



# Campaign Pack 2017/2018



[#SomewhereToCallHome](https://www.instagram.com/somewheretocallhome)

# SOMEWHERE TO CALL HOME

Student housing in the UK is in crisis.

Across the country students are living in often terrible conditions. A combination of factors including private sector profiteering and exploitative landlords are driving standards down. Now is the time for students to say that enough is enough.

*Somewhere to Call Home* was compiled by Labour Students after clubs submitted or co-submitted proposals on student housing. Hundreds of students from all over the UK then voted in an online ballot selecting this campaign over all others.

The truth is, as Jeremy put it; everyone deserves to live in a home fit for human habitation, students included. Our research showed that the various stresses we face at university or college have for some people been made worse by going home to somewhere we don't want to be. It shouldn't be this way.

We all have a role to play in making this campaign a success, and ensuring that future students will live in a place they can be proud to call home, but today we stand at square one. With your help we can make a real difference, this campaign will only be a success with all our hard work.

That is why we've compiled this campaign pack. I hope you will find it useful and that you will use it to get your campaign started. Melantha, Rachel and I will also be working hard to help you with the campaign on your campus in any way we can, so if you have any questions please get in touch. Together, let's make sure every student has a place to call home.

**Josh James**

National Campaigns & Membership Officer, Labour Students

The logo for Labour Students, featuring a stylized red rose icon to the left of the text 'Labour STUDENTS'. The text is in a white, sans-serif font, with 'Labour' on the top line and 'STUDENTS' on the bottom line. The logo is set against a red background that is part of a larger graphic element consisting of overlapping red and yellow squares.

Labour  
STUDENTS

**#SomewhereToCallHome**

# OUR CAMPAIGN

**Our aim is for every Student Union in the UK to provide Letting Agency services for students, and we want your Labour clubs to be the ones to deliver it.**

This campaign has the potential to change the standard of living for students and you are at the centre of it. The General Election saw what we can do when students use their voices together.

With Letting Agencies on our campuses, we hope to see students interests put first, and the costs of the services paid for by landlords rather than by students.

Furthermore the introduction of Letting Agencies managed by Student Unions will ensure that the landlords whom students rent from are safe and end the discrimination of students in the private rented sector.

Alongside pushing for SU letting agencies, your Labour Students Officers will also be lobbying nationally and at a grassroots level for an end to letting agent's fees and for a National Student Housing Strategy which will ensure that the Labour Party has an even better plan to tackle housing when we win at the next General Election.

To help, we will be providing all clubs with Resource Packs that you can use to model your campaign on including model motions and letters as well as examples of best practice.

In the meantime, this step-by-step campaign guide that will show you not only how to mandate your Students' Union to introduce an in-house lettings agency but also how to support the work we will be doing on ending letting agents fees and the National Student Housing Strategy.

## OUR RESEARCH

The responses to our consultation have been wide ranging across a number of bases, but one thing is clear: the standard of housing that students are faced with in the private rented sector is unacceptable.

A significant number of students who filled out our consultation found that landlords simply did not respect their rights as tenants. Most respondents found that their flats, for instance, were poorly insulated, or that they suffered from issues like damp, mould, and infestations of insects/rodents.

**Of all those who took part in the consultation, merely 16% of respondents stated that the quality of their private rented property was anything other than “poor”.**

**Additionally, 67% of respondents said that their accommodation was “unsafe”, with experiences of walls collapsing and mass evacuations cited.**

Another issue raised by numerous respondents was being faced with letting agent fees, which are clearly an up-front cost that many students struggle to afford, especially as they are non-refundable as opposed to a deposit. Fees like these are already illegal to charge in all cases in Scotland. This information has helped us pinpoint the key issues that you have faced in dealing with private accommodation, and allows us to focus on tackling the things that affect you most.

Furthermore, we plan to look at all of your responses to this consultation with a view to using those which have not been submitted anonymously as part of a social media campaign to highlight the terrible standard of private accommodation student face and use them as part of a social media campaign.

# A RECORD OF TORY FAILURES

The Tories have let exploitative landlords off the hook for the last 7 years and now the situation has reached crisis point.

**Since 2010 The Conservatives have presided over:**

- 1. Rough sleeping in the UK more than doubling**
- 2. Private rents rising much faster than incomes**
- 3. Affordable house building stagnating to its lowest level in 24 years**
- 4. The scrapping of landlords registering, which has driven down standards**
- 5. A complete failure to deliver the homes that Britain needs, despite promising a programme of home construction in 2015**

The Conservative government has also changed legislation to allow landlords to get away with not properly insulating their properties, and refused applications to allow councils to license landlords in the private rented sector.



**Only Labour will tackle this crisis with a “New Deal” on housing that was announced during the General Election campaign and invest in housing across the UK.**

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**#SomewhereToCallHome**

# WIN A STUDENTS' UNION RUN LETTING AGENCY ON CAMPUS

*If your SU doesn't already have this, achieving it will be big.*

A SU-run letting agency will provide the services of any other letting agency but will put students first. It will mean that future students can rent without worrying that their letting agent will let them down, charge extortionate fees, and will take any problems seriously.

Our research showed that letting agencies do not take the rights of student seriously, and some respondents said that letting agents did not take action when landlords were acting illegally.

Some Students' Unions like Leicester and De Montfort have already been leading the way on this. Leicester Students' Union has an in-house letting agency that helps students find homes, and doesn't charge any letting fees at all.

## **Their mission is:**

*"To raise standards in accommodation for the students of Leicester. To be honest, transparent and fair in our actions and to enhance the student experience."*



**Our resources guide will include details on how to make sure your Students' Union can follow their example, so keep an eye out.**

# ***How to win an SU-ran letting agency on your campus:***

## **1. Meet with your Sabbatical Officers (Welfare or equivalent)**

Get in touch with your Student's Unions Sabbatical Officers and ask them how you can work together to make it a success.

If you think they will already be on board, or you have a sabbatical officer who is also a Labour Student, they might be able to help you with the cross campus petition to convince the other sabbatical officers and writing the motion to you SU Council.

The voices of your sabbatical officer will be integral to making this a success. So you need to have them onside by this point. They will be the driving force in ensuring that the Trustee Board of your SU approve the move, and that work starts on it this academic year, or you may have to start all over again next year, convincing new sabbatical officers how important this is!

Again, it will be useful to think about how a letting agency might tie into the strategic plan of the Student Union, or fit with any Officers manifesto pledges or goals.

## **2. Mandate your Sabbatical Officers**

Proposing and passing a motion through your Union Council, Assembly or Senate will be the best way to galvanise support for your campaign and get key SU Officers on side.

Do some research, as there may be already supporting policy on housing passed by your SU council.

The success of this motion will be vital in convincing sabbatical officers to implement it.

Not only do you need to make sure the motion is good, but you should also make sure it will have the support to pass democratically through Council.

### **3. Start a petition**

Make sure that when you move to mandate your SU officers to work on introducing an in-house letting agent on your campus, you have the evidence to show that students want this.

When creating the petition, it may be worth thinking about the sabbatical officers priorities and how this campaign helps them fulfil any of their manifesto promises and making sure that this is clear in the petition.

However, before you can sell it to sabbatical officers, you need to sell it to regular students. Having a big list of people who want to see safer, securer and fairer lettings in your area, run for students, not for exploitative landlords will make a huge difference.

Soon we will be sending out model motions as part of the resource pack that you can use to outline what you want to achieve and get out in your institution to make sure that students get behind it and sign the petition which you can attach to your motion, asking the SU to act.



# BAN LETTING AGENT'S FEES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

*The Labour Party promised to put an end to letting agent fees at the last General Election. Letting Agent fees disproportionately affect students who have to pay extortionate costs every year, up front and for often relatively short tenancies of less than a year.*

*This amounts to little more than a tax on students by companies. We have to take this opportunity to ensure that this comes to an end.*

## ***What you can do on your campus:***

### **1. Get signatories for an open letter to key MPs and AMs**

Put pressure on your local Members of Parliament and Assembly Members in Wales to support the move to ban by collecting signatures on your campus to add to an open letter from your club to local politicians.

One thing is clear – that the Tories cannot be trusted to act on Letting Agent fees. This victory will be decided on the action by Labour, and we need your help to make sure it happens.

Your national officers can help you to write an open letter if you haven't done one before, you should include some personal examples from people who have been stung by extortionate fees if possible. Soon we will be sending out model letters to all clubs as part of the resource pack that you can use to send your own to MPs & AMs!

## 2. Push a motion through your Students' Union Council

By making the call to scrap letting agent fees your Students' Union's official policy you can unify the student voice on your campus or town. It means we can add you Student Union to our list of education institutions that back our call to end unfair fees, which your regional co-ordinators can then send to key MPs or AMs in the fight to ensure they the Tories do not back out of yet another promise.

# WHAT YOUR NATIONAL OFFICERS HAVE BEEN WORKING ON

1. We have met with the Shadow Secretary of State for Housing's team to discuss Labour's post-general election plans for housing
2. We ran a consultation of our members over a number of weeks to guide our campaign
3. We hosted a session with sabbatical officers from across the UK to ask how this campaign will work on their campuses
4. We held fringe events at Labour Students Summer Training, Young Labour Policy Conference and Labour Students Political Weekend on the campaign to engage members and raise awareness



# WHAT YOUR NATIONAL OFFICERS WILL BE DOING

## PUSHING FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON STUDENT HOUSING

*Labour Students want to see the adoption of a National Strategy on Student Housing to combat the growing problem of poor standards in our private rented sector.*

*One thing that will set this campaign apart from others is the number of personal experiences we have of the poor quality of student housing in the UK – this will be what will convince the decision makers.*

### **Our National Strategy on Student Housing:**

1. The expansion of the National database on landlord to include civil convictions and non-housing related criminal convictions as students have the right to know who they are renting from.
2. Change the legislation on selective licensing by scrapping the 20% limit and the requirement for local Authorities to get approval to implement.
3. Close the loopholes in the legislation on energy efficiency requirements, which allow landlords to get out of properly insulating their properties.
4. Increase funding to Local Authorities to enable them to police standards in the private rented sector and prosecute rogue landlords.

# ***What you can do to help:***

## **1. Ground Campaign to support Labour Candidates**

Make use of our activism to promote our campaign! As Labour Students we will be out on the doorsteps across England in the run up to the Local & Mayoral Elections 2018. Campaigning is what we do, so we may as well take advantage of the work we do for Labour candidates.

We will provide you with pledge boards in order to promote our campaign and get Labour Candidates behind our plan! All you need to do is campaign as you usually do, but make the ask of candidates that they too support our National Strategy on Student Housing.

## **2. Hold an open meeting on campus with Labour Councillors**

**Galvanising support on campus for Labour Students' campaign will be vital!**

Organising open meetings in the form of a panel debate on the state of students housing is a really great way to get buy-in from fellow students. Invite your local Labour Councillors or Council candidates as well as any other relevant figures to discuss the issue, and give fellow students the chance to share their experiences.

If you need help putting this together, just get in touch with your national officer team using the contacts at the back.

### 3. Create video content to share online

Create shareable graphics based on your experiences of poor housing. We will be creating them too, but we want your help to create content such as graphics and videos to support the campaign online and raise awareness.

We have created scripts to use as examples and help you create content. They will be sent out to clubs soon as part of our Priority Campaign resources pack.



# CONTACT US FOR MORE SUPPORT

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