

## Housing Survey Analysis

For this year's Housing Survey, which was open between 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and 6<sup>th</sup> June, there were 677 respondents. Of these 635 were Home students, 10 were European and 26 were International. This number of respondents doesn't show a full representation because it's not a significant sample size, and this is a factor to be aware of when looking at the results. For this reason, for some of the questions, we'll also be using the results to consider the Lincoln response to the findings of NUS research on "Homes fit for study".

The questions range from asking when the students first begin to look for their accommodation for the next year, to whether they're satisfied with their current landlord and their current accommodation. Basic questions such as what type of accommodation do you live in and who do you rent through, have been asked in order to gain an understanding of whether it's particular providers that students have issues with or if it's the same issues that are being outlined by students.

As mentioned NUS have conducted research on a national basis, about accommodation for students in higher education and whether there are any trends with regard to the standard of living or accommodation that they are being provided with. "Homes fit for study" is a report which focuses on the experiences of these students as well as their housing choices and particularly looks at the experiences of students within the private rented sector. There was a sample size of 6696 respondents nationally and just over 40% of the respondents were from the private rented sector.

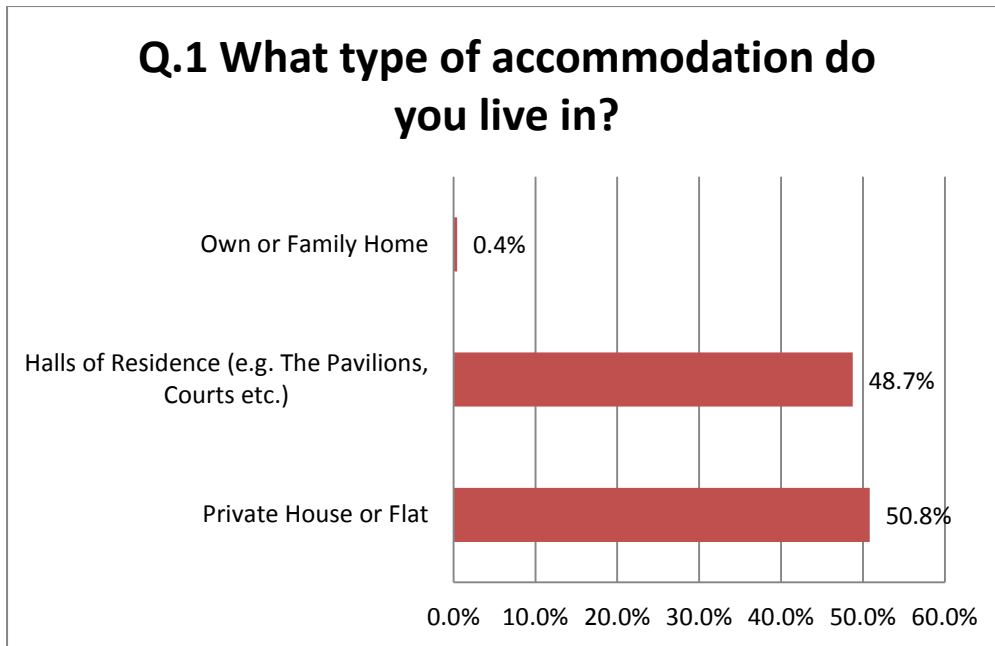
There are some interesting points to be taken from this piece of research that may have relevance to Lincoln. The key choices when looking for accommodation were; cost of rent, the location and convenience for place of study, and property condition. An additional point to note is that nationally only 10% used a housing list to find their accommodation, but just under 60% of students used an online property search portal or a similar website to find their student accommodation. It was also interesting to read that the pressure students face to sign for a house is also an issue elsewhere, shown by the fact that a fifth of respondents signed seven or more months in advance to avoid the risk of low availability of housing.

The majority of respondents had faced issues with damp, condensation or mould compared to any other maintenance issue, and up to 53% of respondents had experienced delays with maintenance repair as well as difficulties contacting the landlord to communicate issues. A final point to note were the majority responses to the question of ways to improve the sector with regards to housing. There were different options but the most selected three were to create a minimum condition standard (66%), a ban on letting agent fees (52%) and more services to ensure landlord and agents fulfil their responsibilities (51%).

What this final point is stating, is the link to students finances to their home as well as their wish to really have possible landlords and letting agents approved before they're allowed to let, but also for these to be monitored by someone in order to make sure that students

won't be affected in a negative way. These final percentages are what has led NUS to make national recommendations such as, "Universities should work with partners to create robust and well-trusted accreditation schemes" and "Letting and managing agents should be properly regulated or licensed to ensure that students and other tenants are afforded protection from poor practice."

Q.1 What type of accommodation do you live in?



The first question on the Housing Survey was simply what kind of accommodation do you live in. It's important to find out where the students are living, in order to realise where issues may be lying or whether there are similar issues in all types of student accommodation. The chart above shows that there is an almost even split between living in Halls of Residence and living in a Private House or Flat, with only 3 out of 677 applicants answering that they lived in own or family home.

Fig.A.1

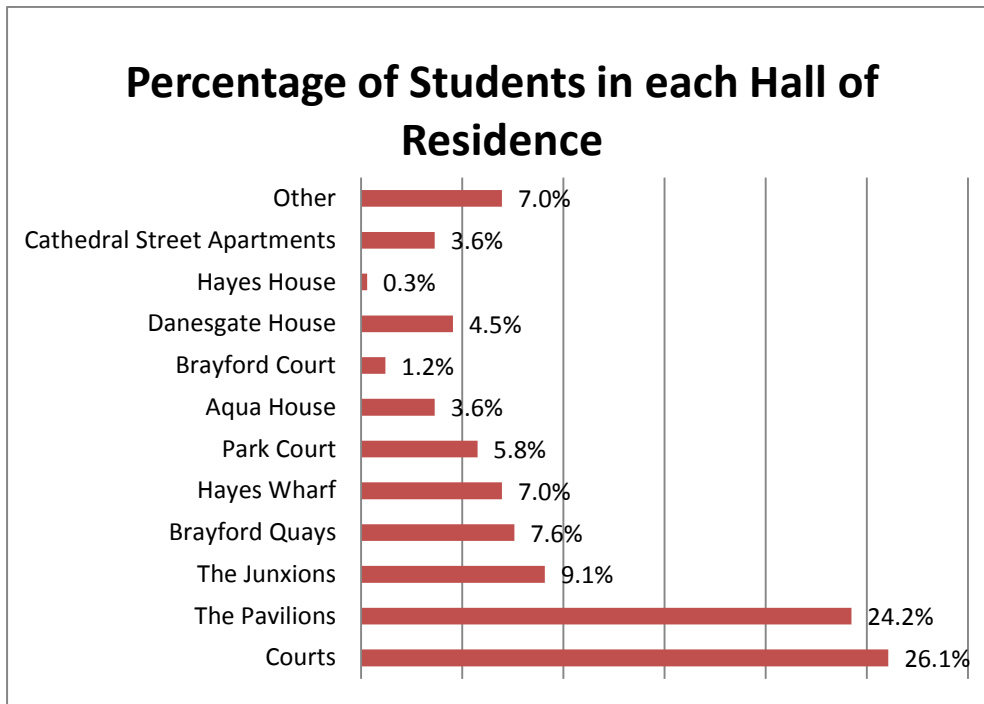
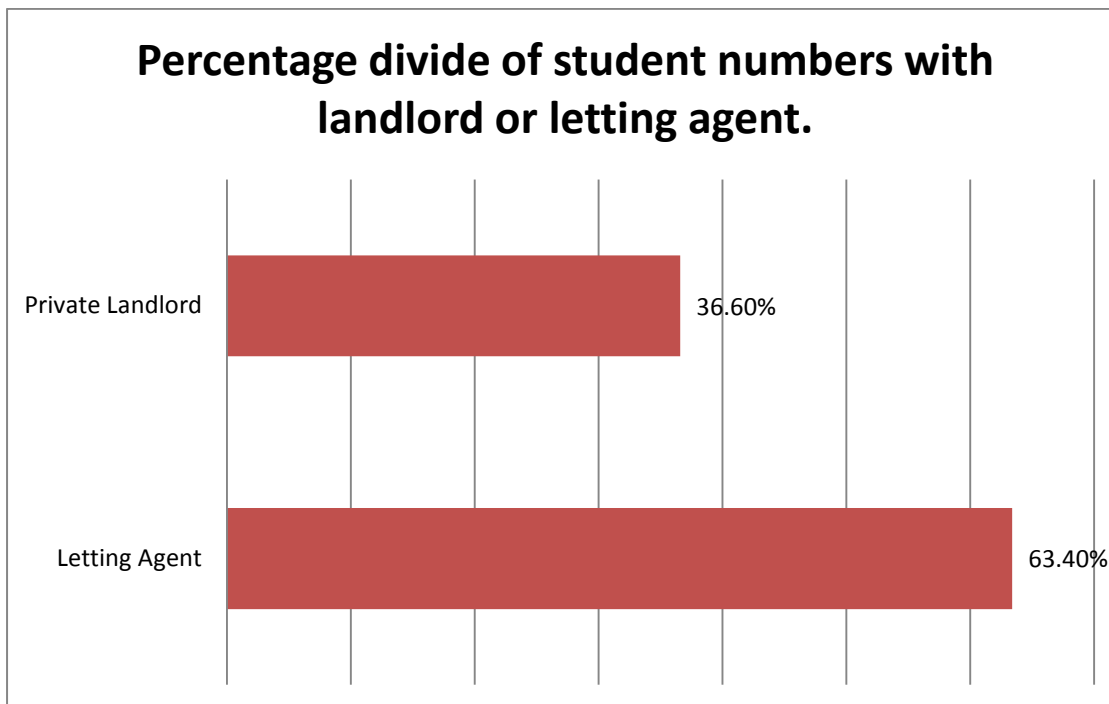


Figure A.1. shows the 48.7% of students who live in Halls of Residence split to show the percentage of University of Lincoln students within which Halls. The majority of students surveyed lived in either Courts or The Pavilions.

Q2. Who did you rent through?



This question further looks into the 50.8% students who responded to question one with the answer, "Private House or Flat". This question shows us a predictable result that most students who are in a private house or flat rent through a letting agent as opposed to a private landlord. These students can experience different things such as a disparity in contact with the landlord as well as repairs or general maintenance in the house. We can also consider the fact that most people who are with letting agents may be with them due to hearing about them from other students, e.g. many people know who Clubeasy or Lighthouse are mainly because of how many other students use these agents.

Fig. A. 2

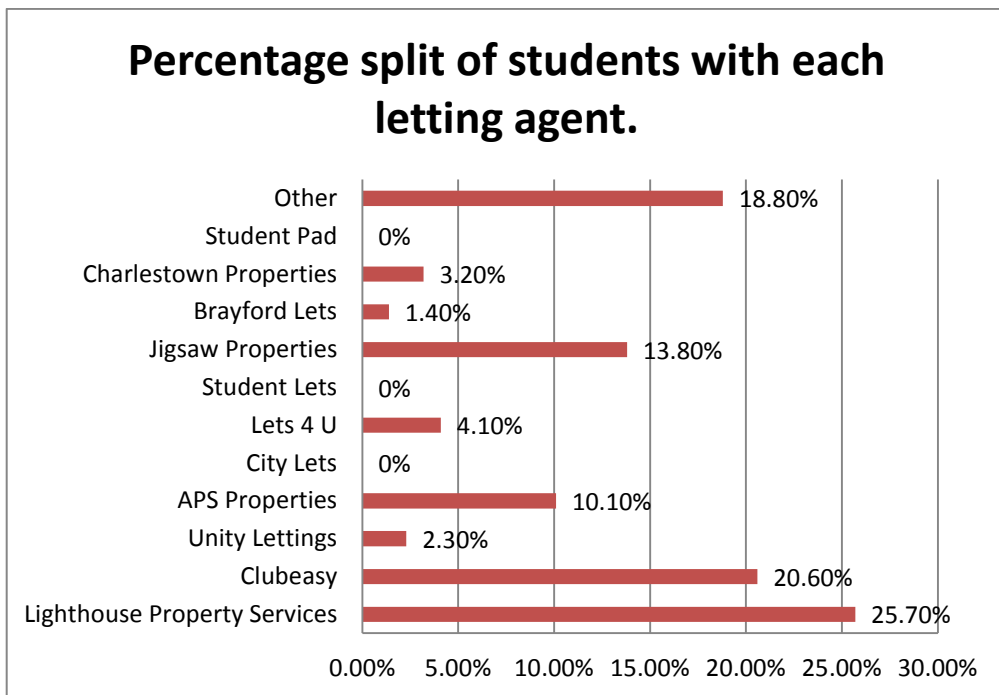
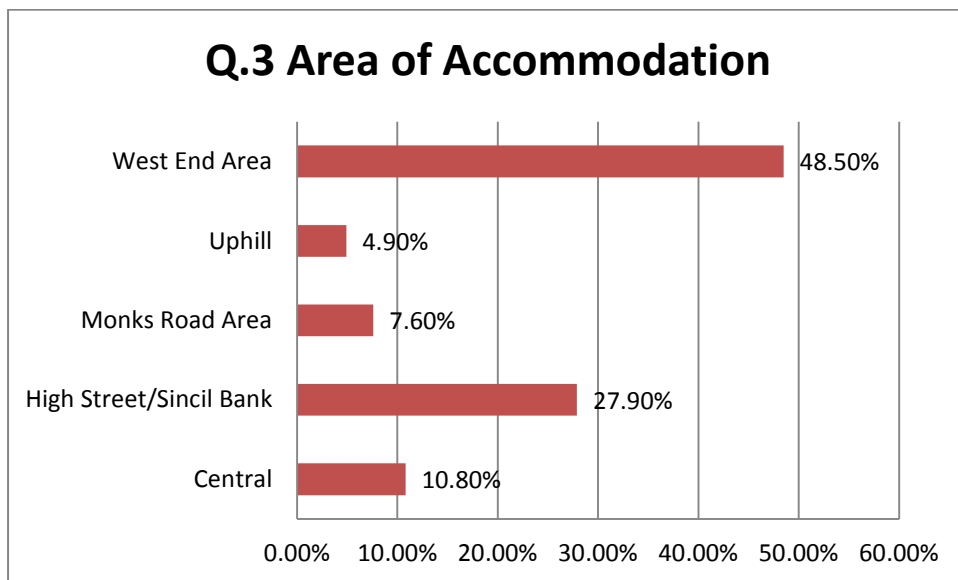


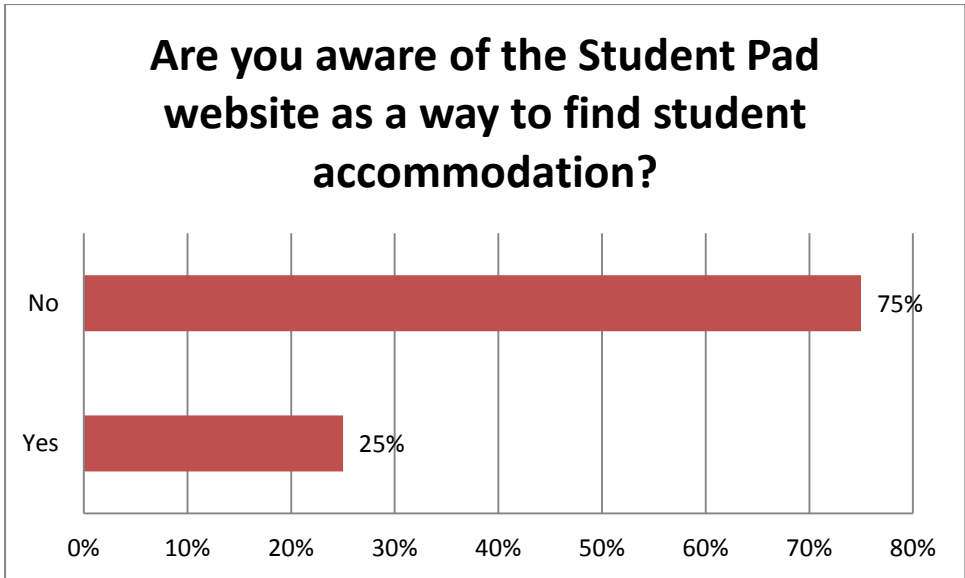
Fig A.2 shows how the 63.40% of respondents to Question 2 with "letting agents" can be broken down into different agents. The most used letting agent by the respondents of our survey were Lighthouse Property Services. This information in itself shows the reach of the motion that VP Welfare and Community Officer Brian Alcorn, made at Student Council in March 2014 which specifically boycotted Lighthouse Property Services and ensuring that they begin working to raise the standards of their accommodation.

Q.3: Please tick next to the area your accommodation is in?



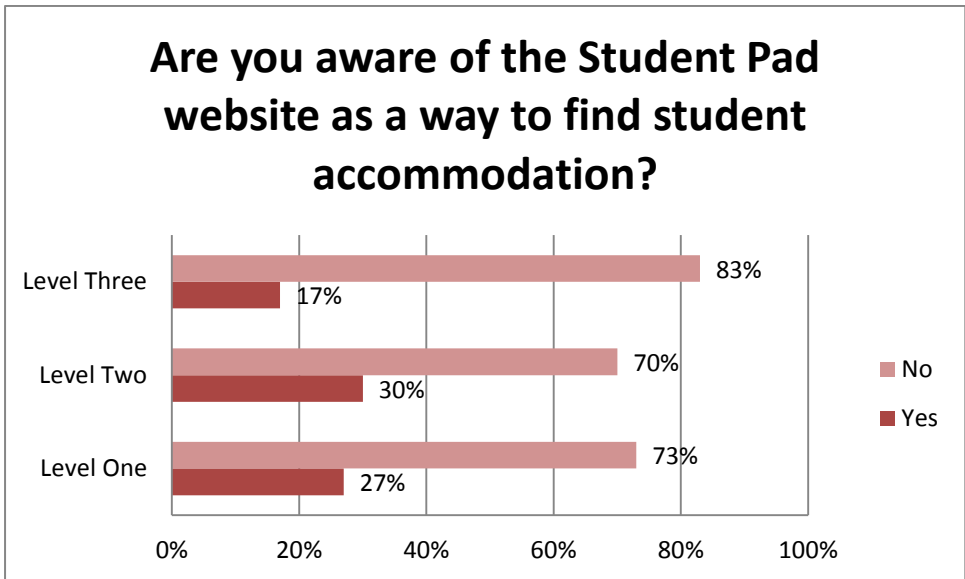
This question was only available to those who were participants in question two, i.e. those who are renting off a letting agent or private landlord. The knowledge of the area of accommodation is important to know for when work in the community is in its planning stages. We can clearly see that it the majority of these students are within the West End Area, closely followed by the High Street. These areas should be a focus with community events to avoid tension between the local residents and the student – possibly with creation of a community gala in the high street area like within the Carholme Community Gala. However, the other areas shouldn't be forgotten just because of the lower percentage, and possibly small scale events should happen here such as the Community Meet and Greets.

Q4.Are you aware of the Student Pad website as a way to find student accommodation?



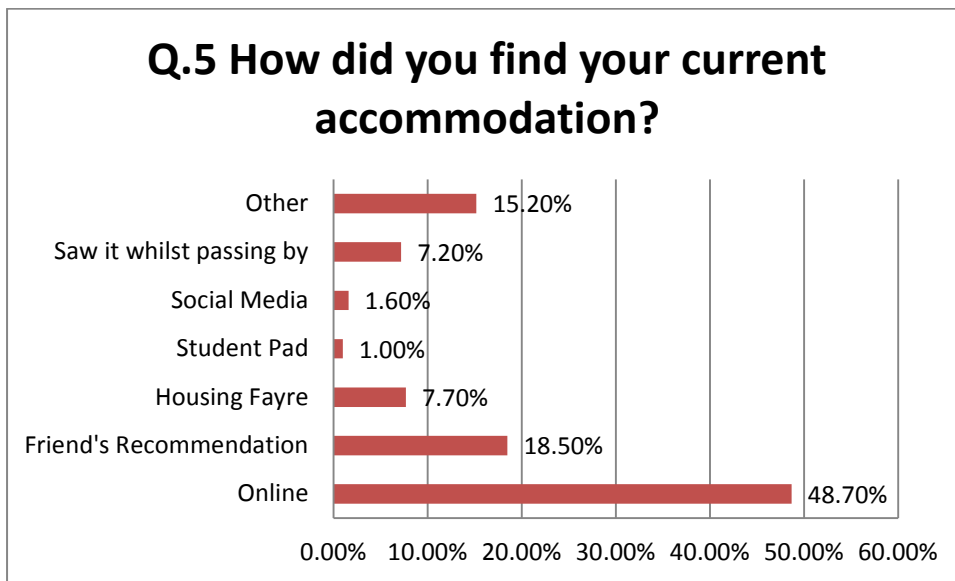
Student Pad is a national website designed to help students find a room in a variety of accommodation types. We can clearly see that 75% of students surveyed did not know about this website.

Fig.A.3



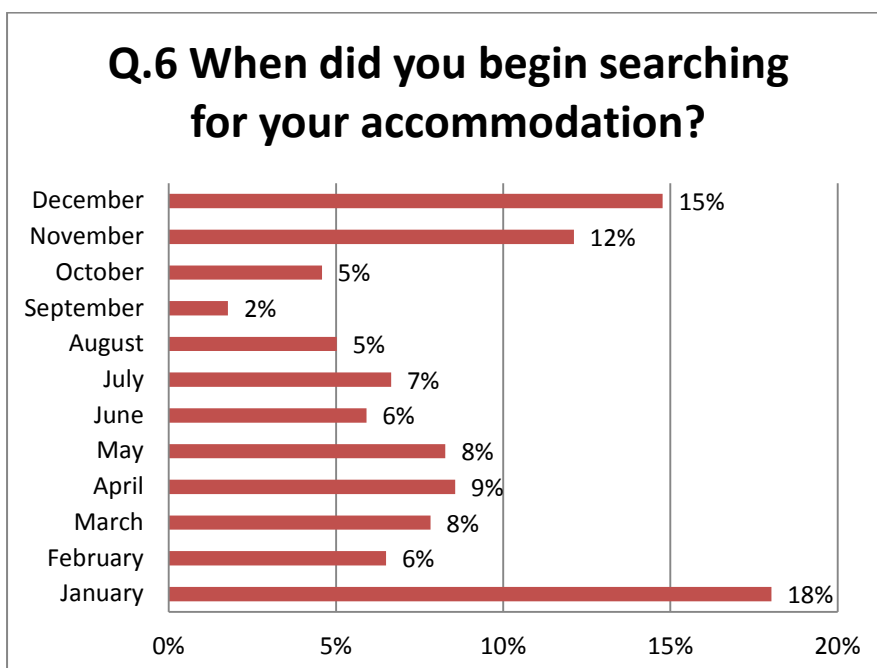
We further broke down these numbers into levels of study to see whether there was a particular level to target for promotional ideas and marketing. The non-awareness issue was worst with the current level three students, over 80% of which said that they didn't know of the website. This may be down to the fact that the majority of this group of students will not be looking for student accommodation here in Lincoln for the next academic year.

Q5. How did you find your current accommodation

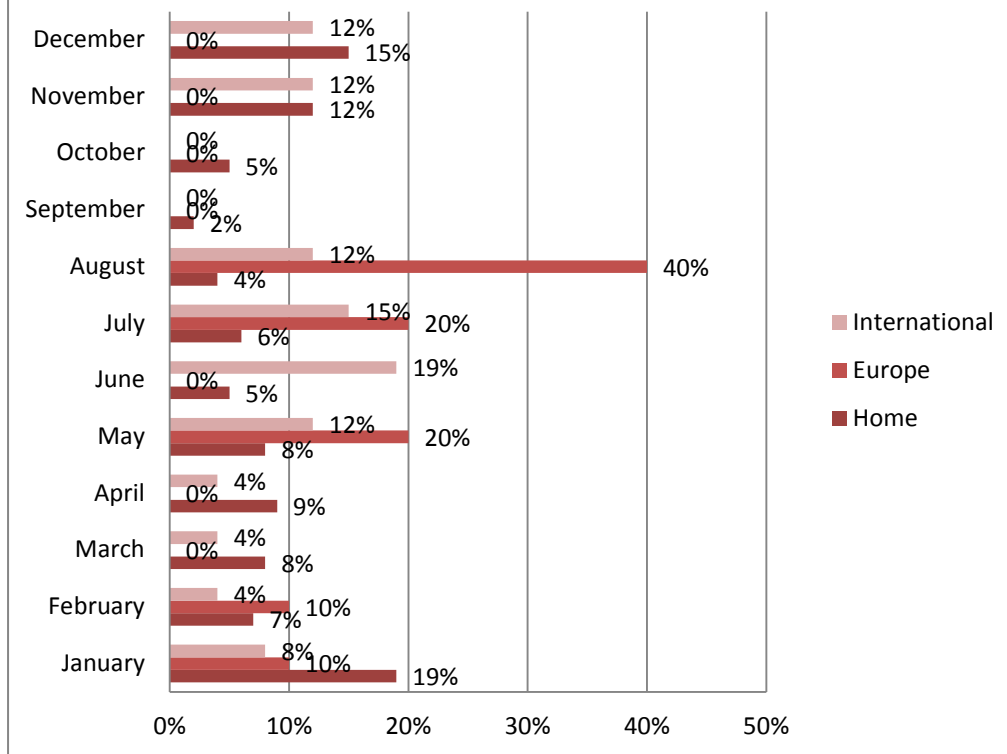


Question five was simply, how did the respondents find their current accommodation? Nearly 50% of students look for accommodation online, as opposed to attending the annual Housing Fayre or by sight of the property. This could be an argument that students are using different mechanisms to find their properties and that there is a need to switch or balance where we provide information or marketing with students. It could however, also mean that students in Lincoln know which letting agency websites to look at, and that Student Pad is not necessarily the right solution for accommodation here, at Lincoln.

Q6. When did you begin searching for your accommodation (approximate month)?



## Q.6 When did you begin searching for your accommodation?

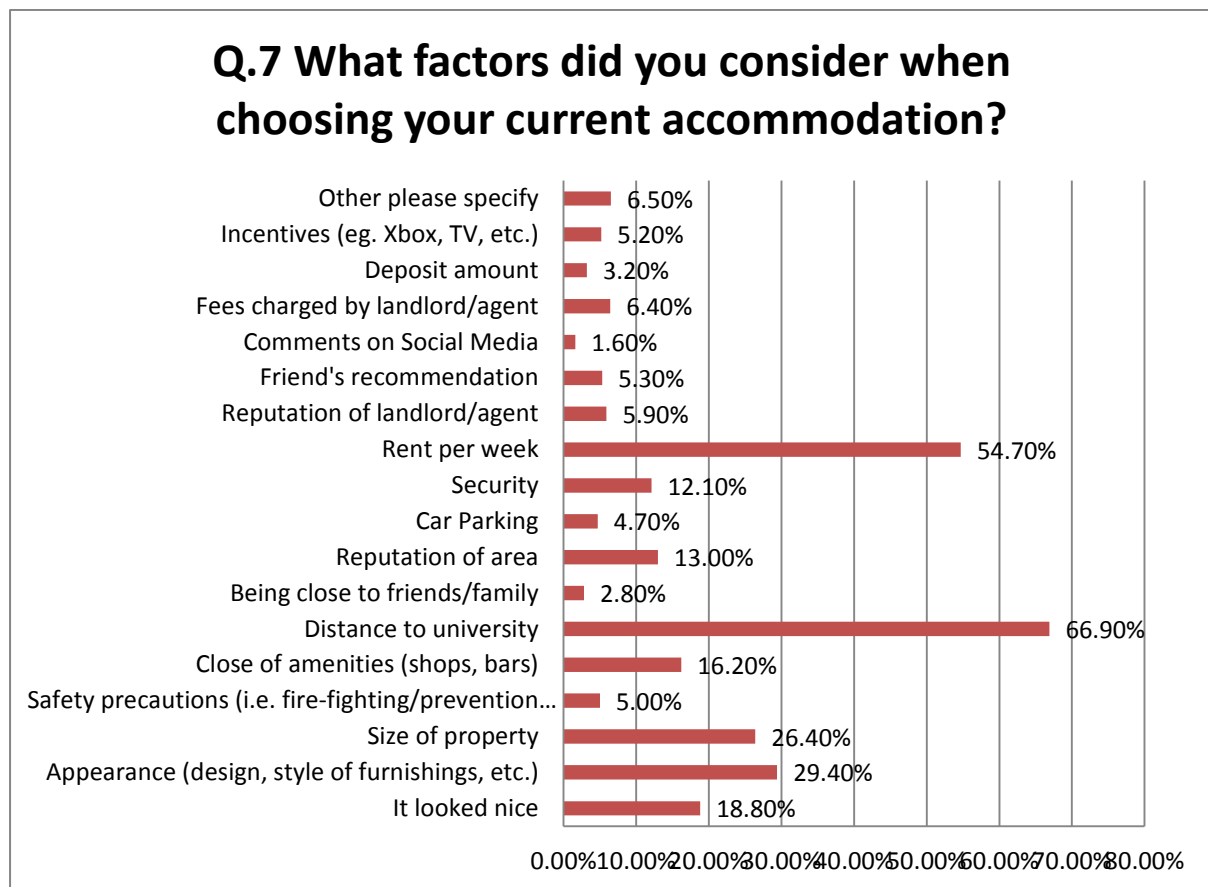


The first of the two graphs on the previous page show the overall view of when students begin searching for their accommodation. We can see that the majority of students look for it in November, December or January, showing the need for visible support at this time frame. We should shape the SU Housing Campaign around this time frame.

For this question, we also wanted to dig deeper and see if the responses from International students were significantly different. The second graph on the previous page shows the results as a breakdown of Home, European and International students and when they choose search for accommodation. These results showed that in comparison to Home students, International students all look for accommodation at different points of the year, for example International students were highest at May, June, July and August, with a slight peak in December, January. This is likely to be linked to the fact that most of these students arrive at these points in time to enrol. It shows us that there needs to be a mechanism in place to support all students all year round with accommodation issues, possibly as a partnership between the University and the Union, in order to that these students are making well-informed decisions but that they are comfortable with the accommodation they take up and the decisions they make.



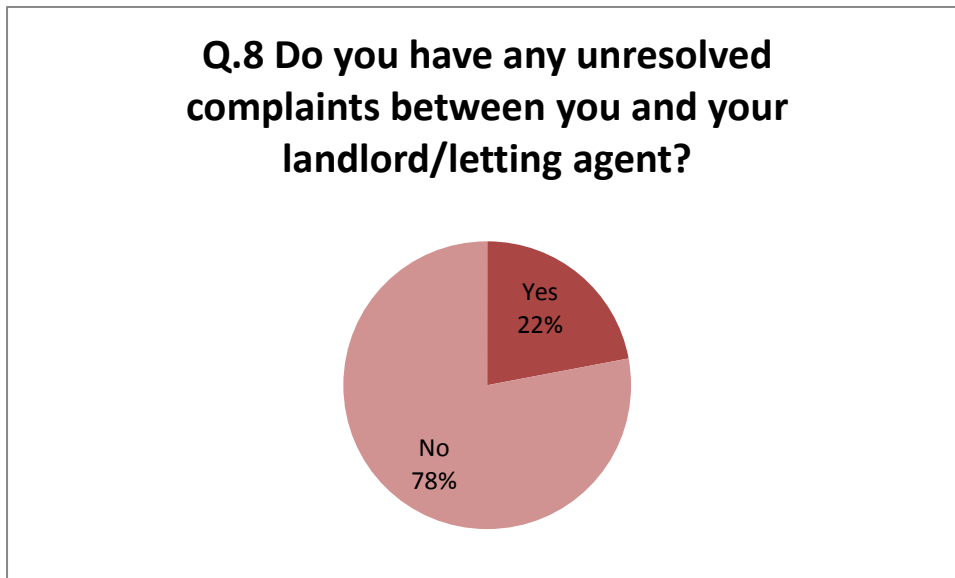
### Q.7 What factors did you consider when choosing your current accommodation?



Question seven is the start of a small selection of questions designed to understand why a student is in the accommodation that they are in. This question is what factors were considered when moving into the current accommodation. Out of 18 options, students were asked to provide the three most important factors to them. However, we are aware that during the GOATING of this survey, paper copies weren't filled in correctly with regards to this question and so the results are to just be used as guidance.

The chart shows that the three most popular factors respondents considered were; Distance to university at 67%, Rent per week at 55% and Appearance of the property at 29%.

Q.8 Do you have any unresolved complaints between you and your landlord/letting agent?



Question eight is to provide an insight into whether there are ongoing issues at the point of year when the survey took place. The results show that 1 in 5 students have an unresolved complaint with their landlord or letting agent. Part B of the question, “If answered with yes, how long has the issues(s) been going on for?” gave us some qualitative data as to what the issues were as well as how long the issues have been going on for, a timeframe which ranges between 1 week to three years. Some of these issues have been serious - such as mould, doors not locking, mushrooms growing within houses - and could lead to illnesses within the student body. One student stated that “I am deeply dissatisfied with the amount of rent I have to pay for such a poor quality room, which after a long time has affected my health, with a chest infection which has lasted for month.” Within the NUS Fit for Study report on the results from their national housing survey there were some similar findings linked to the types of issues that students face. Nationally, according to NUS, the main issue that students have which doesn’t get resolved in their accommodation, is condensation – over 50% of respondents to their survey either currently or in previous accommodation had been affected by condensation. The second biggest issue was Damp and mould with over 40% of students stating that they’d had this within their current or past accommodation whilst studying.

One of the points that concerned us as a Union within the results of our housing survey here at Lincoln was the number of students who had said they’d had slugs or mice in their accommodation with no resolution to this issue. This was also mentioned within the NUS report, that nearly 25% of their student respondents had faced slugs, mice or other infestations whilst living in their current accommodation, with a further 20% stating that they’d faced this issue in previous accommodation. There was also a national pattern in that students who rented with an agent and used them as a contact were more likely to have experienced any problems with the condition of their home whilst at University, compared to those whose property was managed by their landlord.

In Lincoln, this pattern can also be seen as 79% of the students who answered yes to Question 8 rented through a letting agent compared to a 21% who rented directly with the landlord.

This variance between issues shows the need to look into the standards of service that is being given to students from landlords and letting agents.

Fig.A.3

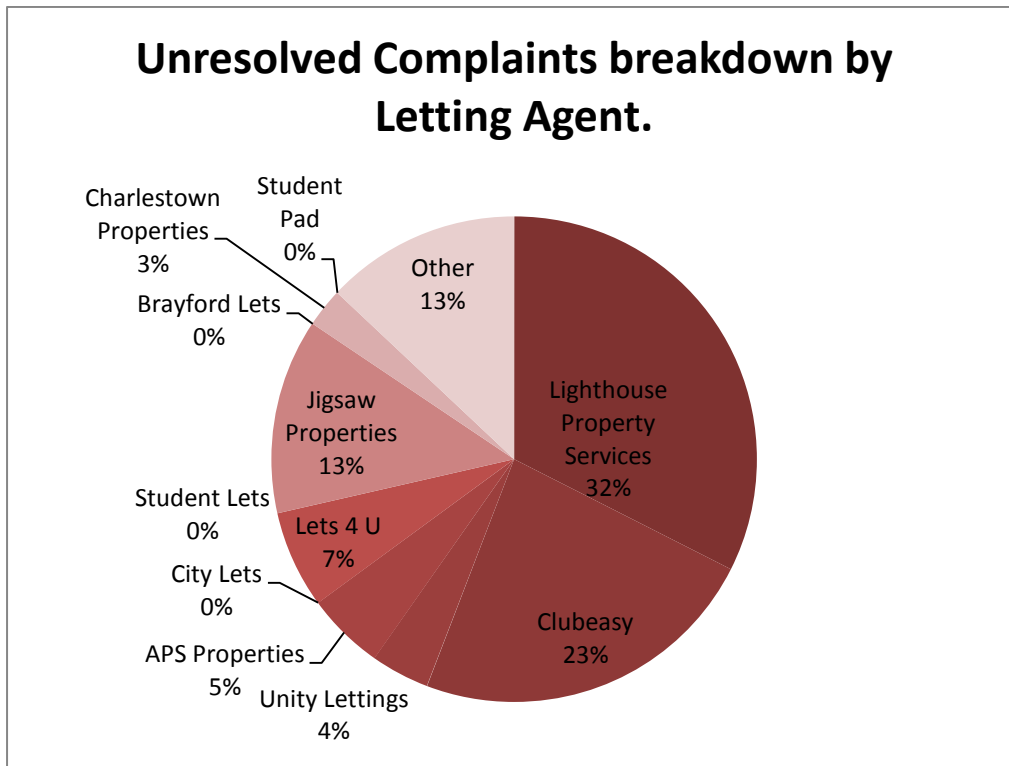
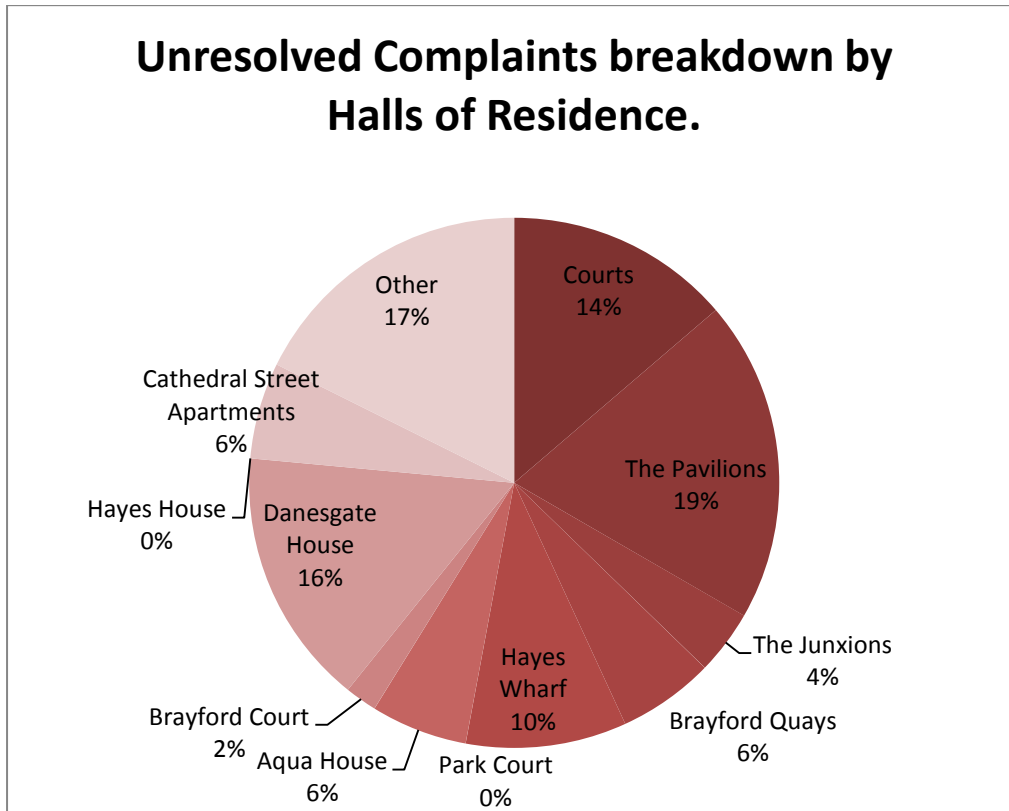


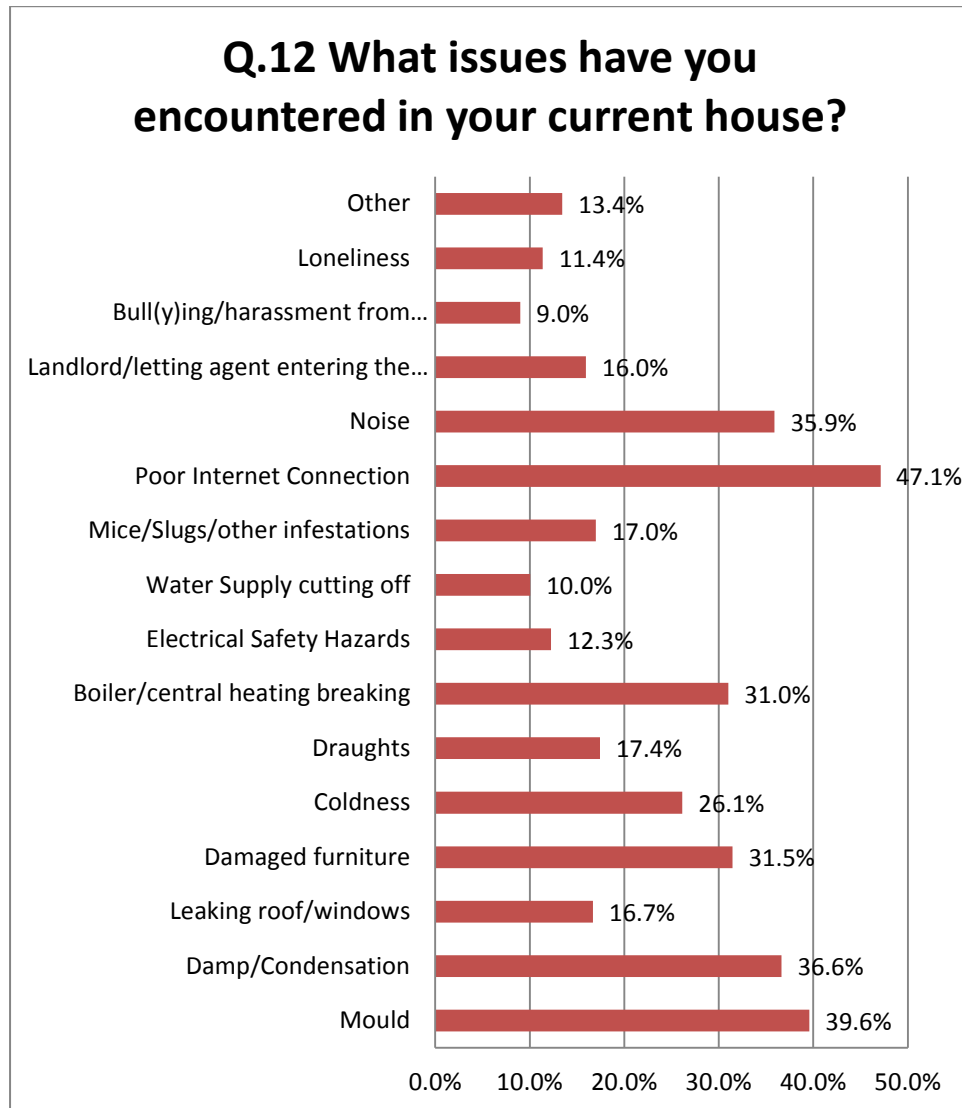
Fig. A.4



We can further look into this by breaking the results down again, and we can see that within letting agent, most unresolved complaints are with Lighthouse. In Halls of Residence, most unresolved

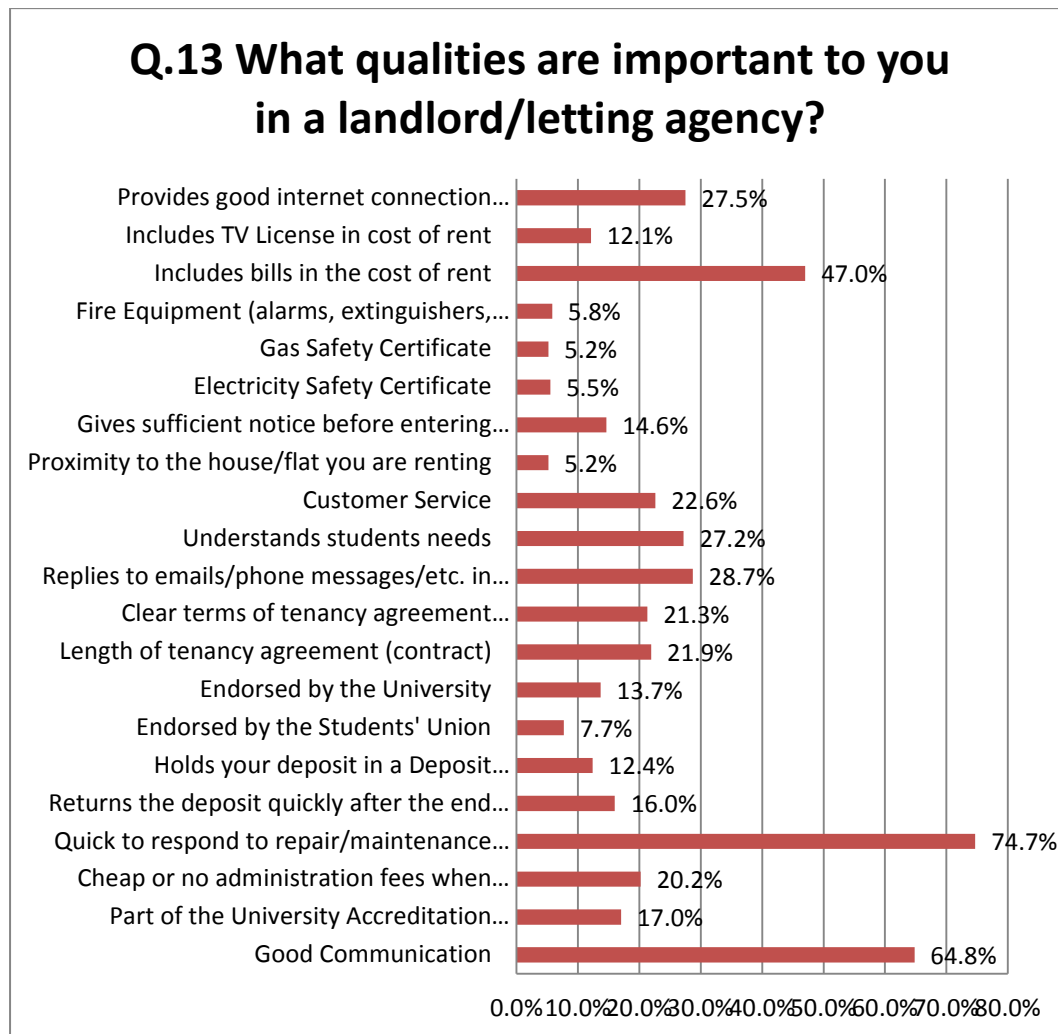
complaints are with The Pavilions. With these the question is whether the current support mechanisms are working or whether there is a need for more support as well as a discussion as to what this further support may look like.

Q.12 What issues have you encountered in your current house?



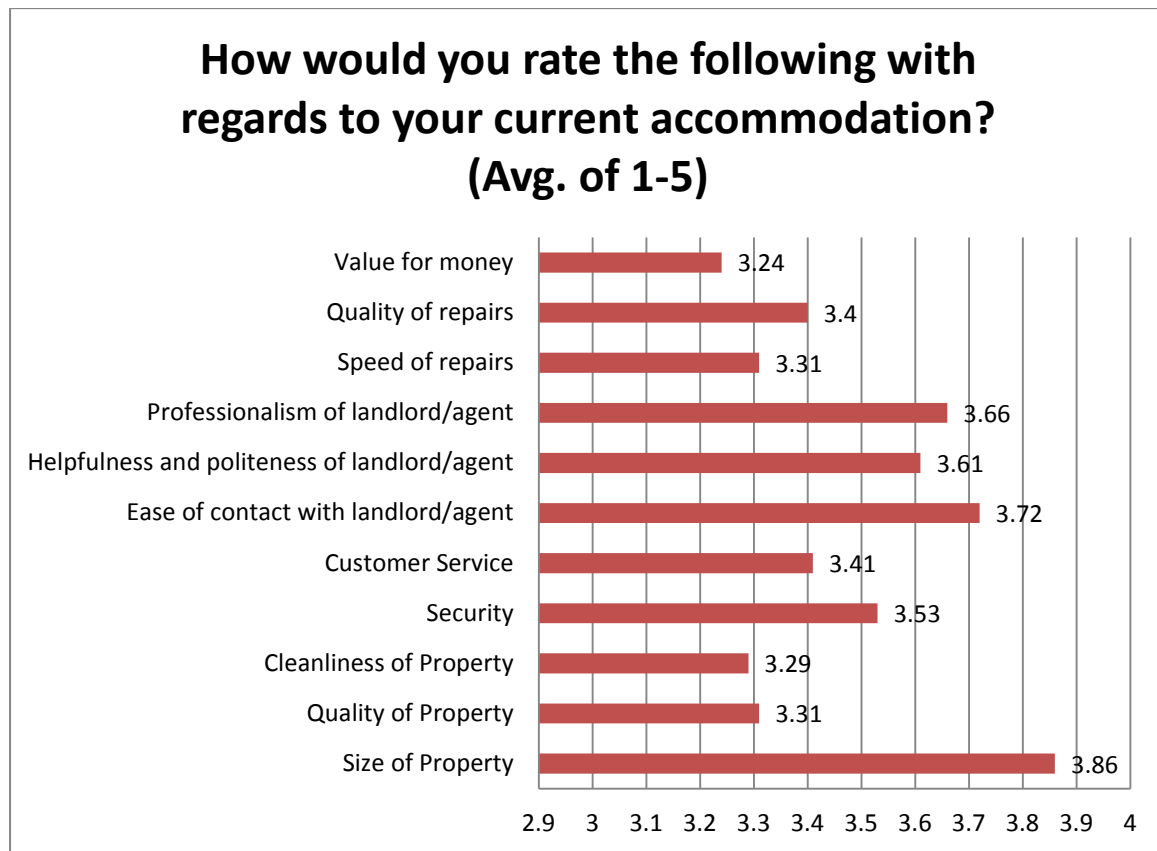
Question twelve outlines what the majority of issues are that students face within their accommodation. The top four are; poor internet connection (47%), Mould (40%), Damp/Condensation (37%) and Noise (36%). Additionally 20% of respondents had faced bullying or loneliness whilst in their current accommodation, linking to the current strategy. Three of the five mentioned issue areas are ones that impact on students' welfare, whether that is their mental or physical health. Again these current issues come back to the oversight of the standards of property and service that these letting agents and landlords are presenting to students. They also support the argument of Vice president Welfare and Community that the current accommodation accreditation needs amending to better reflect non statutory considerations which it currently does not.

Q.13 What qualities are important to you in a landlord/letting agency? (Please choose the five most important factors to you)



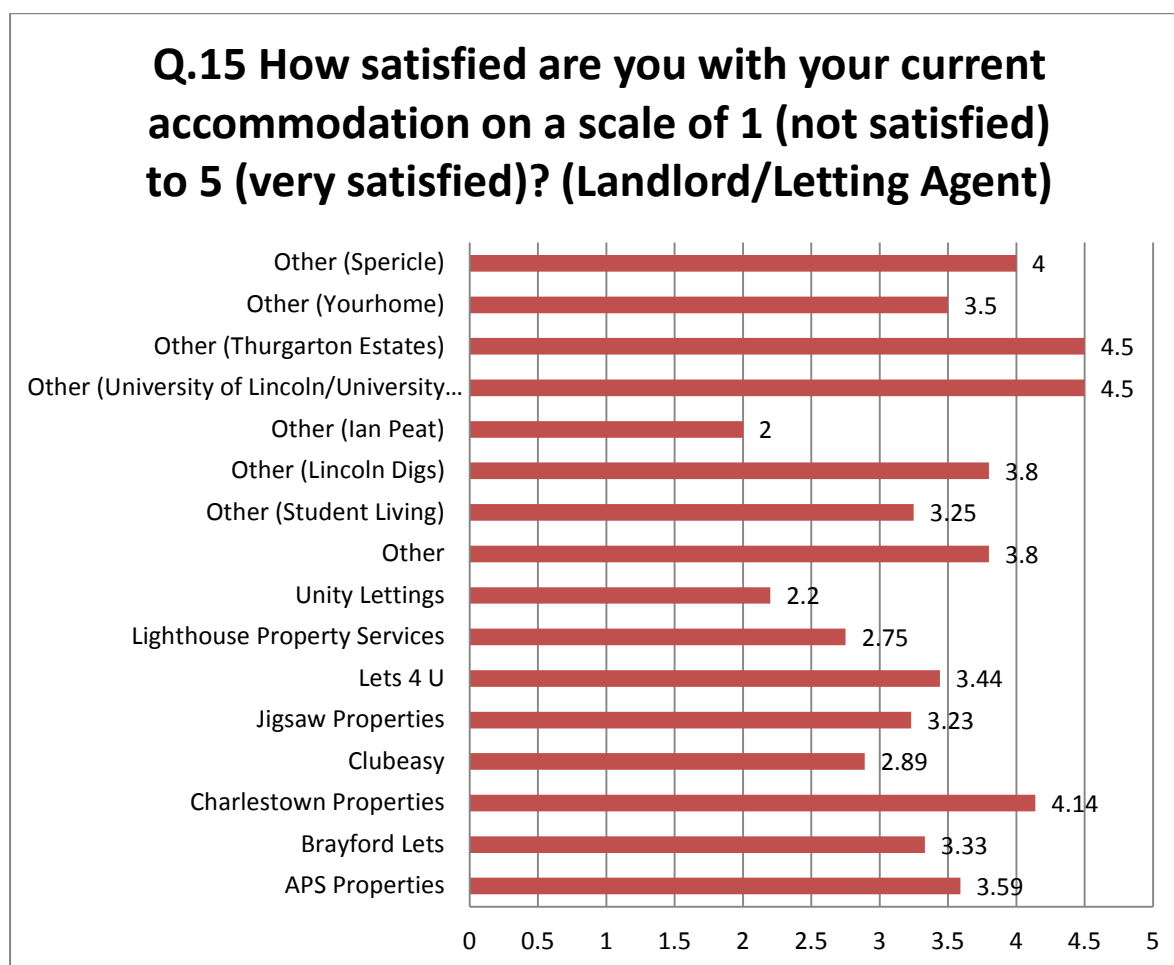
Question thirteen is another example of a question used to understand our local students more in order to cater to their needs. The results show that the three qualities that are important to the majority of respondents in a landlord/letting agency are; Quick to respond to repair/maintenance requests with 75%, Good communication with 65%, Includes bills in the cost of rent with 47%. It's interesting to note that the options; "endorsed by the University" (14%), "Endorsed by the Students' Union" (8%) and "Part of the University Accreditation Scheme" (17%) did not have a significant number of selection by the respondents. This question could be used to help landlords with perceived poor performance to make the fastest improvement by focusing on the qualities that scored the highest.

Q.14 On a scale from 1(poor) to 5(excellent) how would you rate the following with regards to your current accommodation?



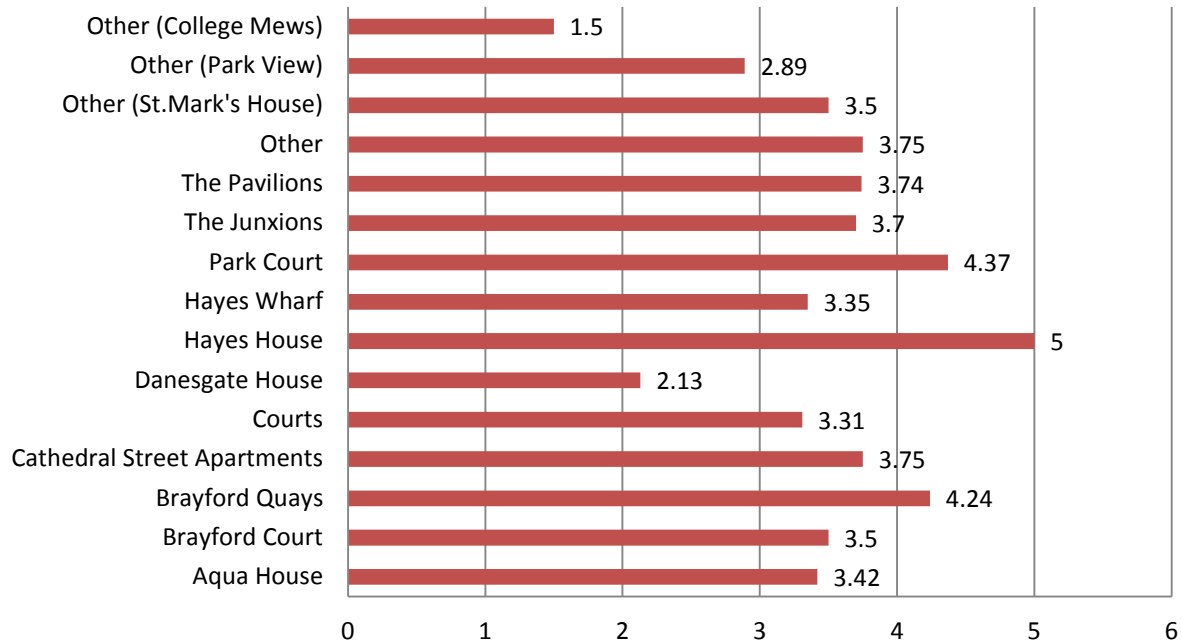
The results from question fourteen were used to create average scores for each of the 11 different areas included within the chart above. The scale was between 1 and 5 and, as can be seen from the chart, all average scores were between 3.2 and 3.8. There doesn't seem to be any area which students would rate highly when asked about the properties where you might expect them to, areas such as security or customer service. In fact the best, on average, was the size of the property with an average rating of 3.86. The lowest on average, was value for money, something which is becoming increasingly important to students as financial difficulties affect more and more of them. This is reflected by recent investment in student accommodation in the city being pitched at the higher valuation of the market. We could be seeing the beginning of a squeeze on affordable accommodation in Lincoln.

Q.15 Please circle how satisfied are you with your current accommodation on a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).



Question fifteen shows how satisfied students are with their current accommodation on a rate of 1-5 with 3 being satisfied. One of the three agents/ landlords below three is Lighthouse Property Services, which had a sample size of 56 respondents. This satisfaction score reflects what has been said in previous questions and that Lighthouse is to continue to be monitored in light of Student Council's motion and in order to ensure students are receiving the standard of service that is outlined within the accreditation scheme. Unity Lettings and Other (Ian Peat) received scores of below 3 (satisfied) but both only had between 2 and 5 respondents, which isn't a respectable sample size. Although this sample size isn't particularly credible, going forward it may be useful to create a link with them at such events as the Housing Fayre to ensure that their tenants are also receiving a correct standard of living accommodation.

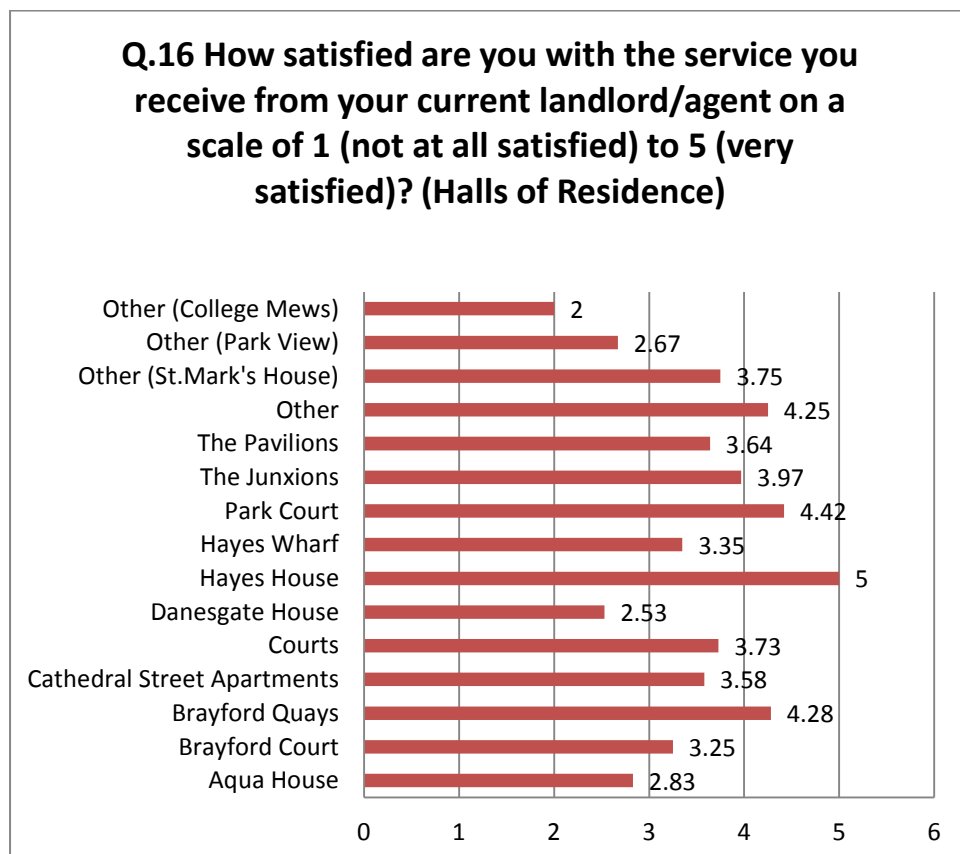
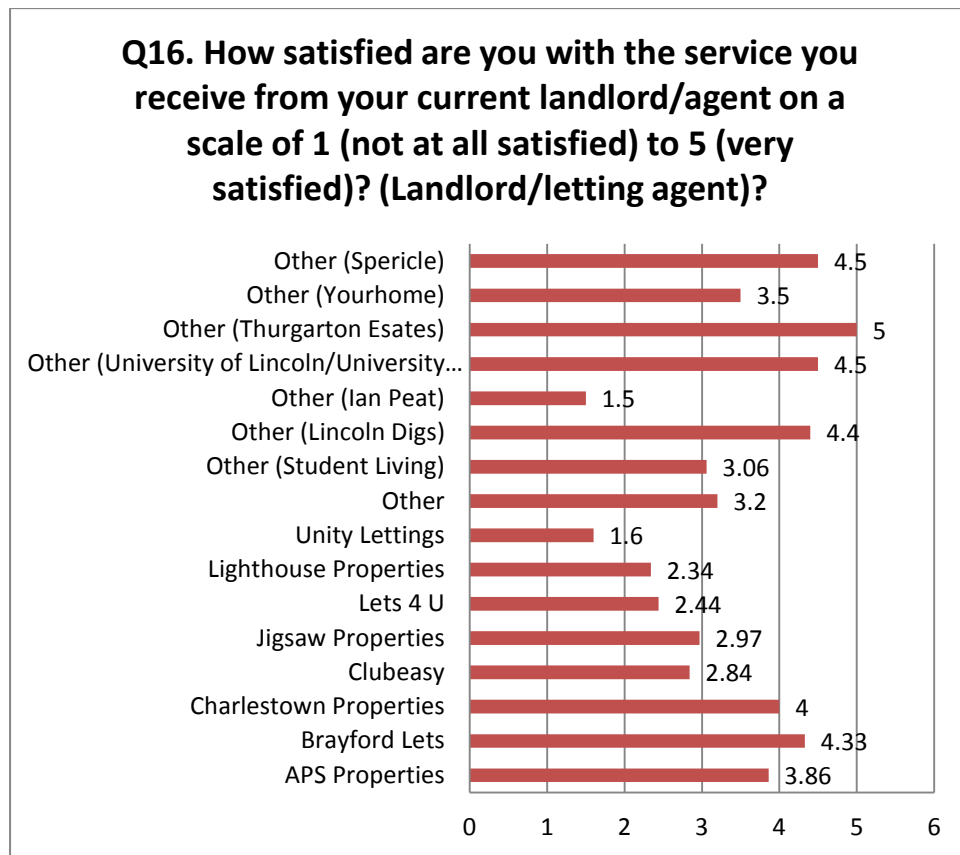
### Q.15 How satisfied are you with your current accommodation on a scale of 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied)? (Halls of Residence)



Again with Halls of Residence, we can see that most scored above the satisfied rate of three. The main provider who hasn't has been Danesgate House. This is an expected result due to work that has been ongoing throughout the academic year to improve their facilities, and is also shown through mention of building work within qualitative data from part b of question eight. College Mews was very low with only 1.5 out of 5, but there were only two respondents who lived in College Mews. Again, we cannot entirely be sure why this may be due to the fact that there were only two respondents and there is no qualitative data. If, as a Union, there was a wish to understand why Unity, Other and College Mews were low within the scale of satisfaction then investigation such as focus groups or interviews with students may have to be undertaken. Potentially we could facilitate focus groups that are incetnivised by the accomodation providers.



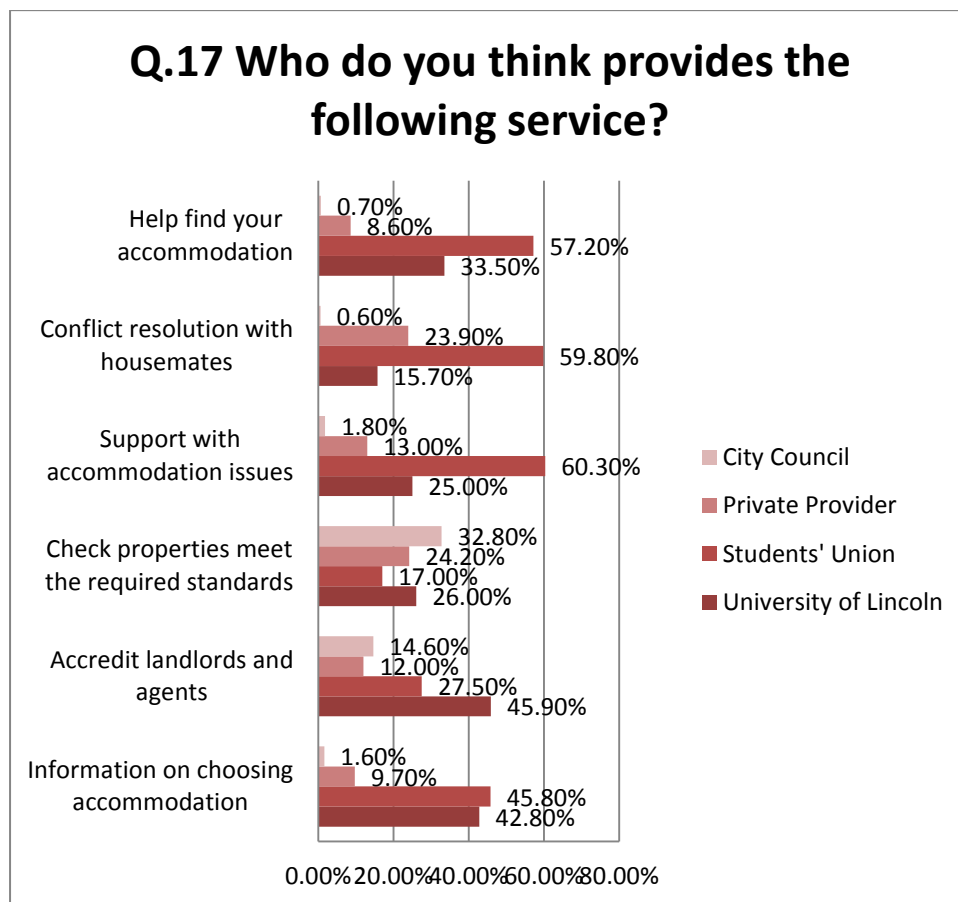
Q.16 How satisfied are you with the service you receive from your current landlord/agent on a scale of 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5(very satisfied).



Question sixteen, focuses on the service that students have had whilst they've been with their current landlord/letting agent and the level of satisfaction with that. An observation that can be made almost instantly is that Landlord/letting agents (first graph on previous page) have lower satisfaction rates of about 1.0 compared to providers of Halls of Residence (second graph on previous page). From this alone, it could be said that the issue with regard to service is not with Halls of Residence providers, but is generally with landlords/letting agents.

It's also interesting to note that the lower scoring providers in this question are; Unity lettings, Other (Ian Peat), Lighthouse Properties, Other (College Mews) and Danesgate House. These were also the lowest scoring providers within question fifteen about satisfaction rates of respondents current properties. There's a direct link here which could be, that the view of these respondents is one that links the quality of accommodation to the quality of service that they receive. This again reinforces Vice-President Welfare and Community's argument for the accreditation scheme to take into account service provision of providers not just statutory needs.

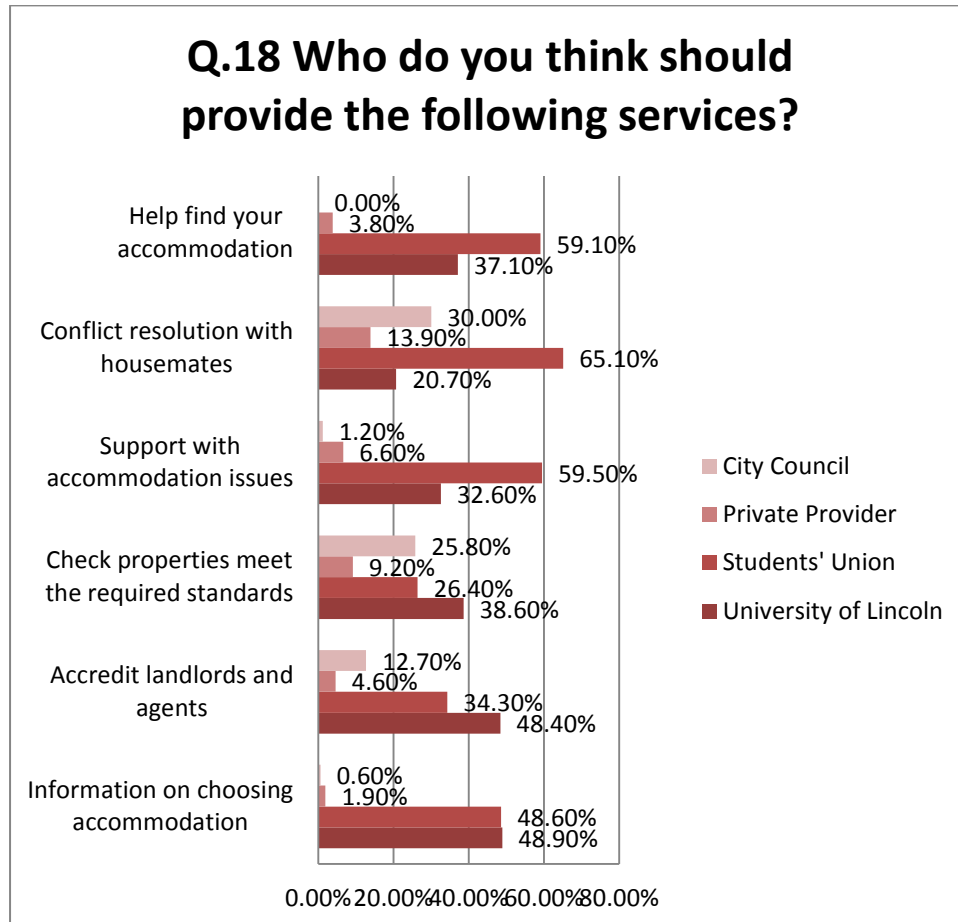
Q.17 Who do you think provides the following service?



Question seventeen shows that students currently believe that the Students' Union provides help finding accommodation, conflict resolution, support with accommodation issues and information on choosing information. It also shows that students believe the City Council checks properties standards and the University accredits landlords and agents as opposed to the partnership that currently is in place. The results also show that students don't acknowledge or know that the Council and the University have a partnership to provide the majority of these services. What this means is that as the partnership continues, there needs to be more work between the partners to raise

awareness amongst students to understand the accommodation system here at Lincoln. There may be a need for a review of the partnership as well as what responsibilities each party has due to the differences as to who students' believe do provide services compared to who students believe should provide services as demonstrated in the next question.

Q.18 Who do you think should provide the following services?



Question eighteen shows who students think should provide the following services. They believe that the SU should help find accommodation, deal with conflict resolution and support with accommodation issues. If we were to do this, a discussion would be needed again in the direction of having an Advice Service to assist with this kind of information. Unfortunately, currently we do not have the capacity to provide this kind of support to students.

Students also feel that the University should be checking properties meet the required standards, instead of the Council as well as accrediting the landlords and agents. Again this reflects badly on the current partnership. We interpret this as further evidence that the partnership needs reforming. There is an interesting point to discuss with the percentages for Information on choosing accommodation. There is only 0.3% difference in student opinion as to who should help with assisting students to choose accommodation between Students' Union and the University. With this in view we need to explore how we can provide more assistance to students than just the Housing Fayre and publications.

