

# The LSESU Halls Survey 2017

## Contents

Foreword.....	2
Introduction and Methodology.....	3
Rent Section .....	6
Welfare Section.....	11
Satisfaction Section .....	15
Catering Section .....	25
Halls Sports Activities Section.....	28
Halls Preference Section .....	29
Final Comments.....	33
Conclusion .....	36
Recommendations .....	37

## Foreword



Our halls are our homes. When we want to crawl into bed, when we want to eat dinner, or when we want to have friends over, our hall is our home and our space.

I am happy to introduce the 2016-2017 edition of the LSESU's Hall Survey, known as 'Your Hall, Your Call'. This year, unlike many previous years, the Union wanted to emphasize a particular point: halls are the homes of our students. Therefore, this year, 'Your Hall, Your Call' looked at aspects that transition halls from living spaces to homes- mental health, social spaces, food, and affordability of living. This survey intends to be a significant contribution to a wider and pressing conversation about how the School and the Union can continue to collaborate on building inclusive, supportive communities in every hall.

For the future, the Union will continue to work with the School on community building. Part of this will be implementing formalized structures to integrate these changes, and the Union hopes that this research will be integrated into the ongoing discussions on how to make the best changes for our students.

I want to thank the students who have taken the time to provide us with the feedback to enable us to write this survey. Our homes should be shaped by our input.

**Riham Mansour**

**LSESU Community and Welfare Officer 2016-2017**

## Introduction and Methodology

From 13 March to 26 March 2017, London School of Economics Students' Union (LSESU) conducted its annual research project of surveying students living in halls of residences. This was the largest research project undertaken by the Students' Union (SU) in academic year 2016/17.

### Background

LSESU began conducting an annual survey of students living in halls of residences a number of years ago. This was a response to feedback from students that LSE Residential Services did not respond well enough to issues they raised within their halls. Therefore this project began as a means of assessing student's satisfaction levels and seeking a better response to students concerns from the School. This situation has improved with Residential Services investing resources into the running of its own annual satisfaction survey and increasing the response rates significantly. The SU believes that the School is generally responsive to student's issues in halls; although this can always be improved.

Therefore the SU's survey has been redeveloped and refined, ensuring that it does not duplicate the School's annual survey. This process began in 2016, with the replacement of many of the original satisfaction questions with a new 'Future' section. These questions were an information gathering exercise, intended to inform the SU's strategic priorities and future activities. In 2017 the survey was further refined, including a new section focussing on mental health support and a focus on the social life and community aspects of halls.

### Methodology

Fieldwork was carried out through paper surveys (administered without direct participation) by LSESU staff in halls of residences and via an online survey. Not all halls were visited by LSESU staff due to resourcing; however the SU ensured that the online survey was promoted to students in those halls.

The online survey was promoted via:

- LSESU social media channels;
- Halls Facebook groups;
- Emails sent to students; and
- An email sent to Halls Committee Presidents.

The halls visited were:

- Bankside House;
- Butlers Wharf Residence;
- Carr-Saunders Hall;
- Grosvenor House;
- High Holborn Residence;

- Lilian Knowles House;
- Northumberland House;
- Passfield Hall;
- Rosebery Hall;
- Sidney Webb House; and

The LSE halls of residences not visited were:

- Urbanest King's Cross; and
- Urbanest Westminster.

### Responses

A total of 456 responses were received, which is a 1% decrease from the number of respondents from 2016. Of these responses, 212 were collected through the online questionnaire and 244 were collected in person by LSESU staff. At course level, 44% of respondents were undergraduates, 46% were postgraduate taught, 1% were postgraduate research students and 8% were General Course students.

There were differing response rates for each hall of residence; the halls with the highest response rates were Carr-Saunders, Northumberland House and Passfield. The halls with the lowest response rate were Urbanest Westminster Bridge, Bankside and Butler's Wharf. Please see the below table for a full breakdown of the response rates for each LSE hall of residence.

Finally, there were 23 students who cited that they lived outside of LSE halls of residences, of these, 11 respondents stated they lived in UoL halls and 12 students stated they resided in private halls of residence. Where questions relate directly to LSE accommodation these answers have been excluded.

Hall of Residence	Responses
Bankside House	5%
Butler's Wharf Residence	6%
Carr-Saunders Hall	23%
Grosvenor House	8%
High Holborn Residence	15%
Lilian Knowles House	6%
Northumberland House	23%
Passfield Hall	20%
Rosebery Hall	7%
Sidney Webb House	14%
Urbanest King's Cross	6%
Urbanest Westminster Bridge	1%

## Findings

The main findings of the survey are presented in the following report under the following headings:

- Rent;
- Welfare;
- Satisfaction;
- Catering;
- Halls Sports Activities;
- Halls Preference; and
- Final Comments.

Overall the survey revealed that students generally enjoy their time living in LSE halls of residences and that improvements made by Residential Services do have a positive impact. Nevertheless, the findings highlight that the cost of rent is a key issue for students and that annual rent increases is not sustainable in the long term. The findings showed that much more work needs to be done around fostering communities in halls. A lack of community in halls can impact not only their student experience but their mental health and wellbeing. Finally, the School needs to improve the provision of mental health support for students living in halls. In particular, there appears to be no clear referral pathways between Residential Services and the central support services, which needs to be addressed.

At the end of this report there are several recommendations, which if implemented, would improve halls of residences at LSE. The SU looks forward to working in partnership with LSE in implementing these recommendations.

## Rent Section

The cost of rent in London is expensive and can often be one of the largest expenses for students studying at LSE. The Students' Union has actively campaigned to freeze and reduce rents at LSE halls of residences, nevertheless the majority of rents in LSE halls continue to increase on an annual basis. The Students' Union believes that the rent levels of LSE halls are not sustainable and is a deterrent to studying at LSE, particularly to those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The School has frozen rents for shared rooms for the last three years, however there is much more that the School can and should do to make studying at LSE more affordable. Therefore this section of the survey sought to find out from students how they feel about the cost of LSE halls of residences

### I am satisfied with the rent that I pay?



Less than half of students were satisfied with the rent that they pay, with only 48% stating either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree'; which is a 2% increase from 2016. This leaves over half of students who either stated that they were either not satisfied (30%) or felt neutral about the rent that they pay (22%).

Students' dissatisfaction is further highlighted when analysing their comments on this question; the most frequently used word was 'Expensive'. The comments left for this question can be grouped into three categories:

*Expensive* – This was the largest group of comments left by students (58%) where they explicitly stated that the rent they pay is too high.

*Satisfied* – This category of comments (22%) were by students who stated that they were satisfied with the rent that they paid. Many of these comments were from students in shared rooms and others that stated that shorter contract lengths helped them keep costs low.

*Price Reduction* – This was the smallest grouping of comments left by students (20%), these suggested that due to disruption to their living space, such as being allocated a small room, construction work in or near their hall and maintenance issues, that the rent that they pay should be reduced.

*“The rent is extremely high”*

**Urbanest King’s Cross**

*“Friends at other unis like SOAS pay much lower rent and they live in the same area.”*

**Rosebery**

*“Considering I live in a shared room, the rent is fine, but I think Grosvenor charges too much for a single room especially considering it’s an LSE STUDENT ACCOMMODATION”*

**Grosvenor House**

*“Relatively cheap”*

**Sidney Webb House**

*“Rent is extraordinarily expensive and too much for many students. Personally, I am forced to work throughout the year just to afford rent which has impacted my studies.”*

**Passfield**

*“Could be a bit cheaper, but that’s London. LKH is still reasonably cheap compared to the other halls...”*

**Lilian Knowles House**

*“The triple room is good value - would not have been able to come to a London uni without.”*

**Passfield**

*“It is heavily overpriced for the quality of my room.”*

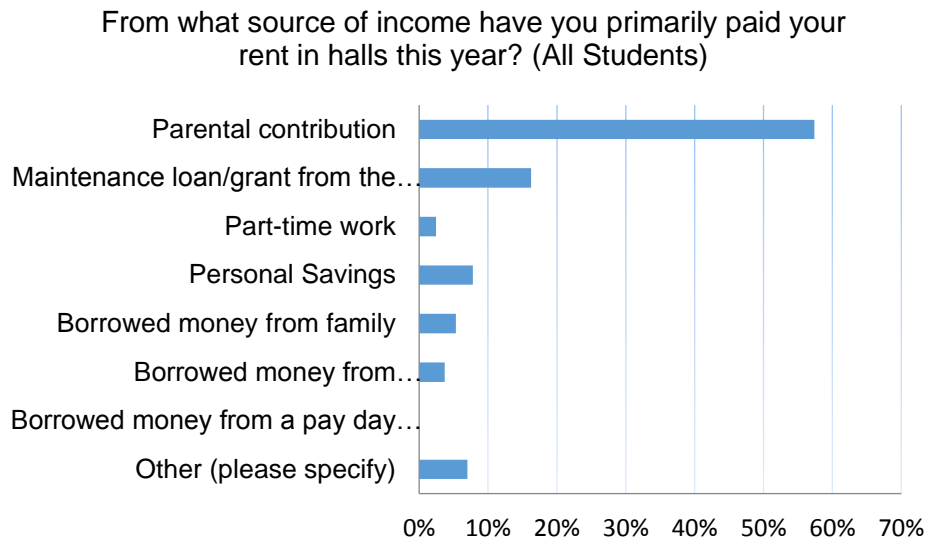
**Carr-Saunders**

*“Fair price for a double @ 140 PW. Though the singles at Bankside are overpriced”*

**Bankside**

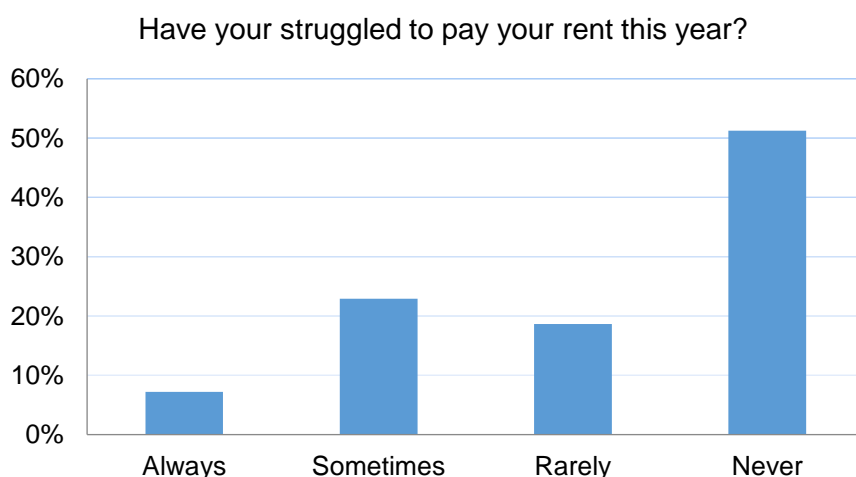


**From what source of income have you primarily paid your rent in halls this year?**



The results of this question showed that students overwhelmingly paid their rent (57%) through parental contribution. The only other significant source of income with 16% of responses was maintenance grants or loans from the UK Government. When this is broken down to a course level; at undergraduate level, 57% relied on parental income and 29% relied on funding from the UK Government. At postgraduate and General Course level, 58% stated that their main source of income was from parental contributions and their second largest source of income was from personal savings (12%).

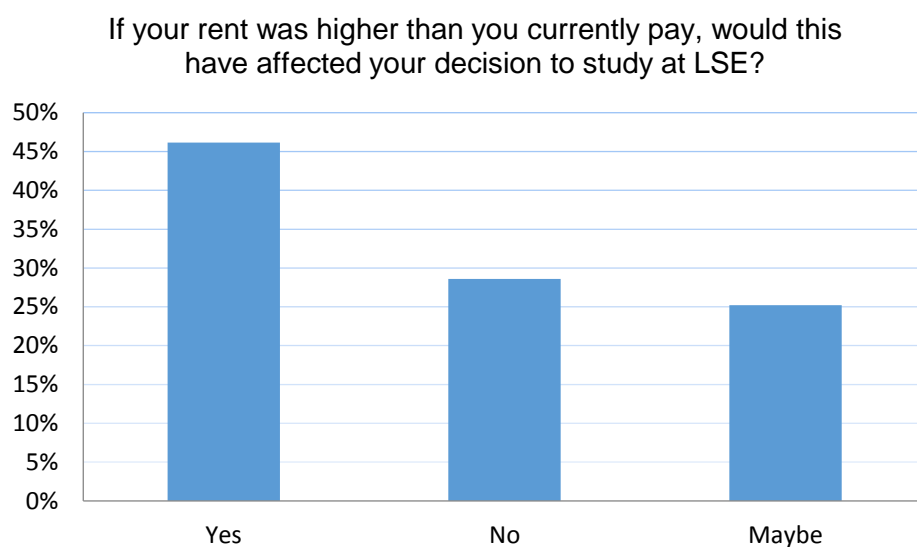
**Have you struggled to pay your rent this year?**



What is promising is that 51% of students stated that they had 'Never' struggled to pay their rent this year. However, 30% of students stated that they either 'Always' or 'Sometimes' struggled and from the comments left by these students, it appears that these students are

those who cannot 'rely' on parental contributions and therefore have to partially fund their own living costs. Many students commented that paying for their accommodation left them with very little left over to live on and that they struggled with overall costs of living in London. Others commented that being required to pay their rent in bulk payments caused issues in terms of budgeting and argued for alternative monthly payments.

**If your rent was higher than you currently pay, would this have affected your decision to study at LSE?**



It was disappointing that 46% of students stated that the cost of accommodation at LSE would have deterred them from studying at the School. From the comments left by students those said that who stated 'No' said that they would have chosen LSE halls of residences as they find the private rented sector in London too arduous.

**Analysis**

Studying in London is expensive, with the cost of rent being one of the greatest burdens on students' budgets. The SU firmly believes that the excessive cost of living in halls is a significant deterrent for those from low socio-economic backgrounds to choose to study at LSE. While the School introducing accommodation bursaries for students from low socio-economic backgrounds is a welcome step, this is not enough to offset annual rent increases. The perception of London and LSE as an expensive place to live begins before a prospective student even begins the application process; were LSE able to market itself as having cheaper accommodation, this could be a means to offset this.

This is clearly demonstrated by how many students rely on their parents to support their living costs at LSE halls at all levels of study. For students that require accommodation, it appears that the lived reality of being able to attend LSE is to rely on your parents being able to afford

to pay your rent. For those from low socio-economic backgrounds or even middle income families, this is not something they can aspire to and therefore, LSE is not attainable for them. This is particularly pertinent for postgraduate students, where with little funding available there is most reliance on the ability of their parents to pay for them. LSE should not become an institution where by only those whose parents can afford to pay their rent are able to study.

Further, the cost of LSE halls can have a detrimental effect on those currently studying at the School. Students who struggle to pay their rent appear to be those whose funding and parental contributions do not stretch far enough. Many of these students were postgraduates, where the assumption of 'the ability to pay' is strongest. As already noted postgraduate students have less funding available to them and therefore are more likely to rely on parental contributions. It is wrong to assume that postgraduate students – and international students – are from 'wealthy' backgrounds. For many, paying the excessive tuition fees is a drain on their resources and paying high accommodation costs leave them with little left over.

This is not to suggest that the School does not attempt to offset the issues identified above. The School has frozen rents on shared rooms for the last three years. While double and triple rooms are an effective means of providing affordable accommodation for students, this is quite a limited approach as little is known about the reasons why students choose shared rooms, whether it is an economic rationale or a preference to live with others. The School should undertake further research to look into which students choose shared rooms and their reasoning. This is not to suggest that shared rooms should be reserved for those from low socio-economic backgrounds; but if the School is prioritising rent freezes for these room types then measuring impact is essential.

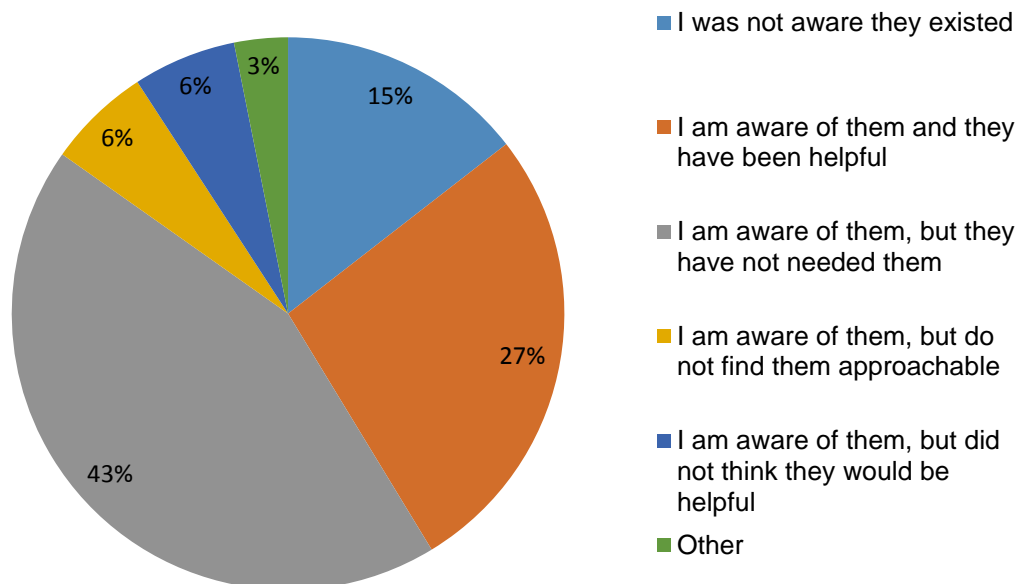
For other room types, the SU believes that annual rent increases are pricing out students and is not sustainable. The SU believes that all LSE rents should be frozen; failing this the SU would like LSE to prioritise reducing the cost of single (shared bathroom) rooms. The School should map the cost of rooms across bed types and halls, to ensure that there are not halls that students are being priced out of. LSE should then use this mapping exercise to look pragmatically to see where the price of single rooms in halls can be reduced – perhaps through offsetting the price reduction through a small increase in premium accommodation such as studios. This then needs to be built into a long term affordability strategy that looks at the cost of halls with a widening participation focus.

## Welfare Section

Ensuring that students are supported in their mental health and wellbeing is a key priority for the Students' Union; in 2016 LSESU undertook a large research project asking students about how they feel their [mental health and wellbeing is supported at LSE](#). This section of the survey sought to expand upon that research and look specifically at mental health and wellbeing in halls of residences.

### Which of these statements most reflects your experience with your Warden?

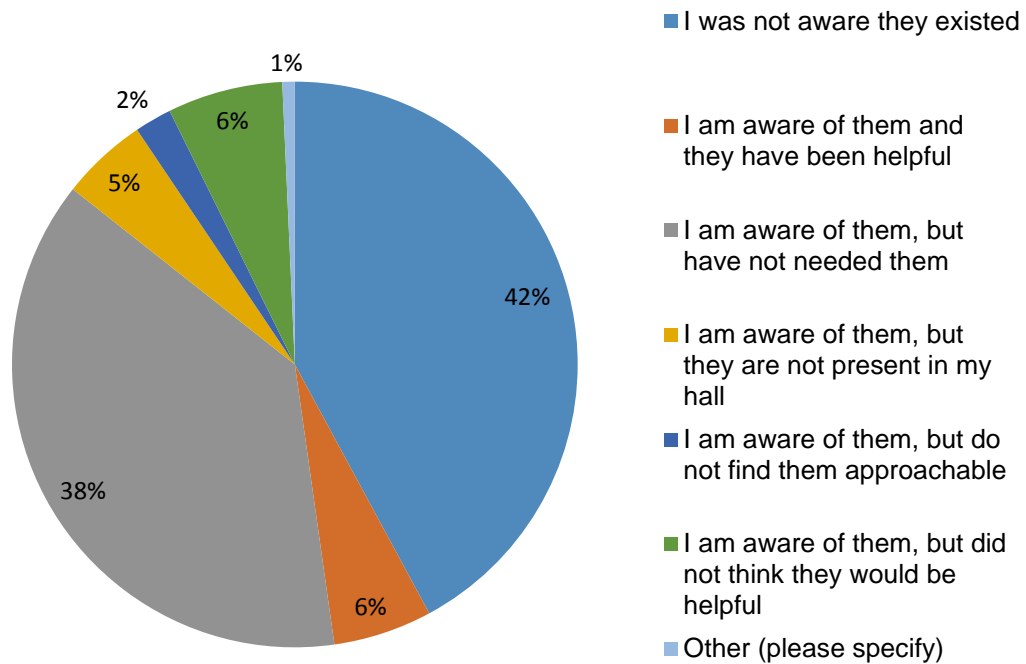
Which of these statements most reflects your experience with your Warden:



Wardens have a pastoral role and are responsible for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students living in their halls. Therefore it is promising that only 15% of respondents were not aware that there was a Warden in their hall of residence; and that only 12% stated they did not find them approachable or helpful. For the students who stated 'Other' around half of these comments were from students who gave specific compliments about their Warden; the other half were those stating they had contacted their Warden but they did not respond.

**Which of these statements most reflects your experience with halls Peer Supporters?**

Which of these statements most reflects your experience with halls Peer Supporters.



Peer Supporters play an important role in supporting students' mental health and wellbeing as they provide informal emotional support and assistance. Therefore, it was disappointing that the majority of students (42%) were not aware that Peer Supporters existed. A further 5% of students stated that they were aware of them, but that they were not present in their hall. It could be that many students were not aware of Peer Supporters as there is not a consistent allocation of them to every hall. However, when students are aware of them it appears that they are willing to engage with them, with only 8% of students stating that they did not think Peer Supporters would be helpful or approachable.

**If you were to experience a mental health issue who within your halls of residence would you be most likely to disclose this to?**

	Most likely	Likely	Neutral	Not likely	Not at all likely
Warden	9%	10%	15%	22%	44%
Sub-warden	3%	11%	17%	23%	46%
Peer Supporter	6%	21%	24%	18%	30%
Friend	66%	22%	6%	3%	3%
Flatmate	26%	26%	19%	11%	19%
Front of house/residence manager	3%	6%	18%	23%	50%
Receptionist	3%	10%	13%	22%	51%
Halls committee member	3%	9%	19%	24%	45%

The three types of people students were most likely to disclose a mental health issue were their friends, flatmates and Peer Supporters. Overall, they were significantly more likely to disclose an issue to their friend. Students were least likely to disclose a mental health issue to residence staff, but slightly more likely to disclose to their Warden. Interestingly, students were less likely to disclose to a Sub-Warden than a Warden. What this shows is that students are more likely to disclose issues to their 'peers' rather than to staff members, this shows the limitation of relying on the Warden rather than adopting a wider structural approach, as the point of contact for mental health support.

**Analysis**

Supporting students' mental health and wellbeing should be an institutional wide response; the Students' Union is working with the School to implement a long term strategic mental health action plan to improve support for students. Ultimately, while a student is living in an LSE hall of residence it is also their home; responding to and supporting student's mental health and wellbeing needs should be centred on how they live their lives. There may be students living in halls who have long term mental ill health or students who due the stresses of LSE life and without their support networks experience periods of poor mental health. When these instances do occur, halls of residences can provide a unique opportunity for prevention and early intervention. Therefore halls of residences should absolutely be at the forefront of the School's strategy on improving support for students and integrally linked to the central support services.

The School does provide support for students in halls through Wardens, Sub-Wardens and Peer Supporters; however this approach can be quite limited. While students are more likely to disclose to a Peer Supporter the awareness of their existence and availability across halls is not consistent. Sub-Wardens are even more problematic, as again they are not consistent

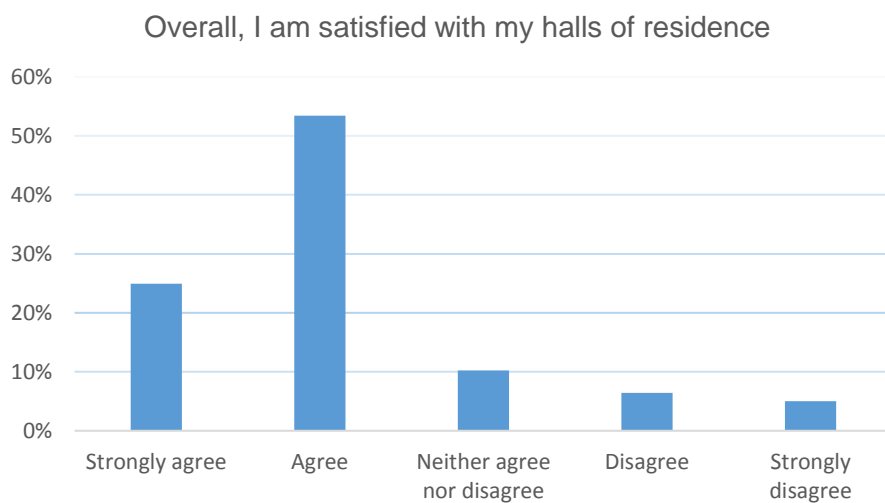
across halls, and students are less likely to disclose a mental health issue to them than a Warden. Therefore the main pathway for students to seek support in halls appears to be through the Warden and while Wardens have an important role to play; the School should seek to improve its peer support and community building. There is an integral link between students feeling part of a community in the places that they live and supporting positive mental health. To achieve this, the SU would like to see a 'resident assistant' type role introduced. These would be second, third year or postgraduate students who are employed by the School to live in halls of residences and provide community building, communication and peer support assistance to students. This is not to suggest that resident assistants should replace Peer Supporters, but rather work alongside them providing a new pathway for students to receive mental health support that is less formal than the Wardens.

The issue of highest priority to the SU is that there appears to be a lack of connection between Residential Services and the School's central support services. If a student discloses a mental health issue to a Warden, it can be assumed that the Warden would inform the Counselling Service; nevertheless internal safeguarding procedures remain unclear. Further, if concern is raised about a student who is known to central support services there should be a process to ensure their wellbeing is maintained in halls. This lack of integrated support between the central School and its halls is deeply concerning. To achieve this the SU believes that any work on improving mental health support and the wellbeing of students living in halls of residences should feed into the Mental Health Action Plan and the Student Wellbeing Working Group. This should include mapping of which staff in halls have received mental health awareness and mental health first aid training and ensuring that a mental health first aider is on the premises at all times. The School should also include creating a counselling service presence in halls with drop in sessions for students.

## Satisfaction Section

Halls of residences are not just a place for students to sleep and eat; they are also students' homes and a place to build communities. Having comfortable and welcoming social spaces and building social networks in halls is integrally linked to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. As well as this, anecdotal evidence from students has suggested that there are inconsistencies between halls communities and social spaces, therefore this section of the survey sought to assess students' satisfaction on these issues.

### Overall Satisfaction



In total 78% of students stated that they either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' that they are satisfied with their hall of residence; this is the same level of satisfaction from 2016. Across the different halls of residences satisfaction levels appear to be relatively high, with students at Lilian Knowles appearing to be the most satisfied and students at Urbanest King's Cross being the least satisfied.

#### Bankside House

In total 86% of students stated that they were satisfied with Bankside, which represents a 4% increase on 2016.

#### Butler's Wharf

Overall, 73% of students at Butler's Wharf stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with their hall. This represents an 11% increase from 2016.

#### Carr-Saunders Hall

In total 94% of students stated that they were satisfied with Carr-Saunders Hall, which is a 12% increase on 2016.



#### Grosvenor House

Overall, 76% of students at Grosvenor stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with their hall. This represents a 6% decrease on 2016.

#### High Holborn

In total 73% of students stated they were satisfied with High Holborn, which is a 6% decrease from 2016.

#### Lilian Knowles House

Overall, 95% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with Lilian Knowles. The data collected for this hall in 2016 did not meet the reportable threshold.

#### Northumberland House

In total 91% of students at Northumberland stated that they were satisfied with their hall, which is an 8% increase on 2016.

#### Passfield Hall

Overall, 91% of students at Passfield stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with their hall. This represents a 22% increase on 2016.

#### Rosebery Hall

In total 61% of students stated that they were satisfied with Rosebery Hall. This represented a significant 25% decrease from 2016 which is of concern and requires further investigation.

#### Sidney Webb House

Overall, 63% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with Sidney Webb, which represents a 1% decrease on 2016.

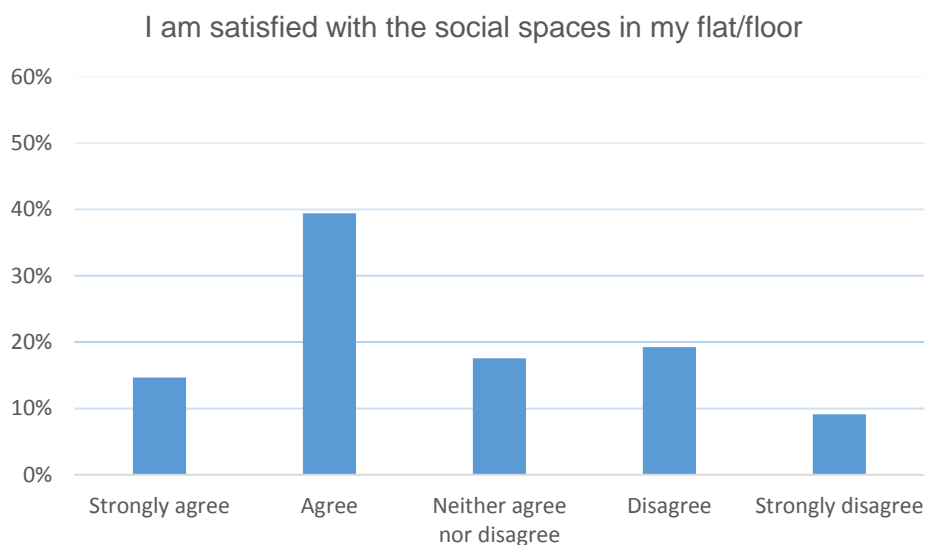
#### Urbanest King's Cross

In total 50% of students at Urbanest King's Cross stated that they were satisfied with their hall. The data collected for this hall in 2016 did not meet the reportable threshold.

#### Urbanest Westminster Bridge

The data for this hall did not meet the reportable requirements for 2016 or 2017; however over half of students were satisfied with Urbanest Westminster Bridge.

## Flat/Floor Social Spaces



Disappointingly only 54% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the social spaces in their flat or on their floor. Interestingly, the satisfaction levels for this question were much lower than their overall satisfaction. Students at Carr-Saunders were the most satisfied and the least satisfied were those at Urbanest King's Cross. This question was not asked in the 2016 survey so there is no comparable data.

### Bankside House

In total 69% of students at Bankside were satisfied with the social spaces on their floor or in their flat.

### Butler's Wharf

Overall, 67% of residents stated that their either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the social spaces on their floor or in their flat at Butler's Wharf.

### Carr-Saunders Hall

In total 85% of residents at Carr-Saunders were satisfied with the social spaces on their floor or in their flat.

### Grosvenor House

Just over half (53%) of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the social spaces in their flat on their floor at Grosvenor.

### High Holborn

Overall 55% of students at High Holborn were satisfied with the social spaces on their floor or in their flat.

#### Lilian Knowles House

Only 41% of residents at Lilian Knowles stated that they either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the social spaces on their floor or in their flat.

#### Northumberland House

Just under half of students at Northumberland (46%) stated that they were satisfied with the social spaces in their flat or on their floor.

#### Passfield Hall

Overall 60% of residents stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the social spaces on their floor or in their flat at Passfield.

#### Rosebery Hall

In total just 52% of students stated that they were satisfied with the social spaces in their flat or on their floor at Rosebery.

#### Sidney Webb House

Overall just over half of residents (52%) at Sidney Webb were satisfied with the social spaces in their flat or on their floor.

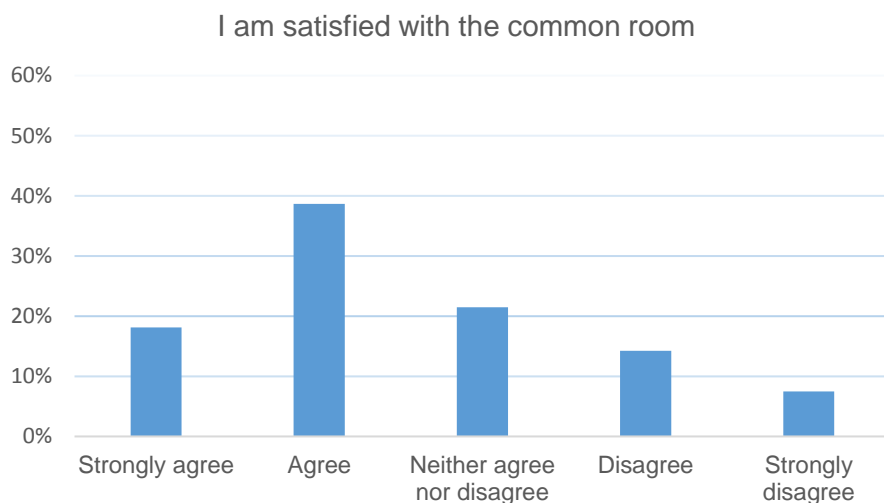
#### Urbanest King's Cross

A disappointing 28% of residents at Urbanest King's Cross were satisfied with the social spaces on their floor or in their flat.

#### Urbanest Westminster Bridge

The data for this hall did not meet the reportable threshold, but generally students were dissatisfied with the social spaces on their floor or in their flat at Urbanest Westminster Bridge.

## Common Room



In total just 57% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' when asked if they were satisfied with their common room. Again the satisfaction levels were much lower than the overall satisfaction level. Students at Carr-Saunders were most satisfied and students at Northumberland House were the least satisfied. This question was not asked in the 2016 survey so there is no comparable data.

### Bankside House

In total 79% of students at Bankside stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with their common room.

### Butler's Wharf

Overall 80% of residents at Butler's Wharf stated that they were satisfied with their common room.

### Carr-Saunders Hall

Fortunately 91% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the common room at Carr-Saunders.

### Grosvenor House

Only 50% of students were satisfied with the common room at Grosvenor House.

### High Holborn

Overall 69% of students at High Holborn stated either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the common room.

#### Lilian Knowles House

Just over half (55%) of students at Lilian Knowles, stated that they were satisfied with the common room.

#### Northumberland House

Just 38% of students at Northumberland House stated that they were satisfied with the common room.

#### Passfield Hall

In total 57% of residents at Passfield stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with their common room.

#### Rosebery Hall

Only 48% of students were satisfied with the common room at Rosebery.

#### Sidney Webb House

Just under half of the students at Sidney Webb (49%) stated that they were satisfied with their common room.

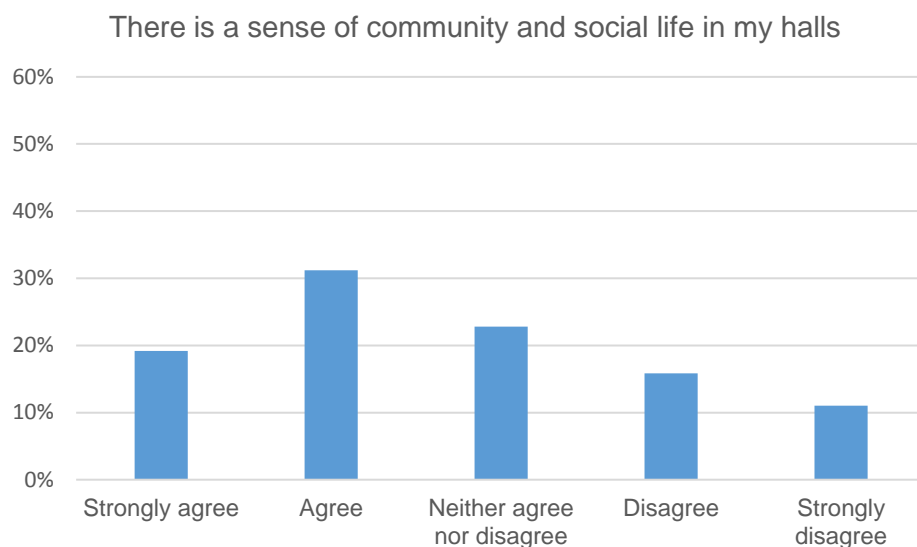
#### Urbanest King's Cross

Only 44% of students at Urbanest King's Cross stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with their common room.

#### Urbanest Westminster Bridge

The data for this hall did not meet the reportable threshold; however a small proportion of students at Urbanest Westminster Bridge stated that they were satisfied with their common room.

## Sense of Community and Social Life



Only 50% of residents in LSE halls of residences stated that they either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the sense of community and social life in their hall. This is 28% lower than the overall satisfaction levels and the lowest level of satisfaction from these questions. The hall with the highest satisfaction was Carr-Saunders and Urbanest Westminster Bridge had the lowest satisfaction levels. This question was not asked in the 2016 survey so there is no comparable data.

### Bankside House

Overall 68% of residents at Bankside stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the sense of community and social life.

### Butler's Wharf

Only 47% of students stated that they were satisfied with the sense of community and social life at Butler's Wharf.

### Carr-Saunders Hall

In total 86% of residents at Carr-Saunders were satisfied with the sense of community and social life in their hall.

### Grosvenor House

Just 24% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the sense of community and social life at Grosvenor House.

### High Holborn

Only 38% of residents at High Holborn were satisfied with the sense of community and social life in their hall.

#### Lilian Knowles House

In total only 41% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they are satisfied with the sense of community and social life at Lilian Knowles.

#### Northumberland House

Just 32% of residents were satisfied with the sense of community and social life at Northumberland House.

#### Passfield Hall

Overall 85% of students at Passfield were satisfied with the sense of community and social life.

#### Rosebery Hall

In total 83% of residents stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they were satisfied with the sense of community and social life at Rosebery.

#### Sidney Webb House

Only 48% of students stated that they were satisfied with the sense of community and social life at Sidney Webb.

#### Urbanest King's Cross

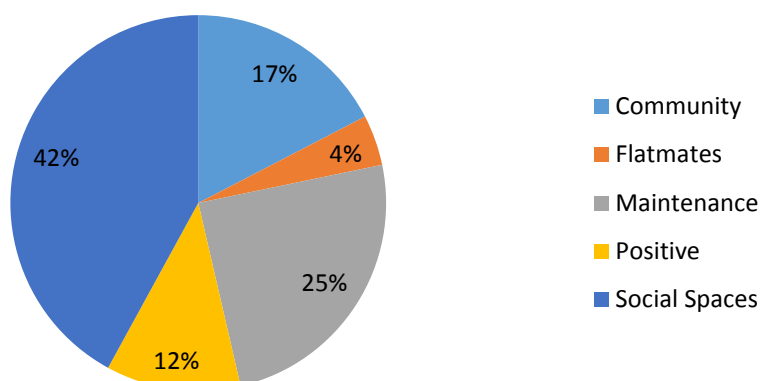
Just 17% of students at Urbanest King's Cross stated that they were satisfied with the sense of community and social life at Urbanest King's Cross.

#### Urbanest Westminster Bridge

The data for this hall did not meet the reportable threshold; however students were generally dissatisfied with the sense of community and social life at Urbanest Westminster Bridge.

## Student Comments

Student Comments



Students were given the opportunity to leave comments about how satisfied they were with their hall. The majority of students who commented (42%) stated that they felt that social spaces within their hall could be improved. Students felt that the social spaces on their floors and in their flats were neglected, as there appears to be an assumption that students would socialise in their common rooms, which is not always the case. Students felt that flat, kitchen and snack points should not just be functional but should provide social spaces as well.

*Community (17%)* – This category of students were those that stated that they felt there was no community in their halls. Issues raised included a lack of non-alcoholic events and a lack of interaction between undergraduates and postgraduates.

*Flatmates (4%)* – These students stated that they were not satisfied with their hall, but their dissatisfaction stemmed from their flatmates' behaviour such as not cleaning the kitchen.

*Maintenance (25%)* – This group of students were those that said that they were unhappy with their hall due to maintenance or construction issues, such as mice infestations, heating not working, or broken laundry machines.

*Positive (12%)* – These students were those who stated that they had had a wholly positive experience in their hall.

*Social Spaces (42%)* – This category of students were those that stated that they thought the social spaces in their hall could be improved. This included both upgrading common room spaces to ensure more consistency between halls, as well as ensuring the availability of social spaces on their floor or in their flat.



## Analysis

The overall satisfaction of students living in LSE halls of residences continues to be high and generally LSE Residential Services provides a good service to students. As previously noted, the survey this year chose to focus on issues relating to students' social life and their social spaces, rather than general maintenance issues. These findings demonstrate that this was the correct approach; there was a noteworthy decrease in student satisfaction levels particularly for the sense of community and social life, and a high number of students commenting that their social spaces and community needs to be improved.

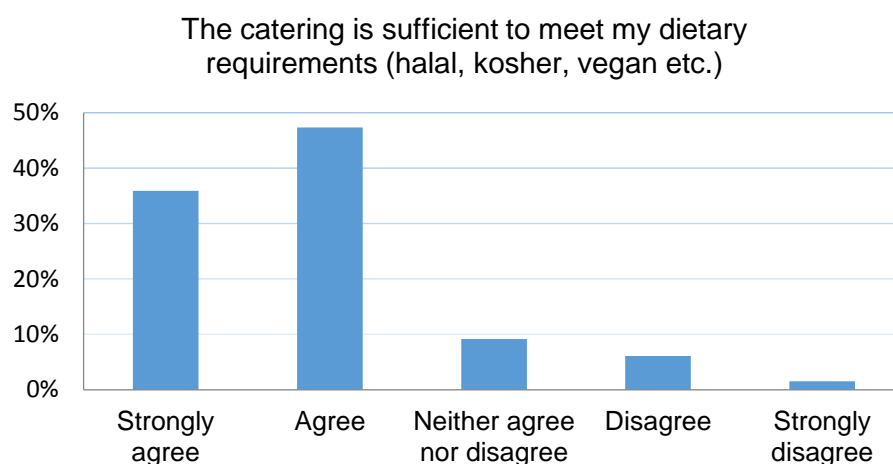
The social element of halls of residences can have a significant impact on the overall quality of the student experience and is integrally linked to supporting students' mental health and wellbeing. Simply put, students should feel comfortable where they live. The SU recognises the important work that Halls Committees undertake to facilitate community building in halls. Nevertheless, it appears that experiencing a positive sense of community is very much a 'postcode lottery'; there is more the School should do to ensure consistency. As previously mentioned in the Welfare Section of this report, this could be facilitated through 'resident assistants' on each floor. Their purpose would be to build communities and to provide pastoral support for students living in halls. This is not intended to replace the current Halls Committees but rather to encourage greater consistency by supporting and assisting them in the work that they currently undertake.

Further the SU is committed to supporting and engaging Halls Committees, for example the SU currently working with Residential Services to introduce a Halls Cup in September 2017, which involves intra-halls charity fundraising events. The purpose of this will be to facilitate collaboration and competition between halls so as to build an LSE community. This is a positive step forward in terms of partnership working between Residential Services and the SU in building communities for students in halls. The SU is keen to seek further opportunity to work with Residential Services but are mindful of the boundaries of our current resources.

## Catering Section

In the 2016 survey when asked about catering, students felt that there were not sufficient vegetarian, vegan, halal and kosher options available to them. Students also felt that there few healthy options available to them as well. While the SU recognises that Residential Services and Catering have improved the catering in halls such as introducing more vegan options, the SU nevertheless sought to examine this issue again.

### Dietary Needs



The total proportion of students living in catered halls of residences that answered either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that their catering was sufficient for their dietary needs was 83%, which is a 16% increase from 2016. This increase reflects that the work that Residential Services and Catering have put in to improve the options available to students.

#### Bankside House

Overall 83% of residents at Bankside stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' as to whether they felt the catering met their dietary requirements; this is a 15% increase from 2016. The only suggested improvement that students had was that they would like to see vegan desserts.

#### Carr-Saunders

In total 91% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' as to whether the catering met their dietary requirements, which is a 21% increase from 2016. The only suggested improvements from students were around the quality of the food provided.

#### Passfield

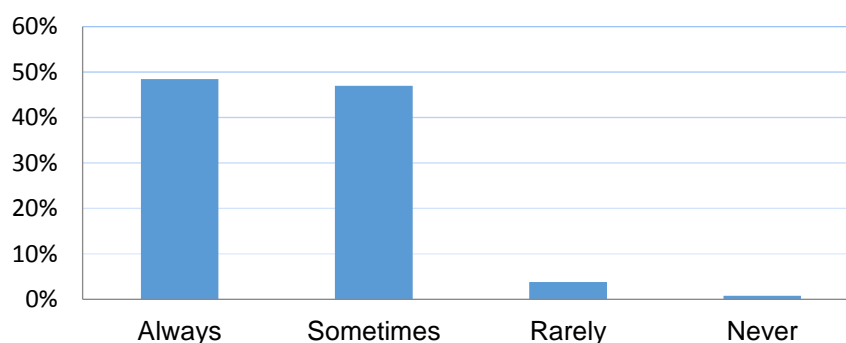
Overall 83% of residents stated that they either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that the catering met their dietary requirements; this is a 24% improvement on 2016. Students were grateful that a vegan option had been made available, however, some students felt that the quality of vegan and vegetarian options could be improved.

### Rosebery

In total 74% of students stated either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree as to whether they felt that the catering was sufficient to meet their dietary requirements; which is a 1% decrease on 2016. Students commented that they felt the quality of the vegetarian options was quite low and other students felt that portion sizes varied too much.

### Healthy Options

Healthy options are provided for in the catering in my hall.



This was a new question for the 2017 survey and sought to expand on issues raised in the previous year's survey surrounding the availability of healthy food. The total proportion of students who stated that healthy options were always provided was 48% with a further 47% of students stating that they were 'Sometimes' available.

### Bankside House

At Bankside only 38% of students stated that healthy options were 'Always' provided for and a further 48% stated 'Sometimes', which is a total of 86%. Students commented that the food could sometimes be oily.

### Carr-Saunders

At Carr-Saunders 50% of students stated 'Always' and 50% stated 'Sometimes' when asked if healthy options were provided for in their hall. No students left comments for this hall.

### Passfield

At Passfield 52% of residents stated 'Always' when asked if healthy options were provided for and 47% stated 'Sometimes' a total of 99%. However some students did comment that they felt the food could be quite oily.

### Rosebery

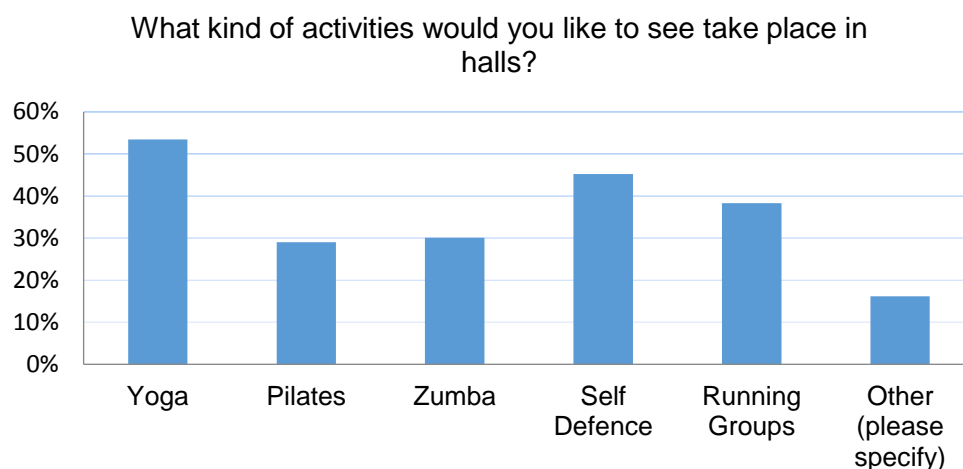
At Rosebery 52% of students stated that health options were 'Always' provided for in their hall and 43% stated 'Sometimes' a total of 95%. However some students commented that the food could be quite oily and carbohydrate based.

## Analysis

While the overall increase in satisfaction of the provision of vegetarian, vegan, halal and kosher food is positive, there is still too much variation between halls. Satisfaction levels at Passfield and Carr-Saunders increased quite substantially, however it is a concern that satisfaction at Rosbery has decreased. Residential Services and Catering should investigate this disparity and ensure that all catered halls are providing options that meet student's dietary needs. Further, students often commented that while vegetarian, vegan, halal and kosher options were available, the variety and quality of these was not always sufficient.

Generally the results for the healthy options question were positive with the majority of students in each hall stating that there was 'Always' or 'Sometimes' available. However, students at Bankside appear to have less healthy options available to them than at other catered halls. While these results are promising, Residential Services and Catering should develop this further to ensure that healthy options are available at every meal. Further, the SU would like to see Residential Services and Catering run an ambitious campaign to promote healthy lifestyles and eating choices to students. It is a priority for the SU to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and healthy lifestyles for students living in catered halls is undoubtedly a means to achieving this.

## Halls Sports Activities Section



One of the many activities programmes that the SU runs is the Active Lifestyle programme, which aims to promote non-competitive, light sports exercise activities for students across LSE. The programme currently runs some activities for students living in halls of residences such as yoga and five-a-side tournaments at Bankside. This question was aimed at informing what kind of light exercise activities students would like to see more of in their halls of residences.

The three activities that students would like to see take place in halls were; yoga (53%), self-defence (45%) and running groups (38%). The most commonly suggested 'Other' suggestion was football.

### Analysis

While Halls Committees provide social events for students in halls, there is currently a gap in other types of activities, such as those offered by the Active Lifestyle programme. As noted the programme does offer some activities in halls, and the SU would like to expand its offer. The SU believes that creating a larger and more consistent offer of light exercise activities in halls would not only improve the student experience in halls, but promote positive mental health and wellbeing. Active Lifestyle could also be a means with which to foster and enhance a sense of community and social life as well.

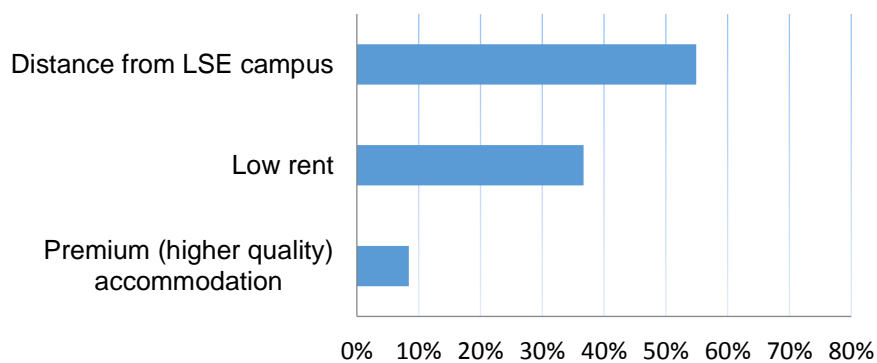
The activities that the SU already runs are successful, however the SU is constrained in expanding its offer on the basis of space and resources. The SU would be keen to work with Residential Services to explore how best to resolve these constraints.

## Halls Preference Section

In the 2016 survey students were asked about how they choose which halls to live in, the results of these questions demonstrated that the choices that student make are complex. In particular, students were asked to rank the importance of different features of halls; this found that students valued both low rent and being close to campus most highly. Therefore this section of the survey sought to clarify what students preferences are when choosing a hall of residence.

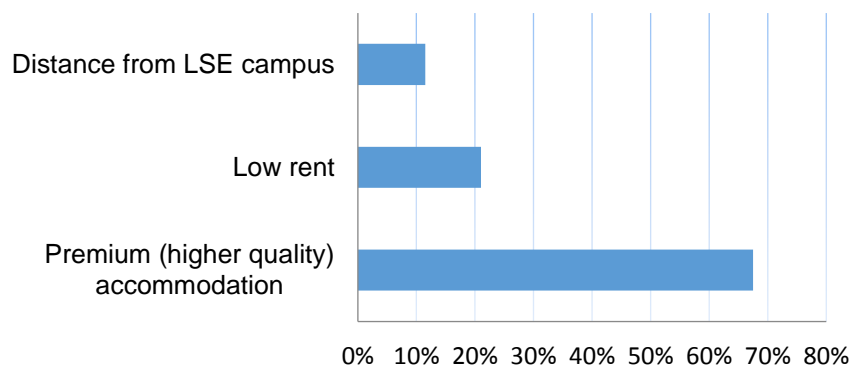
### Halls Choice

Which of these features was most important to you when choosing a LSE hall of residence



The majority of students (55%) stated that when choosing an LSE hall of residence the distance from the LSE campus was the most important consideration. Interestingly, only 8% of students stated that premium accommodation was their main consideration. When broken down into level of study; only 8% of undergraduates, 10% of postgraduates and 5% of General Course students stated that Premium accommodation was their most important consideration.

Which of these features was least important to you when choosing a LSE hall of residence

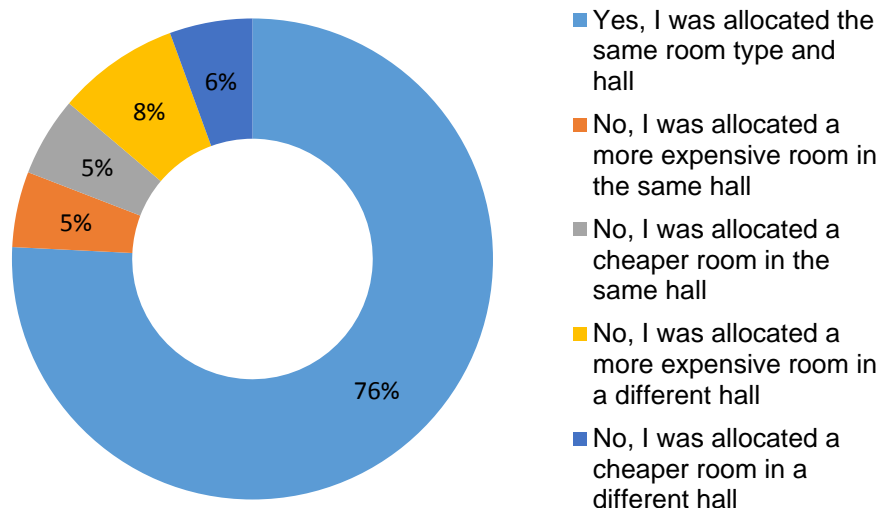


The majority of students (67%) stated that premium accommodation was the feature least important to them when choosing a hall of residence. This clearly shows that premium accommodation is not a priority for most LSE students. When broken down into subject level premium accommodation was the lowest consideration for all groups with 73% of

undergraduates 64% of postgraduates and 54% General Course students citing this.

### Room Allocation

When you were allocated your room in halls was this the room type and hall you requested?



The 2016 survey showed that rent was a significant consideration for students when they were choosing a hall of residence. From this, the Students' Union has heard anecdotal evidence of students being placed in more expensive rooms than they had initially chosen which can have a negative impact on their budgets. This question therefore sought to see how prevalent this issue is. Promisingly, the majority of students (76%) were allocated the same room in the same hall that they requested. Further, only 13% of students were allocated a more expensive room than they had requested. However, 19% of students receiving an LSE bursary – and therefore can be assumed to be from a low socio-economic background – were allocated a more expensive room.

From the comments left by students, there were clear frustrations about the online form on Hallpad that students use to choose their allocation. In particular, when asked to detail a preference for which halls they would like this choice was restricted to price brackets. It appears that students choices are more complex than this, for example: *"I would be willing to pay a higher price for somewhere nearer to school and catered but would be equally interested in staying somewhere further away for a lower price"*.

## **Accommodation Bursaries**

LSE is due to introduce accommodation bursaries for UK students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The SU supports this move as accommodation at LSE is expensive and this can act as a deterrent for prospective students from low socio-economic backgrounds. However, students can only benefit from this funding if they are aware it exists. Therefore the SU asked students how they thought the School should promote accommodation bursaries.

From the responses left by students it is interesting is that there was no general consensus as to a single means of advertising the bursaries to prospective students (although emails were cited most often). The response showed that students believed that a raft of advertising methods should be used at various points of the entry process. Some students stated that the key period to target prospective students was during the application process to LSE.

The methods students suggested were:

- Targeted emails to prospective students when they apply to LSE;
- Clearly displayed on Hallpad when applying for halls;
- Information included in offer letters;
- Clearly displayed on the LSE residences website;
- Clearly included in the LSE prospectus;
- Promoting via social media.

## **Analysis**

In the 2016 survey, students were asked to rank how important different features of halls were, what came out very strongly is that students want to live close to LSE campus but also want low rent. This year, to ascertain which of these was more important, the question compelled students to make a choice. This choice fell on the side of distance from LSE campus; this is perhaps unsurprising given the central London location of the School. For many students, moving to London can be a daunting prospect. If LSE were a campus based institution it is unlikely that location would be such a significant consideration. Given this, it is still significant that such a high proportion of students stated that low rent was their most important consideration.

The Students' Union does not believe that premium accommodation is what students want. With students paying ever-increasing tuition fees, it is easy to see the rationale in favour of it as a means of facilitating an overall sense of 'value for money'. This approach seems to be slowly being adopted by the School; however there are flaws in this reasoning. Firstly, it assumes that students are able to pay, and secondly it assumes that there is a significant demand. These results demonstrate that students do not want premium accommodation. While the SU recognises that this will be the case for some students, generally 'premium' accommodation is not a priority. Even for those students paying the highest fees at



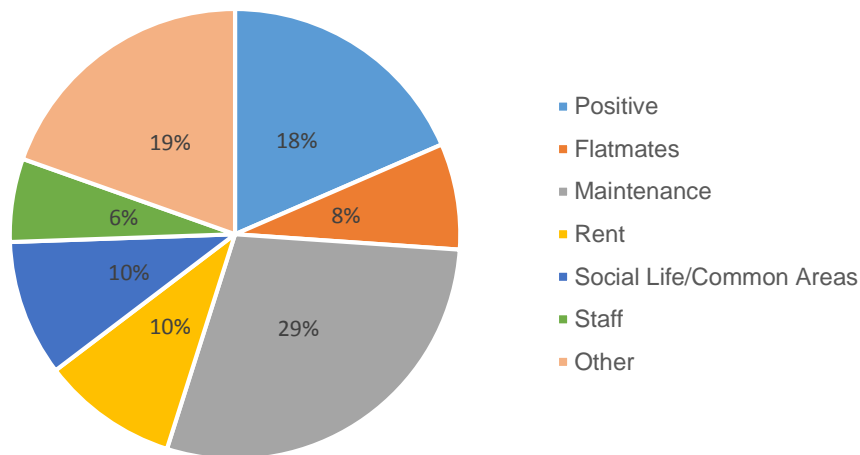
postgraduate and General Course level, 'premium' accommodation is not a priority for them. Therefore the SU asks that the School re-focus their priorities away from prioritising high cost accommodation when refurbishing or even looking to acquire new halls.

Students were frustrated with the application process for halls and felt that the online form and the preferences they were asked to make (price bracket) were arbitrary and not reflective of their own decision making processes. For example, for some students, they would choose a more expensive room if it was closer to LSE campus. However, for other students, price is the paramount consideration and being allocated a more expensive room can have a detrimental impact on their budget. The SU believes that LSE should review the application form on Hallpad to better reflect students' decision making processes. Further, the School should, where possible, try to prioritise students from low socio-economic backgrounds – particularly those in receipt of bursaries – in the room allocation process.

## Final Comments

The final question of the survey allowed students to express any further views that they may have that were perhaps not covered in previous questions.

### Student Comments



Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the survey did not touch on issues relating to maintenance of halls, the largest proportion of students leaving comments (29%) used the opportunity to mention specific maintenance issues in their hall. What is interesting is that again the issues of social life and social spaces in halls were raised by 10% of those commenting.

*Positive* – This group of students were those whose comments demonstrated a wholly positive experience living in LSE halls of residences.

*Flatmates* – This category of comments were those who stated that their experience in LSE halls had been negatively impacted by the behaviour of their flatmates. This was usually related to cleanliness or noise disturbances.

*Maintenance* – This group of students were those that had complaints about maintenance in their hall. This included issues such as mice infestations, faulty appliances in the kitchens, faulty furniture, construction site noise and problems with laundry machines.

*Rent* – These were students who explicitly stated that they felt the rent that LSE charges for its halls of residences is too high.

*Social Life and Common Areas* – This group of students were those that stated that the social life and common areas in their hall could be improved. This included issues such as

improving common room, better study spaces, improving kitchens and creating more social spaces in flats and on floors.

*Staff* – This category of comments were from students who stated that they had had issues with members of staff in their halls and felt that ‘customer service’ could be improved.

*Other* – These were the remaining comments from students where they stated either ‘no comment’ or were comments that were unable to be categorised.

### **Analysis**

From comments left by students, it is apparent that construction work either in their hall or nearby has a significant negative impact on student wellbeing. This was an issue that also came across strongly in the 2016 survey as well. The SU feels that more could be done to consider the needs of students when there is disruption to their living environment. Halls are students’ homes and the School should be ensuring that this is as comfortable and stress-free as possible. Students recognise it is not always possible to guarantee that no construction work takes place; therefore where there is ongoing disruption students strongly feel that their rent should be reduced to reflect this. This is a position that the SU also supports.

Considering both rent, social life and social areas were covered elsewhere in the survey, it is noteworthy that students felt the need to again raise these issues in their final comments. This adds further weight to the SU’s assertion that these should be the focus for improving the student experience in halls. The cost of living in LSE residences can have a really negative impact on current students and deter prospective students from attending. Finally, this also runs into the theme of halls being students’ homes; living in a pleasant environment and feeling part of a community is a key aspect to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

Examples of comments included:

*“My halls have been constantly disrupted with building works effecting my sleep and study schedule as they frequently start before 8am, especially in winter term. This is something I was not aware of prior to arriving, and I felt little concern was given from LSE in our wellbeing in this case.”*

**Carr-Saunders**

*“If someone explicitly applies for only a single room, do not offer them a twin room or a single room in a hall double the price.”*

**High Holborn**

*"It would be nice to have some inter-hall events specifically once in a while as I feel there is certainly a disconnect between students. Community is important and I feel, especially at Urbanest Westminster, it is lacking."*

**Urbanest Westminster Bridge**

*"They are great but the housing crisis in London makes them hardly affordable. I HAVE SPENT MORE IN ACCOMMODATION HOUSING THAN IN MY OVERSEAS UNIVERSITY FEE!!"*

**Grosvenor**

*"Appalling quality of shower, toilet, furniture in rooms! The common room is useless also; all the tables are wonky so are frustrating.... bar is never open either"*

**Rosebery**

*"I'm pretty satisfied with Bankside as a whole, but I regret the lack of community spirit and the fact that postgrad and undergrad do not mix at all."*

**Bankside**

*"Foster a better sense of community. Some halls clearly put on better events and therefore have a stronger community feel"*

**Northumberland**

*"The standard of the rooms is very similar to other uni accommodation, but the rents are astronomical and pose a serious barrier to accessing education"*

**Lilian Knowles**

*"Could you lower down the prices for single room? Also, lower down the prices for students under sponsorship :) Thank you very much!"*

**Carr-Saunders**

## Conclusion

The SU's halls survey began as a project focussed on assessing students' satisfaction in halls; recently this focus has shifted to using the project as an information gathering exercise to inform the priorities of the organisation. This year's survey focussed on the cost of rent, mental health support in halls, sports activities and students preferences in their halls. The survey retained some satisfaction questions on social spaces, community and catering in halls, as these were identified as areas of work for the SU.

The first main theme that came out of the findings was the issue of rent affordability. Living in LSE halls of residences is expensive and this can have an impact on the student experience and deter prospective students from studying at LSE. Students at LSE primarily rely on parental contributions to pay their rent; this was particularly apparent at postgraduate and General Course level where there is less funding available. It appears that those that can afford to study at LSE are those whose parents can afford to pay their rent and those who cannot, struggle to pay their rent. With ever increasing tuition fees and halls rents, LSE is becoming an ever more expensive place to study and it is essential that this is addressed. LSE does work to offset this through rent freezes on shared rooms and the introduction of accommodation bursaries, however, the School needs to do much more. Annual rent increases and increasing the offer of premium accommodation is not sustainable and with every rent increase, more students are priced out. The School needs to do more to keep LSE halls of residences affordable and identify pragmatic ways to reduce rents.

The second theme that came through strongly was the concept of recognising 'halls as students' homes'. Halls are not simply a place where students sleep; it is a place where they build communities and support networks, it is the place where they can remove themselves from the stresses of LSE academic life. The School should ensure that their living environment is comfortable, welcoming and free from disruption. Social spaces and community building is essential to this. When there is insufficient space or a sense of community in the hall, this does have a negative impact on their student experience. Integrally linked to this is supporting students' mental health and wellbeing. The School also needs to focus its efforts on facilitating mental health and wellbeing support in halls, and ensuring that the referral pathways to central support services are clear. It simply is 'not good enough' for the lack of connection between central support services and Residential Services. For students who experience periods of poor mental health or long term mental ill health their home (their hall) provides a unique opportunity to provide support and early intervention.

The results of this survey have produced several recommendations which the SU believes that if implemented, would improve halls of residences at LSE. We look forward to working in partnership with LSE to implement these recommendations.

## Recommendations

### Rent Affordability

1. For LSE to work with the Students' Union to develop a long term Affordable Rent Strategy for halls of residences, which should contain:
  - a) A commitment to the principle that halls of residences should be a form of 'social housing' for students, that it should be 'not for profit' and recognise its role in widening participation.
  - b) A commitment to providing the lowest cost student accommodation in London.
  - c) A clearly set out definition of affordable rent, agreed to by the Students' Union, which should include linking rents to student support and taking account of the challenges faced by estranged and international students.
  - d) A commitment to ensuring that all future LSE halls of residences developments are owned by the institution so that the School has full control over rent setting.
  - e) A proactive approach to the long term sustainability of the cost of living in halls, with a view to ensuring that rents do not get so inflated as to deter students from studying at LSE.
  - f) A commitment to the principle that investment in affordable accommodation is prioritised over investment in premium accommodation.
2. Undertake research to investigate the rationale used by students when choosing to live in shared rooms.
3. Undertake a mapping exercise to look at the distribution of room prices across halls of residences and look to whether single (shared bathroom) rooms can be reduced in price.
4. Review the process of rent collection, with a view to facilitating monthly payments rather than bulk payments.
5. Introduce a rent freeze for academic year 2017/18 for all halls and all room types.
6. Ensure that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are prioritised in the room allocation process, with a view to ensuring they are not allocated more expensive rooms,
7. Ensure that accommodation bursaries are advertised in multiple formats aimed at different stages of the entry process.

### Mental Health and Wellbeing

1. Ensure that work on improving mental health support in halls is facilitated through the Mental Health Action Plan and the Student Wellbeing Working Group.
2. Ensure that there are clear referral pathways for students who experience mental ill health in halls and that there is integrated support between Residential Services and central support services.
3. Review the policies in halls surrounding mental health and safeguarding, to ensure these are coherent and linked with those of the central support services.
4. Introduce a Student Counselling Service presence in halls of residences with drop in sessions for both counsellors and mental health advisors.
5. Run a campaign for students in catered halls around healthy eating and lifestyles focussing on the benefits of this to mental health and wellbeing.
6. Undertake a mapping exercise of staff in halls to determine if they are trained in Mental Health Awareness and First Aid, and ensure that there is always a Mental Health First Aider present in halls of residences.

### Community and Social Spaces

7. Introduce multiple resident assistants in halls of residences to better facilitate supportive community building and mental health support in halls.
8. Ensure that where required, common rooms are upgraded, with an aim to achieving more consistent facilities across all halls.
9. Explore the creation of social spaces in every flat and on every floor in current halls, and ensure that this is present in any new developments.
10. Work with the Students' Union to expand the Active Lifestyle programme in halls, through mapping where activities could take place and exploring additional funding opportunities.
11. Explore further opportunities to work with the SU to better support Halls Committees

## General

12. Ensure that any future halls developments are located close to LSE campus.
13. Review the halls application form on Hallpad to be more reflective of the choices that students make.
14. Plan where the student experience may be impacted by ongoing refurbishments works in the building or nearby construction work, and ensure that this is clearly advertised and that rent reductions are applied.
15. Ensure that healthy food options are available to students living in catered halls at every meal.
16. Improve the vegetarian, vegan, halal and kosher offer in catered halls to ensure that there is consistency in variety and quality.



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