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Community campaign to resist eviction by One Housing Group gains strong national support

Residents at Islington Park Street Community (IPS) have won hearts and minds this week, as they launched their campaign to stop their landlord, One Housing Group (OHG) evicting them from their home.

The community, which has been in existence for 39 years, was served with a notice to quit on 5 June 2015, giving the residents just one month to vacate the property. Some of the residents have lived in the property for over 3 decades and many are vulnerable.

The campaign, which officially began just one week ago, on 2 June 2015, has already won the support of celebrities including, Russell Brand and Mark Thomas. Local councillors, Caroline Russell and Gary Poole, and MP for Islington, Emily Thornberry, have also been vocal in their support of the community.

IPS residents joined with Crescent Road Community in Kingston, another community which is also under threat from OHG, to launch a petition on Change.org opposing the evictions; the petition has received nearly 7,000 signatures in less than a week.

Siobhan McSweeney, resident at IPS, states, "We've been overwhelmed by the level of support we've received. We were established as a community for low-income, single adults with mixed needs and we have remained true to that vision. Over the last four decades we have developed a template for successful, supportive communal living. In the face of the current housing crisis in London, I think people understand that we need communities like this more than ever. OHG should be working with us to regularise our management agreement, not evicting us."

Keith Soutar, a resident at Islington Park Street for over 30 years, highlights the value of the community saying "I'm scared about what will happen to me if OHG succeed. I'm 79 years old and I have Parkinson's disease. I rely on the people here to a great extent in meeting my everyday needs; I get so much support with cooking, housework and other daily tasks. Consider how much it will cost the state if I'm forced into residential care. Evicting the community just doesn't make sense."

Another long-term resident, Rupert Thompson, aged 52, who has lived at the house since he left foster care aged 16, agreed stating "I moved into the community as a referral from social services. Who knows where I'd be now, if it wasn't for this house. Because of everything that's happening with OHG we can't run referral schemes anymore, but I think that if they helped us we could. I want other young people to be able to benefit like I have."

The community's struggle is one of many which have swept London in the last year, as the housing crisis in the city escalates. What happens next is likely to depend on the actions of OHG. The community are keen to work with their landlord to reach a mutually acceptable solution. However, if no offers of discussion are forthcoming, it is clear that this is a campaign that is certain to grow.