

# Property guardianship: between informal housing and security in London

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Introducing property guardianship (PG)

Legal, economic and social considerations

Experiences and rationales of live-in guardians

Conclusions: property guardians and the housing crisis in London

# What is Property Guardianship (PG)?



'Anti-kraak' sign in a window, Rotterdam (July 2013)

# Estimates about property guardianship in the EU

## Netherlands (since the early 1990s)

- 50 PG companies (Bond Precaire Woonvoermen 2014);
- at least 20,000 Dutch individuals living as guardians (Priemus, 2011).

## United Kingdom (since 2001)

- at least 25 PG companies;
- at least 4-6,000 guardians (Orbis, 2014);
- 16 out of 25 companies established after 2009 (a fast growing sector).

Also in: France (2007), Belgium (2001), Ireland, Germany (2011).



Organisation	Founded	Employees	Offices	Office Locations
Ambika Security	1988		1	London
DEX Property Management	1999		6	London (1) Netherlands (5)
Gallowglass Security	1999			Edinburgh and Sowerby Bridge, W. Yorks
Camelot UK	2001	20+	5	London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Bristol
Ad Hoc UK	2006	20+	10	London/SE, Woolwich, Birmingham, York, Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, Peterborough, Cardiff, Newcastle
Newbould Guardians Ltd	2009		1	London
Live-In Guardians	2009		1	London
Minae Property	2009		1	Manchester (properties also Mids/NE/NW)
Property Guardians	2009			London (properties in 9 UK cities)
Guardians of London	2011	7 +	1	London
Global Guardians Management Ltd	2011		1	London
Dot Dot Dot property	2011	9	1	London
Plage Property	2012	>10	1	London
Property Guardians in Cooperation	2012			London
Blue Door Property Guardians	2013			London
Intuitive Guardians	2014			Brighton and Hove
Cerberus Property Guardians	2014			SE London?
Orbis	2014			
Acorn Guardians	2014			London, Bristol, Brighton
Secure Guardians	2012 ?			London, Kent, Suffolk
Grandploy	2013 ?		1	London
Umbrella Guardians			1	London
VPS Specialists				Advertise London properties on Gumtree
London Caretakers Ltd				London
Clearway Security				
Oaksure Security				London

Table elaborated in 2014, to be updated (Dawson, Ferreri and Vasudevan, *in progress*).

### **LARGE SECURITY COMPANY - Orbis**

SitexOrbis is one of the biggest security companies in the UK, responsible for 50,000 properties. It has entered into the property guardian market later (2014) than some of its competitors, offering a more professional approach.

### **SMALL START-UP - Blue Door Property Guardians**

A London-based business set up purely to provide guardians, run by people who have been guardians themselves.

### **SOCIAL BUSINESS - Acorn Guardians**

A 'social business' model, with volunteering. London, Brighton and Bristol. Integrated 'social impact' local volunteer schemes for guardians. Reinvesting up to 40% of guardian licence fees into a community fund.

Preliminary taxonomy of models of PG in the UK.



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EFFECTIVE PROPERTY  
PROTECTION**

**CLICK HERE**

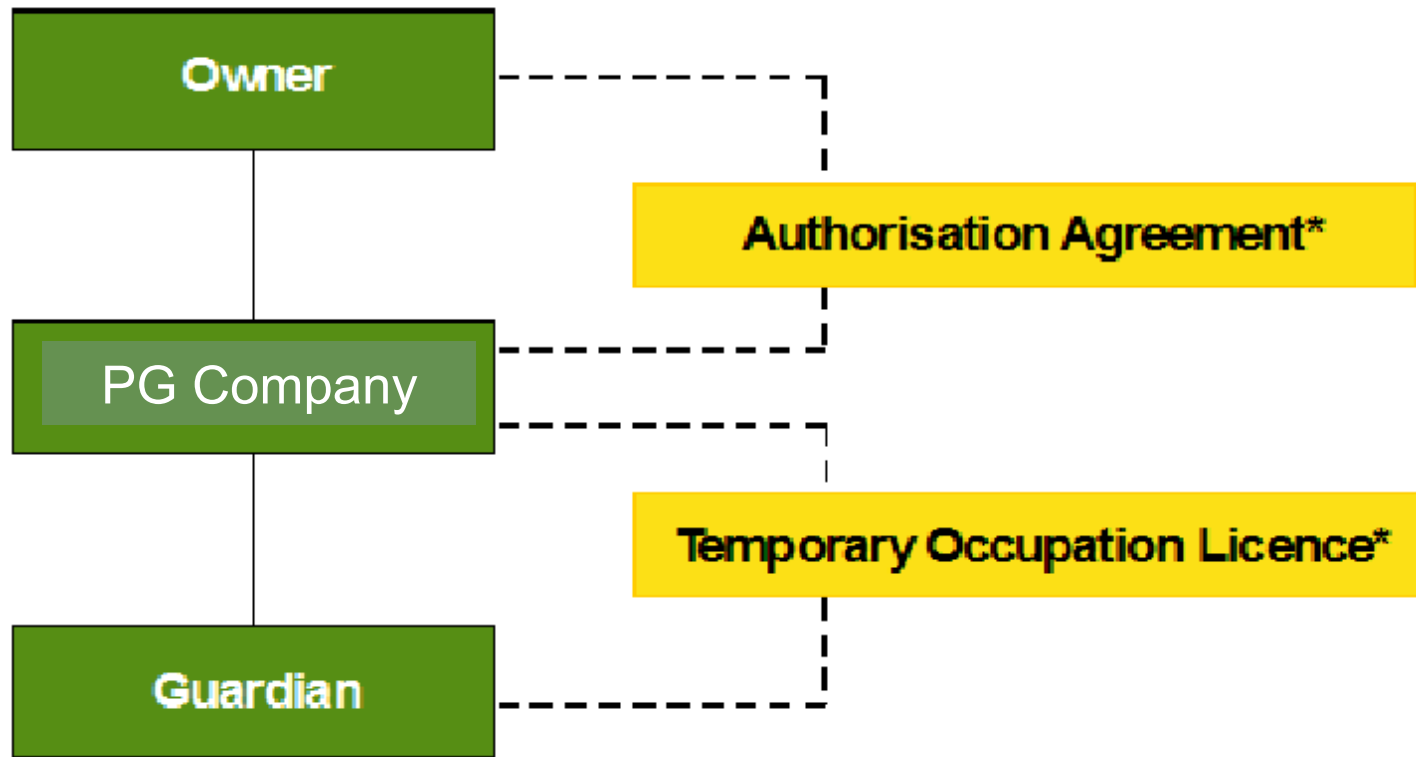


**I AM LOOKING FOR  
AN AFFORDABLE  
LIVING SPACE**

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Dex Property Management (UK and Netherlands), screenshot from  
website 2015 [<http://dexpropertymanagement.com/>]



Adapted from Camelot Property Management Ltd, 2010





Adventures of Scamelot (2011)  
[squattastic.blogspot.co.uk](http://squattastic.blogspot.co.uk)

"Insurance companies love the fact the property is at a reduced risk by being occupied by Guardians who care about the property because it's their own temporary living space."

Camelot Property Management Ltd – FAQ

# 'Licensed Living' vs. tenancies

## LICENCE AGREEMENT

### IMPORTANT NOTE

This is an agreement under which Camelot Guardian Management Limited agrees to let you share living space in a building.

You will not get a right to exclusive occupation of any part of the living space. The space will be shared with other individuals who Camelot permits to share the space. You will have to agree with those other individuals how the space is to be used. The extent of this space may vary from time to time, as directed by Camelot. However, there will always be at least one room for each individual (or couple) sharing the space.

The House of Lords has held that this sort of sharing agreement does not create a tenancy: see *A G Securities Ltd v Vaughan* [1990] 1 AC 417. You will, therefore, have to vacate the building as soon as the agreement is terminated.

This agreement contains important rules about how the building is to be occupied and used. By signing this agreement you agree to keep those rules. Please do not sign this agreement until you have read it.

If you, or anyone advising you, wishes to discuss the terms of this agreement, please contact Camelot's solicitors, whose details are given on the next page.

### 3 This is not a tenancy

- 3.1 This agreement does not give a right to exclusive possession to the Guardian of the Property or any part of the Property.
- 3.2 As a result, the Guardian accepts that this agreement does not create a tenancy of any kind, and that on Termination of this agreement, the Guardian will have no right to stay in the Property.



Nearly Legal  
@nearlylegal

Follow

Hi @camelot\_uk I recall asking you this before. Why do you think your guardian licences are exempt from Protection from Eviction Act 1977?

RETWEETS 5 FAVORITES 4



2:37 PM - 27 Mar 2015



Nearly Legal  
@nearlylegal

Follow

Because @camelot\_uk if your licences aren't exempt (and they aren't) you are lying about 14 days notice to quit. it is unlawful.

RETWEETS 3 FAVORITES 3



2:38 PM - 27 Mar 2015

Twitter: 27 March 2015.



"Does adventurous living in a former school, monastery, office block or factory appeal to you? [...]  
You have chosen to live adventurously in someone else's property."

Camelot Property Management Ltd (FAQ 2012)



We're on public property ladder

*The Sun*, 22 March 2009

SPACE



**Here today,  
gone tomorrow**

Fancy a vast loft in a prime spot, at a knockdown rent? One couple got just that - but they had to give up a few home comforts. By Hannah Booth. Pictures: Nick Ballon



Here today, gone tomorrow, *The Guardian*, 12 March 2011

# Experiences of being a guardian in London

## Welcome

Are you a **young professional** looking for an affordable space to live?

Are you **responsible**?

And... are you **flexible**?



DEX Property Management (2012)

"..the key to being a property guardian, you've got to be so flexible in every respect."

Mark (2014)






## On-demand availability

"It was getting quite close to late August and I hadn't heard anything. I was getting worried because it would be really difficult for me to pay rent at a normal London price.... And in September I got an email saying 'Can you come to a viewing tonight?' and it was here. I came down, I had a look... probably no longer than a week after, we came to get the key, and then it was all 'go!'"

Lucy (2014)

# Code of conduct and unannounced inspections



CAMELOT

Date: 02 Time: pm Camelot Employee: Cash

The following breaches have been found:

- ☐ Fire pack not on display
- ☐ Replace smoke alarm / battery
- ☐ Remove ashtray / stop smoking in property
- ☐ Fire routes / Exits not clear
- ☐ Current state of room unacceptable
- ☐ Rubbish to be removed
- ☐ Please email us your phone number to [ukguardians@camelotproperty.co.uk](mailto:ukguardians@camelotproperty.co.uk)
- ☐ Heater left on without timer
- ☐ Windows / Door not secured
- ☐ Remove toaster / microwave / candles / non approved heater
- ☐ Send room key (Within 5 working days by padded envelope. Do not include address details. Do include reimbursement receipt.)

☒ London ☐ North ☐ Midlands ☐ Glasgow

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ You will receive an email soon

☐ You will receive a warning letter soon

☒ There are no issues with the room

"When it's getting around the time [of inspections] you might want to make sure that you put things away, or you kind of tidy up - you never know when they are coming.... it's just like... things like, when my girlfriend is over, you want to make sure that the pack of condoms is put away and not left out, things that might embarrass them, like dirty underwear (laugh)... otherwise it is fine. You know, I don't, I don't expect they'll rummage too much in my things!"

John (2012)

# 'Legal squatting' or 'licensed squatting'

"You know, they keep squatters out but they essentially want you to be able to cope like a resourceful squatter...if you've had experience of being in a squat... it prepares you for these guardian places."

Elliot (2013)



'Anti-squatting' property guardian signs on building around London (2012-14).



# Insecure and low-paid work in London

"[I]f you don't know where you're going to be working or living, it makes sense.... I've got a three-day a week job... I can't work more than 3 days and keep the theatre going. So I needed a place to live so I could work part-time... until theatre stuff becomes permanent, this is my only way of keeping a base in London. I could definitely easily afford a place [where I am from] but for some reason I feel like it might be beneficial to have a place here for London theatre work if it comes up."

Georgia (2014)



# Expectations and the private rented sector

"All the renting experiences I've had in London, yes Camelot was stressful ...but actually...that's the place I stayed at longest, and in terms of location and value for money, it was probably the best!"

Anne (2012)

"I think I'd be happy with anything from about 6 months I reckon. So it still feels like home. This started to feel like home after about a month, a month and a half? But I guess if I thought that I would only be there for a few more months, I would have an element of it being quite temporary. Knowing that I am pretty certain I have a year ahead of me, that's what makes it feel like home."

Emily (2014)

# Flexibility as live/work precarity

PG 'flexibility' as an instance of multiple precarities:

- increasing labour insecurity, particularly in certain sectors;
- increasing housing insecurity (and lack of alternatives);
- anticipated precariousness: bearing risk in exchange for labour market entrance (Molé, 2010) *and* housing market entrance;
- 'Neo-bohemian' imaginaries of urban living (Lloyd, 2004) particularly for individuals with high cultural capital and low economic capital.

# PG and the London housing crisis

- Growing popularity in comparison to other housing tenures
- PG as one of many emerging practices of informal dwelling in the context of the London housing crisis
- Securing the city on live/work insecurity: implications for the security sector of unpaid paying security personnel
- PG in social housing 'decant' processes and demolition or privatisation

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Presentation elaborated from a collaborative research with  
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