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| **Question** | **Answer?** |
| **Where can I get my tenancy agreement checked before I sign?** | Both Community Living and Guild Advice can check your agreement prior to signing. Please email [communityliving@contact.bham.ac.uk](mailto:communityliving@contact.bham.ac.uk) or [guildadvice@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:guildadvice@guild.bham.ac.uk) to book an appointment. Guild Advice also have a drop-in session between 12-2pm during term time. |
| When is the right time to start looking for properties? | We are advising you not to rush, do not feel pressured by other housemates or a landlord / letting agent to sign. Only sign once you are ALL in agreement. |
| Many students are already looking for accommodation, but I haven’t decided on who to live with yet, what can I do? | Don’t worry you are not alone, lots of students are feeling the same as you and are unsure who they want to live with. We are encouraging all students not to rush to rent and are hosting housemate finder events through term 2 and 3 to help you find someone to live with. |
| Where can I find good landlords? | We recommend landlords and letting agents who are accredited with the Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme (MLAS). We have the reassurance that they have signed a code of conduct and there is a complaints process in the event of an issue.  You will find properties from accredited landlord and letting agents on Birmingham Studentpad  We are also working with a number of landlords and letting agents to have a positive impact on the student housing market via the Lettings Membership Scheme (LMS)  Further information can be found on the community-living.org.uk website. |
| Can you explain what Joint & Several means? | Joint and several is where all parties sign one agreement making you all jointly responsible for rent, deposit and damage. If one of the tenants is unable to pay, then the landlord has the right to ask the remaining tenants for their share. |
| Do we have to have guarantors, and if so how can I find one? | Yes, if this is the requirement of the landlord / letting agent. They are generally required to be UK based. There are companies who can act as a guarantor at a charge like ‘Your Guarantor’ |
| I am worried about viewings during the current restrictions? | Most landlords are offering virtual tours of their houses. Ask they landlord or letting agent if they could do a live zoom tour or if they have any videos of the house they can send you. |
| What is a holding fee / deposit? | A holding fee will take the property off the market and should be no more than the equivalent of 1 weeks rent and is non refundable if you choose not to take the property before signing. |
| How much deposit should we be paying? | The amount of deposit depends on the total rent for the property but is usually the equivalent of 5 weeks rent and 6 weeks if total rent exceeds £50,000. |
| What is a deposit protection scheme | It is a legal requirement for the landlord to secure your deposit with one of the governments recommended scheme. The landlord is required to do this within 30 days of you paying it and they have to send you confirmation and the prescribed information for the scheme. These schemes work to help get your deposit back if you have a dispute at the end of the tenancy. |
| What happens if I decide to leave university having signed an agreement? | Your agreement is legally binding and without a break clause you would need to find a replacement. |
| We have found a property but the bills are not included what do we have to pay and how much? | This will depend on the energy performance of the property and would be on average £7-£10 per person. Remember to factor in things like internet, TV licence. |
| Where can I find more information about house hunting? | House Hunting information can be found on the Community Living & Guild of Students websites. This is currently being updated as new events are added. |
| Is Selly Oak a safe place to live? | Yes! Selly Oak is a much safer place to live than it feels like if you read all of the posts on Fab n Fresh. Statistically Selly Oak actually has less crime than neighbouring Edgbaston! The Community Wardens work really closely with the local policing team to make Selly Oak as safe as possible for you, as well as being there to offer support and advice if any crime does take place. |
| What would you suggest to someone who is worried about living next to horrible neighbours? | It can be unsettling not knowing who you will be living next to when you rent a house but don’t worry, your Community Wardens are working in Selly Oak to keep anti-social behaviour to a minimum and to create a cohesive community. If you have any concerns about your neighbours once you have moved in, please get in touch with us and we will do everything we can to help! |
| How can I find replacement tenants | Many tenancy agreements will give you the option of ending your tenancy early if you find a replacement tenant.  Ways to do this include:   * Ask if your landlord can help by advertising your room on your behalf, (be aware there may be additional charges for this) * Advertise your room using social media, UoB facebook groups etc.   Ask your house mates or course mates if they are aware of anyone looking for accommodation. |
| Should the landlord release me from my contract or reduce my rent if I can’t move in due to covid restrictions? | Once you have signed a tenancy you have entered into a legally binding agreement.  You may be able to end your tenancy early by finding a replacement tenant.  The landlord/letting agent has no obligation to release you from your tenancy. |
| What is the eligibility for council tax exemption and how can I make sure I will get the exemption? | You are exempt from paying council tax if you are a registered full time student.  If you are in thesis awaited status you may be exempt depending on which council you are registered to.  If everyone in your house is a full time registered student then the whole house will be exempt.  If there are non-students living with students then the house will receive a discount but the non-students would be liable to pay the council tax bill.  Dependants of tier 4 visa full time students are also exempt from council tax as long as correct evidence is provided to the council. |
| What are the different types of tenancies, ie AST, license etc. | Different types of tenancies give you very different rights.   * Most people who rent from a private Landlord who doesn’t live with them will have an assured shorthold tenancy. Assured shorthold tenancies are the most common type of tenancy   Assured shorthold tenancies can be:   * fixed term - often 6 or 12 months OR * periodic - rolling weekly or monthly   Your landlord must also:   * follow eviction procedures if they want you to leave * [**protect your deposit**](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/tenancy_deposits/tenancy_deposit_protection_rules) in a government approved scheme * And arrange a yearly [**gas safety check**](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/repairs/gas_safety_in_rented_homes) if there are gas appliances in your home * You can also have what is called an ‘Excluded tenancy or licence’. This type of tenancy or licence is usually in place if you lodge with your landlord and share rooms with them, like a kitchen or bathroom. You’ll usually have less protection from eviction with this type of agreement |
| Where can I find out more information on my rights and responsibilities as a tenant? | * Shelter is the housing and homelessness charity who help millions of people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through their advice, support and legal services * If you need information and advice on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant then you can speak with one of Shelter’s Expert Housing Advisors by using their online chat service or by calling their national helpline * For more information or to seek advice you can search ‘Shelter- Get help’ online * Citizens Advice also provide housing advice covering areas such as ‘If you’re having problems with renting due to Coronavirus’, ‘renting privately’, ‘homelessness’, ‘repairs’ and much more * You can find out more and seek support by searching ‘Citizens Advice Housing Support’ online |
| How do we organise household bills | You will need to form an agreement with your housemates to share the bills, it is advisable to name all tenants on the bill.  You may wish to look into a bill sharing company which does all this for you, however there are additional charges for this. |
| What fees can the landlord/agent charge? | In 2019 there was new a Tenancy Fee Act introduced which specifies the fees that landlords/agents are legally allowed to charge you. Prior to this Act you could be charged for numerous things.  You can now only be charged the following fees.  • the rent  • a refundable tenancy deposit capped at no more than five weeks’ rent where  your total annual rent is less than £50,000, or six weeks’ rent where your total  annual rent is £50,000 or above  • a refundable holding deposit (to reserve a property) capped at no more than  one week’s rent  • payments to change the tenancy when requested by the tenant, capped at  £50, or reasonable costs incurred if higher  • payments associated with early termination of the tenancy, when requested  by the tenant  • payments in respect of utilities, communication services, TV licence and  council tax; and  • A default fee for late payment of rent and replacement of a lost key/security  device giving access to the housing, where required under a tenancy  agreement. |
| How will housemate finder events work with Covid restrictions? | Housemate finders will be virtual this year and will be starting in term 2. We will still keep them fun and interactive so you have a great experience and meet lots of new people |
| Can we exchange accommodation after the first term | To change accommodation you will need to speak to Living [communityliving@contact.bham.ac.uk](mailto:communityliving@contact.bham.ac.uk).  Changing accommodation can be a long process though so please speak to a Mentor [Mentorwelfare@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:Mentorwelfare@guild.bham.ac.uk) for further advice if you are unhappy with your accommodation. |
| When should I sign a contract/start looking for an apartment \*on right move\*? (Looking to live alone) (And privately is cheaper than students accommodations/unite students for a studio) | There is no reason to rush into signing an agreement, there are lots of alternative self-contained apartments available in the local area.  Once signed you will be liable for the period you have signed for!! |
| Can I apply for uni accommodation if I’m going into second year? If so, when do I apply? | You can apply to stay in accommodation for your second year, you can do this via the Living Accommodation portal or speaking to Living. Please be aware that first years will take priority |
| Will there be any support in finding a house if we wait till next year? | We will be hosting a virtual housing Fair from the 25th-28th January including landlords and departments that work in the community to help give you advice about living in the community. |
| I’m worried I don’t know enough people to live with next year | Lots of students are feeling this way this year so don’t panic you are not alone. We will be hosting housemate finder events throughout term 2-3 and will be running Match up Catch up also to help you meet new people. You can also join your Hall Rep Facebook pages to see what activities they are running to help you meet people living in your accommodation. |