

'Obnoxious' landlords cash in on deposits

A survey of York students suggests landlords and letting agencies are unjustifiably cashing in on deposits

By [Neil Johnston](#), News Editor (2012/13)
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Landlords and letting agencies are unjustifiably cashing in on deposits, according to a *Nouse* poll of York students.

Despite nearly a quarter of students reporting vermin or infestation, and a third stating their house had excessive mould, 44 per cent of students in privately-let houses lost their deposit.

Forty per cent of these student had to fork out more than £200 each, meaning in some houses landlords are making thousands of pounds from deposits.

An overwhelming majority, 88 per cent, believed this was partly unjustified, while 44 per cent think losing their deposit was unjustified altogether.

On top of the money earned through deposits 15 per cent of those surveyed have been fined already this year. This is despite significant concerns over the poor quality of housing with 34 per cent of houses having excessive mould and 68 per cent having some level of mould.

A third of respondents stated that letting agencies and landlords were not helpful in dealing with issues, with nine per cent saying their problems were never sorted out.

Thirty-six per cent believed they were not getting value for money with their house or flat, while one in five did not receive everything that was advertised or on the contract. This includes a failure to provide services such as gardeners and cleaners while dishwashers, kettles, microwaves or correct keys are also on the list of promised items which have not been provided.

It is also alleged that more serious breaches of agreements have taken place including failure to repair holes in ceilings and broken fences, general maintenance, and the removal of mould. One respondent reported being left without a working toilet for weeks, and another without a shower for months, while revamped bathrooms have been promised but not delivered. Another reported that their landlord began ripping out carpets, while they were still in the house, banned them from the kitchen and bathroom for 48 hours, and then charged them for the carpets which were "no worse than when [they] moved in."

In the survey by *Nouse* of over 200 privately let households, many were angry over issues such as being ignored for months over "persistent" problems, being "spoken to like dirt" and facing unexplained charges. Respondents repeatedly described their landlords' and letting agencies' attitudes as "rude", "ignorant", "obnoxious", and "dismissive".

Many spoke of what they feel is an "inadequate" and "laid back" attitude of landlords and letting agencies, with some claiming that they feel ripped off or even endangered.

One household felt they were put at risk after being told by their landlord not to worry about their carbon monoxide detector going off.

They were told that they would have to pay for the call-out if nothing was wrong, which constitutes a

breach of contract, but called an engineer anyway. It was then found that there was a carbon monoxide leak. Their landlord then allegedly went into a "a panic" and told them not to call gas services.

Jamie Chatfield, a Sociology student, said they were forced into signing a new contract early by his letting agency: "We were churned. We felt like we didn't have a choice to do anything but sign a new contract, regardless of the fee involved, in order to secure an enjoyable final year at uni in a house we love."

Another student who responded to the Nouse survey said: "We were left without heating for two weeks due to the completely incompetent maintenance manager who ignored our calls and emails. When we finally went into the office to speak to them we were spoken to like dirt. We're appalled by the landlord and their extreme lack of customer service."

Tom Morgan, a third year Politics student, complained that he was 'lied' to by his letting agency for over six months who claimed that there was no way to get his bike out of the shed and was ignored when asking about an extractor fan.

Another student told Nouse that their house was not informed of an extension that was going to be built: "My housemate lost all natural light which used to go into her room. A different set of builders seemed to turn up at the house every week, playing loud music alongside the building which would sometimes begin at 8am on a Saturday morning."

Twenty-three per cent of respondents had experienced vermin in their house, including rats, woodlice, ants, mice, and fly infestations. One household with bedbugs told their landlady who "refused to call pest control and instead bought the chemicals herself and of course used them wrongly - which meant [their] friend was then ill from the chemicals and still had bedbugs!"

George Offer, YUSU Welfare Officer, commented on the findings: "These sorts of questions about value, about quality and about helpfulness of agents are the reason I've pursued the quality of off-campus accommodation really hard this year, pushing for firm commitments to improvement and working on a number of important projects. We're now in a place where the Council is running a good accreditation service we know we can trust, with high standards and reliable quality assurance.

"I want to remind all students that if you've signed an AST your deposit must be protected, as a requirement of the Housing Act, by a deposit protection service offering a dispute resolution service.

"If you disagree with your landlord on the amount of deposit to be returned, you can use this service free of charge. If you need any advice or information about housing agreements, the University's welfare advisers will be really happy to help."



6 comments

Ian Thorpe (I think)

6 May '14 at 11:33 am

Whistles of York are awful

[Report](#)

Charles

6 May '14 at 11:43 am

Any landlord who tells their tenants not to worry about a carbon monoxide alarm is moronic. Is he trying to get people killed? I would rather pay for an engineer to come out and find nothing wrong than have 4 or 5 people succumb to carbon monoxide poisoning. The alarm's there for a reason!

[Report](#)

Mr Tang Hall

6 May '14 at 10:34 pm

AP York are a fucking disgrace.

[▲ Report](#)

awful experience

8 May '14 at 1:41 am

Sinclair, while enjoying a better reputation amongst most students, have been terrible with regards to our house and handling complaints

[▲ Report](#)

Henry George

11 May '14 at 8:42 pm

Adam Bennett is criminal (literally).

[▲ Report](#)

Pedant

14 May '14 at 12:26 am

Usual quality analysis from Nouse? I sent out a survey about the NHS to 100 students. Of the ten that replied, four believed that there should be local provision of services and that the NHS should have access to the latest technology. From this I conclude that 40% of students believe there should be a doctors' surgery of each street corner with all the latest equipment.

[▲ Report](#)

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