



Leading Change: Energy Efficiency & Action Training

Student Energy Action for Life
November 2025



Transforming education so people protect the climate and nature



Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS UK) is an educational charity, who support students and wider society to learn, act and lead for environmental justice.

Our mission statement is to transform education, so people protect the climate and nature. By this, we mean that we are fighting to make sure everyone develops a commitment to protecting the earth and puts it to work – whether it's at school, university or in their careers or later life.

SOS UK runs programmes to create positive action for sustainability, as well as running systems-change projects and campaigns to deliver long-lasting shifts towards a more just and sustainable future.

[Home - SOS UK](#)

What is Energy Efficiency?

‘The process of reducing the amount of energy required to provide products and services’

Using less energy to perform the same task, eliminating energy waste.

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Reducing demand for energy imports
- Lowering our costs on a household and economy-wide level.

[Energy Efficiency | EESI](#)

Renewable energy - <https://www.eesi.org/topics/renewable-energy/description>

Energy efficiency programs

Supporting students to save energy in their accommodation.

- Award winning programs that engage students on sustainability in residences.
- Sector leading Homes Fit for Study research.
- Students are supported from halls to private renting.

Green Campus Revolution 

18 GCR has been running for 18 years

1.5 million We have reached more than 1.5 million students

8 GCR has been delivered in eight countries across Europe

17,000 17,000 tonnes CO₂ has been saved



Our work on home energy efficiency is based on 18 years of organisational experience in supporting students to save energy in their accommodation. This began with our award-winning Green Campus Revolution program which engages students on sustainability in on-campus residences. This work is supported by our bi-annual Homes Fit for Study Research, which collects more in-depth student views on student accommodation and what issues they are facing in student living.

Through this work, students are supported by us from halls to transitioning to private renting, but there was a gap in more specific support for students living in private housing and collaborating with landlords is a huge part of this too. This led to the creation of the SEAL project...

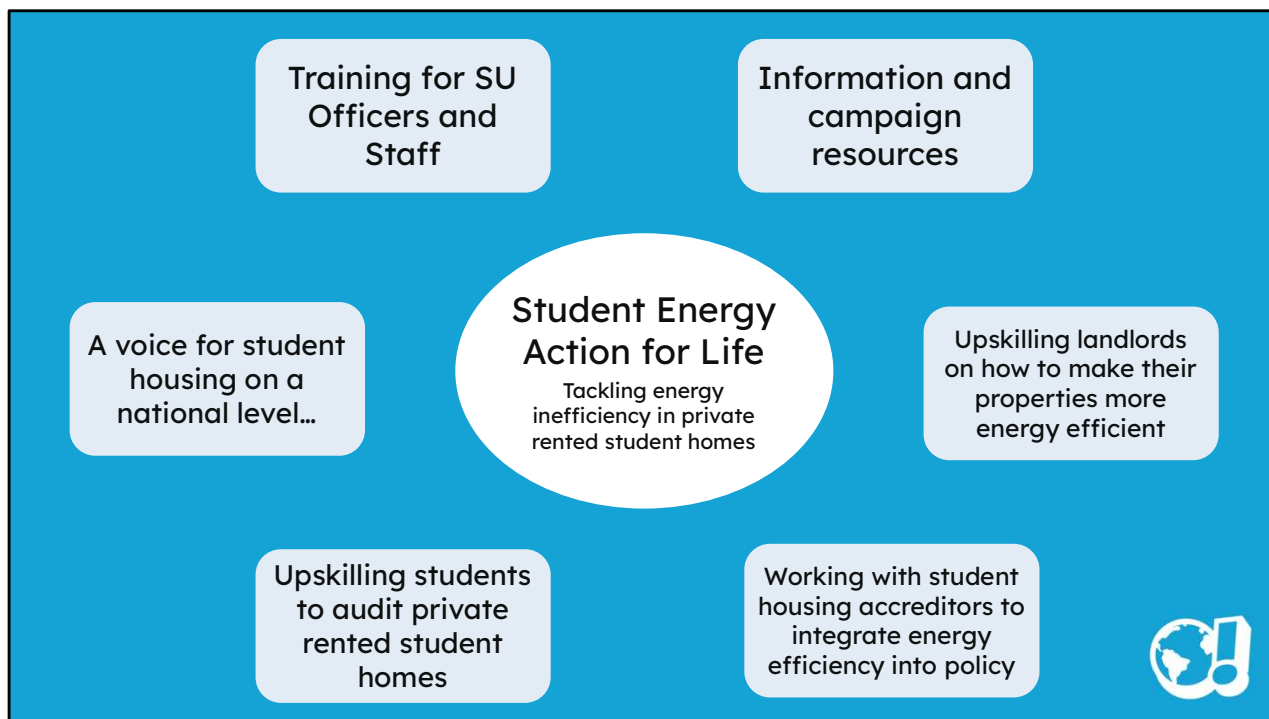
Student Energy Action for Life (SEAL)
addresses the critical challenges faced by
students as they navigate the complexities of
the home energy system.



The Student Energy Action for Life project [[Student Energy Action for Life - SOS UK](#)] or SEAL for short, is a five-year, UK-wide initiative dedicated to address the critical challenges faced by students as they navigate the complexities of the home energy system, and that aims to improve energy efficiency of private-rented homes and to lead the transformation to a better student housing landscape.

Thanks to National Lottery players, we received around £1.25million from The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest community funder in the UK. This comes from the Climate Action Fund, which support communities across the UK to take action on climate change and involve more people in climate action.

The project seeks to empower students with the knowledge and resources they need to navigate the home energy system, as well as seeking to collaborate with landlords, to educate and to upskill them on home energy efficiency, in the hope that we can connect landlords and their tenants to build a more energy efficient future for student housing.



To break our work down a little bit more, this begins with the training that you're in now! We hope that from this training, you will feel equipped with the knowledge and skills to tackle the student housing crisis, and can then collaborate with SOS UK to be able to do so.

To go alongside this, we are producing information and campaign resources that we can supply to students and students' unions, and we can also bring to our campus visit opportunities, which I will touch on later on.

We are also taking a new approach for SOS UK in working with landlords directly to educate and upskill them, as already mentioned. We will be doing this by delivering training that has been developed in collaboration with NEA. This work with landlords is definitely something we can work with you on to integrate into your student housing campaigns, and I will discuss later on too.

To support this work with landlords, we are also working with student housing accreditors to work more closely with their landlords, and

where we are able to, to integrate energy efficiency into more specific student housing policy. This work is already underway at Aston, Manchester and Swansea, and we have also opened up collaboration opportunities with Unipol, the student housing charity.

We also have opportunities for students to get involved with the project more directly too. This is a paid opportunity with us for students to train with us to audit their own home, as well as others in their local area, to assess energy efficiency in the property and what improvements could be made. Later this year, we will also be rolling out an online learning programme for students to upskill on home energy, which is again being developed with NEA, which we are really excited about!

Finally, there is quite significant legal reform that will soon change the private renting landscape, we hope, for the better. We contribute to ongoing policy discussions and to consultations on changes to EPCs and to the Renters' Rights Act,, to articulate the student perspective and to look to find a way forward for student renting that works for both students and landlords.

The Current Landscape



59% of students in the private rented sector have felt **uncomfortably cold** in their current accommodation



54% of students living in the private rented sector report **issues with damp and mould.** (45% for non-student renters)



49% of students are living in **draughty or poorly insulated** accommodation



In 2022, 40% of households where the billpayer is in full-time education were **experiencing fuel poverty.**



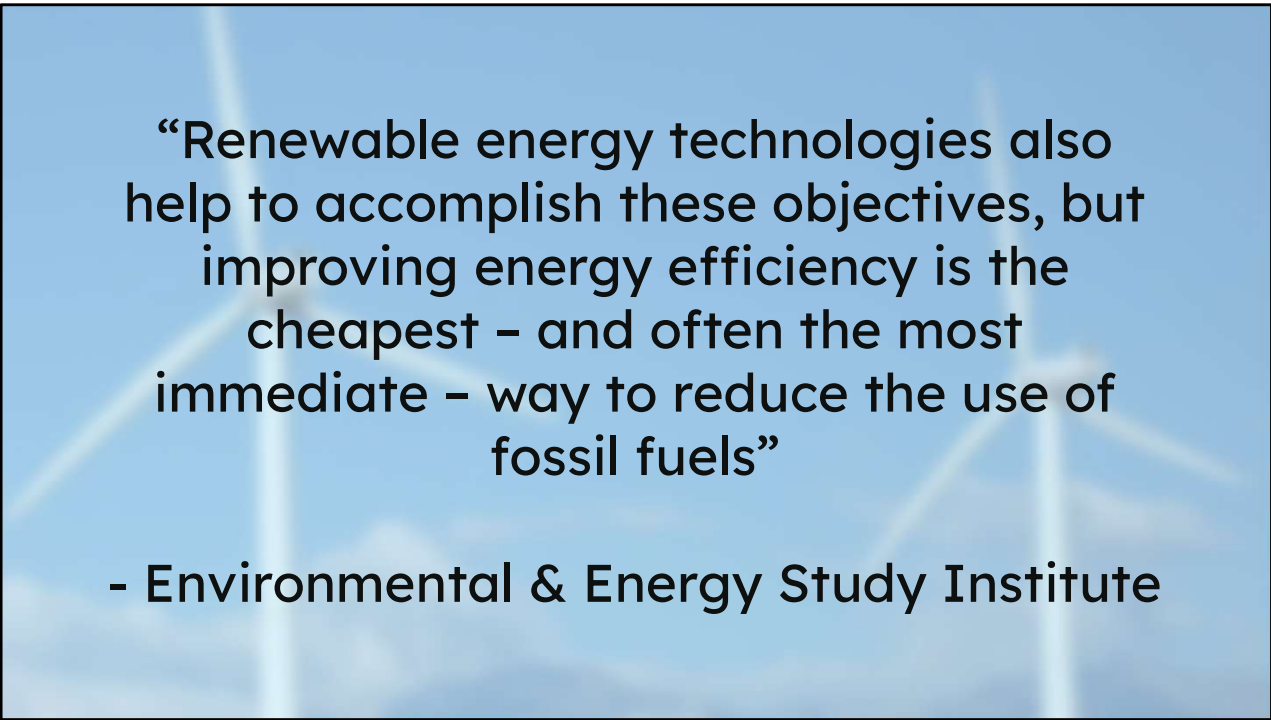
Income after housing and energy costs for students is an **average of £250 below the state definition of household poverty.**

The first 3 of these statistics come directly from SOS UK'S HFFS research.

- 59% of students in the private rented sector have felt uncomfortably cold in their current accommodation
- 54% of students living in the private rented sector report issues with damp and mould, which compares to 45% for non-student renters.
- 49% of students are living in draughty or poorly insulated accommodation – this could be thin walls, single glazed or old windows, or big gaps underneath doors.

The final 2 statistics come from the Government's Annual Fuel Poverty Reports, as published by WonkHE, and this contextualises some of the information from NEA into the student housing landscape

- In 2022, 40% of households where the billpayer is in full-time education were experiencing fuel poverty.
- Income after housing and energy costs for students is an average of £250 below the state definition of household poverty.

The background of the slide features a blurred image of several white wind turbines against a clear blue sky. The turbines are positioned at various angles, creating a sense of motion and renewable energy.

“Renewable energy technologies also help to accomplish these objectives, but improving energy efficiency is the cheapest – and often the most immediate – way to reduce the use of fossil fuels”

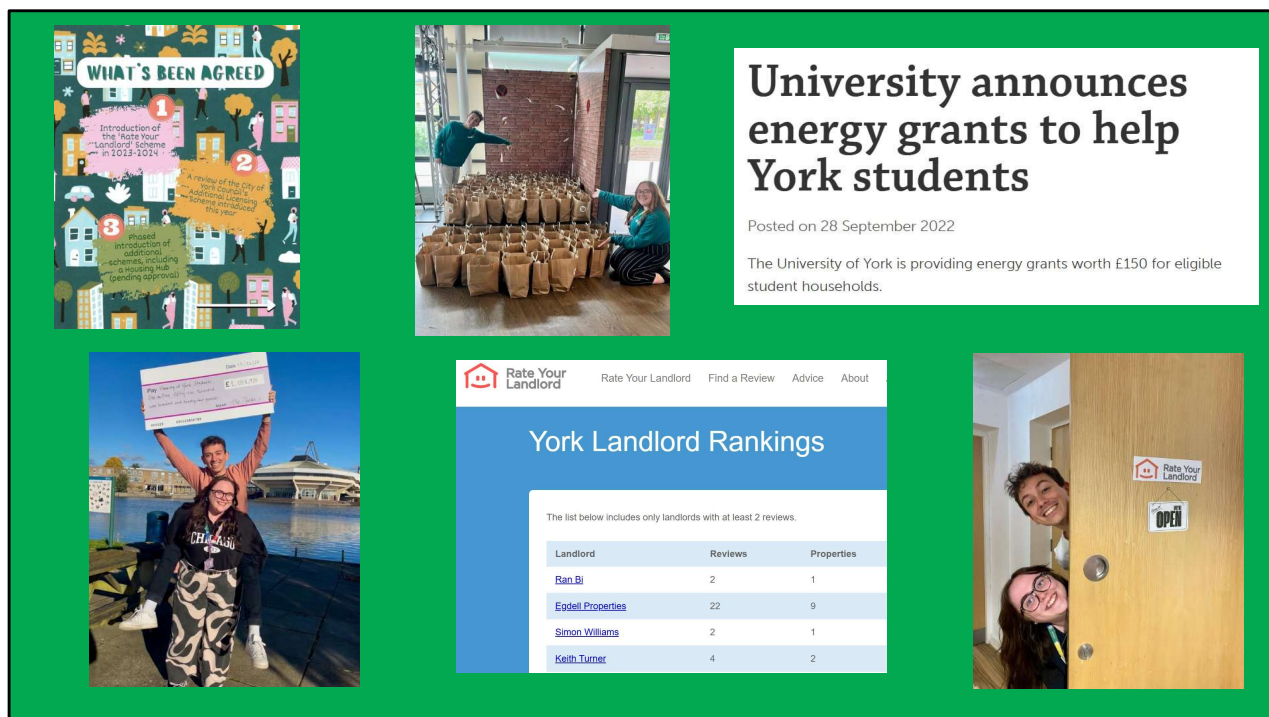
- Environmental & Energy Study Institute



Housing Campaigns 101

Campaigning skills for Students' Unions, Incorporating home energy efficiency into housing campaigns, Renters' rights

Hannah Nimmo
Project Manager, SOS UK



So I have added this in a bit of an explanation of my background but also to transition us into the campaign building section, and that is because I myself, am a former Sabb! I was Community & Wellbeing Officer at the University of York Students' Union from 2022-2024, and my campaign focuses as an officer were on public transport, housing and the cost of living crisis, which kicked into high gear really when I started as an officer.

Some examples of campaign wins that I had were organising the first ever financial aid targeted at home energy bills for students during the energy crisis in winter 2022. This was called the Household Energy Grant, and the University agreed to pay £150 to all eligible households to hopefully cover the shortfall in increased energy prices. Following on from this, the SU and the University began to build a strategy for improving student housing in the city of York, which led to the development of Rate Your Landlord York, which is a scheme organised by Unipol whereby students are able to anonymously rate their property and their landlord on a series of metrics including dealing with issues and repairs in the property, value for money and the broader

letting process – holds landlords accountable.

Supply vs Demand

Damp & Mould

Cold Homes

What issues do we need to tackle in student housing?

Too expensive

Timeliness of repairs

Broken/damaged/
bad appliances

These are the common issues we see across the sector, go through each one by one

- Supply vs demand: either there aren't enough houses to go around, or that there are lots of vacant bedspaces.
- Damp & mould: mix of tenant behaviour and poor housing infrastructure – SOS UK/NEA student e-learning course to upskill on this, landlord training on how to be more energy efficient
- Cold homes: draughty & poorly insulated homes, as mentioned in HFFS research
- Too expensive – links to supply & demand – there are a lot of vacant accommodation spaces, quite often in big cities, because accommodation is unaffordable, so students are living in other nearby towns and cities where housing is cheaper.
- Timeliness of repairs – landlords taking a long time to complete repairs. Explain how Awaab's law will change this.
- Broken/damaged/bad appliances – this also ties into energy efficient appliances and to repairs, all of which can mean homes consume more energy without the tenants even realising.

“But I don’t care about the environment”

“I don’t pay for my energy bills”

“I live on campus, so I don’t need to do anything”

“This issue doesn’t affect me”

“My bills are included in my rent”

“Living in bad-quality housing is normal for students”

“My landlord doesn’t care”

To consider: How do we engage people in sustainability campaigns when they might not be interested in sustainability? – The intersection between sustainability and housing

These are common things that we hear when we speak to students or do campus visits – some of these are things students have said to me at housing fairs over the last few weeks.

There is a question here on how do we engage people in campaigns that they don't think are relevant to them (e.g., living on-campus or are bills included), if they aren't interested in sustainability and therefore see information on energy efficiency as irrelevant, if they are just relatively passive to campaigns or they are fatigued by information overload on social media.

Finding a common ground – do they have poor quality housing – damp/mould/cold home etc? Is there rent/bills/outgoings too expensive? Are they struggling with cost of living? Is their wellbeing negatively impacted by their home/living situation?

Is bills-included really better?



Supporting returning students to avoid expensive utility packages is one of the goals of a new Energy Advice Service launched at the University of Reading.

Research by Reading Students' Union has shown how students using so-called 'unlimited' energy packages in private rented accommodation pay an average of £1,500 more per household annually, compared to those setting up more traditional contracts with individual utilities suppliers (based on data for 'high' energy usage). For

'medium' energy usage, that average can be up to £2,200 per household. In extreme cases (based on 'high' energy usage figures), students could be asked to pay up to £2,690 more per year than they would typically pay using traditional energy providers. The data was obtained in March 2025 and prices may have since varied.

The students' union's research found some student-focused letting agents are receiving commission for recommending expensive 'unlimited' packages. While students may think these deals are easier to setup and provide convenient fixed payments, many may be paying significantly more overall.

News article - [Students paying extra for unlimited energy bills - University of Reading](#)

What can you campaign on?

- Housing and Tenants' Rights
- General housing quality and standards
- Improving Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) in student homes
- Building relationships between Universities, Students' Unions and Landlords -> improve the relationship with students too!
- Approved student homes/landlords - do you have these? What criteria do the homes/landlords have to meet?
- Impacts of tenant behaviour – encouraging students to use homes in the best/most energy efficient way
- Highlighting profit of energy companies and helping students to save on energy bills, wherever possible



There are many things in this area that you can campaign on, and hopefully the training so far has given you some ideas, but these are some of the more targeted asks for the SEAL project in terms of things we would like to see campaigns on and changes made.

Information campaigns



This is an example of a campaign that you could run as a quick and easy infocampaign, which is a technique that is often used with typically younger target audiences, such as students. This is a campaign that came from my SU social media account from when I was an Officer where we shared some advice on how students can reduce their household bills and to give them a bit of an introduction to home energy efficiency.

In this graphic, we kept it quite simple with 7 tips, an example of which you can see in the middle here, as well as some relevant advice and guidance for students. This post was made as part of our cost of living support work, so we included this support, but you may also want to reference some of the advice and support you have learned or been given from today's session, as all of our resources will be shared after the session, and you will also be able to follow up with the SEAL team for advice and guidance on this work too. If you are ever unsure, please do ask us!

Why is this important? – students don't know what EE is, but it has a

huge intersection with housing quality - SEAL conducted 3 focus groups with students to examine how they would like information about housing and home energy to be given to them, and even then, students were confused on what home energy efficiency had to do with damp and mould, for example - students aren't actually always aware that damp and mould can be a direct result of the home's energy efficiency.

I am currently designing up mock posts like this for SUs to take and post without additional work/edits being needed - these will be sent out in our SU campaigns toolkit! However, lots of Dean's NEA content could be really useful for this, and SOS can help to support you in how to convert your learning from today into campaigning materials for your students.



Campaign Building - top tips

- Always have a **call to action**
- Think outside of social media
- Do your research - always **reference sources** for information/statistics
 - Students have told us they are less likely to believe information when it is presented without a source!
- Have a headline – the clear message that people take away - this should also tie into your call to action
- Make a plan – who/what/why/when/how
 - Will be sending out a template for this in the campaign toolkit!

You know your student population the best – think about what the message is that the students want to hear from your union, and how you can best relay this to them in a way that inspires action and makes change.

SEAL campaign toolkit will be coming to you soon!



Students vs Landlords



Students 🤝 Landlords

Framing messages to encourage action from both sides

Working with Landlords

Community interest &
finding common ground

Use your allies:
University, LAs, MPs,
tenants' unions

What are the mutual
benefits for students
and landlords?

Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)

Tells you how energy efficient a building is, how costly it is to heat and light, and what its CO₂ emissions are likely to be.

EPCs rate a home from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient).

- Cost effective ways to improve your EPC rating
- Potential new rating if suggested improvements are made

EPCs are valid for 10 years from the date of issue. In rented properties, are the legal responsibility of the landlord to maintain.

Tells you how energy efficient a building is, how costly it is to heat and light, and what its CO₂ emissions are likely to be. - assess a building's energy efficiency.

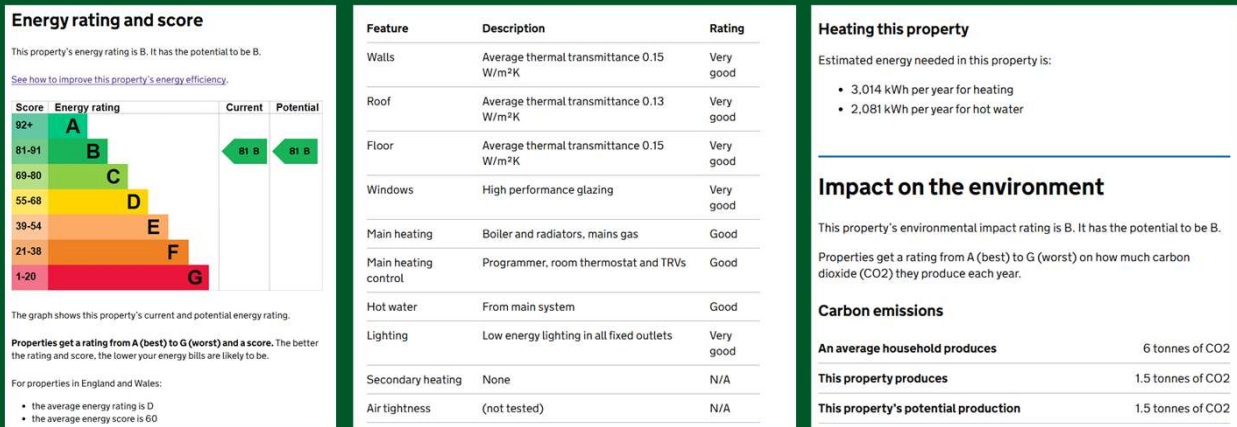
It provides a rating from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient) and includes information about energy use, costs, and recommendations for improvement. EPCs are required when selling, renting, or constructing a property, and for private renters, are a legal requirement, and tenants should be given a copy of their EPC with the tenancy agreement.

Even if you rent your home, you could still implement some improvements noted on the EPC, such as switching to more energy efficient light bulbs.

[Energy performance certificates \(EPCs\) explained - Energy Saving Trust](#)

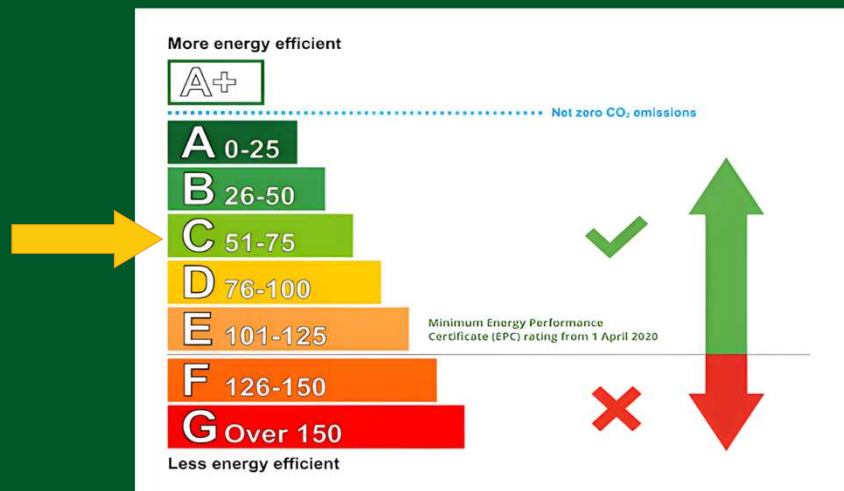
Check your EPC - [Find an energy certificate - GOV.UK](#)

What does an EPC look like?



Highlight – average EPC is D in UK – this is soon to become below the minimum legal standard...

Legal Reform for EPCs



The current legal standing is that, as you can see in the image, EPCs should be at a minimum of Grade E to be legally compliant and to deem the property as 'liveable'. However, as part of the Government's mission to become net zero by 2050, they have proposed a change to increase the minimum Grade of EPC to Grade C instead. This is a change that will affect England, Wales and Scotland, because Northern Ireland doesn't currently have such minimum standards set, but it is expected that Northern Ireland will soon be introducing legal reforms for renting in the People's Housing Bill, which will include minimum energy efficiency standards too – can support individual nations Officers with these processes on a 121 basis.

This was consulted on by the Government about 6 months ago, and SOS UK completed this consultation on behalf of the student community. From our perspective at SOS UK, the proposed changes are a huge step in the right direction to make homes more energy efficiency and to improve the quality of student homes and to future-proof good quality homes.

Having said that, the reality of this change is that landlords whose properties do not currently meet the new requirements will have to incur costs to make improvements to their properties, and this is pretty unavoidable. However, our main concern is that these costs will just be passed on from the landlord to the tenant, and that because of this, we will see another increase in rent prices for private tenants, including students. Either this, or that landlords will be disincentivised to spend money and will therefore just put their houses up for sale and pull out of the rental market altogether, resulting in a shortage of student houses.

As such, in our response, we advocated for increasing financial aid that is available to landlords to support with the rollout of new regulations and to encourage more energy efficient behaviour, as this is core to our project. Also, if landlords have additional funding for these changes, then the cost will also not get passed onto students, so this is the ideal solution for us.

We are expecting the final reforms to be announced soon!



The main thing everyone is looking out for at the moment, though, is the Renters' Rights Act, which is now being finalised in central government

The Renters' Rights Act, or sometimes called Renters Reform, is a proposed law designed to improve the rights of people renting a home. It aims to provide greater security and stability for renters. This Bill directly applies to renting in England, but also impacts renting in Scotland and Wales too, who's Parliaments are either working through rental reforms themselves, or have already implemented changes. A People's Housing Bill has also been proposed in Northern Ireland, and it is expected that the final Bill in England is likely to influence some of the new policy in NI.

I will be going through some of the changes in the next few slides, as a lot of you said this was information you wanted to get from today's training, but the Act sounds like it will bring long-awaited changes, but the impact of all of this is still yet to be determined, and something that I think students and students' unions will feel the impact of quite

significantly when it happens.

What is changing for student renting?

From **1st May 2026...**

- For all renters, an end to fixed-term tenancies, with rented tenancies existing on a 'month-by-month' or rolling basis
 - You must give a minimum of 2-months notice to exist a rolling tenancy

What is changing for student renting?

- However, students are subject to Ground 4A
 - A mandatory possession ground that allows landlords of properties letting to full-time students (including HMOs or PBSA) to regain possession at the end of the academic year to re-let to other students, with conditions and transitional provisions for existing tenancies.
 - This repossession period runs from June-September, final dates are TBC.

Ground 4A: Ground 4A is a mandatory possession ground under the Renters' Rights Act 2025 allowing landlords of properties letting to full-time students (including HMOs or PBSA) to regain possession at the end of the academic year to re-let to other students, with conditions and transitional provisions for existing tenancies.

What is changing for student renting?

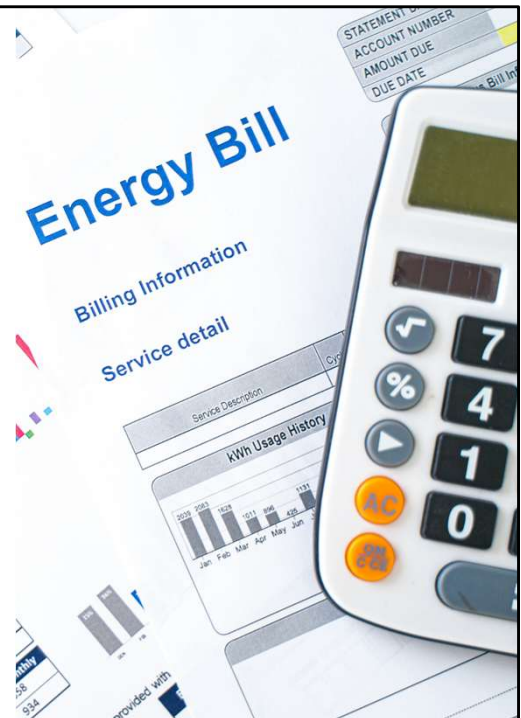
- End to Section 21 evictions – landlords will need to seek legal reason to evict tenants (with a Section 8 notice)
- Landlords will only be able to increase rents once per year and must give at least 2 months notice to increase.
- Landlords can only ask for up to 1-month's rent in advance, and 'rent bidding' is forbidden
 - Guarantors for international students?

Got any questions on this? Get in touch – Hannah.Nimmo@sos-uk.org

Navigating the Energy Market

In the first instance, Student Union advice services, or University housing/specialist associations or advisors.

- [National Energy Action](#)
- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [Ofgem – UK's energy regulator](#)
- [Government Household Energy Advice](#)
- [Smart Energy GB](#)
- [Energy Saving Trust](#)
- [Energy Ombudsman](#)



We're here to help!



Tailor-made
resources and
campaigning
materials



1-to-1
campaign
support from a
member of
SOS-UK staff



Campus visit
opportunities



Campaign follow up with SU officers –
<https://forms.office.com/e/4bP3Vi4MSm>

SEAL LinkedIn group - <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13397024/>

**Homes Fit for Study –
Coming 2026**

Feedback Survey



<https://app.sli.do/event/qcrYjCQef8RXmLwKJsikUf>



Slido - <https://app.sli.do/event/qcrYjCQef8RXmLwKJsikUf>



**Do you have
any questions?**





Thank you!

Hannah Nimmo
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