

Briefing: Accommodation Costs Survey 2021

December 2021

Introduction

Unipol, a student housing charity, and the National Union for Students (NUS) conducted the 2021 Accommodation Costs Survey,¹ finding that rents in student accommodation are rising rapidly, there is a lack of affordable accommodation, and available housing is increasingly found with private providers rather than universities.

Headline Findings

- » The average annual rent for 'purpose-built student accommodation' is £9,488 in London (£7,374 elsewhere in the UK).
- » Student rents have risen at higher rates than inflation with a 16% increase since the last survey in 2018-2019, and 4.4% in the last year alone.
- » Costs of living are outpacing financial support – in London, the average rent would consume 88% of a full student maintenance loan, leaving just £38 per week to cover other expenses.
- » Private providers provide more than 70% of bed spaces for students, but these are typically 24% (£1,505 per year) more expensive than university accommodation.
- » The average rent for university owned and managed accommodation is £212/week while for private direct let it is £259/week.
- » There is a major shortfall in affordable accommodation and lower-cost accommodation is disappearing, while 89% of universities offer a hardship fund and 59% offer bursaries.
- » Studios account for 19% of the student housing stock in London and have increased 166% since 2019-2019 (compared to +66% in the rest of the UK).
- » There is not enough accommodation (and associated services) to meet the needs of disabled students, and private providers are not as engaged in issues of student isolation and mental health.

Recommendations to Consider

- » Increasing sector unity: universities and providers depend on each other, however with roles converging it is important to establish boundaries while maintaining contact, especially around complex issues such as student mental health and welfare.
- » Addressing affordability: providers should consider offering bursaries for students from means-tested backgrounds and find ways to support students from families with multiple children at university at the same time. Quality accommodation should be available at a range of price points and to students from a variety of backgrounds.
- » Policy changes: Student accommodation must provide for good working and learning conditions, in addition to living conditions.

¹ <https://www.unipol.org.uk/news/accommodation-costs-survey-2021-launched>