

Feedback from GSU on  
University Accommodation  
and discrimination

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**greenwich  
students'  
union**

## Background:

Following some individual approaches from students about safety in communal accommodation spaces, GSU's Students of Colour Liberation Chair Mansi and GSU staff members organised a series of drop-ins across university halls, in collaboration with the University Accommodation Service. GSU staff and representatives conducted three drop-ins across Cutty Sark Halls, Greenwich, Daniel Defoe Halls, Greenwich, and in Avery Hill accommodation. Some data was also gathered from a separate session exploring safety on campuses with GSU Liberation.

## Findings:

In general, students we spoke to reported feeling broadly safe across all university halls. Almost all students we spoke to felt the level of lighting and security meant that they did not have issues. Of the small sample of surveyed students, no one gave less than a three out of five rating for how safe they felt in halls, with only one giving three. In general feedback was positive when asked about halls being safe for students with protected characteristics.

The areas of concern we identified were:

1. Most students did know how to report a discriminatory incident in accommodation, but 1/3 respondents did not.
2. One respondent noted that they could not see enough being done when harassment and sexual assaults were reported. We unfortunately do not have further qualitative data from this respondent.
3. GSU heard a report during our drop-ins that the ramp to Cutty Sark Halls, being open to the public, had people gathered and smoking there late at night. GSU heard that students were reporting being harassed sometimes by those outside, and calls to the police were ineffective due to long waiting times. This had culminated in one incident of physical grabbing of a student returning home.
4. There are some students who, particularly at Avery Hill accommodation, feel that the RA system is not set up to allow them to report issues with accommodation. The issues noted were:
  - a. RAs are often not equipped to de-escalate situations on their own.
  - b. It is not always clear whether RAs escalate issues to security staff when the situation is too dangerous for them to manage.
  - c. There are situations where there is a conflict of interest (e.g. where the RA is friends with the person/people they are called to investigate, and will be unlikely to take action.

## Recommendations:

1. Wider communication of reporting mechanisms for incidents in University Halls, including via RAs, email communication, and clear signage across all buildings. This could include pointing students to the GSU Advice Service when seeking support with a formal complaint.
2. A review of security measures outside Cutty Sark Halls, with a view to ensuring that students are not put in uncomfortable or threatening situations when returning at night.
3. Clear communication from staff receiving disclosures about violence and harassment in Halls about next steps, and signposting to support in the immediate term.

4. A review of the RA system, including:
  - a. Clarity on where it is essential to escalate issues to security for RAs.
  - b. An opportunity to feed back on the RA system either annually or termly, to understand issues where they arise.
  - c. If necessary, further de-escalation training for RAs.