

## Press Release

### OCCUPANTS OF PURE CITY VINDICATED

Having experienced tremendous difficulties for more than five months, the occupants of this student development in Islington- Pure City - have successfully argued that the provider who was in charge of building from the time they moved in until the end of February had breached the National Code of Standards. .

A meeting of the Code's complaints Tribunal was convened in order to deal with a complaint from City University Student' Union, taken on behalf of the occupants of Pure City, alleging that Generation Estates Management Ltd (the former operators of the site) were in breach of 18 different sections of the Code, including:

- 3.0 - All property details are reported accurately without misrepresentation to prospective tenants. This will include details provided in brochures and websites.
- 3.7 - Where a building is new, or undergoing refurbishment and the building programme is running late and where this may result in pre-let rooms not being ready for occupancy, the manager informs the future tenant at the earliest possibility of this likelihood and its consequences for them;
- 4.2 - Where access is required to a tenant's room or communal areas for other purposes each affected tenant receives appropriate notification of the date, time, estimated duration and purpose of the visit, except in the case of access needed in an emergency situation;
- 4.4 - Where a building is under defects procedures being undertaken by the builder and work needs to be carried out on a regular basis tenants are informed of this and the timescale for the programme of works, in advance of those works;

The Tribunal was addressed by the President of the Students Union, Rima Amin, and an occupant of the development. Generation Estates Management Ltd did not attend, but instead submitted a written response to the allegations.

Having taken into consideration the views of both parties, the Tribunal thanked the Students Union for bringing the complaint and complemented the President on her tenacity. It was decided to uphold 15 out of the 18 alleged breaches and it was agreed that had Generation Estates Management Limited still been operating this site then they would have been removed from membership of the Code. Full details of the Tribunal's decision can be found from the following link [add when available]

The Chair of the Complaints Tribunal, John Martin, said "It is clear to me that when the students moved into this development the building was an utter shambles, and that the situation remained this way for some considerable time. The message I would like to send to the Purpose Built Student Accommodation sector as a result of this Tribunal is that this type of situation should never be permitted to happen again; where it's clear that a new building is running late, then steps must be taken to ensure alternative provision is made available OR that tenants know what to expect well in advance. I have therefore asked the group that is currently reviewing the National Code to take this decision into account when it comes to requirements relating to late running buildings".

Rima Amin, President of City University Students' Union, who raised the complaint on behalf of students, said "I am pleased that the Tribunal has recognised the suffering that the students living in Pure City had to go through. Whilst attempts were made by the provider to denigrate the work of the Students' Union in pursuing this complaint, I am immensely proud that the campaign has been able to secure a positive outcome for the residents. All those living there should be really proud for making their voice heard and for setting a precedent helping future students"

Colum McGuire, Vice President (Welfare) for NUS said "This is an absolutely disgraceful piece of behaviour from a provider of student accommodation claiming to serve students best interests but categorically failing. The reality is whilst this has come to light this sort of practice is not uncommon and across the country students are experiencing poor standards of accommodation which can affect their wellbeing, health and attainment in their studies.

It's often thought that living in poor accommodation as a student is a rite of passage but it is completely unacceptable for any tenant, student or not, to be treated in this way.

The result of this tribunal should act as a warning not just to private providers seeking to stay in the student market, but to universities who enter into agreements and contracts with providers. Your reputation is on the line and you risk the welfare and safety of your students by allowing them to live in such poor conditions. Students will not stand for it, and NUS will be watching."

### **Notes for Editors**

- 1) The National Code being referred to is operated by the Accreditation Network UK (an umbrella body that promotes voluntary schemes designed for landlords of private sector rented accommodation) and Unipol (a not-for profit student housing charity what operates in Leeds, Bradford and Nottingham). The Code is 'Approved' under Section 233 of the 2004 Housing Act.
- 2) Full details of the requirements of this Code are available from [www.nationalcode.org/](http://www.nationalcode.org/)
- 3) The Code operates an independent complaints procedure, giving tenants (and former tenants in some cases) of purpose-built accommodation that is registered under the Code the ability to lodge a complaint if they believe the operators of that accommodation are not meeting with given standards.
- 4) The complaints procedures consist of different stages that matters can be escalated to - starting with the provider's own internal process and finishing with a meeting of the Full Tribunal. The latter consists of representatives of providers themselves, representatives from the National Union of Students and also allows for the involvement of the local university/students' union and housing authority from the location where the complaint first originates from. Although the procedures have been in operation since 2005, this was the very first time that a complaint was deemed so serious that it required a meeting of the Full complaints Tribunal. The Tribunal is independent of ANUK/Unipol.