

PRESS CUTTING
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One in five student homes 'vermin infested'



The National Union of Students has published new research entitled 'Homes fit for study', which revealed that over three quarters of students have a problem with the condition of their home.

Over half have condensation; almost half have mould, and a quarter have slugs, mice or another infestation in their current home.

Added to these grim health and safety concerns, over a third of students are getting into debt to meet upfront costs to secure a property. The same amount struggle with energy bills, with almost a quarter unaware of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

NUS is calling for proper regulation of letting agents, as well as proposing that an end to letting fees, as has happened in

Scotland, would ensure that students have a better idea of the overall cost of renting in the private sector and can then budget accordingly.

NUS Vice President (Welfare), Colum McGuire, said: "Although there's a commonly held perception that poor quality student housing is a rite of passage, it is both disgusting and unacceptable that students should live in vermin infested housing in this day and age.

"Our research has raised alarming health and safety issues and we are calling for more effective enforcement of standards to ensure students' homes are fit for study."

Local housing issues, such as mice infestations, fall under the remit of local government and NUS is urging Government to ensure that local councils have the resource and capacity to deal with this.

Chief Executive of Shelter, Campbell Robb, said: "No one should be forced to live in a home that is a danger to their health and wellbeing - so these findings are shocking. We hear from young people every day living in unsafe rented homes, dealing with rogue landlords, struggling to pay sky-high rents, or paying out hundreds in unfair letting fees.

"This can't carry on. The government must do more to improve our broken rental market, and make sure that every landlord provides the safe and decent home that we all deserve."

Pat Barber, Chair of the Association of Independent Inventory Clerks (AIIC), comments: "Many students were living in unacceptable conditions and it is worrying that so many students are living in such poor quality accommodation in this day and age.

"Yet again, we see negligent landlords taking advantage of tenants in a booming rental market. Students are facing alarming health and safety issues which landlords are ignoring. The quality of student accommodation needs to be improved to acceptable living standards.

NUS will be supporting students' unions to work more closely with their institutions to improve students' experiences and empower them as tenants. The research shows that initiatives such as accreditation schemes can make a real difference to students' experiences and both unions and universities need to work together to ensure housing support is high on the agenda.