



**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

**‘The Landlord Doesn’t Care’: Student Housing and the
Selly Oak Environment for Supporting Healthy Lives**

A dissertation submitted by

Nathan Matthews

2418515

A candidate for the degree of:

MSc Environmental Health

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences

University of Birmingham

August 2023

Abstract

Throughout housing research, it is clear that the places we live in can affect our health and quality of life. Recently, greater attention has been cast upon ineffective landlords and the challenges of living in the private rental sector; with tragedy and public unrest encouraging housing policy reform. This research investigates the experiences and challenges that face students living within Selly Oak, Birmingham, and the resulting impact on their lives and health; it aims to navigate change by understanding the lived realities and difficulties within the home and the immediate surrounding environment. The study utilises three qualitative methodologies (interviews, focus groups and PhotoVoice) to capture student experience; finding that some students face undeniable challenges whilst living in an area they perceive to restrict healthy lives. Locally, students heavily criticise the health limiting nature of the built environment; whilst inside the property it is agents and landlords that influence their ability to make their house a home, in extreme cases this creates long-lasting issues on their health and education. The research synthesises findings and existing knowledge to conceptualise ‘The Selly Oak Housing Pressure Effect’ which some students may face. Whilst also drawing upon literature and Luke’s theory of power to present a powerless student. It is concluded that action from a range of bodies is required to improve the overall experience for students living in Selly Oak; with recommendations for policy, practice and research outlined.

CIEH note: this PDF currently includes the Abstract only, at the request of the entrant.

This is because the research is likely to be published in a journal in the near future.

We will post a link to any published work when that happens.

Queries about this can be emailed to info@cieh.org