

Tenants Group want to talk about Landlords

✘ Community activists from Edinburgh Private Tenants Action Group (EPTAG) are holding a public meeting to launch a campaign for better enforcement of the laws which protect the rights of tenants in private sector rented housing.

An EPTAG spokesperson said:- “The City of Edinburgh Council has a duty to regulate landlords, but is not doing enough to enforce the existing laws. Criminal landlords have been allowed to rent out properties which are barely habitable, and to harass tenants in their own homes – this needs to be stopped. ”

The meeting will be held on Thursday 8th March at 7pm in Old St Paul’s Church Hall, 39 Jeffrey Street.

As social housing is in short supply, and many people are priced out of buying a property, increasing numbers are turning to the private rental sector. EPTAG points out that this type of housing provides tenants with no long-term security, and many face problems with landlords who withhold deposits, charge illegal fees, or refuse to carry out repairs. Some tenants are threatened with eviction or even violence when they complain, but the upfront costs of taking on a new tenancy make it difficult for those on low incomes to move away from a bad landlord.

Most landlords are required by law to register with their local authority, and have to maintain certain minimum standards, but research by EPTAG has found that no landlord has ever been struck off Edinburgh’s landlord register, despite some landlords apparently committing criminal offences against their tenants.

One Edinburgh-based landlord, Mark Fortune, was convicted of breach of the peace in October 2011 after threatening his tenants with violence when they asked him to pay for repairs. Fortune has previously been banned from renting out HMO properties (those which are let to three or more unrelated adults) amid allegations that he threatened council staff, however EPTAG says there is evidence that he has continued to rent out HMO properties illegally.

Edinburgh Private Tenants Action Group (EPTAG) was founded last year by tenants who have had experiences of bad landlords, and is a member of the Edinburgh Tenants Federation and Scottish Tenants Organisation.