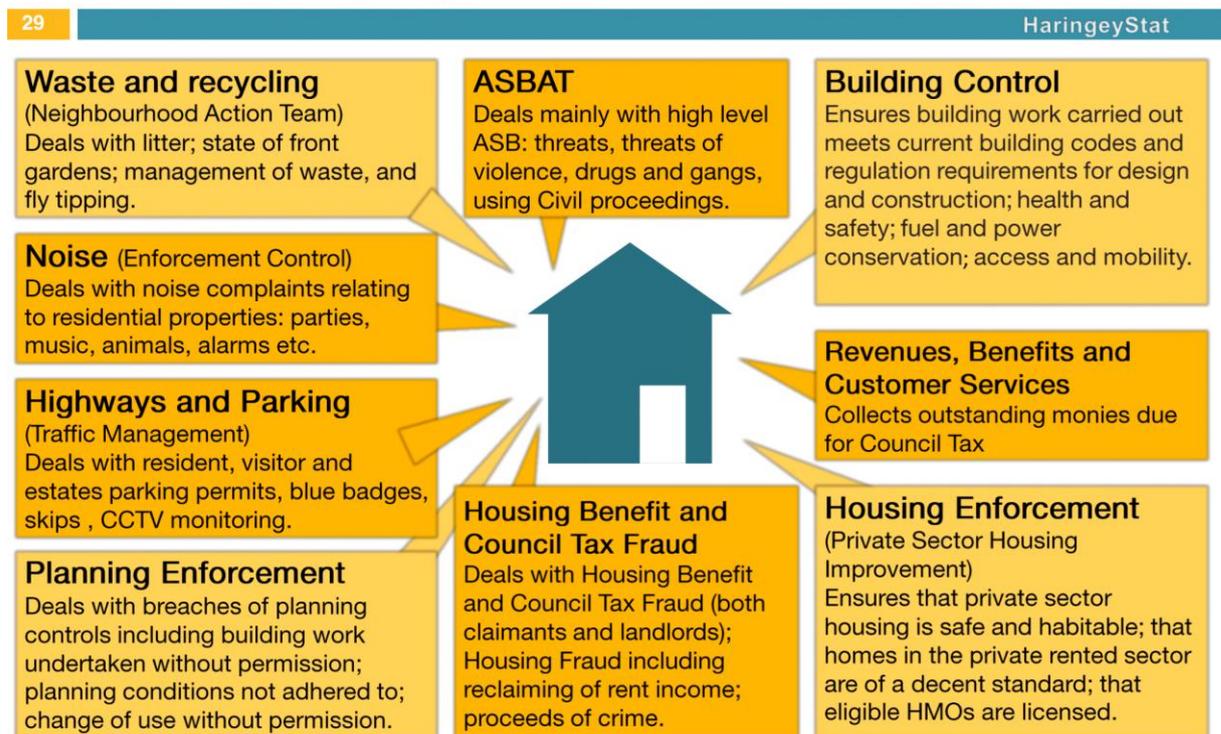


Table 3: Types of enforcement activities (Source: Haringey Council, 2015)

2.9 Advantages and Disadvantages of a Licensing Scheme

Advantages

There was overwhelming support for a licencing scheme by all participants. The main advantages for the scheme were given as:

- More inspection would help to address many of the issues raised and crack down on unscrupulous landlords and provide more protection for vulnerable tenants.
- Provide a public register of landlords and properties that includes a 'fit and proper' landlord information to identify and vet 'bad' landlords.
- Provide more information, advice and guidance to tenants, landlords and partner agencies.
- Resourcing opportunities to ensure ongoing engagement with tenants and partner agencies to a deliver a satisfactory and sustainable HMO sector. For example, there is a private Landlord forum but no private sector tenants' association or forums.

Disadvantages

Participants were concerned that there were some risks that the introduction of a licencing scheme might lead to several issues that directly affect tenants' feelings of security including:

- Some private sector HMO properties may be lost as some landlords may be put off by the licencing fees and sell property or change use.
- There is a risk that the scheme may not be credible to the tenants if it fails to obviously address the issues of unscrupulous landlords.
- Risk of increased retaliatory evictions as a result of greater inspections and enforcement by the Council.

2.10 Top Three Issues Identified as Priorities for the Licensing Schemes to Address

Top 3 issues identified by Latin American and Spanish speaking communities were:

- i. Lack of tenancy agreements
- ii. Poor response rate from landlords to undertake essential repairs including health and safety concerns.
- iii. Overcrowding and inappropriate living conditions enforced against

Top 3 issues identified by Turkish speaking communities were:

- i. Lack of affordable properties being built
- ii. High rents for HMOs in poor condition
- iii. More support from the Council to tenants they place in HMO's or are on the waiting list

Top 3 issues identified by refugees and unemployed people were:

- i. More inspection from the Council to identify bad practices in safety and charging for energy
- ii. More support from the Council to tenants to pursue complaints against landlords
- iii. Poor response rate from landlords to undertake essential repairs including health and safety concerns being actively addressed, this needs to be improved – safety is seen as an urgent matter

Top 3 issues identified by partner agencies were:

- i. Conditions within the HMO properties including repairs and overcrowding, planned inspection as well as inspections related to complaints
- ii. High rents press on households' disposable income and links to benefits creates many problems on moving/eviction
- iii. Rights awareness training and support to tenants at the start of tenancy especially in understanding the agreement, for partners and landlords

2.10 Case Study

Case Study - Miss D

Miss D aged 32 is currently living in a private rented HMO flat with her two children - a boy and a girl aged 5 and 2. She lives in the eastern part of the borough.

The flat is small with an extremely narrow passage which can be difficult to navigate as she keeps her pushchair there due to a lack of storage space. The living room has damp and mould.

She shares the bedroom with her two children, which has two single beds and a cot so there is very little space in this room. Miss D has mental health needs and works with her local mental health team. She is also known to children's services. Both services are concerned about Miss D's environment and the impact this has on her mental health and wellbeing as well as that of her children.

In the past Miss D has incurred rent arrears which could have led to a threat of eviction. This threat became a reality when there was a change in her benefit namely she changed from Income Support to Employment and Support Allowance. Here her housing benefit was suspended, and this led to the arrears. This matter was resolved by children's services. However, in cases where vulnerable adults are involved the partner agency said it would be useful for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to have a means of informing the Local Authority i.e. Haringey Council of any potential changes to benefits.

Miss D's situation could be deemed as one of overcrowding, she is currently on the council waiting list, however, at present, there is no indication when she will be offered a suitable property.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Landlord Behaviour

Tenants feel isolated and are frightened of bad landlords. The research team found the level of anxiety when attending the sessions took a while to subside within the tenant groups. The sense of isolation for each participant was relieved as others openly related their issues in tackling poor landlord behaviours and property defects. There was a general feeling that what support existed for them was difficult to very difficult to access. There is a general fear of subletting by tenants to new tenants where no agreement is in place. These relationships, when complaints are made to the Council, in participants experience give rise threats of eviction with all its consequences.

Participants had an understanding of market rents getting higher as pressure on available places to live increased and reduced their options of where to live in the borough, as their circumstances changed.

3.2 Priority Themes

The key priority themes we garnered from the research are as follows:

- **Tenants having an agreement and understanding it.** Knowing how to complain and who to complain to if the landlord did not provide an appropriate remedy.
- **Fire Safety is not in the top three of tenants' concerns** but in sub-divided property participants raised more issues in this regard.
- **Gas inspections and electric circuit inspections across HMO types are not always honoured.** This is especially important where multiple sub divisions have been made
- **Aligning agencies through shared training and guidance** - taking information on good practice by landlords (those to be praised as “exemplars”) and those bad landlords to be enforced against (shamed). A requirement for any Council officer intervention in a property is to gain a copy of the agreement between tenant and landlord as part of the intervention, and check tenants understanding of it.

- **The complex personal jeopardy that can result when there is loss of income** due to not being able to work leads to non-payment of rent and charges, threats of eviction, actual and eviction. These matters need a slicker mechanism of support, especially with all the systems and arrangement changes due in 2018. The role of partner agencies in support would benefit from being enhanced through shared training in advice and reporting systems.

3.3 Top Three Priorities from Tenants

- i. Lack of tenant agreements, or understanding them
 - ensuring new tenants get an agreement and understand their responsibilities would be a proper start to their tenancy.
- ii. Very slow/no landlord response on health matters and safety matters in the building, including ASB
 - the safety checking arrangements by Haringey Council and fire service need to be more easily accessed.
- iii. Limited supply of properties forcing up rents and increasing fears of eviction and its personal consequences.
 - clear plans for future affordable home building available at ward level, clarity of place on the waiting list. Hand holding buddy for tenants affected by eviction in a tightening supply-side of accommodation.

3.4 Communication and Awareness Raising

The findings from this short research project will assist officers in planning to deliver services to tenants in the new legislative environment from April 2018 onwards. We would commend regular update surveys through this policy deployment period to identify ways to implement changes effectively with tenants, landlords and support agencies.

Communicating through outreach and media with HMO tenants to show the Council's endeavours and success through improving support to tenants and identifying and shaming of bad landlords would we feel increase confidence in tenants coming forward for support.