

Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:

Next steps for student housing in the UK

Timing: Morning, Monday, 12th October 2026

Taking Place Online

Draft agenda subject to change



WESTMINSTER
HIGHER EDUCATION
FORUM

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Priorities for accommodation standards, institutional responsibilities and student protection in Higher Education**
Mark Swales, Independent Chair, Accommodation Code of Practice Governance Board, Universities UK
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Implementation of tenancy reform across student housing markets**
phasing and sequencing implementation of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 / replacement of most fixed-term tenancies with assured periodic arrangements / operation of the purpose-built student accommodation exemption and amended Ground 4A / practical arrangements for reletting, student and provider certainty, and accommodation turnover / tenancy information, guidance and communication / oversight, enforcement responsibilities and local authority capacity / implications for housing choice, provider participation and accommodation supply
Martin Blakey, Expert Commentator; and former Chief Executive, Unipol
Timothy Douglas, Head, Policy and Campaigns, Propertymark
Matt Merrick, CEO, iQ Student Accommodation
Sarah Cummins, Partner, Anthony Gold Solicitors
Senior representative, university
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.20 **Private rented student housing - supply, participation and the academic-year letting cycle**
Ben Beadle, Chief Executive, National Residential Landlords Association
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.45 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.05 **Assessing supply, demand and emerging pressures in student accommodation markets**
Senior commentator
- 11.15 **Priorities for local planning, coordination and delivery of student accommodation**
evidence needed to assess future student accommodation demand / student number forecasts, local and commuting demand, existing capacity and development pipelines / expectations for universities in sharing recruitment forecasts and plans for changes in student numbers / improving the consistency and timeliness of data available to local authorities and providers / reflecting accommodation need in local plans, institutional planning and investment decisions / identifying and responding to local shortages and excess provision / coordination between universities, local authorities, providers and landlords / student accommodation within wider housing pressures and priorities for timely and sustainable delivery
Joe Lister, CEO, Unite Students
Thomas Shephard, Head, Accommodation Services, University of Bristol
Senior representative, local authority
- 11.30 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.50 **Affordability, access and the student housing experience**
Tom Allingham, Communications Director, Save the Student
- 12.00 **Energy efficiency standards, retrofit and housing quality**
affordability, housing choice and access to suitable accommodation / addressing barriers affecting international, care-experienced and estranged students, including guarantor requirements / accommodation quality, security, value for money, complaints and redress / the requirement for privately rented homes to reach EPC C or an equivalent standard by 2030 / application of the new Decent Homes Standard and clarity on scope across different forms of student accommodation / condition of existing private rented, HMO, purpose-built and university-managed stock / planning and scheduling retrofit around occupation and the academic calendar / access to contractors, skills and finance / responsibilities for commissioning, remediation, oversight and enforcement / costs, property viability and implications for rents and accommodation supply
Vicky Ackerley, Director, Residences and Sport, University of Manchester
Senior representative, local authority
Senior representative, contractor
Senior representative, legal
- 12.20 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.40 **Policy and legal priorities for student accommodation across the UK**
Senior representative, policy
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.05 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Higher Education Forum