


Our student services welfare support: Keeping students safe and secure




Unite is committed to supporting student mental health and wellbeing

We understand that as the UK's largest accommodation provider, we have a role to play in supporting students when they need help. That's part of how we provide a Home for Success to our students. Student wellbeing and mental health has been a key focus for our team over the last five years and will continue to be over the 2020/21 academic year.

As a result of COVID-19 there are already reports of a downward trend in student wellbeing. It is anticipated that the number and complexity of welfare issues will continue to increase as a result of COVID-19 and we are preparing accordingly.



Since Jan 2017, Unite has supported students and universities with over **8,276** reported welfare incidents.



Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak (Jan 2020 - present) we have provided support with **1,085** reported incidents.

7 months: Understanding the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on Student wellbeing

Amongst university students	Oct 2019	Apr 2020
I feel loved	50%	44%
I deal with problems well	49%	34%
I feel good about myself	41%	27%
I feel optimistic about the future	38%	27%

Source: State of the Youth Nation. Data from: YouthSight

Parents are also concerned about the impact COVID-19 is having on their children:

69% are concerned about the disruption to social life at university.

78% are concerned about isolation and loneliness affecting their studies. Unite Students survey May 2020

Our student services framework of support

How we directly help students

- Unite's Student Services team provides one-to-one information, signposting and support to students for whom there are welfare related concerns. These include issues around mental health, emotional wellbeing concerns, distressing incidents and health-related issues and disabilities.
- We employ a team of Student Services Managers, who work closely with Welfare Leads and Security Teams in our accommodation across the UK. We work hand in hand, with our university partners in managing student welfare issues, and where relevant, with the police, NHS, social services and community organisations.

- Our 24/7 in-house Emergency Contact Centre ensures there is always someone there when a student or concerned family member needs us. Our phonedlines operate 24/7, 365 days a year and are staffed by a specially trained team who are often first point of contact and support for students on a broad range of issues. Nightline student-led listening service is also available to all residents via our partnerships with London Nightline and Nightline Association.

How we work with others to improve student mental health

- With nearly 30 years of experience we have a deep understanding of the

issues that students experience when they move away from home and have partnered with many other experts and organisations to contribute to improving student mental health. We have published several research reports on student wellbeing and mental health, with the findings being used by the Department for Education to inform their work. These are available on our website.

- In 2019 we co-authored "**Student Wellbeing**", a good practice guide for student accommodation providers published by the British Property Federation. We also worked closely with Student Minds, supporting their work on the University Mental Health Charter.



COVID-19: Our response

- We were the first in the sector to cancel rental payments for any students who did not wish to return for the third term of the 2019/20 University year. We also offered free extensions on the 2019/20 academic year for those stuck during the lockdown.
- We put in place a **welfare support scheme** for students unable to go home during the lockdown.
- Moving forward, we are providing as much **flexibility** as possible for students. This includes flexible booking dates to reflect evolving university start dates and the ability to move bookings to another city if students change universities. In the event that a university change is to a city where there is no Unite accommodation, or a student needs to defer this year, we will do all we can to ensure students aren't disadvantaged.
- We've also **adapted** some of our regular services to help make everyday life a little easier, which we know can often make the difference to a student's general wellbeing. This year we are welcoming students with a digital check-in to help reduce physical contact.
- Where students need to quarantine having arrived from a Covid-restricted area, we will allow them to check-in early, at no-extra cost so they don't miss that crucial start to the new academic year.
- We also **connect** our students via our MyUnite digital app before they move in so they can get to know each other reducing the nerves around moving in with complete strangers.
- To help foster a sense of community, we've also introduced a **Home Charter**, designed to help foster a healthy supportive living environment for those living inside and around our properties in our wider community.



Our purpose is to provide a Home for Success. This means providing a safe and secure home which is affordable and helps students to realise their academic potential while enjoying student life.

At a glance – some key stats



#1
We are the largest provider of student accommodation in the UK



We are the only PBSA provider to be accredited with a 5-star rating by the British Safety Council



x 76,000
Each year we provide a secure home to some 76,000 students



We have 177 buildings across 27 cities



Students living in **Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)** are **26%** more likely to report top grades and almost **twice** as likely to be 'very satisfied' with their physical health

(NUS Homes Fit for Study 2019 report)

