



**Student Experience Zone
Tuesday 9th November 2021, 5pm
HG/147**

Members in attendance:

4 individuals were in attendance

Chair:

Chris Smith, President of Wellbeing and Diversity (PWD)

YSJSU Officers/Staff:

Jamie Andrews, President of the Students' Union (PSU)

Aimee Yeoman, President of Education (PE)

Paul Murtough – Student Opportunities Manager (PM)

Zaki Kaf Al-Ghazal – Voice and Insight Coordinator (ZK)

Christopher Prior – Advice Coordinator (CP)

Grace Pheasey – Governance and Democracy Assistant

Apologies:

None recorded.

1. Welcome and Introductions:

PWD convened the meeting and welcomed the attendees to the first Student Experience Zone for the 21/22 Academic Year. There were **4 attendees**. Questions were posed by PWD using Mentimeter with regards to private housing in preparation of students looking for housing post-halls. This zone was held to understand the student perspective on landlords, tenancy agreements and the experiences they wish to share.

Section A: Items for Discussion

A Mentimeter Survey was designed by PWD to ask a set of questions to the attendees. The questions and answers are as follows:

1. To what extent do you agree with this statement: I am well prepared to start looking for a house for next year?

Majority of attendees reported that they took the initiative and looked for housing themselves. Most attendees acknowledging that there was not much support or assistance.

“did not feel prepared in first year, was lucky to have a housemate who used to be an agent so knew what she was doing”

“I think I can find easily”

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ZONE

| MINUTES



"I really struggled and didn't feel well prepared, I just Googled things like 'student houses York'"

"Started looking in January last year for 3 of us and found Adam Bennett after searching up online housing in York".

2. Is anyone looking to remain in University accommodation after first-year?

All attendees said no. The attendees present were either in their second or final year of study.

3. Has anyone researched into a tenancy agreement right and your rights as a tenant?

Mixed responses amongst attendees, most attendees had read their tenancy agreement, but few knew of their rights as a tenant.

"I didn't but I wish I had"

"Remember reading my tenancy agreement but don't know my rights"

"Yeah, we've got our tenancy agreement in the kitchen"

There was a brief discussion about HMO housing, house deposits, hidden costs and knowing the expectations of both students and tenants.

4. When are people going to start looking for houses?

Mixed response from attendees, varying from November through to January. One attendee looked for housing in March.

"We started looking in December"

"Looked late January after having to change from four people to three"

"October/November in first year but it fell through and ended up going for one in January".

"Maybe from March onwards"

5. How is everyone feeling about the prospect of your future housemates or finding them?

"Quiet girls but everyone keeps up to cleaning house"



“Felt quite risky deciding to live with people I’d know for a few weeks, fortunately gamble paid off, but did feel like a gamble”

“Thinking to move alone!!”

“It’s scary having to find people to live with. And it’s hard to say no when you don’t want to live with someone”

6. **Have you heard of any positive stories, or horror stories regarding landlords and letting agencies?**

Majority of attendees pointed to positive stories of maintenance upkeep to properties, with landlords providing new appliances in a timely manner. There was some discussion about untidy housemates.

7. **Does everyone know how to apply for Council Tax exemption (and how to deal with the Council should matters arise?)**

One attendee reported they have applied for Council Tax and was issued a bill of £1,000. This was then resolved after the University provided confirmation to landlords of student. Some of the attendees acknowledged this can be a daunting process for students.

“I don’t know, I think my housemate sorted it out for me”

This led to an extended discussion about students having a TV License, all attendees present did not have a TV license.

8) **What could YSJ/YSJSU do to prepare you all for private housing and life after First-year?**

“Mixers for finding housemates?”

“Promote good landlords, condemn bad landlords?”

“More support from the Uni if you find yourself in a dodgy position with your housemates”

“Let us know about good ways to find houses, give us some do’s and don’t’s. Maybe set up a system for students looking for other people to live with”

PWD informed attendees that the Students’ Union will be hosting a **Private Housing Fair on 26th November** where letting agents and landlords will be present. There will also be a **Private Housing Booklet** that will be made available for students. Blue Door Properties were also promoted through it’s partnership with the University.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ZONE

| MINUTES



Discussions were raised on a feedback service, like virtual communities such as Facebook group chats where York St John students can share their experiences with York landlords.

The contact details for the University's Wellbeing serviced were also raised. This inspired a conversation about University services such as the Legal Advice Clinic, that offers free legal advice to students which could be of use regarding tenancy agreements.

PWD enquired whether the attendees go home during summer, one student noted they stayed in York over this period but would move back home if there was a gap in the tenancy.

Section B: Other Items for Discussion

None.

Section C: Any Other Business

None.