

# Islington Gazette

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## Mark Foster's Old Street date

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## Bringing down cost of dying

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# Taxpayer foots bill for sky-high rents

### Millions paid to private landlords cashing in on 'right to buy' scheme

by Alisha Rouse  
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Taxpayers are being hit as nearly half of the homes intended for Islington's poor families have fallen into the hands of private landlords demanding sky-high rents.

Shock figures released this week show a staggering 39 per cent of properties bought under the right to buy scheme in Islington are now being rented out by private landlords.

MPs have warned of a "divided" borough with the poorest families "driven out". The crisis is

costing the taxpayer millions, as poorer families need huge housing benefits to pay their private rent, due to the decline in the numbers of subsidised council homes.

The borough's average weekly council rent is £92.07, dwarfed by the private sector's £341.54 weekly bill.

#### Driven out

Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington North said he "constantly" comes across residents who can't afford their homes, including many in full-time work.

He said: "The borough is be-

coming divided, with some people buying houses for a million quid, and people in unaffordable housing just down the street.

"It's a terrible sadness that people are being driven out of our borough."

Tom Copley, a Labour member of the London Assembly, unearthed the figures, which place Islington seventh worst out of the 34 London authorities.

He said: "It is obscene that a policy developed to promote home ownership has resulted in thousands of former council homes being let through the private rented sector. As a consequence, taxpay-

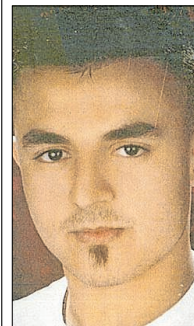
er subsidised housing is inadvertently being used to line the pockets of private sector landlords."

London-wide rents continue to soar, with the average rent last year standing at £1,996 per month.

Mr Corbyn said that an investment in more social housing, and establishing rent controls, will help the crisis – which costs both vulnerable residents and the taxpayer.

Cllr James Murray, executive member for housing, said right to buy had created a ridiculous situation but added: "We are on track to build 2,000 new affordable homes for social rent by 2015."

## Innocent gunned down by hitman



Innocent sales assistant Cem Duzgan, 21, of St John Street, Finsbury, was gunned down in a pool club by a hitman with a submachine gun as part of a deadly feud between two Turkish gangs, a court was told.

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## Goldlovers

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Linda Robson with her daughters Bobbie, left, and Lauren

Picture: Tony Gay

## Family affair as Linda launches a tan shop

Actress Linda Robson has joined forces with her daughters to open a spray tan salon after becoming hooked on a product while in Australia filming *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me out of Here!*

The *Birds of a Feather* star, who has lived in Islington all her life, has launched the Loving Tan shop in Finsbury, with daughters Lauren Killingback, 30, and Bobbie Dunford, 17, who run the business.

The Chadwell Street salon, which was formerly used by Linda's husband Mark Dunford as a café,

then an art gallery, is the first to start using the Loving Tan product, which Ms Robson discovered before she went on the reality TV show.

Ms Robson said: "I put it on before I went into the jungle and when I came home I looked up the website but couldn't get it here, and it was really expensive to have it shipped over. So when my husband's shop became free, we thought we'd open the salon."

"We're now the first place outside of Australia using it."