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## **'It's broken me': UK students on financial strain in the pandemic**

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The average student has paid £1,621 in rent for rooms that they have been unable to use owing to Covid restrictions, according to a survey. For many, the rent has added to their financial worries after losing term-time employment or support from their parents.

While many UK universities have offered reduced rent on student accommodation, a majority of students rent from private landlords. Millie, who studies film and television at the University of Lincoln, is prevented from living at her university address by the lockdown but is still charged £88 in rent a week. This has become increasingly difficult to pay since she lost her job in retail in the spring of 2020.

When she asked her university for assistance, she was advised to send a letter to her landlord explaining her financial situation. "But mine doesn't want to know," she said. "It's obviously up to them, but landlords do get government support, whereas most students don't really, apart from our maintenance loan. They should be more sympathetic."

She also said she would not be eligible for the new government fund for students whose finances have been hardest hit by the pandemic. "I already get a bursary from my university for earning below a certain threshold, but from the sounds of it the new funding they are giving is for students who literally have nothing. It's not enough."

Beth, a student at Queen's University Belfast, has struggled to meet her living costs because the pandemic has led to her own earnings and her mother's income falling significantly. During term time, Beth can only work 12 hours a week without clashes with her timetable.

Although most of her income is spent on rent, which is £300 a month, Beth has been unable to visit her university house since early December and has been living with her family outside the city.

The student said the pandemic and the resulting financial worries had seriously affected her studies. "Some of my grades are lower. It is a massive struggle to meet deadlines. When I'm at home, we don't each have a desk or a room to work in, so I am surrounded by people all the time. There have definitely been stresses between us in the family, which can be hard to manage some days.

"[The stress] has completely broken me," she added. "I never thought, at 21, I would spend so much time worrying and being saddened by these things."

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