

Community

Winter
2021

Introduction from Registrar and Secretary

As we fast approach the Winter Break, we just wanted to take this opportunity to look back at what has been another busy term for us all and update you all on some key initiatives moving forwards.

We've included some important updates around the reintroduction of our Community Fund and the creation of a Community Panel which I hope many of you will be keen to join and share your views and priorities moving forwards.

I am pleased to report that this term has seen a significant fall in concerns raised from the local community in relation to domestic noise, with both our key partners Devon and Cornwall Police and Exeter City Council also noticing the same pattern. The same can be said for garden noise which has significantly reduced thanks to the night-time economy re-opening. We would still like to reassure local residents that we continue to constantly review feedback and share intelligence with our key partners plus we have some targeted messages ready to send to all students reminding them of safe and responsible socialising in the lead up to the end of term.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the community that we continue to monitor our Covid-secure measures particularly in response to the emergence of the 'Omicron' variant. We are following guidance from the Government, Department for Education and Public Health to ensure that our entire community, both staff and students, are working together to protect each other and our wider community. We also have undertaken detailed planning for the entire Winter Break to provide support to our teams who will continue to support our campus operations and more importantly, the students who will be remaining on our campuses for the festive period.

I do wish you all a happy and healthy festive season.

Challenging Early Contracts

This month, we're hosting our annual Accommodation Fair, taking place in the Great Hall on the Streatham Campus. The fair provides an opportunity for students to talk to private landlords, purpose-built student accommodation providers and student support services, to help in their search for accommodation.

The Accommodation Fair was established almost ten years ago, when we discovered that more and more students were feeling pressured into signing contracts far too early. We realised that many students were signing contracts (for their following year) within weeks of arriving at university in their first year!

Student support staff (including the Student Community Wardens) discovered that students who had signed contracts too early were more likely to 'break down' as peer groups changed before their tenancy began. We know that households who sign contracts too soon are less likely to work well as a household – and are more likely to request help for a whole range of practical and personal reasons.

The Student Community Wardens have also been assisting with additional 'pop-up' information events this year to help spread the word further about the risks of securing accommodation too soon.



Student Community Warden Update

The Student Community Wardens have been hard at work this term, providing record levels of advice and peer-support to students living in the community.

They have issued advice on waste management and recycling to hundreds of student households and have worked with the Council's Cleansing Team to target specific streets with additional advice and information.

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Inherited waste has been a huge theme this year – this is when a household moves into their address and their bins are already full of waste, either from Landlords/Builders, or even the previous tenants. As the Council cannot collect extra side waste, tenants often cannot dispose of their own waste for weeks. We work with students to challenge inherited waste problems with their Landlord/Agent, but this process can take a long time. **Ahmed Yusuf, Student Community Warden**

In addition to daily contact with students, the Wardens have been conducting litter-picks in the community, raising awareness about household security and assisting with clearing litter from community spaces, including Bury Meadow Park and Priory Road Park.



The Wardens will now be focused on helping students to depart for Christmas safely and cleanly, with a big emphasis on taking bins back in over the Christmas period.

To contact the Community Wardens with feedback or ideas for projects, please email: communitywardens@exeter.ac.uk.

The Community Fund

We are excited to announce that a 'Community Fund' will be available for community groups and organisations to apply for, from January 2022 onwards.

The fund replaces the previous 'StreetWise fund' and will provide a resource for students, local residents, community organisations and local agencies to develop projects that enhance the relationship between the University and the communities of Exeter.

Grants of up to £300 (increasing to £500 for larger projects) will be made available in two funding rounds, one in January and the second in the summer term. The fund is part of our commitment to help improve civic engagement and explore new ways to collaborate with community partners.

In addition to funding, we understand that some projects may also require different kinds of support. The Community Fund will also provide a chance to discuss project ideas and potentially connect groups with staff/student volunteers, academics or researchers.

Further information about the application process will be made available in the new year, but please feel free to contact Community Liaison Manager, Rory Cunningham if you would like to receive an email notification when application details are released: r.j.cunningham@exeter.ac.uk.

Panel Members Requested

In addition to the Community Fund, the University is also seeking to establish a 'Community Panel' to help us better understand the priorities and aspirations of local people, when developing and implementing our community engagement activity.

The process of setting up a panel actually began before the pandemic, but had to pause until we had a clearer idea of when we could safely come back together again.

We already work with local residents in a variety of ways and we're keen to stress that the proposed panel would seek to complement the feedback we receive from other networks, like the Resident Liaison Group.

The panel will provide us with an opportunity to listen to a wider variety of social groups and to be more responsive to their needs.

If you are a local resident (and not employed by the University) with ideas for research, projects, campaigns and volunteering opportunities, we would like to hear from you.

For further information about the panel positions, details on how we will reimburse panellists for their help or to see a copy of the draft 'terms of reference' for the panel, please email r.j.cunningham@exeter.ac.uk.





Introducing the Community Builders

We would like to introduce you to Exeter's team of 'Community Builders'.

The Community Builders are active throughout the community and take an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which means they use local strengths, organisations and passions as a starting point for enabling greater connection, activity and collective support within communities.

The Community Builders work with community groups, individual residents, resident associations and other organisations (including the University) in a number of ways.

The aim of their role is:

- To build confident, more connected communities.
- Learning about and mapping existing community 'assets' – buildings, events, groups and organisations, and active individuals.
- Listening to local people describing their experience of the community, what they see as its strengths, and what could be improved, to build up a picture of how each neighbourhood works, and how it differs from others.
- Enabling increased community activity.

Please get in touch with your Community Builder if you have any ideas about how you can connect with your community and build relationships with the permanent residents in your area. Perhaps you could help out at your local school? Or you want to give some of your time to support the wellbeing of others? Or would like to practice your language skills by supporting some residents who are new to the area?

Get in touch with:

- Duryard and St James Community Builder:
Maisaa Sweid duryardandstjamescb@eci.org.uk
- Pennsylvania Community Builder:
Ebbie Peters mountpleasantcb@eci.org.uk
- Newtown and St Leonards Community Builder:
Jayne Leaver newtownstleonardscb@eci.org.uk
- St Davids East: Bernice Endacott stdavidseastcb@eci.org.uk

Visit: wellbeingexeter.co.uk/community-building-2 to find out more about the scheme and to find other Community Builders in the city.

Community/Gender Safety

The Provost and Registrar have been leading a Gender Safety Group since May 2021 looking at student safety and particularly the safety of women at night within our communities. This has been in close collaboration with our students across all campuses, our Guild and our community partners.

One of the key workstreams, led by our Director of Campus, Residential and Commercial Services, Peter Scargill, has been focused on physical safety and the following measures have been put in place:

- Passive personal alarms and drink spiking testing kits available across all campuses including in bars and halls of residence reception areas;
- An Exeter Night Bus introduced, in collaboration with Stagecoach, running three nights a week;
- Launched a **Campus Safety guide** detailing all initiatives;
- Added in additional lighting and signage on campus as well as working with community partners on a Safer Streets proposal which was funded to improve lighting and CCTV coverage in key areas across the city.

In addition we have just been awarded a Home Office Safety of Women at Night (SWAN) bid working as a consortium with our local partners. The funding aims to:

- Provide training for women and girls, Night Time Economy (NTE) staff and professionals on key issues faced by women in the NTE;
- Developing and launching a Safety Charter to empower everyone to challenge unacceptable behaviours;
- Strengthen and re-energise Best Bar None to enable it to play a key long-term role in delivering a safe NTE.

For any further information, please contact registrar@exeter.ac.uk

Sign up for Cultural Events

We would like to thank the local residents who joined us for the recent Diwali celebrations on campus. We are currently preparing for our Lunar New Year celebrations early next year and we would like to remind residents that they can register to receive notifications about public events and activities on campus. Simply email communitywardens@exeter.ac.uk with the words 'University Events' in the email subject line, and we will add you to our list.

Term dates

Autumn Term:

Monday 20 September – Friday 10 December

Spring Term:

Monday 10 January – Friday 1 April

Summer Term:

Monday 2 May – Friday 17 June

Resident Liaison Group

The Resident Liaison Group meets once a term with resident group leaders, councillors and other community partners to discuss a range of community topics and queries. The next two Resident Liaison Group meetings will be held on **March 2 and May 25, 2022**. To find out more about the format of these meetings, please contact Community Liaison Manager, Rory Cunningham: r.j.cunningham@exeter.ac.uk

Key links and contacts

University of Exeter Covid-19 mini-site:
exeter.ac.uk/coronavirus

DfE guidance – Higher Education COVID-19 operational guidance:

gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-covid-19-operational-guidance

If you have any questions please contact us via coronavirusenquiries@exeter.ac.uk

Estate Patrol

01392 723999 e.patrol@exeter.ac.uk

The University's Estate Patrol team can assist with noise disturbances from student premises (if direct contact is not possible). Please note that Estate Patrol cannot investigate disturbances in parks and other public spaces. These concerns need to be passed to the police for investigation.

Please note the University, police and city council are regularly sharing information and coordinating their responses based on the information they are receiving.

For general daytime queries relating to students living and socialising in the community please contact the **Community Liaison Team:** communitywardens@exeter.ac.uk / **01392 723721**.

The Community Liaison Team provide peer-support to students living in private housing. They also conduct follow up visits to any student addresses that Estate Patrol interact with out-of-hours.

The Community Wardens can also make initial contact with student households regarding waste management and storage.

Rubbish and Waste

If you have concerns about persistent rubbish or waste issues connected to a property, you can also report details to the council via: exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city

PC Alex Banks

PC Banks is our Neighbourhood Beat Manager (NBM) for the University, Duryard, Pennsylvania and Stoke Hill. You can contact her by emailing exeterneighbourhood@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk or call **101** and ask for **PC Banks 3329**.