

Proposer: Eliot Wooding-Sherwin
Seconder: Justine Pédussel
Date: 17/03/23



Motion Title: Support of actions for better housing

Motion Resolves:

Any rent strike action taken by students to encourage the University to better the state of housing shall be supported by the Students Union. This should come in the form of, but would not be limited to, supporting students through the action with kind words and advice, and publicly stating that the Union supports the action by advertising it and releasing official statements of support.

Any boycott of university services taken by students to encourage the University to better the state of housing shall be supported by the Students Union. This should come in the form of, but would not be limited to, supporting students through the action with kind words and advice, and publicly stating that the Union supports the action by advertising it and releasing official statements of support.

Any occupation/sit-in action taken by students to encourage the University to better the state of housing shall be supported by the Students Union. This should come in the form of, but would not be limited to, supporting students through the action with kind words and advice, and publicly stating that the Union supports the action by advertising it and releasing official statements of support.

Any similar actions taken by students to encourage the University to better the state of housing shall be supported by the Students Union. This should come in the form of, but would not be limited to, supporting students through the action with kind words and advice, and publicly stating that the Union supports the action by advertising it and releasing official statements of support.

Motion Notes:

Students are currently living through a housing crisis. The National Union of Students Scotland survey found that the average cost of rent for student accommodation has increased by 34% since 2018.¹ As a result, 12% of Scottish students have experienced homelessness,² 45% of students have gone without heating due to a lack of money,³ and 35% have been unable to pay their rent in full.⁴

Our Students Union carried out its own research in relation to the housing crisis in Stirling, at the time of writing this motion the results of this survey were not accessible to the proposers. However, it is expected that the results will be similar to those gathered by NUS Scotland.

Students in student accommodation do not have the same tenancy rights as students in private accommodation.⁵ This cannot continue.

¹ NUS Scotland, Fighting for Students: Towards a Student Housing Strategy for Scotland, page 4.

² NUS Scotland, Fighting for Students: Towards a Student Housing Strategy for Scotland, page 3.

³ NUS Scotland, Fighting for Students: The Cost of Survival, page 17.

⁴ NUS Scotland, Fighting for Students: The Cost of Survival, page 22.

⁵ NUS Scotland, Fighting for Students: Towards a Student Housing Strategy for Scotland, page 7.

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In 2020 the combined efforts of organised rent strikes and a student occupation led to the students at the University of Manchester winning a 30% cut to rent.⁶ Similar wins have been seen at Bristol University⁷ and in 2017 at UCL.⁸

We can achieve better student housing rights using these methods.

Motion Believes:

When students take direct action it is often without the full backing of the Students Union. Instead, statements of support from the Students Union would allow the actions to reach more students. It would break the stigma that only radical and politically engaged students can partake in these actions and will make actions more accessible. Support from the Students Union will encourage more students to get involved, ultimately resulting in a higher chance of winning the action taken by students.

Furthermore, universities often respond unfairly to legitimate actions taken by students, the official support of the Students Union can reduce the chances of this happening.

Additionally, support for actions like these will allow the student body, in turn, to better support our sabbatical officers going into negotiations with the university.

Efforts such as the free breakfast scheme, although important and should continue, will not resolve the issue. We should be aiming to resolve the problem itself in order to prevent students from needing support like this in the first place and rent takes up a huge amount of our budgets. It must be addressed.

Housing affects all of us and we should be supported to make a difference.

⁶ Rachel Hall, Manchester University students win 30% rent cut after Covid protests, The Guardian 2020.

⁷ "Bristol, Cut the Rent", Facebook Page.

⁸ Alfie Packham, Students win £1.5m pledge from UCL after five-month rent strike, The Guardian 2017.