

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### OUR STUDENTS



With almost 30 years' experience in the student sector, we understand students' evolving needs. This unique perspective helps us to ensure our students get the most out of their University experience and differentiates us by delivering a better Home for Success.

 For more information on our Covid-19 response see **pages 2 and 3**

### WHO ARE OUR STAKEHOLDERS?

### HOW WE ENGAGE

- Day-to-day contact with in property teams
- Regular student pulse surveys
- Annual survey across the UK student body in partnership with the Higher Education Policy Institute
- Our MyUnite app connects flatmates before they move in
- Student ambassadors help new students settle in
- Student life website 'The Common Room' with student-created content
- A Home Charter designed to help foster a supportive community for students
- Leapskills programme for school leavers which helps students prepare for University life

### WHAT WE DID FOLLOWING ENGAGEMENT

- Waived 2019/20 third term rents for students during the first national lockdown and in light of lockdowns in 2021 we offered 50% rent discounts together with a four week complimentary extension into summer 2021
- Implemented a range of Covid-19 specific measures for our students and use of a range of communication channels including social media, text bursts and emails
- Enhanced service features in the MyUniteApp including self-isolating notification and the ability to notify our teams remotely of maintenance or other assistance requests
- Enhanced student welfare services, including bespoke support for students shielding, support for those self-isolating, online welfare checks and a pilot peer-to-peer scheme

### OUR PEOPLE



Our people are at the heart of our business and engaging with our people has been especially important during the Covid-19 pandemic.

 For more information on our workforce engagement and D&I strategy see **pages 94 and 107**

- This year we adapted our people engagement strategy given Covid-19 challenges
- Regular engagement and employee pulse surveys on a range of topics such as our support during Covid-19, diversity and inclusion and development of our Sustainability Strategy
- Unite Live sessions with our CEO and key senior leaders providing regular business updates with an opportunity for our people to ask any question
- Employee panels attended by Non-Executive Director, Elizabeth McMeikan
- A new employee Culture Matters group providing employees with a dedicated employee driven forum to discuss diversity and inclusion issues

- Provided additional special leave to employees with caring responsibilities, extending our cycle to work scheme all year around and a new flexible working policy to balance work with home priorities
- Commenced a programme of training for senior leaders with an external diversity and inclusion consultant to help our teams engage in supportive diversity and inclusion discussions
- Launched our refreshed values, on the back of the completion of the Liberty Living acquisition, with the inclusion of a new value Creating Room for Everyone
- Refreshed our Diversity and Inclusion strategy with new targets

## OUR UNIVERSITIES



We aim to be a strategic partner to the strongest Universities, not just a supplier. This means we work with University partners to deliver solutions which work for them.

For more information on our University partnerships, see [pages 34 and 35](#)

We invest in understanding the long-term aspirations of Universities including their accommodation requirements and service expectations. This is achieved through:

- Our local management teams working closely with University accommodation and student services teams
- Our dedicated Higher Education team engaging regularly with Vice Chancellors and University leadership teams
- The Unite Foundation working in partnership with 27 Universities to provide support to students from challenging backgrounds

In light of Covid-19, this year the annual Higher Education Trust Survey was not undertaken but regular dialogue was maintained with Universities throughout the year.

The Universities we partner with recognise the decisions we have made during Covid-19 including:

- Allowing students to arrive 14 days before their 2020/21 tenancy start date rent-free for quarantine needs
- Providing delayed start dates for students to check in past the usual September start

This year, we have increased our support for Universities by providing:

- Our best practice Covid-19 guidelines and FAQs
- A monthly newsletter to our University partners outlining our activity over the previous month and sharing what we have planned
- Information on planned announcements on rent refunds and rent discounts
- A Higher Education podcast – Accommodation Matters – which is available on our website, Spotify, Podbean and Apple Podcasts featuring invited guests from the Higher Education sector to share learnings.

## OUR INVESTORS



Our investors and funders are a key source of our efficient capital that allows our business to invest and grow.

For more information on our business model please see [page 32](#)

We aim to produce balanced and transparent reporting and communications to allow our investors to best understand our business and strategy, key risks and how we deliver long-term shareholder value. This year we increased our communications to investors with regular trading and business updates to keep investors informed of our performance and decisions made during the pandemic. We significantly increased the volume of meetings for investors and lenders throughout 2020, often in response to ad hoc requests, to provide maximum transparency around our response to the changing environment.

Our investors understand the difficult year this has been as a result of the pandemic and appreciate we have had to make difficult decisions such as cancelling the final dividend for 2019 and not paying an interim dividend for 2020.

In June 2020, we consulted with a significant number of our major shareholders prior to a successful £300 million share placing where we received strong support from both new and existing shareholders. The principles of pre-emption were respected insofar as possible through the allocation process.

## COMMUNITIES, PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS



We understand the importance of building trusted relationships with our communities, partners and suppliers.

For more information, see our Sustainability Strategy on [pages 46 to 63](#)

Throughout Covid-19 we have engaged actively with Government and liaised with Public Health England. We engaged with key stakeholders including students, Universities, our supply chain, strategic partners, investors, and our teams across the business to understand the material issues in developing our Sustainability Strategy. We engage with local decision makers including local councillors and stakeholders during the planning process for our new property developments. We work closely with our contractors and conducted a BSC Safety Council construction audit to understand areas of improvement.

We have developed key themes which we have incorporated into a new Sustainability Strategy to address the areas that matter most to us and our stakeholders. We engaged with local leaders on our Paddington, Bristol and Edinburgh developments and kept local MPs aware of our actions relating to Covid-19. Throughout the pandemic, we worked closely with our contractors to ensure our sites remained safe and also worked with our supply chain to mitigate delays in product and material delivery to our development sites. We now provide mental health and counselling support to contractors and their sub-contractors.