

HM Assistant Coroner Ian Potter
Inner North London Coroner's Court

By email: [REDACTED]

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Dear Sir

Regulation 28 Report response from Unite Students

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report (the **Report**) dated 20 January 2025 relating to the tragic death of Student A on 28 July 2024. I wish to extend our sincerest and deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Student A. Student welfare and safety is paramount for Unite Students and the case of Student A has had a profound impact on our teams.

It is my understanding that Unite Students was not formally invited to provide evidence to the inquest. I wanted to therefore inform you that should the need ever arise, we are always willing to lend our support to a Coroner's inquiry, whether that be through the provision of information and records or releasing employees from their duties to give witness evidence.

Having reviewed your Report, I would like to take the opportunity to provide some additional evidence which may help clarify some aspects of the Report and provide a fuller context for our response to the concerns you have raised.

Timeline of events

First, we noted your concern that it *"took hours for the request for a welfare check to be actioned in any way"*. From our review of the information available, and in particular the witness statements you kindly disclosed, post inquest, we believe this concern is based on an understandable misinterpretation of the witness evidence given by one member of staff ([REDACTED]).

The Report states "[O]n 28 July 2024, the request for a welfare check was received by staff at Somerset Court, from the Emergency Control Centre (the ECC) for Unite Students, at approximately 07:00". In fact, 07:00 was the time when [REDACTED]'s shift started, and it was not the time of the first call to the ECC.

Our call records show the first call was made to the ECC at 09:33. During this call with the ECC, it was communicated that Student A had been spoken to the previous evening and there were no specific concerns about their physical or mental welfare. The caller requested contact be made with Student A and for someone to check whether they were present in the building. It is our view that there was nothing of particular concern at this stage given the information available.

At around 09:40, the ECC phoned the staff member on site requesting that they try and get in touch with Student A. Immediate attempts were made by the staff member to contact Student A, with calls made three times between 09:40 and 10:40. In light of the information available at that time, we believe this to be a reasonable response.

As recorded in the Report, at approximately 10:50, the staff member went upstairs to Student A's room. Again, in light of the information available, we believe this escalation and the associated timescales were reasonable.

The staff member opened the front door to the room and did not enter but observed Student A to be present and in bed.

A further call was received by the ECC at 10:58 who relayed this to the staff member just after 11:00. This call to the ECC escalated the seriousness and highlighted the situation as a potential emergency.

As per our safety protocol, the staff member on site requested a second staff member attend to allow for a two-person room entry. The second staff member, who had travelled from another property, arrived at the site and, at 12:00, a two-person room entry to Student A's flat was carried out. At 12:02 an ambulance was called.

Our response

We recognise that a second staff member could have attended sooner to facilitate a room entry after the call escalation at 11:00. The steps that we are taking to address this are twofold:

1. We have changed the geography of our Duty Manager rota to reduce the number of properties each manager is responsible for; this will enable improved responsiveness in the event that room entry is required
2. We will review our training, policies and procedures to ensure that staff members feel comfortable calling emergency services and do so promptly and simultaneously with any request for a chaperone or other assistance in entering a student's room where there is a safety concern or an emergency situation

The staff member's decision to not enter the room immediately and instead seek further assistance was ultimately a matter for that member of staff (who genuinely did not believe there was an emergency, but that Student A was likely to be sleeping). However, we believe additional guidance can be provided so that in any circumstances where the wellbeing of a student cannot be positively confirmed by a member of staff then matters are escalated to the emergency services immediately if staff members are unable to enter a room.

More generally, we are reviewing all our procedures for dealing with calls made to the ECC to effectively triage calls received, and to ensure that appropriate questions are asked to understand the basis and potential seriousness of enquiries.

Unite Students as a landlord

Unite Students is very proud of its interventions around student welfare and our continuing aspiration to achieve better outcomes for our tenants. We go further than we must as a landlord and lead the sector in what we are able to offer tenants. We choose to do this as it is the right thing to do and, by extension, this choice helps us to align with some of the additional obligations faced by our university partners. As part of this commitment, we have a Support to Stay framework (details of which are available at [Support to Stay: Improving our student support framework](#)) which helps our teams deliver for our tenants. This is an important part of our offering and, in doing so, we undertake nearly 1,500 checks every year on students in our accommodation.

To prepare our teams for this, they all receive training specific to the roles which they perform but, unfortunately, sometimes find themselves confronted by some of the most difficult situations imaginable. We have in recent years made the decision to have 24/7 staffing at all our sites and offer student welfare programmes; however, our teams are not emergency service professionals or staff providing supported living. We will, of course, work through the learnings from this tragic incident and will implement additional measures as necessary.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should I be able to assist further.

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive – The Unite Group PLC and Unite Students