

News



Roofless dictator This convertible Mercedes 600 Pullman Landaulet, delivered in 1971 to President Tito of Yugoslavia, is one of nine ever built and is being sold for £2.5 million by the Tom Hartley Jnr car dealership in Swadlincote, Derbyshire

TOM HARTLEY JNR/SWNS

Airbnb faces curbs on letting by landlords

Andrew Ellison
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Airbnb faces strict rules to stop professional landlords from using the holiday lettings website.

Executives from the American company have been called to a meeting with local government officials to answer accusations that their business is driving up rents by allowing landlords to convert long-term rentals into lucrative holiday lets in defiance of planning rules.

The meeting will be attended by representatives of Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, who has indicated for the first time that he is willing to take action against the company.

In a letter sent to MPs, seen by *The Times*, Mr Khan says that he has "concerns" that Airbnb is exacerbating the housing crisis by reducing the stock of long-term rentals and that people living near the website's properties are experiencing antisocial behaviour, such as noise and rubbish pollution.

Mr Khan says that he "supports the right of people to benefit from renting out their homes for short periods". However, he adds that this freedom "must be balanced against the need to ensure that Londoners are not adversely affected".

The letter finishes: "If boroughs are finding that the legislation needs to be revisited to make sure that we find a better way of balancing the benefits of

the sharing economy with the protection of local residents and the retention of housing for long-term use, then I will be happy to work with them and discuss with government whether any changes may be needed."

The letter seems to mark a significant change of tone from Mr Khan. Last month Airbnb executives boasted that "Sadiq loves us right now" as they mounted a huge lobbying campaign to fight the threat of regulation.

Almost half the properties on Airbnb in Britain's biggest cities are now offered by landlords. In London alone there are more than 20,000 entire properties listed on Airbnb, a 24 per cent increase in four months.

Homeowners in the capital must apply for planning permission if their property is used for short lets of more than 90 days a year, but critics have accused Airbnb of not doing enough to enforce these rules.

Tom Copley, a member of the London Assembly who brokered the meeting between Airbnb and councils, said: "The company has adapted its platform in other cities to comply with local laws so there is no reason it can't do that in London... The meeting will be constructive but if Airbnb doesn't co-operate, legislation is the next obvious next step."

Airbnb denies reducing housing stock and says it is helping to boost local economies. It says that it tells hosts they must comply with local regulations.

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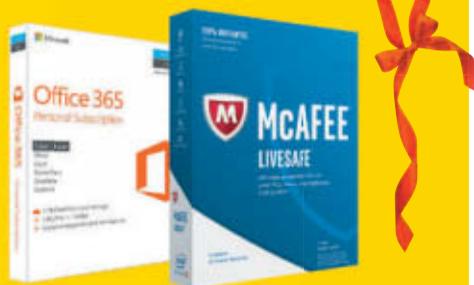


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Nurses too busy to help patients

Patients at a hospital were told to wear incontinence pads because staff were too busy to help them to use the lavatory, while others waited up to two months for their hair to be washed, a damning report has found.

The Care Quality Commission has told Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich, southeast London, that it "requires improvement" after the in-

spection in June. Inspectors also raised serious concerns after seeing a patient in A&E with sepsis deteriorate because they were not checked on often enough. People in A&E were being treated in corridors and on chairs because of overcrowding, and staff were failing to carry out a full range of checks on children.

Further inspections will be made.

In The Times tomorrow

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