



Privately-Rented Accommodation

A Guide for Students



Where to Find Accommodation

Small Ads

You can find advertisements for accommodation in the Daily Echo newspaper every Thursday.

There are sometimes adverts placed on the notice board at school by private landlords.

Agencies

Estate agents or letting agents can help you find a suitable house or flat for rent. However, most contracts are 6-month agreements.

There are many estate agents on London Road. You can also visit www.rightmove.co.uk to search for rented properties.

Many agencies charge an administration fee. However, do not hand over any money just to register and get a list of addresses. Agencies can only make a charge if they find you accommodation. Before signing a contract, always ask what fees you will have to pay.

Living with a Resident Landlord

If you share accommodation with your landlord, you can be required to move out with as little as one week's notice. On the other hand you can also leave at short notice, which is useful if you are looking for accommodation elsewhere.

Inspect the property thoroughly – don't go on your own or after dark. Take a friend with you.

Checklist

Money

- How much is the rent and what does it include?
- How is the rent payable and to whom?
- How much is the deposit?
- What does the deposit cover?
- Is the deposit refundable?

Furniture

- What furniture is included? is it in good condition?
- What will you have to provide?
- Is there an inventory of the furniture?
- Is there enough storage and preparation space in the kitchen?

Gas and Electricity

- How is the house heated?
- Is there adequate heating?
- Have you seen a copy of the Corgi Safety Certificate for the gas appliances?
- Is the wiring safe? Do plugs get hot (they should not!)?
- Do the fridge and cooker work?
- How will the fuel bills be paid?
- How much will the gas and electricity bills be?

Bedrooms

- Is the room large enough?
- Is there enough storage space?
- Are there enough power points?
- Is the heating adequate and safe?

Plumbing

- Do all the taps work?

- Does the toilet flush and not leak?
- Does the water heating work?

Safety and Security

- Are the gas & electrical appliances safe?
- Is there a smoke alarm?
- Is the house secure/do the external doors close properly
- Are there adequate facilities for the number of people who will live in the house?

Insurance

Check to see if the landlords' insurance will cover your possessions. Usually you will have to arrange your own insurance.

Moving In

Most landlords are perfectly reasonable and fair. However, some are not. Protect your interests by following these rules.

- Get a rent book or make sure that you get a receipt for all the money that you pay.
- Get an inventory signed by the landlord and make sure that it states all the defects and damages.
- Make sure the inventory states the meter readings for gas, electricity and water (if applicable) at the time you move into the property.
- Get a TV licence.
- Get a letter from School to prove that you are a student and therefore that you are exempt from paying Council Tax.

- Arrange insurance for your belongings.
- Make sure that you have your landlords contact details for emergencies e.g. burst pipes.

READ AND MAKE SURE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE CONTRACT BEFORE YOU SIGN IT AND MOVE IN AND NEVER SIGN A CONTRACT ON BEHALF OF ANOTHER PERSON – THE OTHER PERSON MAY CHANGE THEIR MIND AND YOU WOULD BE LEFT WITH THE RENT LIABILITY.

You will normally pay a deposit when you sign the agreement – this is usually the equivalent of one months' rent. The deposit is held by the landlord against any damage that you might do to the property, unpaid bills or rent.

Some or all of your deposit may be retained if you move out before the end of the agreement or without giving enough notice. Get a receipt for the deposit as well as a written statement of what it covers and when it will be returned to you.

The Agreement

This should have the following information:

- How much rent you must pay
- What is included in this
- When it should be paid
- To whom it should be paid
- How much notice do you have to give before moving out

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO GET PROOF OF THE RENT YOU HAVE PAID.

If you don't do this, your landlord could evict you for non-payment of rent and you would not be able to prove that you had paid. It is your responsibility to get the rent to your landlord – it is not his responsibility to collect it.

Your rent cannot be increased until your agreement ends and a new one is given to you. The landlord cannot evict you if you refuse to pay a higher rent during the time of your agreement.

Repairs

The landlord is responsible for the following:

- Roof, walls, floors and windows
- Gutters, pipes and drains
- Baths/Showers, toilets, sinks and basins
- Electrical wiring, gas piping, fixed heaters and water heaters

He is not responsible for anything that you may install or buy. If major repairs are needed, tell the landlord or put it in writing.

You are responsible for looking after the property and this includes:

- Taking reasonable care that you or your guests do not damage the property.
- Taking reasonable care to protect the property when you are not there e.g. taps turned off and doors locked.
- Undertaking minor maintenance e.g. replacing light bulbs.
- Keeping the property reasonably clean

Useful Contact Details

Police

Call 999 for emergencies

Call 101 for non-emergency incidents (eg loud noise or vandalism)

Call 0845 454545 for general enquiries

Gas

To find out who supplies your gas, ask your landlord or call the National Grid on 0870 608 1524.

If you smell gas, call on 0800 111 999. This is a free 24-hour emergency number.

Electricity

To find out who supplies your electricity, ask your landlord or call Southern Electric on 0870 905 0806.

Southern Water

Tel. 0845 278 0845

www.southernwater.co.uk

TV Licensing

www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

3 Kings Park Road,

Southampton

Hampshire

SO15 2AT Tel. 023 8022 1406 / 023 8033 3868

Insurance

Endsleigh Insurance

www.endsleigh.co.uk