

9<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**Dear Agents and Landlords of Southampton and Winchester,**

As the representatives of Southampton's and Winchester's Students' Unions, it is our duty to represent the concerns of our student community and ensure student voices are heard during this time of uncertainty and turbulence. We are repeatedly being told that the issue of rent payment and the unpredictability many students are experiencing due to Covid-19 and the Government's national restrictions are having a huge impact on students at present.

During the Summer, following University and Government guidance, students from across the world travelled to Southampton in order to pursue an education with the understanding that a physical presence was required for in-person teaching despite the ongoing pandemic. Students entered tenancy agreements with the expectations that they needed to be here. Since the start of the academic year, many students have had little to no face-to-face teaching and as such have had no reason to be paying rent in Southampton or Winchester. In addition, and in line with government guidance, many students left the city to return home for the winter break in December, only to be instructed to remain at home, leaving many of them paying rent for rooms they are no longer occupying. In following such guidance, students now face increasing uncertainty and stress as to where they stand in relation to their rent payments.

We are appealing to all Landlords and Agents in the city of Southampton and Winchester to seriously consider the measures outlined below:

1. Acknowledge the situation of students living in your accommodation by considering rent reductions and early release from joint tenancy agreements where possible particularly for students who are unable to return in line with the national lockdown and the pre-Christmas student travel window.
2. Particularly, consider the situation of international students who are unable to be in the country due to national and international COVID-19 guidelines and make reasonable adjustments to their tenancy agreements.
3. Allow individual students to be released from joint tenancy contracts with no charge if they are unable to occupy their accommodation in Southampton and Winchester and offer a pro rata rent reduction to students who are not able to return.

We understand of course that in the current global crisis, everyone including you has been affected. In writing this letter, however, we are speaking on behalf of the tens of thousands of students across Southampton and Winchester who are currently experiencing such a challenging time with all teaching being online, no opportunity to enjoy anything resembling a normal student experience and still being required to pay for accommodation that they cannot access; in the case of many international students, indeed, they may never have been able to set foot in the country this year. Student anxiety is at an all-time high and we ask you to do everything in your power to address these concerns and support the students who contribute so much to our local community and economy.

We hope that students can continue to offer positive reviews and recommend you in the future, particularly highlighting flexibility and support you offered at this time of need.

We look forward to your response.

**Winchester Student Union,  
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