

Fire safety, late buildings, accessibility and affordability - the need for a national student housing campaign

Submitted by: Queen's University Belfast SU

What's the problem?

Student accommodation is one of the biggest issues for students across the UK. Issues of accessibility, affordability and safety are of major concern. We urgently need to develop a holistic vision for what reforms we want to see to the sector and mobilise to win them whilst these opportunities are here.

In recent years NUS and student led campaigns such as RENT STRIKE have had some big wins for student accommodation, but it is vital in the absence of a VP Welfare this work continues as no other organisation is going to do this work and continue to call out private providers who profit from our students.

This academic year started with hundreds of students left without student halls due to late developments or made to live far away from educational establishments because of lack of suitable accommodation.

In Bolton we saw a block of student halls go up in flames, more needs to be done to ensure this never happens again and that flammable cladding is removed from all student accommodation.

Students deserve accessible, affordable and safe accommodation regardless of where they study or their financial situation.

During the past year it has become apparent that student accommodation is finally on the political agenda with events organised by UUK and the Universities Minister. NUS has played a key role in these discussions and it should continue to do so in the absence of a VP Welfare.

Issues around student accommodation are being raised in all parliaments and Scottish Labour included it within their election manifesto. We want to see all political parties focusing on making student accommodation better.

The welfare campaign and disabled students' campaign have successfully lobbied for reforms to the codes of standards to ensure student accommodation is more accessible, but this work should not be forgotten within the new structures of NUS. It is vital NUS continues to do this work.

Late buildings have disrupted too many students this year we want NUS to build on the work of the past year and ensure compensation is mandatory.

What could be the solution?

In light of Grenfell, and the fire in Bolton student accommodation it is imperative the work on fire safety does not stop.

All flammable cladding should be removed from educational buildings and accommodation including social housing.

The NUS Affordability in Education paper began the process of articulating a new vision for affordable accommodation. We need a holistic vision for the future of student accommodation and what reforms we want to see.

Cut the Rent groups and student housing campaigns should be supported and there should also be a national campaign around a vision to secure more affordable and safer housing for all.

The affordability structures being implemented within the Mayor of London's Plan should be explored further as the basis for reforms around the country.

Ideas for Implementation

NUS must fulfil the recommendation from the Poverty Commission to write a full vision for the future of student accommodation and what reforms we want to see