



University of Lincoln Students' Union Accommodation Survey Results 2016

This year's University of Lincoln Students' Union Accommodation Survey was conducted from 18th January to 3rd April to encourage more students to take part.

The survey was hosted online using the University of Lincoln Students' Union website as well as paper copies used for Student Officers to promote whilst GOATing (Going Out and Talking) which were then inputted by SU Staff.

To market this survey, a mixture of posters, newsletters and social media was used alongside the Student Officer promotion. Additionally, Letting Agents and Halls of Residence were contacted to promote the survey to their residents in order to gain feedback on their services. An incentive of a TV was introduced during the survey period in order to increase participation.

The survey was completed by 8.1% (1106) of our members – an increase of 1% (150) response rate.

The majority of respondents were Undergraduate (95%) with an almost equal split between Postgraduate Taught and Research as a make-up of the remaining 5%. This was a similar picture with regards to nationality, with a high percentage of Home students (95%) and the remaining 5% split between EU and International Students. The low engagement from these groups could be that more Postgraduate students may have their own property or a family property in comparison with the Undergraduate students, which could also have affected the responses from Home and EU/International students.

With regards to level of study, the majority of respondents came from Second Year (36%) and First Year (36%) and this may be due to the prominence of the Survey alongside the information about renting accommodation for next year.

Headline Results

In this year's Accommodation Survey, respondents appear to be making choices on their accommodation based on the property itself, however whilst in the tenancy changing their priorities to customer service values, for example communication or quick responses.

It is also interesting to note that the expectations of the respondents, and potentially the wider student body, – are higher than what the accommodation providers anticipate or are currently providing to their tenants. This is reflected in the latter half of the survey, and is likely to be due to students becoming more educated around these areas for example how long they should wait for a repair or who should enter the property and when.

Finally, a result of Question 9, Lighthouse Property Services have met the required result of scoring 3.0 or above on the question "How satisfied are you with your current accommodation?", for the boycott of University of Lincoln Students' Union on them. As a result, the boycott should be lifted.

Key Recommendations

Recommendation: For the Advice Centre Advisor to annually review the list of providers included within the survey to ensure it reflects the current market.

Recommendation: For the Advice Centre and Marketing Team to continue to promote a "Wait to Rent" Campaign to educate students.

Recommendation: For the Advice Centre to continue to discourage providers to sign up students for accommodation on the day of the Housing Fayre.

Recommendation: To create an "information portal" on the Advice Centre section of the Lincoln SU website, providing useful information about providers, potentially from other students. This will be led by the Vice President Welfare and Community with the Advice Centre Manager.

Recommendation: For the Students' Union Advice Centre to deliver a campaign about reporting bullying and problems with housemates to the Advice Centre or Accommodation Provider.

Recommendation: The Advice Centre Manager to offer a small briefing to providers to highlight respondent answers in order to improve services mentioned in this survey.

Recommendation: The President to make Lighthouse Property Services aware that the boycott against them has been lifted. The Advice Centre Manager should meet with them to make them aware that there is an ambition to assist Lighthouse Property Services to work on their customer service provision in order to ensure that students do not have a negative experience whilst being a tenant of their properties.

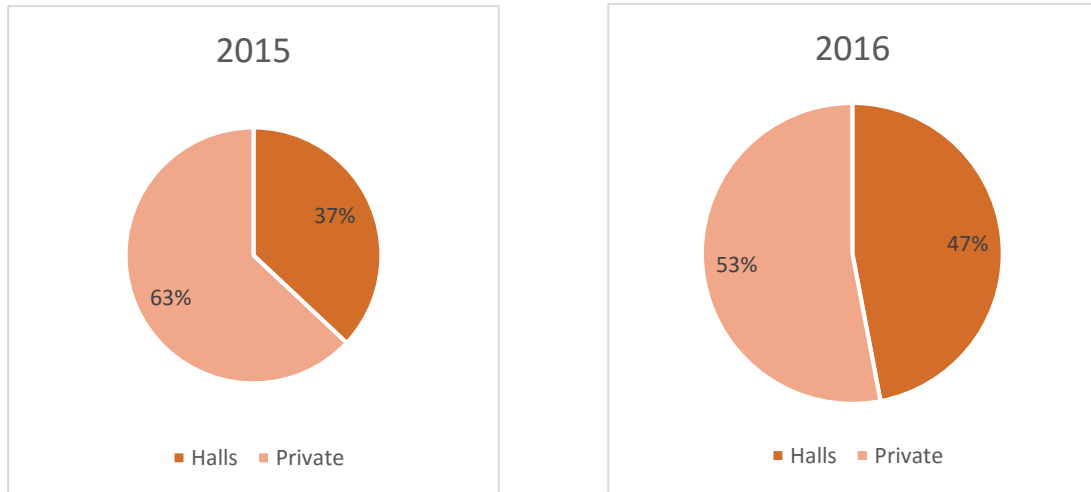
Recommendation: For the Advice Centre Manager to work with the partners of the City of Lincoln Accreditation Scheme to encourage improvements to their publicity to students to raise awareness of the remit of the Scheme, and actions the Scheme has carried out.

Recommendation: For the Advice Centre and Marketing Team to publicise the accommodation support that the Advice Centre can provide, and ensure that all Advice Staff are trained to deliver this effectively

Results

Your Current Accommodation

1. Please choose which type of accommodation you live in?

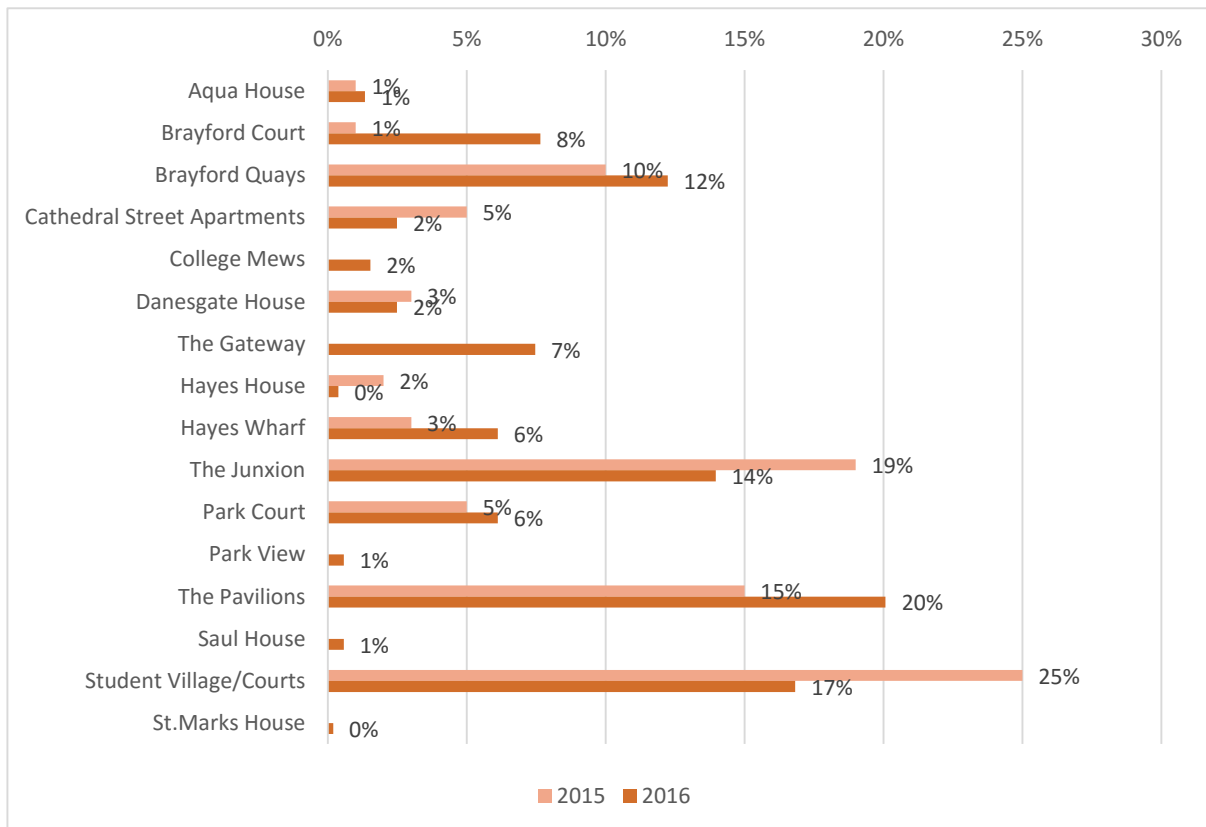


In comparison to last year's results for this question, more respondents are now living in Halls of Residence, leading it closer to an equal split between private accommodation and Halls of Residence. This may be due to the high number of first years who took part in this year's survey and due to the idea of ease that is associated with living in a Halls of Residence, due to location or inclusivity of bills or services.

For question 1a) about which Halls of Residence students live in there were some respondents who selected a Halls of Residence which they live in, but for question one stated they lived in Private Accommodation. The terminology that we use for these may need to vary so that students understand more i.e. change accommodation to housing if that is the issue.

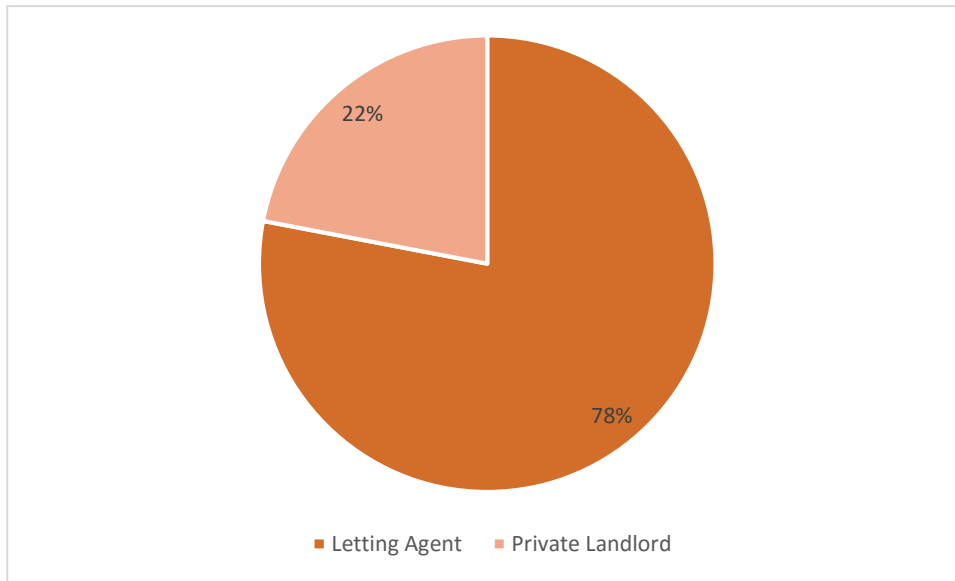
Recommendation: To review the language used to ensure that students understand the meaning of Private accommodation or its equivalent.

1a) If in Halls of Residence, please select from the list below then proceed to Question 3:



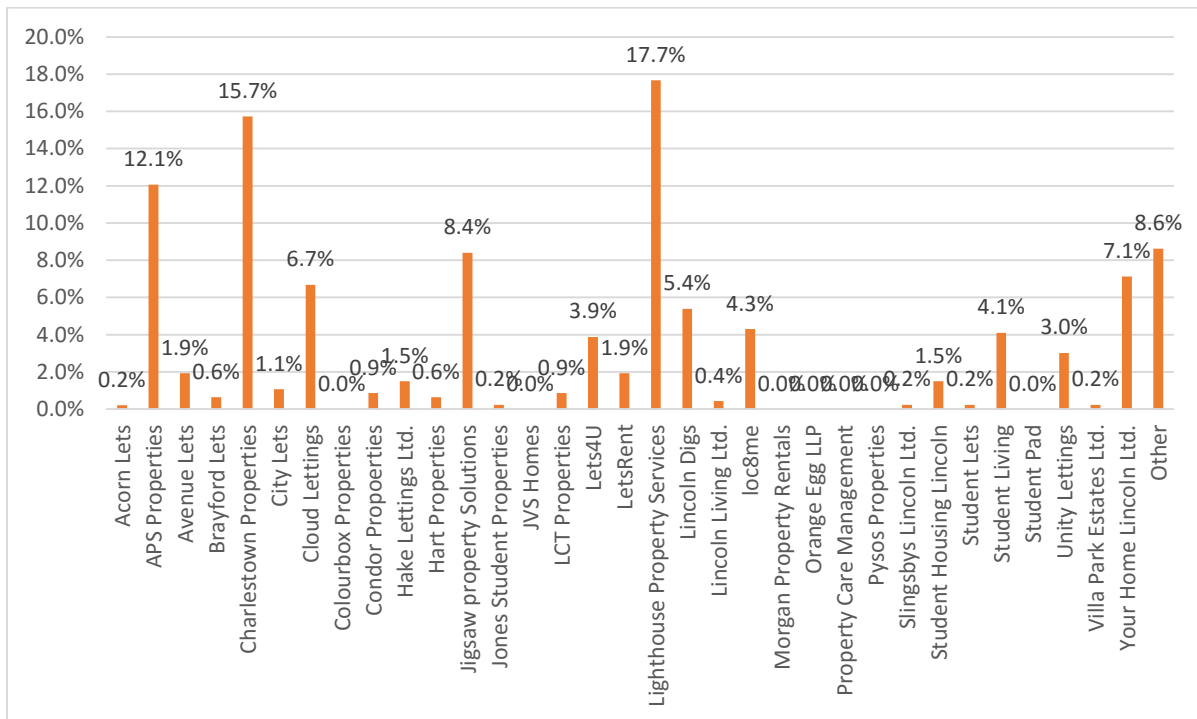
This chart shows how many of the respondents who selected Halls of Residence live in each of the Halls around Campus. This year there has been an introduction of more Halls of Residence which has meant that popular spots such as The Junxion appear to have less of the respondents in them when comparing to last year's statistics. However, some accommodation providers have increased such as Brayford Quays, which may be due to renovation works which took place last year.

2) If in a Private House or Flat, did you rent through a Letting Agent or Private Landlord?



For respondents who are in Private Accommodation, results show that the majority have rented through a Letting Agent as opposed to a Private Landlord. This could be due to the fact that traditionally there are more Letting Agents who are more publicised, and are in attendance at the Housing Fayres held on campus in comparison to Private Landlords. As a Students' Union, generally speaking, we would prefer students to go through a Letting Agent as they appear to know more about legal rights and responsibilities and can be easier to contact in urgent or emergency situations. This isn't always the case and there are several Private Landlords available who offer excellent service.

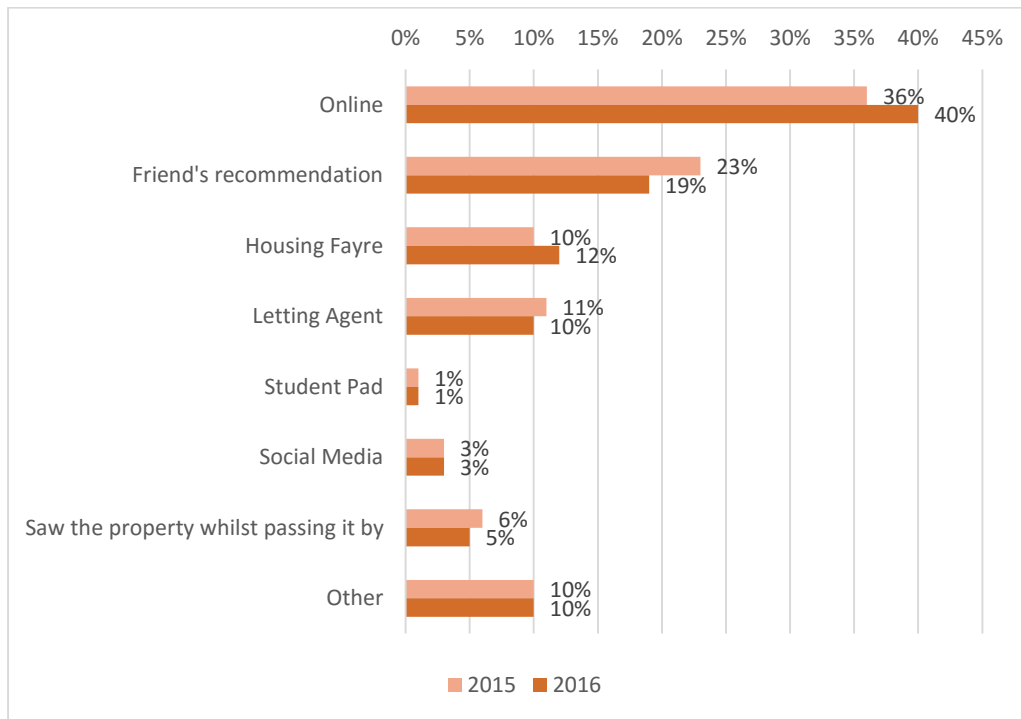
2a) If through a Letting Agent, please select Letting Agent from below:



In this year's survey all Letting Agents were included that were known over the past year as new agents, as well as who were listed on the University of Lincoln Student Pad website. The results show quite a few of these may be new providers as there are currently not a significant amount (< 0%) of students in these properties. The most common Letting Agent amongst respondents is Lighthouse Property Services with almost 18% of respondents renting through them, closely followed by Charlestown Properties accommodation with almost 16%.

Recommendation: For the Advice Centre Advisor to annually review the list of providers included within the survey to ensure it reflects the current market.

3) How did you find your current accommodation?



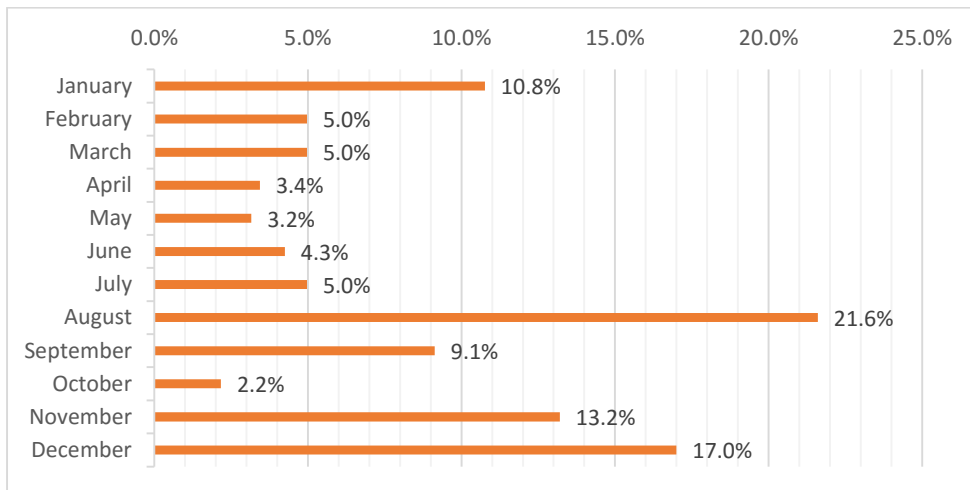
The chart above demonstrates that the methods students are favouring to find accommodation is changing slightly. More respondents are choosing to find their accommodation online as opposed to passing by the property, and more respondents are choosing to use the on campus Housing Fayre instead of going directly to the Letting Agent or listening to the views of their friends.

It is important to note that the respondents who have selected the Housing Fayre will be referring to the Housing Fayre of academic year 14/15 (December '14). The current plans to make the Housing Fayre more flexible may help with improving the use of the event as a mechanism to find accommodation, and this in turn can be used to educate students further as to the decisions they are making. However, the impact of this may not be seen until the Accommodation Survey 2018, due to the cycle of fayres and surveys.

The majority of the comments from those who selected "Other" showed that they had either lived in the property previously, had been helped by the University or had been seen at Open Days. The comments from respondents who selected "Online" had used the University of Lincoln website for accommodation referrals or to find University managed accommodation. Comments were also made to the Letting Agents direct website as well as high street letting agents and Rightmove.

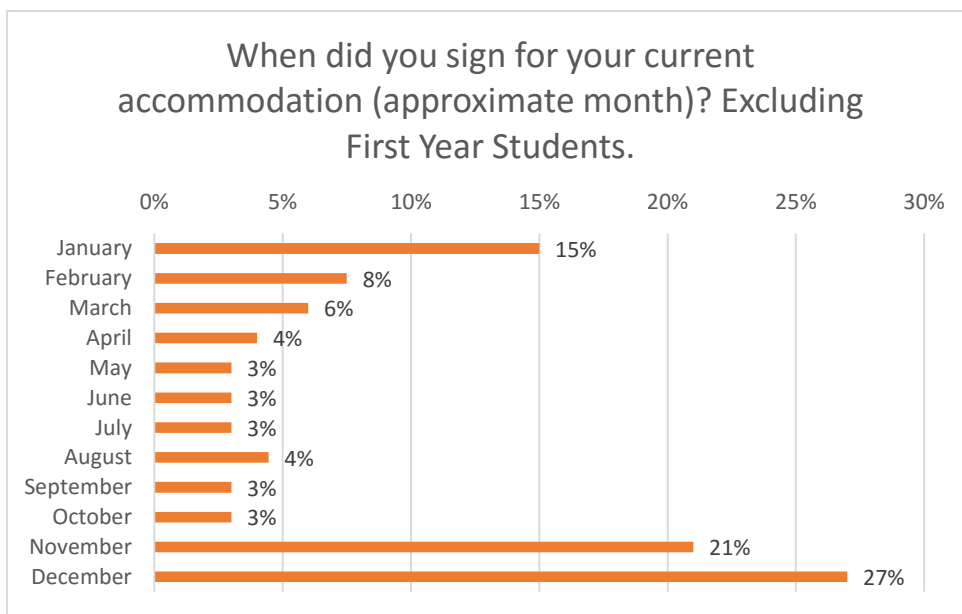
Recommendation: To include the University of Lincoln website as an option, to see if it is a significant source.

4) When did you sign for your current accommodation (approximate month)?



In previous years this question had been asking students when did they look for their property, however due to the University of Lincoln Students' Union campaign - "Wait to Rent", it was suggested that the more appropriate question would be when do students sign up for the accommodation to reflect the principles of the campaign.

August seems to be when the majority of respondents signed their contract for their current accommodation. This is due to the high amount of first years who responded, due to not signing for accommodation until after their results from further education courses have been released. In order to gather an accurate picture of the results we would need to remove the data from first year students for this question. Additionally, it could be because a high number of student tenancies begin on 1st August and so respondents may be asked to sign for their accommodation at this point of the year. In order to resolve this, we need to make it clear in the question that we're asking when they signed their contract, not gained access.



This chart shows that without the first year data range that December is the most popular time amongst respondents to sign for accommodation – which is something that is not encouraged by the University of Lincoln Students' Union. This may be as a result of current

providers asking to renew before the New Year in order to keep their property, as well as persuasions at viewings. At this academic years Housing Fayre, providers who were invited were discouraged to ask students to sign up for accommodation on that day. This is something that the University of Lincoln Students' Union will need to continue to dissuade students from doing in order to ensure they have made a confident decision on where they will be living, who with and whether they can afford it.

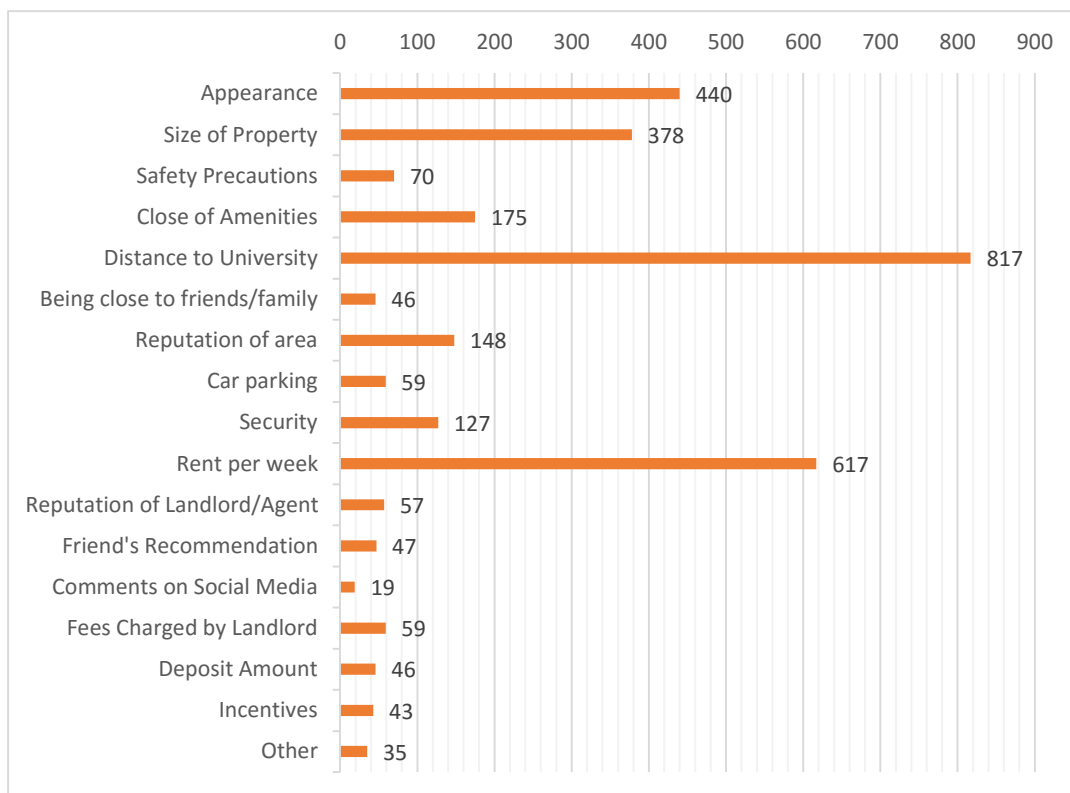
Recommendation: For the Advice Centre and Marketing Team to continue to promote a "Wait to Rent" Campaign to educate students.

Recommendation: Only ask this question to level two and above students who are able to sign for accommodation at any point of the year.

Recommendation: Make the wording of the question clearer to ensure we collate the necessary data.

Recommendation: For the Advice Centre to continue to discourage providers to sign up students for accommodation on the day of the Housing Fayre.

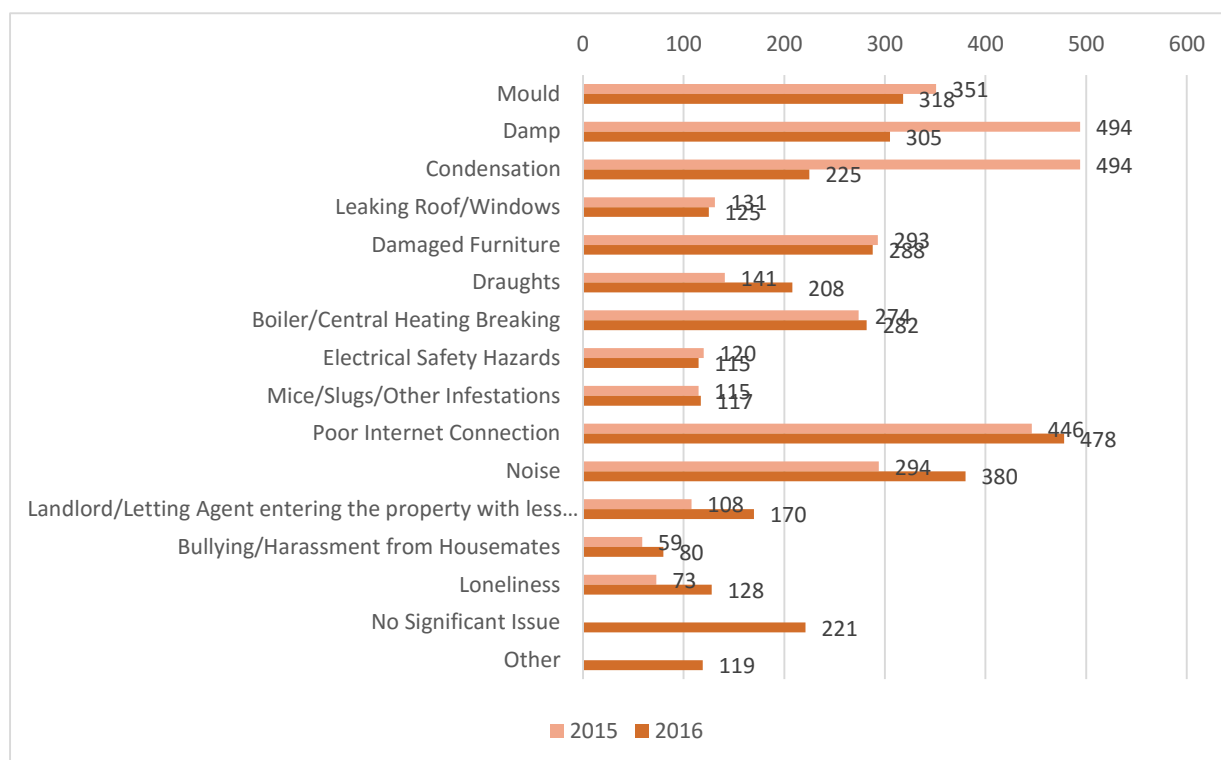
5) What factors did you consider when choosing your current accommodation?



For this question these students could choose three options for which factors were considered when choosing their accommodation. As noted from the chart above, students are showing that they take into consideration the "Distance to University", "Rent per Week" and "Appearance" of the property. Least opted for were "Comments on Social Media", "Incentives", "Deposit Amount" or "Being Close to friends/family". This year the University of Lincoln Students' Union have been made aware of some landlords using a deposit waiver which may be reflected in future results, or if used before this year, may be affecting this year's results and could indicate why "Deposit Amount" is so low.

These selections show that students are focussing more on the actual property with regards to location, cost and aesthetics as opposed to options provided by Landlord or Letting Agent as incentives to encourage students to sign to them.

6) What issues have you encountered in your current house/flat?

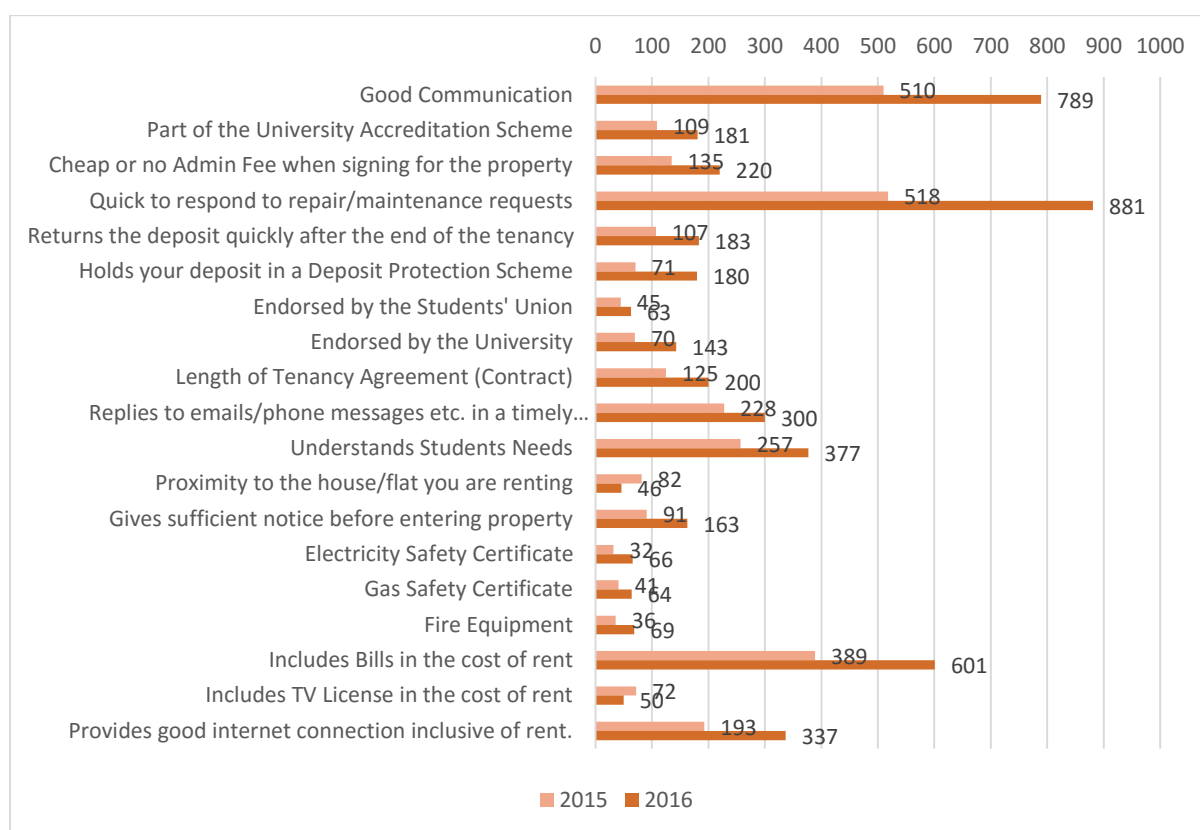


For this question, respondents were able to select as many options as they needed to in order to share any issues. The most commonly selected this year were “*Poor Internet Connection*”, “*Noise*” and “*Mould*”. The “*Poor internet Connection*” result is interesting as this is something that the Advice Centre has been made aware of more and more as the academic year reaches its end. Students have also reported about the Library not remaining open twenty-four hours opening which affected students when their accommodation internet connection did not work.

This year, external feedback was gathered. Issues of “*Damp*” and “*Condensation*” was separated unlike previous years. The separation of them shows that, “*Damp*” was experienced most by the respondents to this survey. If they were combined as they were last year, there would be an increase of 36 experiences of them showing that these are still big issues for students. The chart above indicates that “*Loneliness*”, increased by 55 respondents, and “*Bullying and Harassment from housemates*”, increased by 21 respondents, when compared to last year’s results. Additionally, there appear to have been as a rise in issues brought to the attention to colleagues in the Advice Centre and additionally research for our 2016-2021 strategy has shown that 19% of our members think about bullying/harassment or isolation on a daily basis. For these reasons, we feel that students need to believe that they can speak up and report these issues if they’re facing them.

Recommendation: For the Students’ Union Advice Centre to deliver a campaign about reporting bullying and problems with housemates to the Advice Centre or Accommodation Provider.

7) What qualities are important to you in a landlord/letting agency?



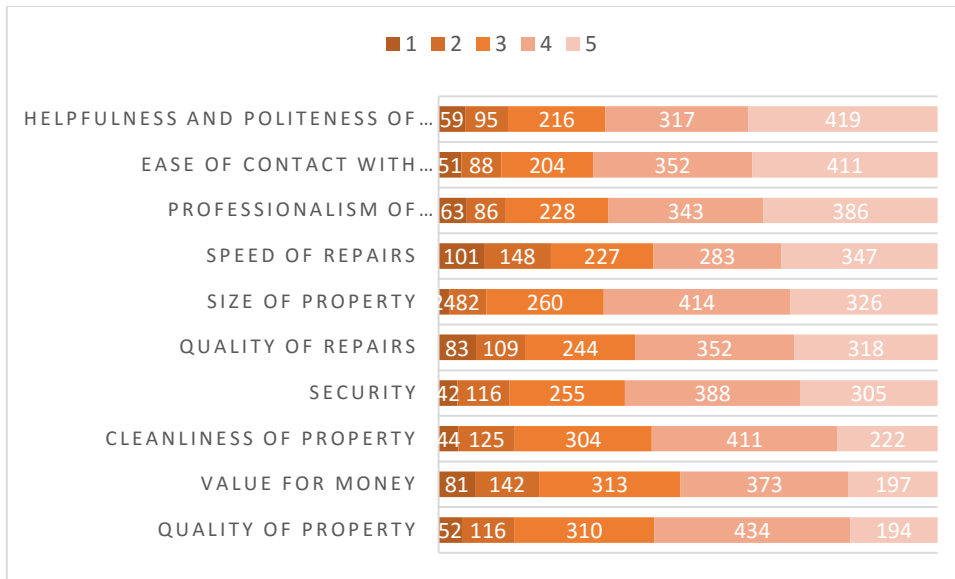
Again with this question, respondents were asked to select five qualities that were important to them. It is very clear from the data that the most important quality shown by providers to the respondents was that they were "Quick to respond to repair/maintenance requests". Second to this was the quality of "Good Communication" which almost goes hand in hand with the previous mentioned quality. It is interesting to note that when these answers are compared, they are different to those selected in Question 5. In Question 5 respondents stated that they considered distance, appearance and cost of rent when selecting accommodation, – factors which are arguably property based. However, in this question, the response to maintenance and communication could be argued as customer service based factors or qualities. As customer service appears to be an important factor to students, it may be useful to provide information to students on the different landlords/agents available for them to access before they sign up to a provider.

It could be considered that some of the qualities from this question is included in the selection for Question 5 such as good communication. Doing this may help to discover if students change their opinion as to what is important at the point of signing for a property as opposed to when they have been in the tenancy for a short while. It may also be as a result of students who have had issues are now reconsidering what matters to them about their accommodation.

Recommendation: To create an "information portal" on the Advice Centre section of the Lincoln SU website, providing useful information about providers, potentially from other students. This will be led by the Vice President Welfare and Community with the Advice Centre Manager.

Recommendation: To include "Good Communication" in Question 5 to see if there are any differences when choosing their accommodation when compared to their view when their tenancy has started.

8) On a scale from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent) how would you rate the following with regards to your current accommodation?

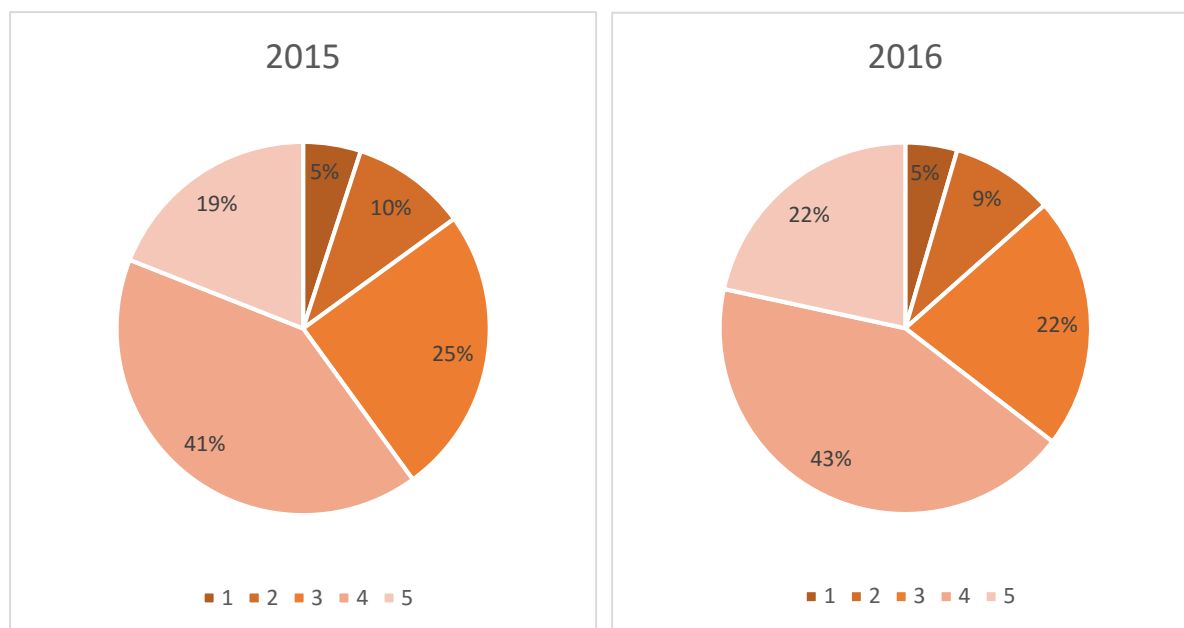


For the majority of these areas, respondents scored highly for 4 and 5 at the positive end of the scale. The majority of these had a difference when calculated of between 100-200 respondents who are more satisfied than those who are not about each of these areas e.g. for "Size of Property". Responses of 1,2 and 3 calculated to 366, whereas responses at 4 or 5 totalled 740.

The only area where there was not a significant difference was "Value for Money". Responses of 1,2 or 3 at the lower end of scale had a total of 536 and the total of 4 and 5 responses gave a total of 570. This could suggest further that students' expectations of what they are expecting with regards to property and what they receive for their money are changing.

Recommendation: The Advice Centre Manager to offer a small briefing to providers of what their tenants who responded to this survey believed in order to improve services above.

9) Please select how satisfied you are with your current accommodation on a scale of 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (Very satisfied).



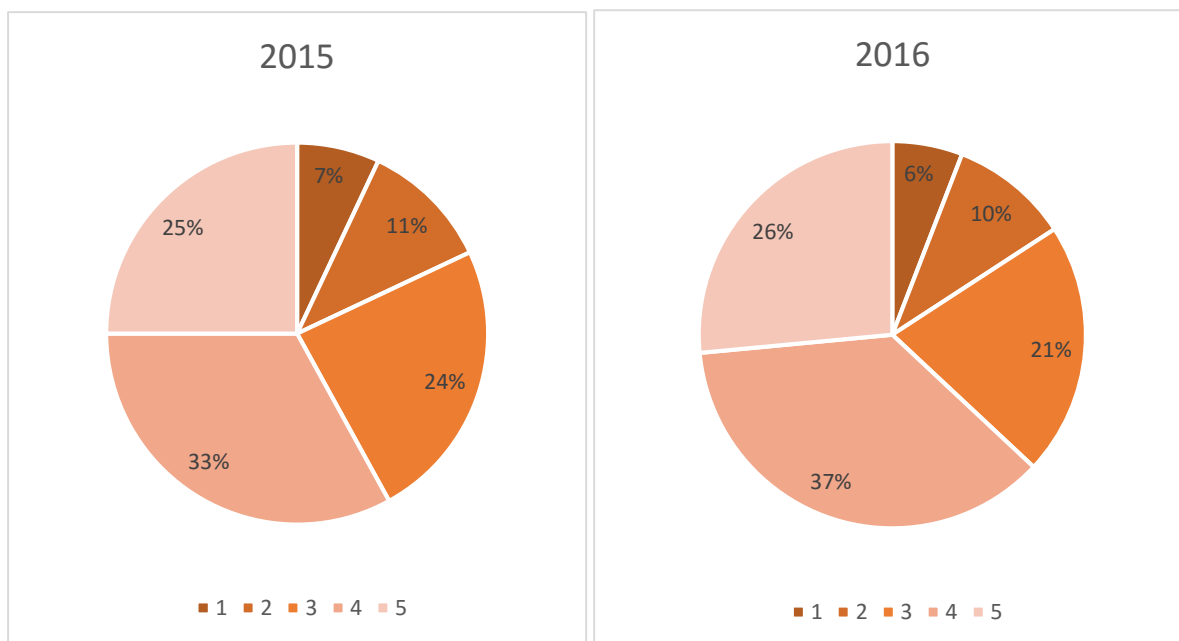
The charts above show that, when the results of this question are compared to last year's survey results, there is a slight shift of satisfaction on the scale between "Not at all satisfied" and "Very satisfied". There still remains a 5% of respondents who are "Not at all satisfied", whereas those who rated their accommodation at 4 has reduced by 1% taking them into the top 3 scoring of satisfaction. The 4% difference from those who scored 3 and 4 have moved up into the top 2 tiers of satisfaction giving 1 "Very Satisfied" an increase of 3% and 2 an increase of 2%.

This would appear to show that students are becoming more satisfied with their accommodation that they are living in, which may be as a result of provider's improvements or students being more aware of what is on offer to them as well as their rights as a tenant.

Additionally, this question was nominated as the measurement with regards to the boycott against the Lighthouse Property Services, decided by the Executive Committee. This year Lighthouse Property Services met their target of an average of 3.0 from their respondents on this question. The boycott has been lifted, Lighthouse Property Services will be encouraged to increase their level of customer service satisfaction (Q10) for which they scored below 3.0.

Recommendation: The President to make Lighthouse Property Services aware that the boycott against them has been lifted. The Advice Centre Manager should meet with them to make them aware that there is an ambition to assist Lighthouse Property Services to work on their customer service provision in order to ensure that students do not have a negative experience whilst being a tenant of their properties.

10) Please select how satisfied you are with the service you receive from your current landlord/agent on a scale of 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).



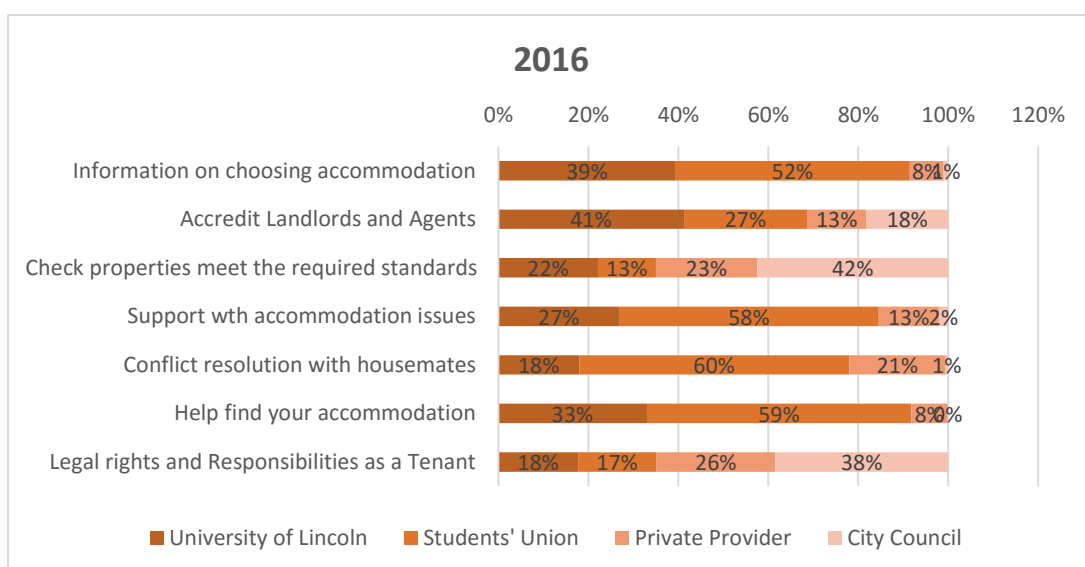
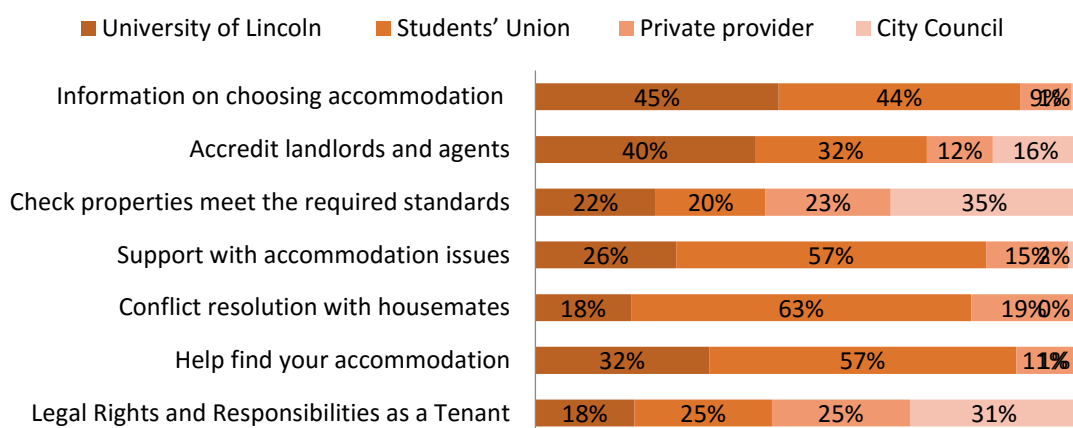
With regards to the responses received for question 10, it is a similar picture to question 9. The respondents to this year’s survey appear to be slightly more satisfied than the previous year’s data. Satisfaction seems to shift up from the lower scale to the higher end of “very satisfied”, showed by an increase of 1%, and to the second highest option which has an increase of 4%.

This may be linked to the information provided in question 9. With these results it’s likely that if students are happier with their accommodation, this is due to an improved customer service from their provider when answering to queries or answering to any maintenance requests.

Additionally, linking back to question 7, an information portal to allow students to consider different aspects of providers before point of signing tenancy agreement could prove valuable. This portal would include the customer service factor for students to find out with the intention that they will sign with a provider who meets their expectations. This information will include factual information from the Landlords and provider such as price ranges and data from this and previous surveys, as well as the accreditation scheme. This information should allow for students to be able to compare providers against each other but also against previous year’s data. It could also in turn lead to a general improvement in customer service provided by Letting Agents, Private Landlords and Halls of Residence providers.

11) Who do you think provides the following service?

2015



This question is about the provision of services surrounding accommodation and students' perception as to who currently delivers which.

As with last year, there are only two areas where a significant number of students believe that the City Council provide a service; "Accredit Landlords and Agents", "Check properties meet the required standards" and "Legal Rights and Responsibilities as a Tenant". Students may have selected these in this way due to these areas appearing to be statutory or regulatory tasks.

In the majority of these areas, a significant amount of the respondents believed that the University of Lincoln Students' Union provides this service especially with regards to conflict resolution and support with issues. The Advice Centre which was introduced this academic year could be attributed as to why students responded as they did.

"Accredit Landlords and Agents" was an area which most respondents felt was provided by the University as opposed to being a partner. Although, this is positive recognition of the University's involvement in the scheme, it may be beneficial to advertise to students that the scheme is a partnership with several stakeholders around the city.

“Check properties meet the required standards” was an area which respondents did not believe that the University of Lincoln Students’ Union were involved with, and the majority of respondents believed that this sat with the City Council, followed by an external provider.

The responses to this question and question twelve, show that students are unaware of what aspects the Accreditation Scheme cover and potentially who this is. All providers included as answer options (apart from the Private Provider) are members of the Accreditation Scheme along with Bishop Grosseteste University and Students’ Union. As most of the tasks we asked about are tasks of the accreditation scheme, it may be useful to publicise more what tasks the scheme covers.

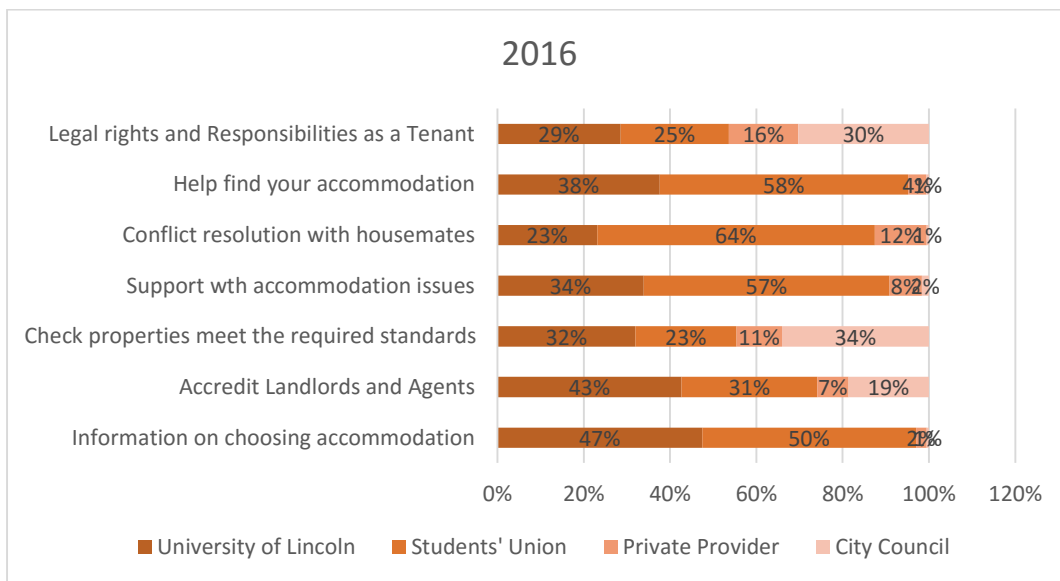
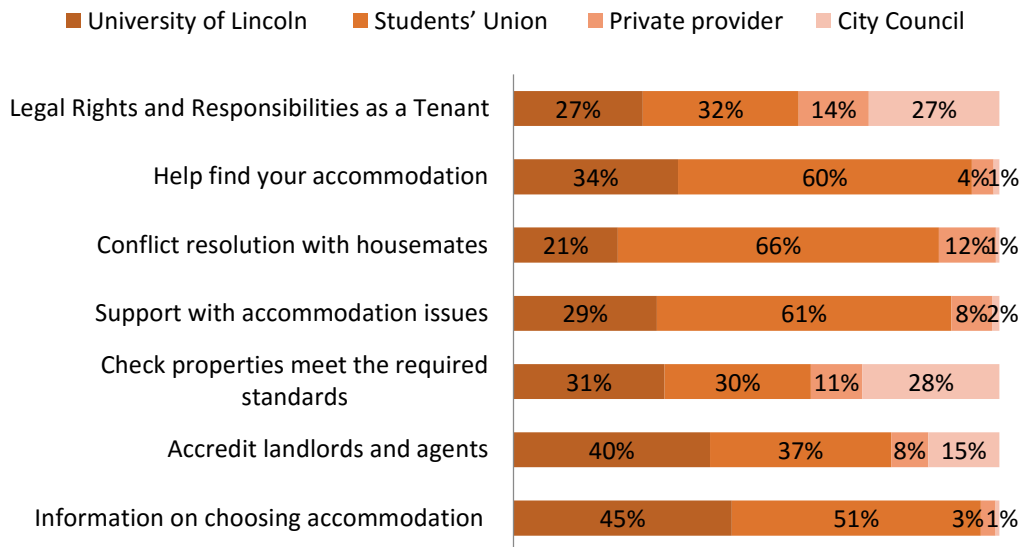
Finally, 58% of students think we provide support with accommodation issues. This is support that we provide, but not openly publicise. The main promotion linked to housing is help to make the right decision before signing for a tenancy. The fact that our SU Advice Centre provides support with accommodation issues should be promoted more and we should ensure that staff are trained to be able to do this.

Recommendation: For the Advice Centre Manager to work with the partners of the City of Lincoln Accreditation Scheme to encourage improvements to their publicity to students to raise awareness of the remit of the Scheme, and actions the Scheme has carried out.

Recommendation: For the Advice Centre and Marketing Team to publicise the accommodation support that the Advice Centre can provide, and ensure that all Advice Staff are trained to deliver this effectively.

12) Who do you think should provide the following services?

2015



This question shows who the respondents believe should be providing these services as opposed to the previous question which asks about current providers.

In comparison to 2015, the data shows that up to 5% more of respondents of this year's survey believe that the University of Lincoln should provide more of the services. However, on only three of these areas the University of Lincoln is the preferred provider in comparison to the University of Lincoln Students' Union, and only one of these three is the University is the preferred provider over all ("Accredit Landlords and Agents"). For the two areas of "Legal rights and responsibilities as a Tenant" and "Check properties meet the required standards" the City Council had been chosen as the preferred option by the majority of respondents.

The University of Lincoln Students' Union was selected by the majority of respondents to provide "help find your accommodation", "Conflict resolution with housemates", "Support

with accommodation issues” and “information on choosing accommodation”. These areas have been worked on by the Advice Centre this year and is testament to the work that has taken place this year as well as recognition by students of the Advice Centre values to help and support.

There has been a high level of partnership work between the Advice Centre and the University Accommodation Team in order to provide help to find student accommodation with events such as the Housing Fayre, something which appears to be recognised by students when looking at the data above. This is a partnership that should be encouraged to help students face these tasks with ease.

Recommendation: Publicise the accommodation support that the Advice Centre can provide, and ensure that all Advice Staff are trained to deliver this effectively.

Recommendation: To continue building upon the partnership between the University of Lincoln Students’ Union Advice Centre and the University Accommodation Service.