

Dear HSC members

We would like to begin by thanking the committee for agreeing to our deputation tonight.

On the 24th July and 16th October, Councillor Pat Callaghan hosted two meetings of the Camden Housing Association Residents Group (CHARG) at the town hall.

CHARG is a borough-wide group that was set-up and is currently being run by Camden Federation of Private Tenants, following a recommendation made by the Housing Scrutiny Committee in 2016, to give a collective voice to this group of residents, who make up around 12% of the borough's households.

These two meetings were organised in response to ongoing concerns Councillor Callaghan had about how service charges were being administered, and in particular, about very large increases that some of the borough's residents were now facing.

One of the largest increases she has seen recently in her own ward, is a tenant of Riverside Group (formerly One Housing Group) who is facing an increase of 214.5% from £36 to £116 per week, which has pushed his total housing costs above the Universal Credit Benefit Cap. The person who is now facing possible eviction from his home is 55 years old, and he has lived at his current address for 13 years. He was recently diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Adult ADHD, and he is also living with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and a range of other health issues

Sadly, this was but one of many shocking stories we heard from attendees at the two meetings who covered the four largest housing associations operating in the borough. Some of those who weren't able to attend, subsequently shared their experiences with us by email.

We have collated these into a brief report called "**Housing associations and service charges – Is it a system in crisis ?**" which we have shared with all members of the HSC. The report has also been submitted on our behalf by Sir Keir Starmer's Senior Caseworker to MHCLG for a response.

We are also hoping that a meeting can be convened with the housing associations themselves, to discuss the range of the issues highlighted in the report.

Robert Taylor

Organiser

On behalf of Camden Federation of Private Tenants