

# Case Study 2: Private Rented Sector Housing



**Client: Ian MacLellan Student Experience University of Strathclyde**

Topic:

Students' experience of Private Rented Sector Housing

Data collection method:

Focus Groups

## **Group C**

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## **Executive Summary**

This paper presents information pertaining to University of Strathclyde students' experience within the private rented accommodation sector.

Data for this research was collected through focus group discussions using a non-probability based stratified judgment sampling method to select participants. Transcripts were used to facilitate cognitive mapping, and a cognitive map was produced for the purposes of analysis.

Through the cognitive mapping process, overarching goals and undesired outcomes for students were identified; the overall goals relating to being in a good relationship with accommodation provider, being content with location, and getting value for money. The undesired outcomes relate to poor working relationships with accommodation providers and illegal subletting of accommodation.

The most central theme which influences students' decision on accommodation selection was identified as the availability of adequate housing information, or lack thereof. Non-UK domiciled students who typically have less access to this information therefore select private halls of residence due to convenience and simplicity of the process when University accommodation is not suitable or available. Domestic students have more information and support available related to seeking accommodation, therefore face less barriers to entering private rented accommodation.

Guidance on topics such as statutory rights and obligations for tenants and landlords, requirements for setting up utilities and others, contract requirements including necessity for UK guarantors, and general information about the different areas that students' choose to reside within Glasgow are recommended to be provided in greater detail to prospective students prior to relocation.

## **Background**

Student Experience services at the University of Strathclyde wish to obtain more information on students and their experience with private rental sector housing. The client emphasised a lack of knowledge of students' accommodation if they do not stay in university halls. This report aims to investigate students experience in the private rented housing sector and make recommendations to our client on what services they can provide students to improve their experiences within the market.

Private rented sector housing encompasses a wide variety of accommodation types, the most common for students being private rented flats / houses and private halls. Private halls are student only accommodations typically with private rooms contained in flats with communal living areas. These are an extension of the idea of university provided halls but for students not provided university accommodation. This type of accommodation has become increasingly popular and there has been large developments in Glasgow in recent years. This type of accommodation can be expensive but is a good option for students due to the type of contracts they offer. The other main type of accommodation that students use is private rented flats / houses, these are commonly advertised through websites such as Rightmove and Zoopla or directly through a letting agency. Glasgow City Centre has a competitive rental market with increasing rental prices and the option for landlords and agencies to be picky with their tenants. To collect information on students' experience with these housing types the research team hosted focus groups on the university campus. A focus group allowed students to discuss and speak openly about their experiences with private rental sector housing and to identify common themes emerging. The following report outlines our methodology in hosting the focus groups and our findings. The limitations of the data collection technique are taken into consideration before making recommendations to the client.

## Methodology

This part of the report is structured in two sections; the first focuses on the practicalities of our data collection method, focus group discussions, and the second on the techniques used to analyse the qualitative data gathered in this research, cognitive mapping.

### Data collection

As recruiting participants for up to two-hour lasting focus group discussions can be challenging, a non-probability sampling method was used. The rationale for this approach revolves around various time and resource constraints, limited access to representatives of the target demographic and difficulty in attracting participants to take part without additional incentives. Stratified judgement sampling was deemed most appropriate in order to ensure sufficient responses and opinions of the target population (Palinkas et al., 2015) This approach allowed for a relatively fair representation of informed views on the subject matter, hence the final sample consisted of 42% students staying in privately rented flats / houses and 54% in private halls<sup>1</sup>.

In order to adhere to the sampling methods outlined above, an important part of recruiting respondents was to ensure prospective participants were only asked to partake after verifying that they meet two fundamental criteria: being a student at University of Strathclyde and having experience renting accommodation in Glasgow in the private sector.

Another aspect considered in forming the four focus groups was the dynamics of discussions amongst pre-acquainted individuals, as highlighted by Bloor et al. (2001) and (Brown, 2015) in (Barbour, 2018). Optimising the proportion of strangers and students who knew each other within the four focus groups was an effective approach and resulted in productive discussions without the need for frequent probing questions.

This research followed the standard practice of inviting between six to ten participants to each session, however literature on ideal overall sample sizes of focus groups is fairly limited; “Carlsen and Glenton (2011) reviewed 220 studies...and found that only 17% of these provided an explanation for the number of focus groups carried out” (Barbour, 2018). The aim of this research was therefore to recruit as many participants as possible given time and resource constraints; hence, the final sample size was 25.

Following guidance from (Barbour, 2018) the research team paid attention, from the outset, to the specific practicalities involved in organising and moderating fruitful focus group discussions. A purpose build worksheet was used to plan all sessions (exact time and location on campus), monitor progress on recruiting participants and assign roles of moderators to facilitate discussions and those responsible for note taking, audio recording and distributing participants’ consent forms and information sheets (Appendix A).

In terms of the running order, facilitators adopted a semi-structured approach, whereby discussions were moderated using a pre-set and carefully considered questioning route (Krueger, 2015), (Appendix B), while contributions and participant interactions were encouraged throughout the session.

A full and thorough audio transcription of all discussions is fundamental for successful qualitative data analysis; hence, all four sessions were transcribed using intelligent verbatim transcription style<sup>2</sup> to ensure maximum benefit from participants’ comments, interactions and contributions (Appendix C).

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<sup>1</sup> Remaining 4% (one participant’s) responses were excluded from analysis as it transpired through discussions that they live in University halls (rather than private); this was caused by a miscommunication during participant recruitment process.

<sup>2</sup> “convert any recorded speech into text while leaving out any phrases or words considered redundant, such as repeated words, filler expressions (er, um) or thought pauses (yeah, you know) and editing slang words (gonna to going to)” ISAAC. 2015. *Intelligent Verbatim Transcription* [Online]. Available: <https://weloty.com/intelligent-verbatim-transcription/> [Accessed 25/10 2018].

## Data Analysis

To capture and examine a combined view of all the information collected from the focus groups, the research team conducted a cognitive mapping session. Cognitive mapping is a technique designed to capture a person's values and wisdom in a diagram; mapping out how a person "makes sense of the world" (Ackermann, 2005).

Transcribed notes tend to be written without consideration of relationships and are generally constrained to be linear, which makes drawing meaningful conclusions difficult. To better understand the situation, the points which are being made, i.e. the content, must be understood as well as the meaning and implications of the points, i.e. the context (Williams, 2008). By constructing this full extent (as much as possible given time and resource constraints), this approach helps identify the "nub of the issue"; or more specifically the one or more statements that are most central and have the most impact on outcomes (Reynolds and Holwell, 2009).

Cognitive mapping therefore provides a powerful method of analysis for data collected during focus groups and is a suitable method for approaching large, messy problems such as the one student face when relocating to Glasgow for University.

The research team conducted a cognitive mapping session using transcriptions from each focus group to identify concepts and statements from each respective focus group. Following the formalities of mapping described in Ackermann, Eden and Brown (2005) as closely as possible, concepts were written down on post-its and arranged on a wall, then placed appropriately to form a coherent structure. Concepts and structure were then transposed into Decision Explorer (specialist cognitive mapping software). Focus group facilitators acted as expert witnesses to make inferences about causality between statements based on their experiences leading their respective focus groups. The initial map was then tidied up and restructured to increase clarity and coherence, leading to the finalised cognitive map (Appendix D). The finalised map was used for the analysis presented within this paper.

From the transcripts, 105 concepts in total were identified with 161 links between concepts identified. This provides a ratio of links to concepts of just over 1.5; which is higher than the ideal ratio of 1.15 to 1.25 suggested in Ackermann, Eden and Brown (2005). This suggests that there are potentially concepts which were not identified which will be discussed further in the limitations section of this report.

For ease of interpretation, concepts were colour coded to match the rough theme of question which was asked (Appendix E). They are colour coded as follows: Green - Location and safety of accommodation; Orange - Relationship and communications with provider; Yellow - Quality of accommodation; Purple - Costs and contracts. There are instances where there is some overlap within concepts and in these instances the more relevant theme was selected for colour coding.

The most central statements identified were "Students are able to find adequate information... (as opposed to) students are unable to find information", "Students move into private halls", and "Students move into a private flat" (Appendix H). This provides clear evidence that the volume of information students have access to regarding housing within Glasgow is the most decisive factor in their decision of where they should stay. From the focus groups it is inferred that students moving to Glasgow from abroad, who for the most part have the least access to available information, will more likely move towards private halls, whereas students who currently reside within Glasgow or the UK have more information available and are more likely to move into another form of private accommodation.

Five clusters were identified within the map through the use of the software; correlating closely to the themes which became apparent for each question asked within the focus groups (Appendix F).

## Results

The findings of the focus groups are presented in four sections according to the main topics addressed by the study; Landlord Relationship, Quality of Housing, Location and Safety, and Costs. Please refer to Appendix B for a comprehensive list of questions asked.

### Relationship with accommodation provider

The participants of each focus group were asked to talk about the relationship with their landlord. From the responses, a noticeable contrast emerged between the type of relationship private student halls and private rented flats. The participants from private halls described their relationship positively and this was solely based on the relationship they established with the Student Hall reception or Site Managers:

*“...I go down to the reception and ask them for whatever I need, and they’ll probably give it to me... no problems at all with them.”*

This is reflected in the analysis of the map where the two most central statements relating to Landlord relationships are “Dedicated reception is available to deal with issues” and “Halls have online portal or e-mail system for logging faults”. Several participants also stated that they only communicate with on-site managers/reception via email:

*“...we don’t really see each other. We just send messages and emails... or leave note.”*

Participants living in private flats explained that the relationship with their landlord can be friendly until issues start to arise. As mentioned in one focus group:

*“My landlord is friendly, but I don’t think he cares that much about the flat because everything is basically broken.”*

The majority of participants had met their landlord at least once to agree to the terms of lease, with one person also having a doubt on whether the tenancy was legal:

*“My biggest problem is that the landlord doesn’t care. I’m pretty sure I’m living in my flat illegally right now. I’m subletting from my flatmate, I have no idea. Who knows? But I don’t think it’s an issue.”*

When talking about resolving problems a noticeable difference was observed between those who live in private halls and those living in private flats. Amongst all the participants living in halls, it was clear that all issues were solved within the same day that the problem was reported. One participant said:

*“I had problems with the heating system and they provided assistance immediately... Even my bin. I said it had a scratch on my bin and they changed it.”*

Conversely, solving issues in private rented flats is not as straightforward. All focus groups emphasised how long it takes for repairs to happen. As one participant noted:

*“My landlord is responsive on WhatsApp, but then to actually come and sort the problem takes too long”.*

This was also the case when major problems occurred as stated by another participant:

*“...right now, I have a big hole in my ceiling because of a leak coming through the roof which they took a full week to respond too... and then the ceiling fell last week, and it is still down... They are friendly...but absolutely useless. We had a toilet that would only flush once every two hours for a*

*period 6 months. I asked if I could sort it out myself and I did it. Then the washing machine broke, and they asked me if I could handle it."*

This is reflected in the two undesired outcomes highlighted on the map, "Landlord avoids fulfilling statutory responsibilities" and "Students generally have lesser working relationship with letting agent". Only one of the participants rightly noted how important it is to know your rights as a tenant and how that can help when problems happen and need to be solved quickly, and states: *"when I have my first contact with the landlord I make sure that he understands that I'm going to be a pain in the a\*\* with everything that doesn't work in the flat...I make him aware that I know the rules ... and when I send a message about something not working I also send a message saying: 'I've already found a way to fix it so are you going to be on holidays in the next 14 days? Because 14 days is the prescribed period, after that, I'm going to fix it myself and I'll take it off the rent. 2 days, and they usually come."*

### **Quality of accommodation provided**

When the participants were asked about the quality of their accommodation, it was noted that both people living in private halls and private rented flat had different opinions regarding this matter.

Students living in private halls are overall satisfied with the quality that they get although having experienced minor issues regarding the cleanliness and maintenance standards which were promptly rectified, as evidenced by one participant:

*"...when I first came the shower wasn't working correctly but I just went down to the reception and the next day it was working... no problems at all."*

Several participants also stated that their expectations were in line with what was provided:

*"In my opinion, it's fine because I've been living in other accommodations during my undergraduate in Spain and if I compare it to the terrace and the pricing and stuff I think it is good."*

Some participants living in private flats explained that they discovered unexpected issues after moving in, such as equipment and furniture not matching descriptions as advertised by letting agencies and landlords. Furthermore, letting agents consistently failed to ensure satisfactory cleanliness levels upon moving in although charging for professional cleaning services as an additional fee:

*"The big thing is that they charge you for a cleaning fee when you move out, and again when you move in, but nothing actually happens"*

Additionally, letting agents and landlords were generally reported as taking unreasonably long to arrange repairs. This is captured by one participant:

*"...the washing machine broke and it took about 2 days to get someone out... which was pretty quick... it did take like a year to get the buzzer fixed... it didn't really get organised"*

Feedback about the overall experience reaffirms the disparity between those who live in private halls and those living in private flats. Amongst all the participants living in halls, it was

evident that they are satisfied with the quality, cleanliness and maintenance of their accommodation. One participant said:

*"For us, they need to prepare the room before you move in and if you're not happy with that cleanliness, you tell them...but after that, the common areas in the flats are done by them [cleaners] but your flat and your kitchen you have to do on your own. Its run more like a hotel I guess, with weekly cleaners."*

In contrast, private flat tenants were generally less satisfied with the conditions of their flat upon arrival:

*"... it was not in a clean condition at all... the letting agents told us that we needed to wait a few days... so that they can hire professional cleaners... it absolutely was not professionally cleaned... mould in the washing machine, mould on the windows... it was disgusting... we cleaned it all ourselves"*

### **Location and Safety of accommodation**

From the cognitive map, central themes for student's opinions on the location and safety of their accommodation were identified. While some students use the limited information made available to them by the university to make an informed decision on their preferred type of accommodation, others do extensive research using publicly available online data sources:

*"P3 pointing at P5: He's really deep into this, excel spreadsheet, maps, circles, analysis, everything!"*

Due to a lack of information made available by the university concerning the different factors that contribute to a student's decision in selecting their type of accommodation, students often find accommodation in private halls due to the simple process, convenient location and wide availability of private halls around Glasgow. This is strongly reflected in the most central theme identified, "Students find adequate information about housing online ...(as opposed to) information is not available". From the top central themes identified in the map, safety seemed to have a higher prevalence in students' answers than location when it came to choosing their accommodation, with 3 of the top 6 most central statements based on safety. The students were aware that some areas of Glasgow were more "dodgy" than others, i.e. respondents showed an awareness that some areas experience higher levels of deprivation than others before choosing the location of their accommodation:

*"I don't feel unsafe but I wouldn't want to walk along there late at night on my own".*

Students were more likely to pay a higher rent for accommodation in a less deprived area of Glasgow (e.g. the West End) and accommodation located closer to the University within the City Centre. With the location of the accommodations being quite close to the town centre, the costs were slightly higher than those further away, but the convenience of the location of their accommodation outweighed the additional cost of City Centre living. Additionally, students felt that it was quite safe to live close to the city as there is generally a high police presence observed in the City Centre:

*"I'd like to mention that I think there is a lot of police around."*

Overall, this made the students feel like City Centre living was the safest option, in a good location, though less affordable.



## Costs and Contracts related to accommodation

Private hall residents generally pay more for their rent than private flats. The average monthly rent for halls for the sample is £451.57 whereas the average monthly rent for flats is £366.36. (Appendix G) One student felt that they were paying too much for their accommodation:

*"I am paying too much. Compared to a private flat, I pay way too much. I think I could get more for £585 per month"*

Respondents living in private halls felt that it is an easy and smooth process to signing their contract agreements and that there is less stress in doing so. One student's response was *"yeah, very straightforward and simple...No stress."*

Private landlords usually demand students to have a UK guarantor when renting a flat. This was identified as the 5th most central statement relating to costs and contracts and 11th most central overall, highlighting the high overall importance of this factor. Due to this strict requirement, students from outside the UK tend to prefer private halls to avoid this barrier:

*"...really difficult, especially for students coming here from abroad, first years, second years...it's really difficult to find someone in the UK who is willing to be a guarantor"*

*"They are very strict about some rules... a UK guarantor – not easy to find a UK guarantor"*

Accommodation in the City Centre was found to generally cost more than out-with, aside from some instances in the West End. Some participants felt that more affordable flats located further away from the university would increase their commute time and cost so would rather stay close to the university for the convenience. One student reported:

*"...if I consider living near the university or living far from the university, considering the direct costs and indirect costs... if I live far from the university...I may pay like £350 or something but then the transportation cost, the time for commute... considering those factors, I feel it's a good value for money to stay at my place [Private halls in city centre]"*

For private halls, students pay a deposit to secure their room and claim it for a fixed period of time with no hassle. Conversely, students in private flats generally pay a higher deposit and have more issues with their rental contracts. This was identified as an undesired outcome within the cognitive map. An example was highlighted:

*"[P5 referring to P1]...trying to make her sign a contract... It was more of a private agreement between individuals...that she was going to stay in the flat for at least 6 months... that it was just one page; the other one is 60 pages; but the reality is that she was entitled to the 28 days' notice contract...he wants to lock her into a longer contract."*

## Conclusions

The overall goals of students living in private rented accommodation in Glasgow were identified through the cognitive mapping process as: feeling safe in their accommodation; being happy in the relationship with their accommodation provider; being content with the location; and getting value for money. Some undesirable outcomes were also identified, namely landlords avoiding fulfilling their statutory responsibilities and students having poor working relationships with letting agents, often resulting in providing student accommodation without the appropriate licenses leading to illegal subletting. This is often the preferred route for students due to affordability and ease but carries its own intrinsic risks.

Non-UK students are more likely to enter into private halls due to the simplicity of process, low deposits and no need for UK guarantor. This typically carries a higher rent cost, but overall students are content given the convenience and often central location.

UK domiciled students tend to be better informed and in a better position to find relevant information in aid of finding private accommodation via letting agents and other methods. Some still choose to move into private halls due to stringent requirements imposed by letting agents. For those moving into flats, this often entails increased responsibility and complexity in terms of dealing with landlords and letting agents, arranging deposits, setting up utilities, and addressing maintenance issues with relevant parties. One benefit of renting a private flat is the typically lower rent cost compared to halls, with the exception of centrally located flats; in which case students agree that the convenient location outweighs the additional cost.

## **Recommendations**

As identified by the most central theme in the map (Appendix H), access to relevant housing information is the strongest contributing factor in influencing students' decision making process for accommodation selection. Conversely, lack of access to this information often forces the students' hand to select private halls as the default option, if university accommodation is unsuitable to the needs of the student.

It is for this reason that the main recommendation would be for Student Experience to provide more information to prospective students on the topic of the private rented sector in Glasgow. It is important that this information is accessible to students prior to moving to Glasgow to allow adequate time to make the necessary arrangements. This information could be delivered in a number of formats to accommodate differing needs – e.g. online documentation, webinars (with Q&A), helpline resources, online chat and FAQ, video case studies.

A radical but potentially effective solution could also be to partner with local letting agents and streamline the application process for privately rented flats. This service could ease the burden on meeting stringent requirements (UK guarantors, high deposits up front) for students and a higher success rate of students successfully securing flats from agents and landlords. This would also facilitate a positive synergistic relationship between the University and local accommodation providers.

## **Limitations**

Sometimes it's appropriate for researchers to reconvene focus groups after analysing results (arising from multiple data collection methods) as this creates an opportunity to follow up any ambiguities and confirm preliminary findings (Bloor, 2001). While reviewing outcomes of the data analysis with participants would be a useful validation technique, it would also have a positive impact on the overall credibility of research findings.

Furthermore, additional time and financial resource would also allow the research team to carry out focus group discussions prior to conducting interviews and designing questionnaires to maximise the benefits of each technique. This approach would ensure that learnings from focus group discussions can inform and shape the design and wording of subsequent questionnaire and interview questions.

The research could have been further improved by ensuring the population sample included a more even proportion of various sub-groups of students (UK/Non-UK, Undergraduates/Postgraduates, various age groups etc.). This approach would have likely allowed for more in-depth analysis of results and possibly more inferred findings about these specific demographics rather than generalising results as applicable to all students of Strathclyde University.

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## **Appendix A: Participant information sheet**

Department of Management Science Ethics Form- as approved by the departmental Ethics committee on 12 October 2018

### *Evaluating Strathclyde University students' experience with housing in the private rented sector*

#### **Participant information sheet**

You are being invited to participate in a study run by the Department of Management Science of Strathclyde University to evaluate students' experience of housing in the private rented sector (PRS). The study is run by group C (MSc Data Analytics), as part of their Data Analytics in Practice (DAIP) Case study 2 project. This information sheet is provided to you so that you can decide whether or not you wish to participate. The aim of the study is to gain insight into the quality of the private rented housing in the Glasgow area, as experienced by students of University of Strathclyde.

You are invited to participate in the study as you fulfil the base requirements of attending Strathclyde University and having experience of living in privately rented accommodation.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to attend a focus group session and partake in a discussion structured by a series of questions pertaining your experience of renting private property while studying at Strathclyde University. With your consent, there will be voice recording carried out during these sessions (saved as mp3 files on a secure USB drive) for data analysis purposes. All data will be treated as confidential and deleted after one month following submission of the final report for quality assurance purposes. Anonymised responses may be shared with two other groups conducting research on the same topic area for deeper analysis. A summary of all findings will be submitted as a report and presented to the client.

We would ask participants to allow for up to two hours per session, however we anticipate a shorter duration. The focus group sessions will be facilitated by two members of the research team, with one taking notes of discussions and emerging themes.

Discussions at the focus group sessions will revolve around the following topics:

- Experience of private sector landlords
- Disrepair/quality of housing
- Costs (incl. bills)
- Location/safety

The focus group sessions will be held in WC 15<sup>th</sup> Oct at locations (on Strathclyde University campus) which will be confirmed to participants in due course.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may decide to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. In this case any data you have given will be withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

The data will be used to help inform future resource requirements of the Student Support and Well Being services at Strathclyde University. Emerging themes will be grouped and analysed but not individually identifiable to the participants. Short quotes from focus group recordings (transcripts) may be used in the final report, but these shall be used in

such a way that the source is not identifiable. Any data collected will be transformed to allow for further quantitative analysis.

This study is being conducted by group C, a subset of the Data Analytics cohort at Strathclyde University, as part of their DAIP module. The work is supervised by the programme director, Dominic Finn and has been approved by the Departmental Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact us:

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**Participant Consent Form**

I have read the participant information sheet and agree to take part in the focus group discussion.

I agree to the information I provide being used as part of the study as specified in the participant information sheet and give consent to being recorded at the focus group sessions.

Print name:

Signed:

Date:

## **Appendix B: Questioning Route**

### **Focus Group Questioning Route**

Can you tell me about the type of private sector rented accommodation you stay in? For example; private flat rental, private 'Halls'?

#### **Landlords**

- How would you describe your relationship with your landlord / letting agent / property manager (private halls)? Are they friendly, quick to respond to issues?
- Have you ever had a significant issue with your landlord / letting agent / property manager (private halls)?

#### **Quality of Housing**

- Are you happy with the quality of your accommodation, such as disrepair, initial cleanliness?
- Is it line with what you expected before you moved in?

#### **Costs**

- Is utilities (including broadband) included in your rental payment? If not, have you had difficulties setting these up? Did your landlord / letting agent / property manager (private halls) assist?
- What contracts did you have to enter into to be able to rent your accommodation (and for what duration)?
- Thinking about the overall cost (rent, energy, internet, parking) do you consider it good value for money?
- What deposit did you have to pay when moving in? Have you ever had issues getting your deposit back when moving out?

#### **Location/safety**

- Do you feel safe in your accommodation? If so, why? If not, why?
- Has there been any issues in your accommodation location?

#### **Overall experience**

- Overall, are you happy with the choice of your accommodation (halls/flat) or will you be looking for a change as a result of your current living situation? (ie. will you be extending your lease or looking elsewhere for next academic year)

## Appendix C: Sample transcript

Below is a transcript from one of four focus group sessions. Remaining three transcripts follow the same formatting and style however can be made available upon request, as well as the audio recordings.

**Please note:** Due to miscommunication, it only transpired during this session that one of the participants (P6) didn't actually meet the sample selection criteria as they stay in university halls as opposed to private halls. Their contribution to the discussions were therefore transcribed (for consistency and context) but excluded from any further analysis.)

**M: Thanks for coming; we're doing a case study on experience of housing in the private rented sector, so that's private halls, private rented flats and things like that. We'd be very happy if you could answer a few questions for us and then maybe after each question, maybe have a wee group discussion, just to collate our ideas together.**

So first questions is:

**Can you tell us about the type of private sector rented accommodation you stay in? For example; private flat rental, private 'Halls'?**

P1: I stay in a private flat

P2: Same here, it's a private flat- I've never actually stayed in halls.

P3: Private flat

P4: Private en-suite, it's not halls rather a tiny serviced apartment

P3: Is it through uni?

P4: No, it's private, not through uni

P5: Private landlord flat

~~P6: Uni halls~~

**M: Next question then, your landlord- how would you describe your relationship with your landlord/letting agent or property manager? Are they friendly, quick to respond to issues? So maybe, if your cooker's broken or something, do they respond quickly and then fix it all? Or do they just kind of drag it all out?**

P1: My landlord is friendly but I don't think he cares that much about the flat because everything is basically broken.

M: Have you went up to your landlord to...

P1: Yeah, I told him we had some issues and he tried to fix it but it's like...if something doesn't work, like hot water, I'm sure he would come, if there's a big issue... but the small ones, he doesn't care that much. He tries to be friendly...

M: Ok, so what sort of small issues?

P1: For example not all the programmes on the washing machine work so I told him and he kept saying: 'I'll come, I'll come- but he didn't come. And then the boiler, there was water on the floor...it doesn't affect me because it's his floor, in his flat and we have hot water but he was like: 'Oh, I'll come next week' but he didn't come...

M: So how long would you say his response time took?

P1: We talk on whatsapp so he responds, but then to actually come,... takes longer.

P2: That's exactly the same with mine. Most of my landlords in the past (as well as my current one), they're usually very quick to respond in the sense: 'ok, we note that you have an issue'... and then they take a few weeks to actually deal with it. And that's for agents and private landlords.

So for example in my previous flat, there was an issue with one of the windows...so it was a new build attic flat and he obviously installed the window wrong so there was water getting in when it was raining lots...and it took about four months for him to get that fixed. So I had to put down towels on the window sill to make sure that the water didn't get on the walls.

P4: When you signed the contract with them, is it mentioned in the contract what kind of issues they need to fix?

P2: I can't remember, there probably was something quite vague about general maintenance but also I didn't want to follow the route of suing him: 'It says in the contract...you have to fix it and you've not fixed it...' It's quite a lot of hassle to get that confrontational with a landlord...

P4: It's not about confrontation, it's more like...if you signed a contract, there should be an inventory of things that are in the flat and what condition they're in...and if it's not working then...

P2: Well, on the day I was viewing the flat, it wasn't raining so I couldn't tell there was going to be leaking. So even though on the inventory, it said everything was in 'new' condition, I couldn't tell there was an issue with the window.

P1: You would think they would care about their own flat right...

P2: Yeah! It was a new built, so you'd think it that it was in his interest to make sure the walls didn't get water marks on them... but he said: 'Meh, it's gonna stop raining eventually so it'll be fine...

**M: Do they give you any sort of indication of how long it's going to take to fix something or do they just say: 'Ok, I'll take care of that and leave it as a very, kind of, vague thing...?**

P2: It's quite a specific case because his argument was that if he was that he didn't want to come over to fix it because he didn't know exactly what the issue was- he didn't know where the water was getting in and he thought if he gets into the tiles and roof, it might 'open a can of worms' and potentially make things worse. So he said if the issue didn't happen too often, then he'd rather leave it than potentially do more damage.

P4: One question (~to M~), are you going to note down the comments or the situation described by the people or are you going to dig down into some analysis of the root causes?

M: It's more just getting people's experiences of the quality, costs and things like that. And then we'll take the data, the comments you told us, transcribe it into an excel sheet and analyse that data. We have two other groups to collate the data with, so we're looking for common themes across the groups.

P4: Ok, why I ask is because for this kind of issues, the landlord issues, there are three categories of students here: Scottish, EU and International. So, are the people staying in private flats,...are the Scottish landlords behaving the same way to Scottish students, or do they behave differently to EU students or International...because I know some people from other countries, they may not be aware of their rights or they may be too shy to protest strongly...Whereas Scottish students know the local things, they can speak up more strongly...those from outside may just accept the situation.

M: That's a very good point. I guess once we get the data from the other groups we could ask them and see an approximate ratio of the Scottish/UK/International students in private rented sector, whether their answers in some way differed from each other.

P2: I actually have something potentially to contribute on that point.

(07:30-09:11) Irrelevant- experience with letting agents in Aberdeen- guarantor requirement.

P5: Every time I have my first contact with the landlord, I just try and make sure that he understands that I'm going to be a pain the a\*\* for everything that doesn't work in the flat. So I make him aware that I know the rules. I tell him about my previous experiences and problems I had with previous landlords, if something wasn't working...So I try to become friendly with them, telling them stories about how bad my previous landlords were and I'm sure that he's not going to be this bad...I try to make sure they know all the stuff I went through...so if they accept me like that, they know that when I message him: 'this is not working...' , I also send a message saying: 'I've already found a way to fix it so are you going to be on holidays in the next 14 days?

Because 14 days is the prescribed period, after that, I'm going to fix it myself and I'll take it off the rent. 2 days, and they usually come.

It was like this in Aberdeen too and we never had any problems. They even accepted our cat.



P4: and similar conditions to sign the contract?

P5: Yes, we had to have a guarantor...one of the flatmates' father is our guarantor. So if I didn't have that, I wouldn't have been accepted to the flat. (10:49)

P2: Even that I think makes it really difficult, especially for students coming here from abroad, first years, second years...it's really difficult to find someone in the UK who is willing to be a guarantor because it's a huge risk for them.

P4: That's why private apartments are better.

P3: That's why there's sometimes the option to pay 6times your rent in advance

P4: I know, but you're talking about students here, students generally don't have that much spare money to pay upfront.

P4: Yeah, you have to have parents behind your back to pay this...like £3000 extra. And then when they return it to you, you live off that money for six months.

M: Ok, P6, did you have any issues?

~~P6: We don't really have any issues...but if we call with an issue, they usually come in 10-15 minutes so it's very easy.~~

**M: And have you ever had a significant issue with a landlord or letting agency?**

P3: Is this current landlord or previous experiences?

M: Current landlord...living in Glasgow.

P3: A bit of loud music on Friday night should not be a problem if it's like 8 o'clock...remember when we got a message the next day? (to P4)

P5: but it's also true that we had Jonny and Nikko putting music on for 8 hours a day until 8 o'clock...(both lol)

P3: I think the message he sent was a bit too much, you know? ~'I'm really disappointed...' I mean, come on...

M: So was it like quilt trip type situation?

P3/P5: Yeah...He said: 'I'm very disappointed to be writing this message, because the neighbours complained for the loud music and noise in general. This looks really bad on me for the next time I'm gonna be applying for an HMO...' so basically he was saying that: 'Because of you! I cannot bring bread to my family'

P4: Do you think he was in the right?

P5: I think in that instance he was right because Jonny was out of hands.

**M: So would you say that the situation about the loud music sort of, made your interaction with your landlord a bit more iffy?**

P3: No, our interaction it's the same, it was just an occasion.

P5: I still feel safe in the flat, I don't think he's gonna chuck us out in the next 28 days.

P4: No problems at all, it was just a warning...~'You guys can listen to music but be respectful of the neighbours and responsible.

**M: Ok...did you know your landlord prior to moving in? How did you meet him? How was it...you were just looking for flats and then you'd get in touch with him and spoke to him?**

P3/5: Yes.

P4: For an international like me, doing that is pretty risky because there are a lot of scams and it's not convenient. So when I went for my private accommodation, I just had to sign a contract with them, which was pretty easy, just gave them my deposit and signed a contract and anyone can be guarantor, even non UK person. And living there also, any issues, just send them an email or I just walk down to reception and they come and fix it the day after. (14:58) So if you don't create a problem for anyone else and are a good citizen, then no issue. But I see some people make too much noise...since they are groups of flats together, someone is smoking inside the room and the fire alarm goes off for everyone so...that happens very frequently so they send an email to the people that are being inconsiderate...some people get drunk and pee in the common area at reception...(lolz) There are lots of young undergrads...

M: What does the landlord do with that sort of thing?

P4: They just send them an email in the morning saying ~'We can look at the CCTV records and see who was doing that thing but we'd expect that you behave like adults, not do things like this.

M: **So would you say that your landlords give you a lot of warnings but then not actually follow up on them? Or does he follow up?**

P4: No, they follow up on some of the specific people who does the stupid things but I think it's reasonable...if you want to keep a collective space used by all people, you need to have some rules or regulations.

M: Is there a system as to how much damage you can do and then you get kicked out, like three occasions and then you're out?

P4: Yeah, when you sign the contract when you move in, you have to do an inventory of everything, what is working and what isn't...and if something stops working, they come and fix it. And we also pay a deposit, £150, which is refundable if everything is...no damages or anything after the end of your tenure (16:49)

P3: That's good £150...

P4: No but that's deposit, not rent

P3: But still, usually deposit is at least one full month rent

M: **Anyone else had any other significant issues?**

P3: I had in the past but not now.

M: or even small issues that are ongoing?

P5: Actually she has one (pointing at P1), do you remember the contract? he was trying to make her sign a contract that wasn't even valid anymore. It was more of a private agreement between individuals so that one has...it's binding, it's got contractual validity, because it's a private agreement between me and you, that she was going to stay in the flat for at least 6 months. He used the excuse that it was going to be easy, that it was just one page...the other one is 60 pages...but the reality is that she was entitled to the 28 days notice contract...the Scottish Private rented...I can't remember the name of the contract. It's not convenient for them because she can leave any time if there is any issue but he wants to lock her into a longer contract. (18:21)

P1: Yeah, I don't think my flat has HMO license, I'm pretty sure it doesn't...that's why he tried to make a different kind of contract. But for me it's ok because this is temporary flat for me for two months so I'm going to close my eyes.

P3: so it goes by a month yeah? It's on a monthly basis?

P5: 28 days yeah...but he still tried...it was unethical. He wasn't doing something illegal but...

P3: He was trying to hide...

P5: behind a very friendly face

P2: So there are more than 2 people living in the flat and he doesn't have an HMO

P5: We suspect...

P1: I think so because to get an HMO the flat needs to have certain standards and things

P2: Oh, is it things like fire doors etc...?

P1: Yeah and we do not even have that...but I'm fine because I want to use that when I want to leave...(19:25)

M: ok, so on to the quality of housing: **Are you happy with the quality of your accommodation, such as disrepair, initial cleanliness? So like, did you have to hire your own cleaner to clean up as you actually got to your flat or was it relatively clean when you got there? Is it line with what you expected before you moved in?**

P5: Ours was good.

P3: Yeah, ours was ok.

P4: For us, they need to prepare the room before you move in and if you're not happy with that cleanliness, you tell them...but after that, the common areas in the flats are done by them but

your flat and your kitchen you have to do on your own. It's run more like a hotel I guess, with weekly cleaners.

M: So was it what you expected it to look like?

P3: Yeah, because it's a professional private business so...it's done like hotel.

P2: Um, my experience of this is slightly different. So when I moved into the flat, it was not in a clean condition at all. And this was after the letting agents told us that we needed to wait a few days before we can move in so that they can hire professional cleaners in to sanitise the place before we move in. And when we moved in, it absolutely was not professionally cleaned. We got in touch with them and just sent pictures of mould in the washing machine, mould on the windows etc...

P5: Mould in the washing machine?? How do you even get that?

P2: I don't know!! But the woman who stayed there before must have been an artist because there was like black thick tar/paint and mould in the washing machine.

P4: No ventilation in the room?

P2: No, I think it's because after she washed her clothes she must have closed the door so the humidity stayed in...So we told the letting agents and they sent someone around to check whether we're telling the truth and then they agreed that it was disgusting. Then they had to get in touch with the landlord to check if she was happy to pay for cleaning services and it took so long for them to arrange all of this, that I just ended up sending an email after a few weeks saying: 'Ok, leave it and don't bother because we cleaned all of it ourselves now so there's no need to pay anyone.' So originally they were responsive and they were happy to deal with it but because it took them so long, ...just from a practical point of view, we had to clean it ourselves because we had to live there.

P3: Are you going to subtract it from rent somehow?

P2: hmm...yeah we might try that still...

M: so that kind of comes back to your landlord's response time...

P2: Kind of...but ultimately, I think it's the letting agent that should deal with the issue initially, and then take the time chasing the landlord for the money...

(23:24)

M: **Did you get an itemised list of everything that was in the flat and what they expected?**

P2: Yeah, we had an inventory list which I returned to them with a lot of comments, and then I also sent them a PDF of pictures of all the dirt. Just to show the overall cleanliness of the flat when we moved to ensure they didn't complain about us returning it in this condition when we move out.

M: What was the response to that?

P2: ~'Noted, it's on our records now.'

P5: But you know, lot of letting agents, when you move out, they take £150 for the cleaning regardless of how clean you leave the flat. So you have some ground now...

M: **Other than cleanliness, was anything broken that needed fixed?**

P2: not broken but the flat's got gas central heating and when we moved in, we found out that the main source of heating in the living room- gas fireplace, has been disconnected and it's not getting connected back again. The agents didn't tell us that before we moved in. It was advertised as having gas central heating with a fireplace in the living room but didn't mention that it didn't work.

M: Can I ask what sort of fire place it is?

P2: I don't know...gas. There's no actual combustion that you can see.

(25:16)

M: Anyone else had anything broken when they moved in or anything they had to get fixed?  
No response.

M: Ok, very fortunate...

M: Moving on then, let's start with: Were utility costs included in your rental agreement (gas, water, heating?)

P1: Everything included, everything works so it's easy

M: Was it with your phone and broadband as well?

P1: Yeah

P2: No, it was just the flat itself and everything else had to get sorted out separately

P3: No

M: Ok, so who else had the answer to that as yes?

M: Did you already have everything set up for you moving in, P4?

P4: Yeah, all utilities included

P2 to P4: and is your wifi ok?

P4: Yeah

P2: I just didn't know if it was shared between that many apartments, if it would be fast enough

P4: They have an online portal for your wifi account so you register your mac addresses

~~P6: Wifi in the accommodation is only in the living room.~~

M: Right, so it doesn't extend to the rest of the flat?

~~P6: Yeah... mine is third and some of them are 6 (- rooms in halls apartment? 27:35) so it doesn't connect~~

P3: Can you not use your wifi from you bed?

P6: No I have to be in the living space all the time.

P2: You should try one of those wifi extenders. I got one on Amazon and they actually do the job.

~~P6: But for a laptop it's a lan so it's ok~~

**M: Ok, have you had any difficulties getting set up if your answer was no? Did you landlord maybe help you find energy suppliers...?**

P3: No, we had to find it ourselves, broadband provider, the electricity and gas providers to set up the account, water- we don't pay water because it's included in council tax which we don't pay as students

P2 to P3: So when you moved in, did you stay with the energy supplier that was already connected to the property or did you switch?

P3: No the provider is the same, we just set up an account with them on our name

P2: And did the landlord tell you which supplier to contact?

P5: We just asked the landlord and he provided the information. Because it's tough and it's a pain when you have to find your own provider etc....it takes ages...

P2: Yeah...I was a bit pi\*\*ed off with my letting agency because before we moved in, tried to find out who was the current supplier and what tariff we were on so I can look at comparison websites to find the best deal... but the letting agents couldn't tell me anything, not who the provider was, unit costs for gas and electric, standing charges...just no information whatsoever. So it was only the day that we moved in that I found out it was Coop Energy but that was it...they didn't tell us anything else. So I had to phone them and it was actually quite difficult trying to find out what the unit tariff is, what the standing charges to enable me to go and do some comparisons...so in the end it took us a month to switch energy suppliers, just because the letting agents wouldn't give us any information in advance! I wish there was a better system set up for this so people can do this prior to moving in because now I'll have to pay a month worth of energy at much higher rates than I'd like to.

P4: And it's very hard for international students because knowing the units and everything...

P2: Even just switching energy suppliers (even if you do know who you're with), I still think it's quite difficult for students because there's not a lot of information out there...even how the bills break down, how much you pay gas, electricity, how it's metered, how often you get charged....whether it's direct debit, cash, prepayment meter etc...I don't think there's enough

information out there to help students get set up properly because otherwise they end up paying more than they have to because landlords don't mention that these options are there.

**M: So, moving on, what sort of contracts did you have to enter?**

P4: What do you mean?

M: Long term, short term, notice periods? (31:00)

P5: It depends...a lot of them are 2 years. I think with the utilities, you can sign up for a two years contract but then if you move out, there is no exit fee. Whereas the broadband, usually you're locked in to the contract- you are forced in some way to bring it with you when you move into a new flat. So for example with Sky internet, no Virgin media, we signed a contract for one year. And the one month notice option was a lot more expensive so you have to lock yourself into the contract and for the utilities you can exit without the exit fee.

M: Is that pretty much universal for everyone?

P2: No, I think with the utilities, it depends on the provider- so some providers may have an exit fee of £30-£50...

P5: No they all have, but the exit fee only applies if you switch provider in the same flat. But if you move out of the property, I think they can't.

P2: Oh, I didn't know that...

P5: but with broadband, for some reason, they're allowed to force you to bring it with you.

M: Ok, so what about your actual flat, is it like a 12 month lease or a month to month sort of thing?

P3: Month to month so 28 days notice

P2: I think for us it's a six months lease initially and then it's a one month rolling contract from then on.

P5: So it is a purpose built student accommodation?

P2: No, just a flat.

P5: 6 months and then rolling?

P1: I think that's not legal because that's what I had the problem as well. It depends, it needs to be-

P2: So maybe it's 12 months and then rolling?

(32:55)

P5: That's even worse...

P1: it needs to be purpose build accommodation or the landlord needs to have more properties to let, then he can do it, otherwise now they changed the law so you can..., you need to have month to month.

P5: Maybe they have enough properties to...

P2: Well it is a letting agent

P1: Aaaaah, so yeah, they can do it then.

P2: Our lease is with the landlord but it's the letting agent that let it to us...

**M: So within your contracts, do you have some sort of trial period of two weeks, a month at the beginning, to see whether it actually works with your flat and landlord, or is there no trial period?**

P5: No, you never get that.

P2: I don't think so.

**M: Ok, and if there were problems, is there a sort of time period where the landlord gives you before you're evicted?**

P2: Yeah, I'm sure there's some notice period but I don't know what it is. I think it's pretty difficult for a landlord to actually physically evict you from a flat but I don't know the details of that.

**M: So there's no bespoke clause in your contract that says: "I will give you at least 30 days..."**

P2: No, there is a notice period for the tenants, I think it's two months for us, but I don't know what the notice period is for the landlord...whether it's the same or whether it's longer.

P4: For us, we sign a contract depending on the term, for me, I signed a contract for 51 weeks. Some people sign contract for 49, forty something weeks. Just one contract, no separate contract for the utilities or something and when you sign the contract, which was like two months before coming here, (maybe not two months, maybe one month), there is a cool off time, like 15 days, if you want to change your mind, like you want to move into another property or just cancel the...you don't want to live there...so you have a cooling off time for two weeks but after that, you have to pay something if you want to cancel your contract.

P5: Such a different experience...it's completely different

P4: Yeah, very straight forward and simple.

P5: It's just a business to business almost.

P4: No stress...

**M: Does the rent change depending on term time or is it just a straight fixed £500 a month for every month**

P4: Yeah, it's per week

M: wow...

M: P6, Was your contract for the academic year or can you choose for it to be until November?

~~P6: 49 weeks...and we have to pay for four, like three months every time~~

M: So you don't pay month by month, you pay...

P4: Just one thing, both the university halls and the private stuff like mine, they have the option that if you pay the full term's rent in one time, they give you like two to three percent discount. So I had that option of paying two to three percent discount but I chose not to.

~~P6: And if you have to switch your accommodation, that cannot be possible. You cannot switch your rooms...If you get a one room, it's for you for whole year. And if you want to switch to another accommodation or to private, it cannot be possible. You have to pay in full.~~

**M: So if it doesn't suit you, you can't say: "I don't want to stay here, I'm going to look for somewhere else".**

~~P6: You have to pay all. It's very hard.~~

**M: So what would you say your overall costs for your flat rent and utilities would be? You don't have to say precisely but maybe a range? If you're happy to give exact figures, go with that, if not, say between £400-£500, or something along those lines....and would you consider it good value for money?**

(37:08)

P5: Actually we don't pay £450, we should include the amount that Jonny pays because he's got the big room...because it's £515 each...£405 each....?

P3: So it's around £550 everything included

M: So including utilities?

P3: Yeah, everything included.

M: Per person?

P5: per person.

P3: for us two, a bit more for the other guy.

P4: How far do you stay, how far is it from-

P5: It's in the West end, in Finniestone

P4: So you have to take a subway

P5: No I have motorbike now but I used to cycle.

P3: It's a mile...1.6 miles...

P5: And it's much better than living in the city centre...you don't get the drunks,...the drunk idiots every day of the night, shouting Celtic...

~~P6: I'm facing that problem, because my accommodation, at the front, there is bar and left right and they are shouting on like three o'clock. One day, two girls are sitting next to my door...seriously...and they're asking for cigarette...(38:28) I gave them two and said "please leave". (Lolz) So these are the issues...like they shout all the time...~~

P2: maybe that's why they don't let you leave...cose they know everyone would leave after the first month if that's the experience that people get.

~~P6: And they started at like three o'clock, five o'clock they're singing a song, maybe some Scottish song...anything I don't know~~

P2: My overall cost would come to around £350 ish, depending on bills.

M: Right so can your bills change over time...?

P2: Yeah so I'd expect them to be more in winter...but internet is the same.

P5: Where do you stay?

P2: Southside

P5: How do you come here? Do you drive?

P2: Train...well I drove today but generally I take the train.

P5: Yeah you need a car to live in the southside...

P2: Well I don't actually use it that much; I usually take the train but this morning I was lazy so...

P5: So do you pay for parking?

P2: No, I don't pay for parking...

P5: What do you mean?

P2: No just as a principle...I don't like paying for parking...

P5: So what do you do? I mean... I think you need to pay for parking...(lolz)

P3: Exactly, what's that?!

P2: I find free places to park in

P4: So that means you have to walk more?

P2: Yeah...

M: P1?

P1: I pay £450, everything included.

M: **So that's including utilities and everything? Is it good value for money? Do you feel like you pay too much or not enough? Or is it about right?**

P5: Not enough...

P1: No, like for the location and for like, that I can like...all utilities included, I think it's ok. If I tried to look for a flat in that location, it'd be much higher.

P5: But at the end of the day, we pay £100 more but we have a massive living room and the flat is in just better condition...

P1: Yeah but you also need guarantor and I'm having like you know...

P5: Yeah, that's true

P1: Like for what I could get, I think it's ok...

P2: I think the benefit of yours is that it's a fixed amount...whatever the bills come to...

P1: Yeah...

P2: So if you like warmth in the winter...then that's ok cose you won't pay for it...

P1: Yeah I do, all the time, I'm always cold so yeah

P2: That's what I had in Aberdeen, I rented a room that was all inclusive, internet, bills, everything so it was really nice cose we could use the oven all the time we could have the heating on all the time...yeah...silly landlord

P3: With Aberdeen Property leasing?

P2: Nono, this was a private landlord...

(41:27)

P4: When it comes to overall costs, if I consider living near the university or living far from the university, considering the direct costs and indirect costs, -direct cost like the rent, what I pay is around £500, everything is included and it's just a 10-15 minute walk from the university. So if I live far from the university, maybe somewhere southside or somewhere, I may pay like £350 or something but then the transportation cost, the time for commute, maybe two hours per day just travelling, then at the end of the day, I'm more tired because I'm travelling more so... considering those factors, I feel it's a good value for money to stay at my place. You save a lot of time and energy.

M: Ok, thanks.

~~P6: It's around £400 per month~~

M: And that's including everything?

~~P6: yeah~~

**M: and would you say that's good value**

~~P6: I don't know because I didn't find any accommodation or anything-~~

P3: You don't have anything to compare it to...

~~P6: Yeah~~

**M: Ok and so...what sort of deposit did you have to pay?**

P3: One month's rent

~~P6: One month's rent~~

P1: £250, half of the rent

P2: Mine was one and a half months rent

P3: Plus guarantor though...?

P2: Yeah plus guarantor, plus proof of income, plus proof of savings...there was a lot of information the letting agency asked us for before we could move in

P4: Is that deposit refundable or...

P2: I hope so! (lolz)

P4: Ok, we don't have that kind of deposit but when you sign the contract before moving in here, we pay a portion of...maybe one or two month eh...because it's paid in instalments, nine or ten instalments during your stay here, so first one or two instalment I had to pay before moving here. The £150 deposit is a refundable one though.

**M: Ok. Do you feel that's a fair amount to pay?**

P3: One month rent is the maximum that should be asked for, more than this, no. Two months is pointless asking for...maybe you can ask for two months if you don't have a guarantor...you know, give me evidence that you can pay....you know...give me a warranty

P2: I don't mind paying the deposit as much because I'm assuming that I'll get it back...If it comes to a point where they refuse to return some of it, then I'll be really angry but as long as I get it back, I don't mind paying it. And I understand it with mine because some of the furniture that the landlady's left in the flat is quite nice and it's obviously hers so she must have some sort of an emotional attachment to it so I understand that she wants to protect it. If we were to damage it, then there would be no way to get the money out of us other than through the deposit so I sort of get it.

P3: If it's a private landlord also, you want to make sure the deposit is actually put through the Safe Deposit Scotland scheme...is it 'Scotland deposit', what's it called?

P1: There are different types

P2: Yeah, there may be a few...I'm pretty sure it's law now that-

P3: Just make sure it's put through there because once our landlord didn't put it through, and I knew it case I went to check myself so I said: "Listen, I'm not paying you the last rent so f\*\*k you..." (lolz)



In Aberdeen....first flat

P2: Our ex-landlord didn't put the money in to the deposit scheme for about 5 months after we paid it to him, and he didn't realise that we'd get notified once it was put in so he lied to us, saying it's been in the whole time...so then we just kept that bit of information for future reference in case we needed to blackmail him or something...it was handy. I think there's a 30 days limit they have to deposit the money...but he didn't. (45:45)

M: Moving along...**location and safety, so do you feel safe in your accommodation and if so why?**

~~P6: No.~~

P3&P5: Yes.

P2: I feel quite safe in my accommodation. But I think that's down to us taking quite a lot of time researching where to look for flats.

P1: Me too, I feel safe, there's no reason to not feel safe.

M: **So would you say you have quite a good location for where you have your rented accommodation? Is there good transport to get into the city etc?**

P4: Yep

P3: Yeah, well connected

P1: Uumhmm

P2: Yep

~~P6: My accommodation is not safe that much...~~

M: Why do you say that?

~~P6: It's not safe~~

P4: Because of what? I mean you feel unsafe because of the girls?

~~P6: If you're in your room, it's quite not safe also because in front of you is a bar and every time a drunk comes to our accommodation, there is no guard anywhere~~

P4: Oh there is no security guard?

~~P6: No, so anyone can enter our accommodation and sit near our door. And they always ask for some cigarettes, every time they ask for cigarettes because many time we smoke outside so they ask every time they see, they come and ask us for cigarettes. Anyone can enter and like I don't know, some of the people came from another building to laundry in our accommodation because it's open every time so it's not safe.~~

P5: You say you can't leave when you're not happy with your accommodation...but t be fair you can use all those things if you document them and ad send them regular emails on the issues you're having, you have a lot of ground to just defend yourself in court. You can say: "I want to stay in this place, but in my contract there are certain conditions regarding safety..."

P2: you should start collecting evidence...

~~P6: Yeah...because like yesterday one person came inside our accommodation, when we were standing there, and he said: "Do you guys want weed?" so this is the thing...~~

M: **So has anyone else had any issues with your accommodation location like P6 has just said?**

P3: Not really, no

P5: No

P2: Nah

M: **Do you see any crime nearby or is it quite...not crimey, the place you live?**

P1: Finniestone is quite chill I'd say

P5: No, I see people spending a lot of money...I see that but not crime. Restaurants are constantly full...you can tell that it's a very affluent area, nice houses...you can tell there's money there.

M: What are your neighbours like?

P5: Very nice, Nigerian lady...she threatened us, she said: " If music too BoomBoom, Police BoomBoom" (much lolz). She must be 75 years old, n'awww, she's too nice, she couldn't be threatening if she tried.

M: So would you say you have quite good relations with your neighbours?

P3: So far, so good yeah...

P5: You see, also, I think safety has different aspects...for example, if I receive a parcel, I know as a matter of fact that one of my neighbours will collect it and they will not try and steal it which you know adds up to the...because you get to know them at night when they see you on the stairs...

P3: not really, remember that guy

P5: but that guy's just strange but we had an expensive parcel delivered to neighbours and they were super nice, invited us inside the flat

P4: I don't have this kind of problems because there is security 24 hours so all parcels and letters are received by the security and they will drop in your flat and no one outside....anyone who's not staying in that place, they cannot enter unless they have a key or the id card...but you are free to swipe in your friends and bring them but strangers cannot come inside.

M: That's good.

M: **One more question to ask, did you do any research on areas you wanted to live before moving?**

P3: Yes

M: what sort of stuff were you looking for?

P3 pointing at P5: he's really deep into this, excel spreadsheet, maps, circles, analysis, everything!...(lolz)

P5: I find Glasgow a lot less dangerous than I thought. Glasgow's a lot safer than I thought. I used to think that Glasgow is a really dangerous city.

M: It depends on what area you live in.

P4: It used to be the murder capital of Europe a couple of years ago

P5: I thought it was going to be a city where you have to defend yourself every day against bad crime

M: The centre is relatively safe I'd say

P1: even West end as well

P5: We feel very safe, there is never police, literally you see never police

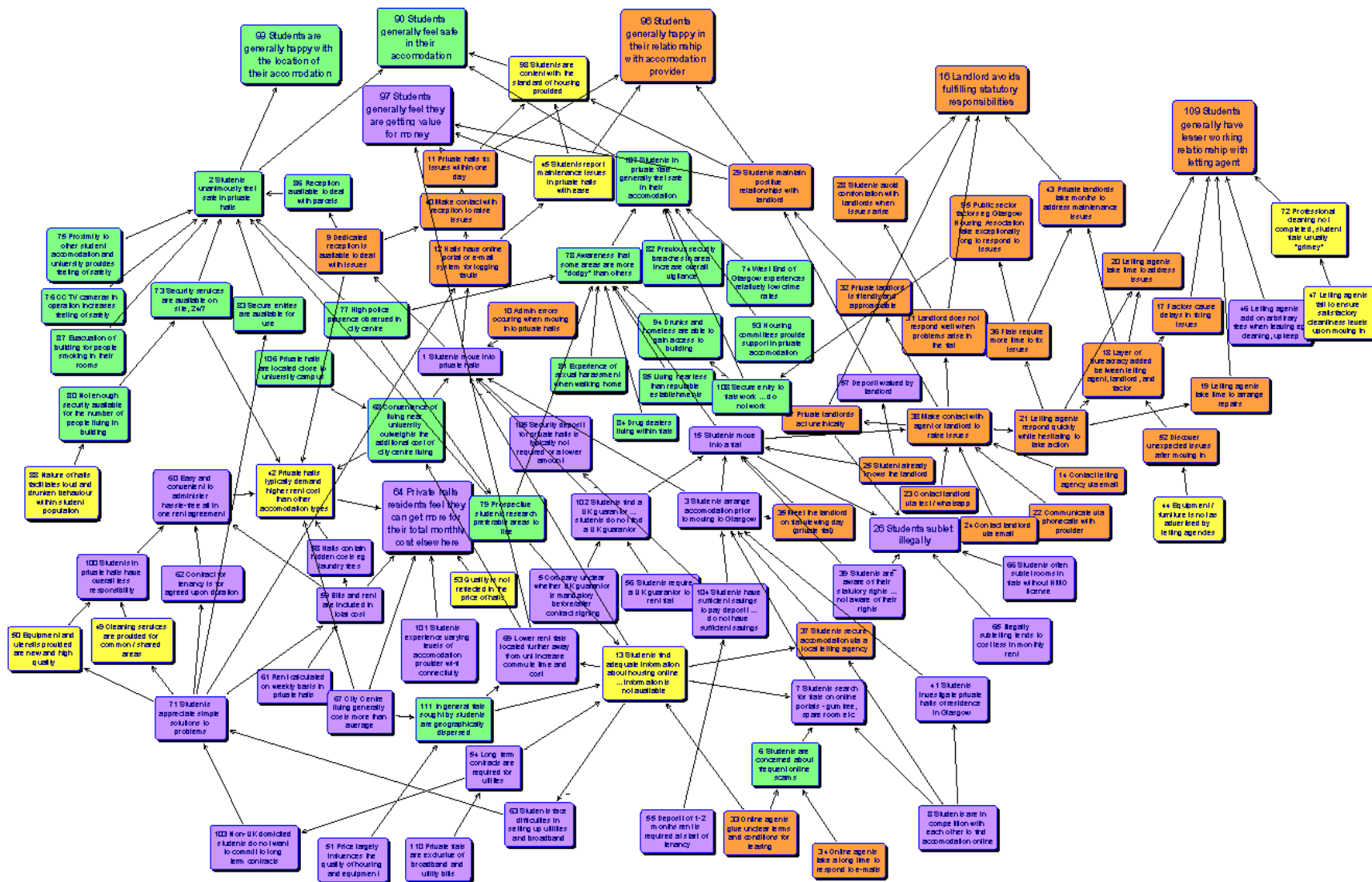
P3: Because they're understaffed (lolz)

M: Mostly the east end and Easterhouse and Gorbals.

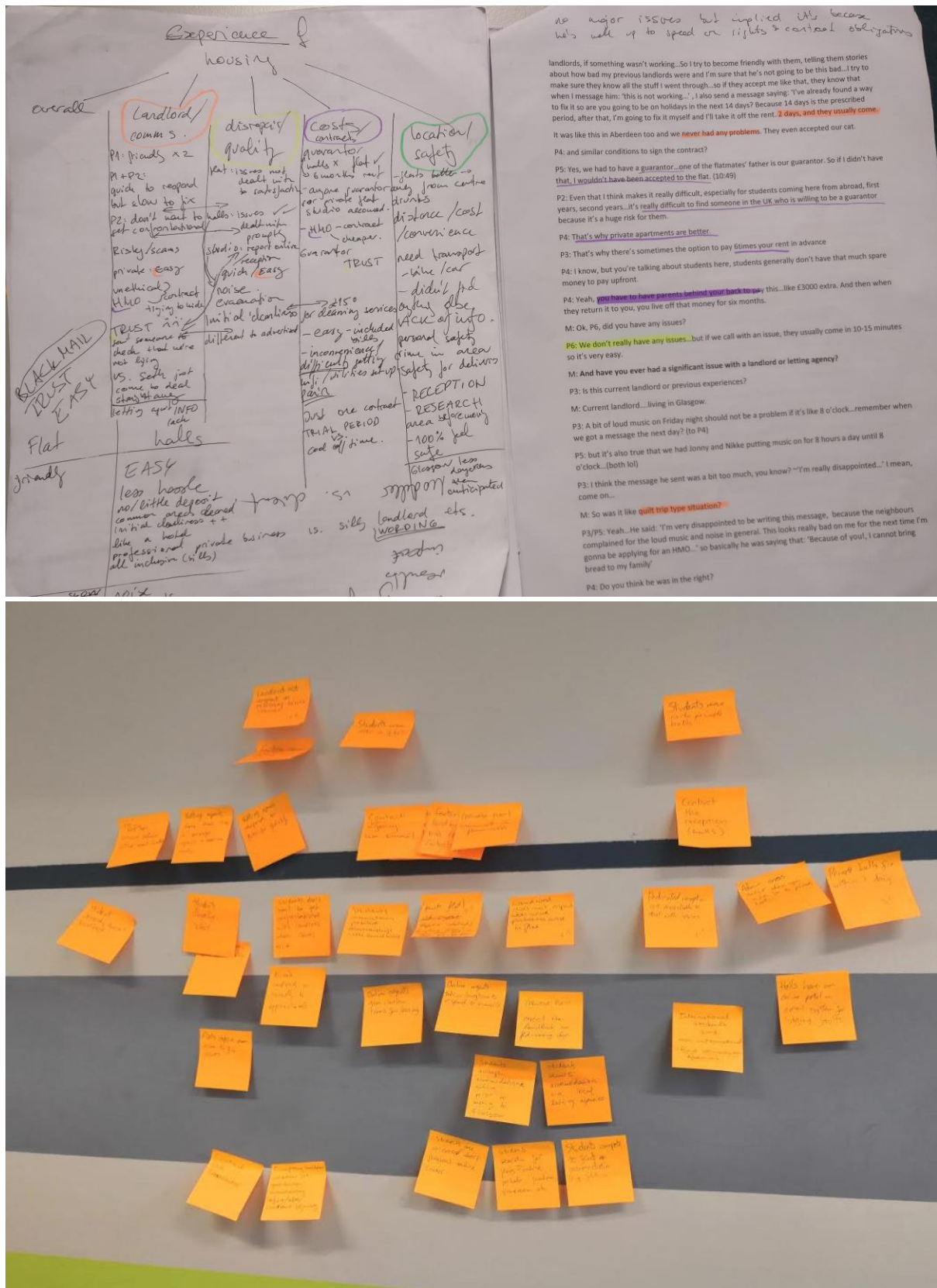
P5: I feel that people can moderate themselves in a way that if you're doing something stupid, they'll tell you off...If you do something stupid with your bicycle, they tell you...you know...it's a nice community.

M: Thank you. I think that's it....help yourself to cake!

## Appendix D: Cognitive Map

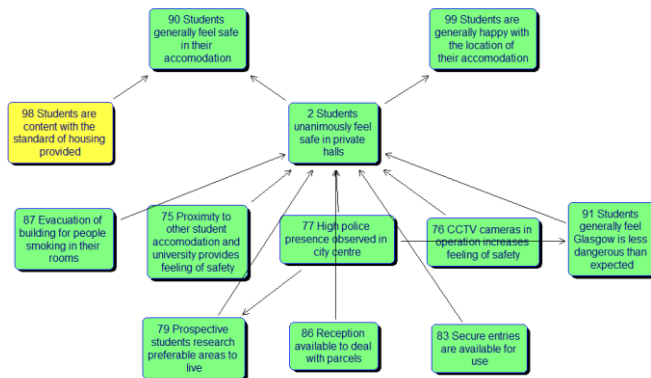


## Appendix E: Theme identification process

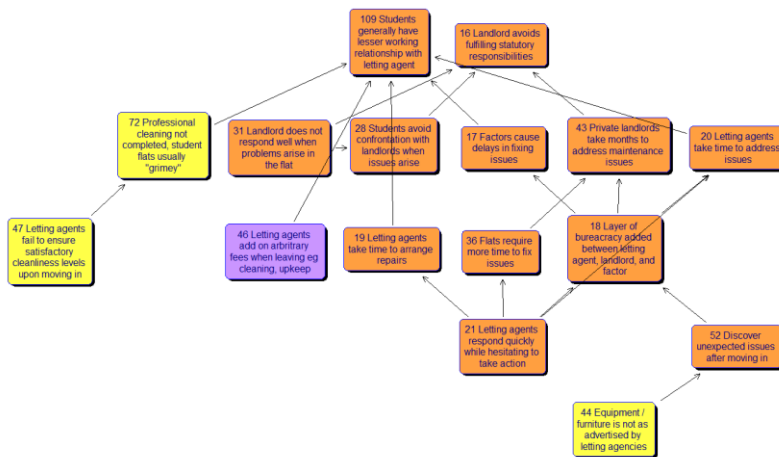


## Appendix F: Clusters

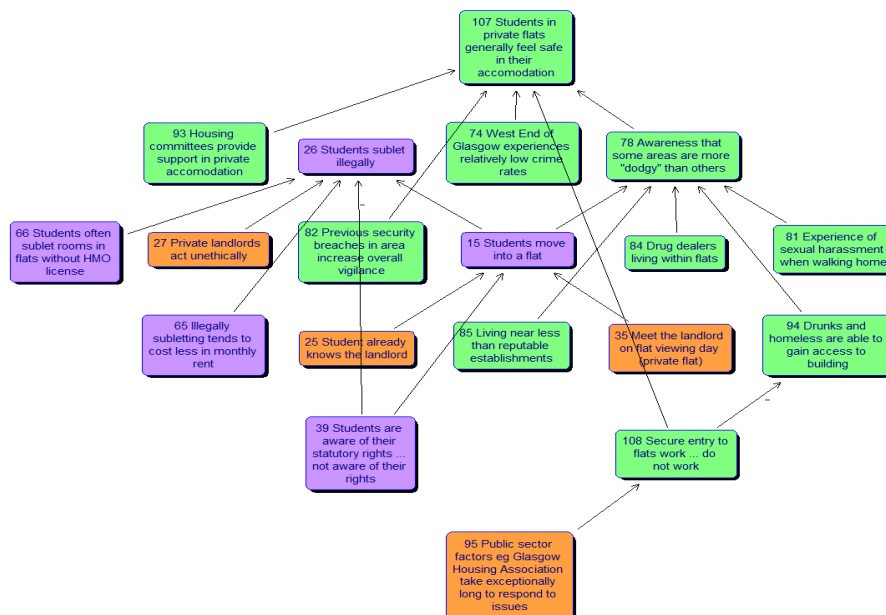
### Cluster 1 – Reasons for students unanimously feeling safe in private halls



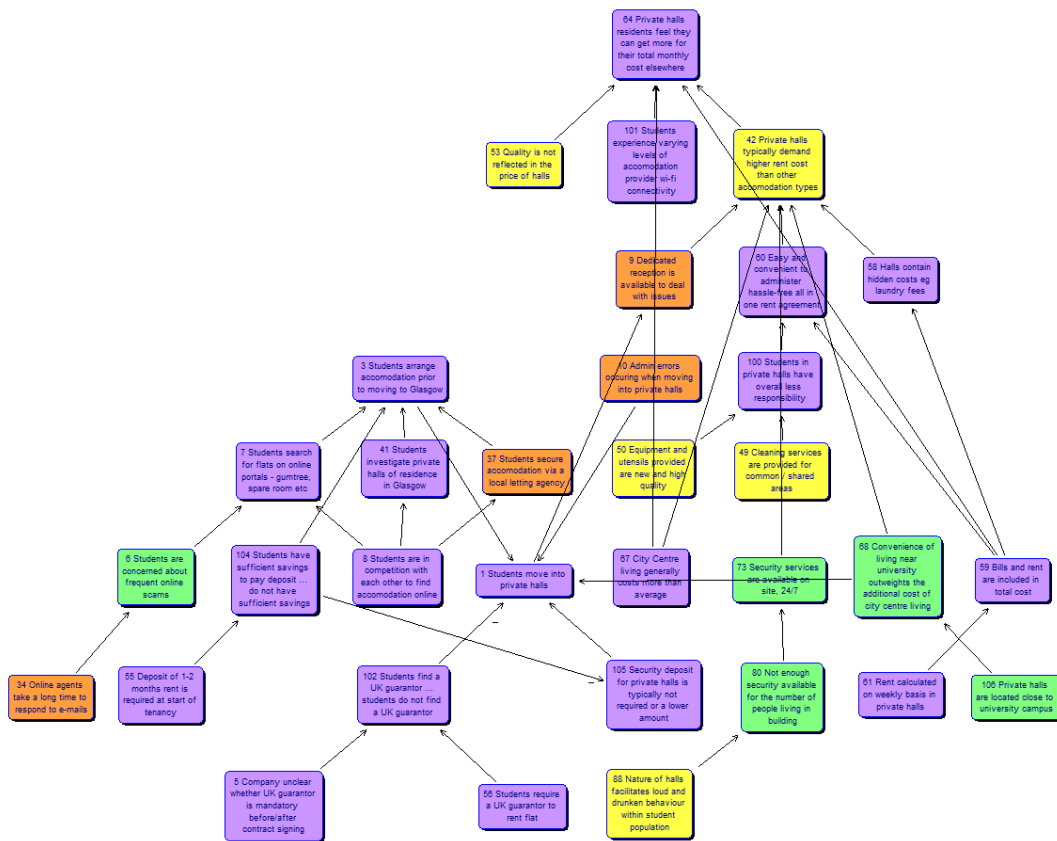
### Cluster 2 – Negative actions leading to poor relationship between students and private landlords/letting agents



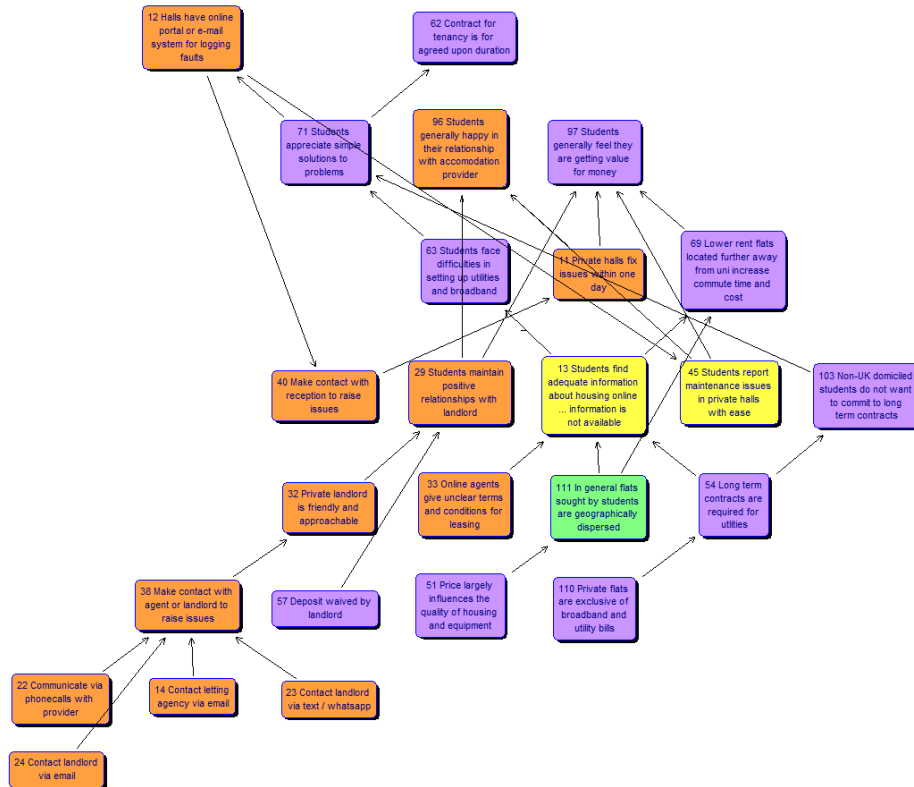
### Cluster 3 – Actions leading to and causing students to sublet illegally



## Cluster 4 – Reasons why students in private halls feel they can get better value for money



## Cluster 5 – Process of raising issues with accommodation provider



## Appendix G: Quantitative data/ summary statistics

Gender	participant no.	type	costs (pounds per month)	include bills?	deposit (pounds)
f	1	flat	450	yes	250
f	2	flat	370	yes	525
m	3	flat	550	yes	450
m	4	halls	500	yes	150
m	5	flat	550	yes	450
m	6	n/a	400	yes	400
m	7	halls	520	yes	125
f	8	flat	500	yes	475
m	9	flat	390	yes	250
m	10	halls	516	yes	150
f	11	flat	440	yes	400
f	12	halls	436	yes	not provided
f	13	flat	450	no	no deposit
m	14	halls	504	yes	no deposit
m	15	halls			20% of total (1 year)
f	16	halls	696	yes	2088
f	17	halls	350	yes	
m	18	flat			no deposit
m	19	halls			no deposit
m	20	halls	680	yes	not provided
m	21	halls	680		not provided
m	22	halls	432	yes	1296
m	23	flat	not provided	no	not provided
m	24	halls	520	yes	~250, not specified
m	25	halls	488	yes	250
m	26	flat	330	not provided	no deposit

Average rent halls £451.57

Average rent flats £366.36

flat: 11 (42%)

halls: 14 (54%)

n/a: 1 (4%)

Average calculated using total participants, includes non-responses, therefore averages are likely to underestimate the true cost

## Appendix H: Central statements

Rank	Concept	Theme	Centrality Score
1 (most central)	Students find adequate information about housing online...information is not available	Repairs and quality	28 from 59 concepts
2	Students move into a flat	Costs and contracts	27 from 56 concepts
3	Students move into private halls	Costs and contracts	27 from 55 concepts
4	Students unanimously feel safe in private halls	Location and safety	26 from 52 concepts
5	Awareness that some areas are more "dodgy" than others	Location and safety	25 from 55 concepts
6	Prospective students research preferable areas to live	Location and safety	24 from 54 concepts
7	Make contact with agent or landlord to raise issues	Landlord and communications	24 from 48 concepts
8	Students arrange accommodation prior to moving to Glasgow	Costs and contracts	24 from 54 concepts
9	Students appreciate simple solutions to problems	Costs and contracts	23 from 49 concepts
10	Dedicated reception is available to deal with issues	Landlord and communications	22 from 52 concepts
11	Students find a UK guarantor ... students do not find a UK guarantor	Costs and contracts	21 from 50 concepts
12	Halls have online portal or e-mail system for logging faults	Landlord and communications	21 from 46 concepts
13	Private halls typically demand higher rent cost than other accommodation types	Repairs and quality	20 from 43 concepts
14	High police presence observed in city centre	Location and safety	19 from 43 concepts
15	Convenience of living near university outweighs the additional cost of city centre living	Location and safety	19 from 44 concepts
16	Lower rent flats located further away from uni increase commute time and cost	Costs and contracts	18 from 41 concepts
17	In general flats sought by students are geographically dispersed	Location and safety	17 from 39 concepts
18	Students in private flats generally feel safe in their accommodation	Location and safety	17 from 36 concepts
19	Students generally feel safe in their accommodation	Location and safety	17 from 38 concepts
20	Security services are available on site, 24/7	Location and safety	16 from 35 concepts