



The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business, Energy and
Industrial Strategy

Councillor Jon Taylor

Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and
Transformation

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Dear Secretary of State

Private Landlords, Purpose Built Student Accommodation Providers (PBSAs) and Letting Agencies

We are writing to you about the uncertain financial pressures students are currently facing.

Many students have arranged accommodation with Private Landlords, Purpose Build Student Accommodation Providers (PBSAs) and Letting Agencies to attend university. However, they currently unable to live in the accommodation due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

We recognise these are challenging times and how vital it is, more than ever, that we act to ensure the safety of everyone. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on so many lives across the UK, through damage to health, changes to life circumstances or financial difficulty. It has also had a devastating impact on the wider economy with many businesses closed or financially struggling. This in turn has had an impact on student's ability to secure part-time and holiday work and many now face financial hardship, where student loans do not fully cover all expenses.

With all this in mind, and in order to protect our students during the pandemic we have a number of asks from government, requesting that the relevant departments work with Private Landlords, PBSAs and Letting Agencies to

- Reduce student rent by forty percent for the rest of the academic year.
- Enable students who cannot occupy their accommodation to exit their contracts without penalty.
- Reimburse students who have paid in advance and cannot occupy their accommodation.
- Reimburse lost income for student landlords whose tenants cannot occupy their accommodation.
- Consider allowing students who cannot work due to lockdown to claim Universal Credit.
- Respond to the Higher Education sector's request for government financial support for enhanced student hardship funds allowing students to receive direct financial support across the full range of financial hardships caused by the pandemic.

- Request that all Universities, Private Landlords, PBSAs and Letting Agencies stay updated with implemented best practice public health guidance, communicate with tenants and provide the maximum support possible.
- End all evictions for all renters, for the duration of the crisis, and particularly for those who do not have another home.
- Suspend all student rent increases.

We realise this is a large financial ask, however we believe the government has a duty to act and support students who may be struggling financially, or cannot access their accommodation due to lockdown legislation.

Finally, we would like to share with you steps we have already taken in Plymouth.

- Plymouth Marjon University has waived rent for students that have been unable to travel to the university due to lockdown
- University of Plymouth has taken similar action through its enhanced student hardship fund.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Taylor', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Jon Taylor
Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation