



STUDENT RENT STRIKES!

Shortly after the COVID-19 lockdown was announced, University of Nottingham students living at Raleigh Park student accommodation (next to Jubilee campus), received the following message from Derwent Living (one of the accommodation providers): "If students have not already done so, please return to your permanent home if you can", thereby also adhering to government and university advice.

While the university released students from their contracts when they left their on-campus accommodation, and were also successful in convincing most other privately managed halls to follow suit, Derwent Living (who run the accommodation via their subsidiary, Derwent Students) are still holding students liable to fulfil their contracts and pay a final instalment over the summer semester. Raleigh Park accommodation is divided into two major providers managing rooms for different landlords. In contrast to Derwent Living (ca. 366 rooms), ACIS (ca. 934 rooms), who manages the vast majority of rooms, has agreed not to enforce final instalments for students who have followed advice and left. Students managed by Derwent Living are therefore being singled out. While other students in the same accommodation have been released from their contracts during the pandemic, Derwent are capitalising on the crisis in an attempt to charge students for living in accommodation which has been left empty, after they were instructed to leave.

Recently, this has led students to organise a rent strike (see coverage of the strike [here](#)), arguing that the contract has been frustrated Under the Law Reforms Act of 1943, here it states:

· Section 1(1) 'when a contract governed by English law has become impossible of performance or been otherwise frustrated... the parties thereto have for that reason been discharged from further performance of that contract.'

While Derwent Living is unwilling to cooperate, students are continuing to organise, maintaining their rent strike and receiving support from ACORN.

Derwent Living has only agreed to review contract liability where financial hardship can be proven, on a case by case basis. Their measure of what constitutes financial hardship during the pandemic appears unclear. Students who are placed into Raleigh Park accommodation by the university do not receive information about which provider they are subject to, let alone the landlords hiding behind them. Derwent's approach of profiteering from this crisis despite their advice to students to 'return home, if you can' is a disgrace. But many are resisting, and by building the collective power to challenge exploitative landlords, can win!



WHAT NEXT?

Join the union!

Predatory landlords and property management companies like Derwent will always try to individualise issues. While individually it can be very difficult to challenge exploitative landlords, by acting collectively we have much greater strength in numbers. Renters' unions and community organisations, like ACORN in Nottingham, can help us pull the power we have as residents, community members, and workers together, in order to take collective action to challenge the inequalities and power imbalances in our neighbourhoods.

Organise!

Many renters and students in Nottingham will be facing similar issues at the moment. Speak with your neighbours and friends, are they having the same problems? Do they have the same landlord? What action can you take collectively to challenge them? We can all show solidarity with those being ripped off by Derwent by signing their petition (<http://chng.it/xNTp6S9ZNq>). But tenants know they will have to go further too, and are striking against paying the rent Derwent is demanding for time during which tenants were asked to vacate their accommodation. We must encourage as many people as we can to observe the rent strike and withhold payment, and support all of those who are taking this action. We can also all put pressure on The University of Nottingham to back their students by writing to the University Vice-Chancellor.

Get involved!

Join ACORN: <https://acorntheunion.org.uk/join/>

Contact ACORN Notts: <https://www.facebook.com/ACORNNotts/> https://twitter.com/acorn_notts

Sign the Derwent students' petition: <http://chng.it/xNTp6S9ZNq>

Join the Raleigh Park Notts Rent Strike Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1533565946813230/>

Contact us: NottsUniWorker@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NottsUniWorkers> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NottsUniWorkers>