

Motion Name: Bristol SU to Lobby an in- house University Guarantor Scheme

Proposer: Lucy Pears

Seconded: Bakhtawar Javed

Background:

1. The following points have inspired the work that the current officers (2024-2025) have been undertaking to try to best serve students in an increasingly difficult rental landscape. We have added some new actions to reflect the current undertakings.
2. Most landlords in the city require a UK Homeowner to guarantee a student's rent for the year.
3. If a student cannot provide this, landlords either request a full year's rent up front, or these students must pay out hundreds of pounds to a private guarantor service, such as Housing Hand.
4. The University has a partnership with Housing Hand, however the costs of using this service is £225. This price is increasing for the next academic year.
5. The Student Living and International Students' Officers this year have been lobbying the University to support setting up an in-house guarantor scheme to prevent students from needing to go via Housing Hand.
6. They have been pushing initially for the University to pilot an in-house guarantor scheme for up to 100 students and, if successful, for this scheme to become a permanent fixture of the University's offer of accommodation support to students and support an open-ended number of students.
7. Other universities such as Edinburgh, Sheffield, UCL, Cardiff and Sussex have such a scheme.
8. The University Accommodation Group voted to endorse this proposal but have not been successful in securing the funding for next year to implement this scheme.
9. We are so close to making this a reality and need future Officer teams to hold the University to account to ensure this scheme becomes a reality.

Purpose:

1. To ensure equity in rental experience for International and Widening Participation students by campaigning for a service to mitigate the impact of the unfair guarantor system in private renting.
2. To prevent private companies from profiting off student need for a home by setting up a replacement in-house guarantor service.
3. To protect the wellbeing of students living in the private rental sector by removing one of the known stresses around private renting.

Actions:

1. Bristol SU Student Living and International Student's Officers to take this project on as a priority next year.
2. Bristol SU Student Living and International Students' Officers to meet with the university stakeholders to discuss implementing a pilot of the in-house guarantor service.
3. Bristol SU Student Living and International Students' Officers to run a focus group next year with International or Widening Participation students to gain an evidence basis for this work and sense-check the current proposal for the scheme.
4. Once a pilot has been secured, Bristol SU Student Living and International Students' Officers to continue to lobby the University to make the in-house guarantor scheme permanent and able to support an open-ended number of students.
5. SU officers should explore other options of providing students with a way to access housing easily and affordably. They should engage with the student community and the wider renting scene.
6. SU officers should look at alternative services to Housing Hand and push for the renter's rights bill to reflect the struggles that students face by engaging with local charities and politicians.