

Guide to Renting in the City

This is a brief guide on what to do when moving into private rented housing in the city.

Before you start your search you will need to consider the following:

- What your budget will be for rent, utility bills, travel and living costs.
- Do you want to share a property or live by yourself?
- What area of the city would you like to live in?

This guide provides useful information to help you answer those questions and the process of finding and securing a property.

TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION

There are a number of different private housing options for students in Brighton and Hove. Discover the different types of student accommodation in the private sector and how to access them.

Shared Whole Properties

The most common type of student housing in the private sector is renting a whole house with other students within a residential area of the city. These house shares can vary in size, but the most common are 4-6 bedrooms.

When renting a house with other students, you usually sign up to what is called a 'joint and severally liable' tenancy. This means that although you will have your own bedroom, all people renting the property will be jointly responsible for all terms of the tenancy agreement for the whole property.

Shared whole properties are usually let either directly from the landlord that owns the property, or the landlord may choose to rent the property via a letting agency.

Resident Landlords and Host Families

You might prefer to live with a resident landlord or a host family during your time at Sussex. These options mean that you would rent a room in a house in which your landlord also lives. A Resident Landlord usually consists of renting a room and sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities with your landlord. A host family usually offers additional services such as cooking meals, washing laundry and cleaning your room, and is suited to students who would like the experience of living with a family in the local area.

Sussex Student Pad has a list of local resident landlords and host rooms that are inspected by Housing Officers at the University to ensure that they are comfortable and safe for you to live in. When completing the search options on the site, select 'resident landlord/host family' from the drop down selection to bring up a list of available rooms. www.sussexstudentpad.co.uk

Private Halls of Residence

Brighton has some halls of residence around the city that are managed by private companies for students. This accommodation is similar to the types of accommodation found on campus, but is not owned or managed by the University.

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Blocks usually contain studio rooms or rooms with a private bathroom and tend to be higher in price than shared houses.

IQ Student Accommodation and Aparto are some of the largest providers of private student halls in Brighton, and rooms can be booked through their webpages.

<https://www.igstudentaccommodation.com/>

<https://apartostudent.com/>

AREAS OF THE CITY TO SEARCH

Explore the different areas in and around Brighton & Hove and find somewhere to live that fits your budget and lifestyle.

| Area of the city | Amenities | Transport |
|---|--|---|
| Lewes Road Close to both the city centre and campus - it is around 1.5miles from the University. | It's popular with students due to the range of small cafes, pubs and shops in the area. It also has some larger retailers such as Sainsbury's, B&Q, Aldi and Halfords. | There are regular buses to and from campus, some running 24 hours a day. The 23, 28 and 29 go from Lewes Road, and stop right outside the University campus. You can also cycle to campus and into the city centre using the dedicated bicycle lanes. |
| Moulsecoomb and Bevendean Moulsecoomb and Bevendean are two estates located in the suburbs of the city, around two miles from campus. | The area has a large leisure centre, local shops and community pubs. | There are buses to campus and the city centre. The number 23, 28 and 29 go through Moulsecoomb, and stop right outside the University campus. Moulsecoomb also has a railway station with connections to Falmer Station (the closest train station to campus) and Brighton. |
| Coldean Coldean village is around 1.5miles from campus. It's surrounded by fields and woodland. | It has cafes, shops, a pharmacy, a doctor's surgery, a library and a post office. | Coldean is well connected to both the University and the city centre. It's a 10 minute walk to campus and 30 minute bus ride into Brighton. You can get the 25X bus from Coldean to campus. |
| Hollingdean Hollingdean is a semi-suburban area made up of elegant rows of Victorian | It has trendy cafes, pubs and restaurants. Hollingdean is home to the largest green | The closest railway station is Preston Park. Preston Park station is on the Brighton to London mainline, so you can travel into the city or take the train up to the capital. There are also buses into the city centre, and you can change there for buses to campus. |

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| terraced houses. It is just over four miles from campus. | space in Brighton & Hove, Preston Park, which hosts the city's annual Pride festivities. | |
| London Road London Road is around four miles from campus. | It has a range of bars, pubs, coffee shops, supermarkets and the city's Open Market. London Road is also within walking distance of Brighton's bohemian North Laines. | London Road railway station is on the same line as Falmer and it only takes around seven minutes to get to campus. There are also many bus routes but you may need to change in the city centre to get to University. |
| Hanover and Elm Grove Hanover and Elm Grove are two of the quirkiest neighbourhoods in Brighton. The area is known for its bright and colourful houses and strong community spirit. It is around four miles from campus. | It has proven popular with students due to its large number of cafes and local pubs, and the supermarkets of Lewes Road are only a short distance away. | There are buses from Hanover and Elm Grove to campus but you may have to change at Lewes Road for some routes. |
| Hove Hove is just over seven miles from campus. It's easy to get to the seafront and into the city centre. | Hove is a bit further from campus, but is home to many cafes, restaurants, shops, galleries and bars. | You can get the train from Hove to Falmer, but need to change at Brighton. The number 25 bus route runs from Hove, covering areas to the west of the city and travelling through central Brighton to campus. |

| Additional areas to search | Amenities | Transport |
|---|--|---|
| Lewes Lewes is a historic, picturesque, traditional English town. Popular with tourists and students. | There's a good selection of high-street shops, supermarkets, cafes, bars, restaurants, and pubs. There is also a swimming pool, parks, gardens, and museums. | There's a direct train connection in less than 10 minutes to Falmer and two buses per hour to the University. |
| Portslade/Aldrington Portslade is close to Hove and | There's a good selection of pubs, bars, cafes, grocery | You can get to campus by train in around 30 minutes (changing trains |

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| considered to be an 'up and coming' residential area. | stores, supermarkets and restaurants. | in central Brighton). It is less than 10 minutes by train to Hove or Brighton. |
| Shoreham-By-Sea Shoreham is a small, traditional English seaside town with beautiful seaside views and a picturesque river and walking/cycling routes into the South Downs National Park. | There's a good range of shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs and two supermarkets. | It is 16 minutes by train to Brighton. You have to change trains in Brighton to get to Falmer. It is also within easy reach of London (one hour 30 minutes direct). |
| Newhaven Newhaven is a small port town with ferry connections across the English Channel to France. | There's a selection of shops, supermarkets, cafes, restaurants and bars. | There is a direct train connection to the University in 20 minutes. |

Searching for properties

Discover where to find landlords and letting agents in Brighton that rent to students, and where to find reviews to ensure that they meet your housing needs.

Sussex Student Pad

If you are looking for a reputable list of student landlords, we recommend that you visit www.sussexstudentpad.co.uk which lists whole properties and lodgings rooms listed by landlords that want to rent to Sussex students. The University housing team administers the site and carries out checks on all rooms and properties to make sure that they are safe, legally compliant to national housing legislation and are comfortable homes for you during your studies.

Only Sussex students are granted access to the site, and when you move into a Student Pad property, you will deal directly with the property owner throughout your tenancy, cutting out any third party agents.

Sussex Student Lettings

The Students' Union at Sussex has their own letting agency, set up by students, for students. Sussex Student Lettings have a number of properties to rent each year offer an ethical services from which all profits go back into support services for students. You can visit Sussex Student Lettings at their on campus office based in Falmer House, or at the University of Sussex Information Centre at 91 Lewes Road, Brighton. A list of their properties is online: www.sussexstudentlettings.com

Online Searches

Websites such as Rightmove, Zoopla and Sturents list properties to rent to students by landlords and letting agents and on the website, you have the ability to refine your search by area, price and number of bedrooms. Once you have found a property you are interested

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in, you can contact the agent or landlord by completing an online form within the advertisement to arrange a viewing.

Rightmove - www.rightmove.co.uk/student-accommodation.html

Zoopla - <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/>

StuRents - <https://sturents.com/>

There are websites such as Spare Room which advertise available rooms to rent in existing house shares or with a resident landlord.

Spare Room - <https://www.spareroom.co.uk/>

When completing online searches for properties, always use websites that complete checks to ensure advertisers and properties are real. Avoid websites where anyone can create a listing such as Gumtree, as there is no way to verify that the advert is genuine.

Visiting Letting Agents

The Lewes Road area of Brighton is home to lots of the main student letting agents in the city, with many having offices in the area. If you are visiting Brighton to look for properties, a visit to these offices is a good idea to get an idea of the properties each agent has available, and to discuss the terms of letting with them, as these terms vary from agent to agent.

The University has an Information Centre at 91 Lewes Road, if you visit an agent and have any questions about their terms, you can pop into the Information Centre and speak to a University Housing Officer for advice.

Reviews

When thinking about renting a property, particularly from a letting agent, it is useful to get as many reviews as possible on the service and management of the property to help you make an informed decision. Speaking to other students who have rented in the city can give you a good idea of first hand experiences with agents, and there are review websites outlining the experiences of other students that have rented with particular agents. One example of a review website is: <https://www.allagents.co.uk/>

Viewing a property

Top tips for finding the right home

If you're sharing with housemates, try and see the property together. This will help ensure you choose a place you'd all like to live.

You could also:

- view at least three properties in different areas of the city. This way you'll get a better idea of what's on the market to suit your budget

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- research transport links, proximity to shops and if you will be able to easily access them
- ask the current tenants questions about what it has been like living there, and take your time looking around the property
- check the condition of the property from the outside including the garden, pathways, windows, doors and the roof
- inspect the inside of the property including the decoration, flooring and furniture
- ask the landlord or letting agent what appliances are included, and check that there is enough cupboard, fridge and freezer space for everyone
- check that the property has a communal living room, and that this is not a conservatory
- ensure there is safety equipment within the property such as fire alarms, fire blankets, fire doors and carbon monoxide detectors
- enquire if there are any planned building or renovation works to the property before you move in.

You should never be asked to pay any money to view a property.

Living costs

Living costs can vary depending on the area you live in and how many people share the property. The living costs table below gives you an idea of how much money you may need to budget.

| Outgoings | Cost per week | Cost per month |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Rent for a room in a shared house in Brighton without bills | £100 to £150 | £433 to £650 |
| Utility bills (average) | £10 | £44 |
| Mobile phone contract | £1 to £10 | £5 to £40 |
| Food (average) | £30 | £130 |
| Laundry (average) | £4.70 | £20.50 |
| Books, course materials and other costs (average) | £5 | £22 |
| Going out, socialising and hobbies (average) | £10 - £40 | £43 - £173 |
| Clothes, shoes and accessories (average) | £2 - £10 | £9 - £43 |
| Total* | £163 to £260 | £707 to £1,123 |

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SIGNING FOR A PROPERTY

Find out what will happen before you sign a tenancy agreement, what types of tenancy there are, and what should be included in your agreement.

Before your Tenancy Agreement

There are a few things that your landlord or letting agency may ask for before they draw up your tenancy agreement to sign. These are usually checks to make sure that you are eligible to rent the property. Additionally you may be asked to pay money up front, including a holding fee, security deposit and rent in advance.

Referencing

When looking for any property you may be asked to provide a reference from a previous landlord. This is evidence that you have been a good tenant, for example paying all the rent required on time. Usually you can get a reference from your previous landlord, or if your last address was in University managed accommodation, you can request a reference from us. If you are unable to provide a reference from a previous landlord you may be asked for a character reference or an employer reference. Check with the landlord or letting agent what they would require. They may also ask for proof that you are or will be a student.

Guarantors

Landlords and agents will most likely ask that you have someone who will be your guarantor.

A guarantor is someone who agrees to pay any money that you are supposed to pay in your contract, such as rent, bills or damages, if you fail to pay it.

A guarantor can be your parents, guardian, another family member, or friend. They will have to be based in the UK and a homeowner, and earn a specific amount per year. You should ask your landlord or letting agent what their guarantor requirements are.

A guarantor will sign their own legal agreement that outlines their responsibilities. Be aware that if you live with other students and you sign a joint tenancy agreement, your guarantor may well be responsible for all the costs, such as the whole rent and not just your share, if your housemates do not pay.

Make sure you and your guarantor understand the responsibilities and obligations you both have before you commit to the agreement.

If you are unable to provide a guarantor, the landlord or letting agent may ask for 6 or 12 months of rent to be paid in advance instead. If you cannot do this then there are a number of private guarantor companies that, for a fee, will act as your guarantor. Make sure you do your research to find out who will be suitable, what their terms and conditions will be and what their reviews are.

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Tenant fee ban

Following the introduction of the Tenant Fee Act 2019 on 1st June 2019, certain letting agent fees have been banned and only certain payments are now permitted. Please see the table below for permitted payments. Landlord and agents are still entitled to claim for damages from the security deposit or during the tenancy if required.

| Permitted Payments | |
|--|---|
| Holding Deposit | Capped at 1 weeks rent. This will later be put towards the security deposit or first months rent. |
| Security Deposit | <p>This is refundable at the end of the tenancy agreement (less any agreed deductions if applicable).</p> <p>Capped at 5 weeks rent if the annual rent is less than £50,000.</p> <p>Capped at 6 weeks rent if the annual rent is £50,000 or above.</p> |
| Rent | <p>The rental amount should be agreed in advance and usually paid monthly during the tenancy.</p> <p>If you do not have a guarantor you may be asked to pay 6 or 12 months rent in advance.</p> |
| Payments to Change the Tenancy | Capped at £50 or reasonable costs if higher. If more than £50 is charged the landlord/agent should provide evidence of costs incurred. |
| Payments associated with early termination of the tenancy | Landlord/agents are entitled to charge a fee, but it cannot exceed the amount landlord/agents will lose by accepting the tenant leaving early, or reasonable costs they incur in arranging for the tenant to leave early. |
| Payments in respect of utilities, communication services, tv licence and council tax | <p>Tenants will be responsible for paying the utility bills (gas, electricity, water), unless they are included in the rent.</p> <p>Communication services (broadband, tv, phone) are the tenant's responsibility, unless they are included in the rent.</p> <p>Council Tax- Full time registered students will be eligible for a Council tax discount during term time. Check the City Council website for further</p> |

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| | information and what you may have to pay if you are not a full time registered student. |
| A default fee for late payment of rent | This charge only applies once the rent has been outstanding for 14 days or more and any fee charged must be no more than 3% above the Bank of England's base rate for each day the payment is outstanding. |
| A default fee for replacement of a lost key | A fee can be charged to replace lost keys. The landlord/agent must provide evidence to demonstrate the costs they have incurred are reasonable. |

DEPOSITS

What is a Deposit?

A deposit is a sum of money that you pay at the beginning of the tenancy to the landlord or letting agent that should be no more than 5 weeks' rent.

The deposit acts as protection against any financial loss the landlord might face if you, or anyone else living in the property do not pay rent or leave the property damaged.

Money can sometimes be taken from the deposit for the following reasons:

- Any damage to the property or the fittings.
- Unpaid or outstanding rent.
- Redecoration costs due to tenant damages.
- The cost of removing any rubbish or possessions left from the property.
- The cost of cleaning to return the property to the condition it was given to you in.
- The cost of replacing locks or keys if keys are not returned.

Although the landlord may take money for your deposit for the above, they have to take into account fair wear and tear, meaning that they cannot take money for changes to the property that have occurred as a result of day-to-day living in the property.

Deposit Protection

If you have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, your landlord or letting agent must put your deposit in a Government approved tenancy deposit scheme. Landlords and letting agents have 30 days from the payment of your deposit to register it with one of the following schemes:

Deposit Protection Service - www.depositprotection.com/

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My Deposits - www.mydeposits.co.uk/

Tenancy Deposit Scheme - www.tenancydepositscheme.com/

Once your landlord or letting agent registers the deposit, they should provide you with the details of the scheme it has been protected with.

If you share a property with others, you may all be equally responsible for paying the rent and any damage caused, and as such you will all contribute to one single deposit. Some of the schemes preferring there to be a 'lead tenant'. The deposit will be registered in the lead tenants name, communication about the deposit will be with the lead tenant, and the money will go back to the lead tenant at the end of the tenancy.

Therefore it is important that you decide as a group who you would like to be the lead tenant.

If you do not have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, for example if your landlord lives with you in the same house, then legally your deposit does not have to be protected but we recommend you still ask for a written receipt of payment and the terms under which the landlord or letting agent may deduct from the deposit before it is paid.

If you think that your landlord or letting agent should have protected your deposit but are unsure if they have, you can contact Housing Services for advice.

Steps to get your deposit back

There are steps that you can take at the start, during and at the end of your time in a property to ensure you get as much of your deposit returned to you as possible when you move out.

When you move in

When you move into a property you should be given an inventory which outlines to complete condition of the property on the day your tenancy begins. On your first day in the property, make sure you go around the whole property, checking that the items listed on the inventory are correct and that no existing damage is missing from it. If you disagree with anything that has been recorded on the inventory, or if anything is missing, let your landlord or letting agent know in writing as soon as possible. We also recommend that you take photographs of the property on the day that you move in to keep as a record of the condition that you found it in on move in day.

During your tenancy

Whilst you are living at the property, there are some things that you can do to minimize any potential deductions from your deposit at the end:

- Make a cleaning rota with your housemates. This will help to keep your property clean and tidy throughout the tenancy.

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- Keep on top of the garden. Don't leave it until you move out as if the landlord has to arrange for an overgrown garden to be tidied up, they can remove the cost of this from your deposit.
- Report any repairs during your time in the property as quickly as possible to your landlord and keep a record of your report in writing in case you need evidence of it at the end of the tenancy.

When you move out

When you move out of the property, a check out inventory will be arranged by your landlord or letting agent and this will be compared to the inventory made when you moved in to check for any differences such as damage.

If your landlord or letting agent wishes to make any deductions from your deposit, they should inform you in writing once the check out inventory has been completed. If you agree that the deductions that your landlord or letting agent wants to make are fair, you should receive your deposit (minus the agreed deductions) back within 10 days.

If you feel that the deductions your landlord or letting agent is suggesting are unfair, you should let them know why in writing as soon as possible, explaining why you disagree.

If you and your landlord or letting agent cannot reach an agreement, then you can contact the deposit scheme under which your deposit is protected to begin a dispute resolution process. In this process the deposit protection agency will collect evidence from both you and your landlord or letting agent and make a final decision about how much of your deposit should be returned to you.

Any decisions made by a deposit protection agency are final.

Not paying a deposit?

Landlords or letting agents do not have to take a deposit and some choose not to, but this is rare.

There are also some deposit replacement schemes out there where for a fee, the provider will agree to cover the cost of any damages, up to a certain amount and would then recover these costs from you afterwards. Not all landlords or letting agents will accept these schemes, so check with them before viewing the property to save time.

Types of Tenancy Agreement

The two main types of agreement you may be asked to sign will be either an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or a Licence agreement. Which agreement you will have will depend on:

- If your landlord lives with you or in the same building.
- The type of housing you live in.

The type of agreement you are given will determine your rights and responsibilities and your landlords rights and responsibilities.

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You should always make sure you have received some kind of written agreement before moving into the property as this reduces confusion or any potential misunderstandings between you and the landlord about your rights and responsibilities. Agreements should usually include the following information:

- The full names of the landlord and all tenants living in the property.
- The address of the property that you will be renting.
- The start and end date of the tenancy.
- How much the rent will be and how it should be paid.
- A rent review clause after the initial fixed term.
- Who will be responsible for paying any utility bills, internet or council tax.
- Information outlining your responsibilities and what you should and should not do during the tenancy, for example reporting any repairs promptly.
- The landlords responsibilities and what they should and should not do during the tenancy, for example what maintenance obligations they have.
- Where your tenancy deposit will be protected and any reasons the the landlord or letting agent may taken money from the deposit.
- Rules on ending the tenancy.
- Information about how the landlord can take back possession of the property.

Assured Shorthold Tenancy

If you live in a private house or apartment by yourself or with housemates, and the landlord does not live there, then you are most likely to have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreement. This is the most common agreement.

Usually the agreement will be for a fixed period of 6 or 12 months, or you could be given a periodic tenancy, which runs weekly or monthly.

When signing an assured shorthold tenancy, by law your landlord or letting agent must provide you with the following documents:

- **Gas safety certificate:** If the property has gas appliances and/or gas central heating then legally the landlord must have a gas registered engineer check the safety of these every year.
- **Energy performance certificate for the property:** The property must have a rating of E or above to be able to be let. The closer the rating is to A the more energy efficient the property will be.
- **The Government How to Rent guide:** This guide takes you through the process of renting.

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- **Deposit protection information:** This will outline which government protection scheme the landlord or letting agent has registered your deposit with.

In addition to the legally required documents outlined above, we also recommend you ask for the following documents:

- **Electrical condition report:** This is an assessment of the condition of the electrics in the property and will be carried out periodically.
- **House of Multiple Occupancy Licence:** This is issued by the City Council to landlords or letting agents who let out properties with three or more unrelated people living together across two floors. You should check that your property has a licence if required.

Remember, once the agreement is signed and dated by you and the landlord, it becomes a legally binding document. You should always read through it carefully before signing and seek advice on any terms you do not understand. Housing Services will read through your tenancy agreement and advise you on the terms for free.

Joint Liability

You will have a joint tenancy if you signed one single agreement that includes you and your housemate's names on the contract. This means that you all have equal responsibility for the property and payments connected with the agreement, including rent.

Rent

You will pay a share of the rent due, however if one of your housemates does not pay their share, the landlord will be entitled to ask that any of the other tenants in the house pay, including you.

Damages

You are all responsible for looking after the whole property, so the security deposit that everyone contributed towards will cover any damage regardless of who caused it.

Leaving a Joint Tenancy

Leaving a tenancy once it has started can be difficult, unless there is a specific break clause in the agreement which states that after a certain amount of time you can give notice to the landlord and leave.

If there is no break clause you will be responsible for the property until the end of the tenancy.

In certain agreements there will be a clause allowing you to leave if you find someone to replace you. The landlord will have to agree to this and your housemates will usually have a choice in whether they accept your replacement. There may also be a fee of £50 (or more if the landlord can prove it has been more costly).

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Individual Liability

On occasion landlords and letting agents will provide an individual tenancy to each person sharing the house, so you will have a contract that is just between you and the landlord. The agreement will be specific for a room that you alone will be responsible for and paying the rent for, but you will still have joint access to the communal areas such as the kitchen or bathroom.

You will have sole responsibility for any damage done to your room, but may also still have responsibility for the communal areas.

If any of your housemates do not pay their rent and you have an individual tenancy then this will not affect you, as you will only be responsible for your rent.

Despite the advantage of only be responsible for your rent, there are some disadvantages to individual tenancies for example, if one of your housemates leaves, you will have no say in who replaces them as your landlord will choose and you also may have to buy your own TV Licence.

Unfair Clauses

When you receive an agreement, it should be written in easy to understand and plain language to ensure that you understand their rights and responsibilities.

You should always be given at least 24 hours, preferably longer, to take your agreement away and have it checked. Never be pressured to sign a tenancy on the spot.

Landlords or letting agents cannot put any terms and conditions that they want in the agreement, they have to be fair to both parties and legal.

Clauses written into the agreement are not automatically legal and enforceable.

Examples of unfair clauses include:

- Increasing the rent during the fixed term without notice.
- Landlord or letting agent not taking any maintenance responsibilities.
- Stating that the landlord or letting agent can make spot check visits without giving notice (unless it is an emergency).

If you are concerned by any clauses in the agreement then please get in touch with Housing Services for advice.

Licence to Occupy Agreements

If you live with a resident landlord or host family then your agreement will be a licence agreement rather than an assured shorthold tenancy. There are a number of differences between these two types:

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- A licence gives you permission to occupy a room within the landlord's home, whereas a tenancy agreement gives you exclusive use of a property, therefore your rights will be different depending on which agreement you have.
- Your protection from eviction will be different, if you have a licence your landlord can ask you to leave after giving you appropriate notice, usually a months notice if you pay monthly or a weeks notice if you pay weekly. Whereas if you have an assured shorthold tenancy you will have the right to stay until the end of the fixed term and if the landlord wants you to leave during the tenancy they have to apply for a court order giving a reason.
- If you have a licence the landlord can still have access to your room and does not need to give you notice to go in, whether that's for cleaning or decoration. With an assured shorthold tenancy the landlord has to give at least 24 hours notice to visit the property (unless it's an emergency).
- If the landlord sells their property the licence is not binding, so the new owner does not have to honour the agreement and can ask that you leave.
- A landlord does not have to protect your deposit in a protection scheme with a licence agreement.

When entering into a licence agreement, if you are paying any money make sure you ask for receipt of payment and never pay in cash.

Check that you are receiving the right kind of agreement when you are moving into a property. Shelter's tenancy checker can help you understand which agreement you have been given.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/downloads_and_tools/tenancy_rights_checker

RIGHT TO RENT

Landlords and letting agents are legally required to carry out checks relating to the immigration status of all of their tenants to make sure they have a right to rent in the UK.

Landlords and agents will need to see and check original identity documents, such as a valid passport or visa, of all tenants.

This applies to all tenants over the age of 18 living in private rented accommodation.

All checks should be carried out before the start of the tenancy.

If you have a time limited visa, the check should be carried out within 28 days before the start of the tenancy.

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MOVING DAY

Preparing for moving day

Moving into your new home is an exciting day, you can make it as stress free as possible with a little preparation. Before you move in you'll need to consider and arrange the following:

Pre-tenancy Administration

Make sure you and your housemates have paid all money that was due before moving in, such as security deposit and any rent in advance. You may not be able to collect your keys if you have not done this.

Check that you have received all of the paperwork you should be given, such as the tenancy agreement, deposit protection information, how to rent guide and safety certificates for the property.

Confirm with your landlord or letting agent when and where you will collect your keys.

Travelling to the Property

Think about how you will get yourself and your belongings to the property.

If you are coming by car, think ahead about where you can park around the property to unload your belongings.

If you are travelling to the property from outside of the UK, plan your arrival time so that you can collect your keys and get to your property as smoothly as possible. Take into account when your landlord or letting agent may be available to meet you.

Plans for the Day

Decide with your housemates before you arrive who is having which bedroom, this will prevent any disagreements on the day and help your move in run smoothly.

Check if the landlord will be meeting you at the property to show to show you around and make sure you have agreed on a suitable time.

Discuss with your housemates which household items each of you will be bringing so you don't end up with 5 vacuum cleaners!

On the day

Arriving and Checking the Inventory

When you arrive at your new home, before you move your things in, go around the property and check the inventory, or if you do not have one create one yourself, including taking your own photos of the property.

If you notice anything different in reality to what has been written on the inventory, make a note of this and send an updated version in writing to your landlord or letting agent.

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An inventory details the condition of the property and its contents, first at the beginning of the tenancy and then another is carried out at the end of the tenancy. It will usually include photos as additional evidence.

When you receive your inventory you should go around the property and check that you agree with what has been written.

If you disagree with anything in the inventory, you should make a note of the particular issue and put this in writing to your landlord or letting agent as soon as possible. You should also take your own photos for your records.

You should never have to pay for an inventory.

Creating your own inventory

Most landlords and letting agents will pay for an independent company to carry out an inventory, although legally, they do not need to do this.

If you are not given an inventory or you are not happy with the inventory that you have been given then you can make your own.

An inventory should carefully list the condition of:

- The walls and ceilings in each room, listing any scratches, marks or peeling paint.
- The carpet and flooring throughout the property.
- The decoration and paintwork in the property including skirting boards.
- Windows and doors, listing any broken locks or hinges.
- Fixtures and cupboards throughout the property.
- Furniture and appliances (if included in the property).
- The front and back garden.

The inventory should also record whether there are any smoke or carbon monoxide alarms in the property and also what the gas, electricity and water meter readings are.

Make sure you take photos of the whole property, making sure to include cracks, marks or scratches on anything or stains on carpets. We recommend that you hold on to these until you move out of the property in case you are held accountable for any damages that were there before you moved in.

Once you are happy you have recorded everything, sign and date the inventory you have created and send a copy to your landlord or letting agent. Keep a copy for yourself.

Make sure that during the tenancy you report any repairs to the landlord promptly, preferably in writing, and keep track of when the issue is resolved.

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Setting up Utilities and Council Tax

On your first day in your property, you will need to take a meter reading for gas, electricity and water when you arrive. It is best to take a photo of the meter reading in case you need to send this to the supplier.

Once you have your meter readings, you can call or go online to set up an account with the energy supplier. We recommend you put the names of everyone in the house on the account. If you do not know who your energy supplier is you can find out online: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/connections-and-moving-home/who-my-gas-or-electricity-supplier>

You will also need to complete the Council tax discount application form online. If you are a full time registered student you will be eligible for a Council tax discount.

What is Council Tax?

Council tax is a payment collected by Brighton and Hove City Council for local services such as the police and fire service. The amount you will pay is based on your property and the number of people living there.

Council Tax Exemption

In order to be exempt from council tax you must prove you and everyone in your household are in full time education and complete a form on the Brighton and Hove City Council website.

If one person living in your property is not a full-time registered student, you will need to pay Council Tax, but the household will receive a 25% discount on the bill. If two or more people living in your property are not full-time registered students, you will need to pay the whole Council Tax bill as a household.

Council Tax Outside of Term Time

If you are about to start your first year of study and move into a private sector property before you register at the University, you will need to pay Council Tax for the period before your University registration. For example, if your tenancy starts on 1st August and you register as a student at the University on 20th September, you will need to pay Council Tax for August and September.

If you are not in your first or final year of study, you will need to pay Council Tax from the official start of your tenancy until the day that you notify the City Council that you are moving into the property (not just the day you receive your keys). If you contact the City Council to say that you have collected keys on 1st August but will not be moving into the property until 1st September, you will need to pay Council Tax during the period that the property is unoccupied (August).

If you are in your final year of study you will need to pay Council Tax from the date that your student status ends. For example, if your final exams were at the end of June but your tenancy ends on 1st September, you will need to pay Council Tax for July and August.

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For more information and to complete the Council Tax discount application please see:

<https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-discounts/council-tax-discounts-students>

In your first week at the property

Registering with Local Health Providers

It is important that you register with your local GP practice as soon as you can, don't wait until you are feeling unwell. We also recommend that you register with a dentist. For more information on doing this please see:

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-practice/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/dentists/how-to-find-an-nhs-dentist/>

<https://student.sussex.ac.uk/new-students/when-you-arrive/register-for-healthcare>

Property Management

It is important that you check where important appliances are in the property such as the boiler and safety valves and the water stopcock, which is used to turn the water off in an emergency.

Look for any manufacturer guides or landlord instructions on how to use the appliances or check to see if they are available online.

Find out when your rubbish and recycling collection days will be and put this information on your notice board.

Check what you can and can't dispose of and recycle. You can find out more about this and collection days on the Council website. <https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-streets>

It's a good idea to put important contacts on the notice board, such as the landlord's number and email.

Meet Neighbours and Explore the Area

Make time to say hello and introduce yourself to your neighbours. It's good to have a positive relationship with your neighbours, they have lots of local knowledge about the area and are great to ask for advice.

LIVING IN THE PROPERTY

Learn what your rights and responsibilities are as a tenant to help you integrate into your new community easily and quickly.

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Your responsibilities as a tenant

Agreeing to take on a property comes with certain responsibilities, specifically to look after it and behave considerately towards those you are living with and the community around you.

Your tenancy agreement will list your responsibilities and if you break them your landlord can take steps to evict you. Your responsibilities include:

Paying your rent on time

- When you sign your tenancy agreement it should state what the rental amount is and how and when your rent should be paid. Usually this will be in advance and monthly.
- If you fall behind with paying the rent you should speak to your landlord as soon as possible to discuss this. Your landlord could take steps to evict you and go to court to claim for the missed rent.

Paying the bills

- You may be responsible for paying some or all of the bills for the property, these include: gas, electricity, water, internet, TV licence and Council tax. Check your tenancy agreement to see what you are responsible for.
- Some agreements will say the rent includes bills, but you will still be asked to only use a certain amount, and if you go over this you will be charged.
- If you do not pay the bills services may be cut off and you will be charged to reconnect them. This will also negatively affect your credit rating. If you are having difficulty paying your bills get in touch with the utility company as soon as possible, they may be able to set you up on a payment plan.

Taking care of your home

- You will have some general repair responsibilities around your home such as changing light bulbs and batteries in smoke alarms. Your overall obligation will be to look after your home, including heating and ventilating it properly, disposing of rubbish correctly, avoid causing any damage and report any issues as soon as possible to the landlord.

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- Your tenancy agreement states that your property will be your main home and as such you should not leave your home empty for long periods of time, otherwise your landlord might think you have left the property for good.

Behaving considerately

- You have a responsibility not to behave anti-socially, including towards those you live with, your neighbours and anyone visiting the property. Anti-social behaviour can include:
 - Having the TV on too loudly or playing loud music
 - Not disposing of rubbish correctly
 - Making noise outside of your property or when coming in
 - Using your home for illegal activities, such as drug dealing
 - Behaving aggressively towards housemates, neighbours and visitors
 - You will be responsible for the behaviour of any friends or visitors that you have.

Tenant and landlord communication

- You should ask your landlord for permission if you want to make any changes to your house, such as any decoration.
- If your landlord wants to visit the property, for example to carry out repairs, they need to give you at least 24 hours notice (except in emergencies) and visit during reasonable hours. If you find that the landlord or anyone sent on their behalf tries to visit without giving notice and it is not an emergency then you are within your rights to refuse entry to them. If this happens regularly then please get in touch with us for further advice.
- Report any repairs that need doing to your landlord promptly.

Looking after the property

As a tenant you are responsible for looking after your property, this involves notifying your landlord of any repairs or damage to your home as soon as it occurs.

Maintenance and Repairs

What is your responsibility and what is your landlords.

Your landlord is responsible for repairs such as;

- Utilities such as electrical wiring/appliances and the supply of gas, water and suitable drainage.
- Boilers, heating and hot water and providing adequate ventilation.
- common areas including entrance halls, stairways and bathrooms

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- The structure and exterior of the building, including walls, stairs and bannisters, roof, external doors and windows

Your landlord must ensure that your home is fit for habitation throughout your tenancy find out more here.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/repairs/is_your_home_fit_for_human_habitation

You are responsible for;

- Keeping your house reasonably clean and tidy both inside and out, this includes keeping gardens or outside areas in a reasonable state.
- Small repairs such as changing smoke alarm batteries or light bulbs.
- Checking the electrical safety of any electrical appliances you bring to the property.

If your actions or the actions of any of your guests result in damage to your home or any of your landlords property then you may be required to pay for repairs or you may have money deducted from your deposit.

Reporting Repairs

You must report any maintenance issues to your landlord or letting agent as soon as possible. You can report repairs in person, over the phone or in writing. However, we advise that you always follow up conversations with an email so you have evidence of what was reported and when you reported it.

You should give your landlord or letting agent time to do any repairs to your property. Below is a rough guide to how long you should expect repairs to take.

- **Emergency repairs – within 24 hours.** Any repairs that are a danger to you or your safety, damage to the building or anything that could damage residents' belongings. For example: gas appliances, boilers, broken toilets, external door locks.
- **Urgent repairs – within five working days.** Repairs that affect your comfort or convenience of the residents. For example: leaking roofs, rodent infestations or damage to windows.
- **Non-urgent day-to-day repairs – within 28 days.** Repairs that are not covered by the above two categories, for example, guttering, replacing window frames.

When Repairs aren't completed

If your landlord or letting agent don't repair damages at your property there are a number of steps you can take to ensure they do.

- Keep records – take pictures of any damage to your home and belongings and keep copies of all emails, texts and letters sent between yourself and your landlord

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- Chase your letting agent/contact your landlord – continually remind your landlord or letting agent that repairs haven't been carried out. Suggest dates and times that works could be completed and if your letting agent isn't replying to your emails contact your landlord directly.
- Contact the council – if your landlord or lettings agent are continually ignoring your requests for repairs you can contact the Private Sector Team or Environmental Health at the council to investigate

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/a-z/a-z-pages/private-sector-housing>

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/a-z/a-z-pages/environmental-health>

- Legal Action – if all else fails you could consider taking legal action against your landlord. We always recommend seeking independent legal advice such as Citizens Advice. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/brighton-hove/>
- Property redress schemes- If you are unhappy with the conduct of your letting agent or have a dispute with them then you can get in touch with either The Property Ombudsman: <https://www.tpos.co.uk/> or The Property Redress Scheme: <https://www.theprs.co.uk/>. The agent has to be registered with one of these schemes.

Never withhold your rent to get your landlord to do repair work to your home, this could lead to them seeking to evict you from the property and cause complications with references when you try to rent in the future.

Insurance

Your landlord must have building insurance for your property, if your house is furnished then your landlord will likely also have insurance for their furniture and kitchen appliances.

However, your belongings won't be covered by your landlords insurance so it is always worth getting contents insurance for your home. You can find out more about tenants contents insurance here: <https://www.gocompare.com/tenants-insurance/>

Be a good neighbour

Living in the city you will most likely have neighbours either side of your home, opposite and behind. With this many people in close proximity, with each having your own schedule and priorities, it is important that you live as considerately as you can.

Developing a positive relationship with your neighbour from the beginning will go a long way to ensuring you will have a happy time in your home. Start by introducing yourself on the day you move in. You will be able to speak to your neighbours if you need any advice or to find out when your bin collection days will be.

Taking an interest and pride in your property and relationships will help you settle into your new community and enjoy your time living in your new home.

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Noise

If you plan on having a party let your neighbours know in advance and tell them a time it is due to finish. You should try and keep this to a Friday or Saturday night, as during the week your neighbours will have work and children will have school, although remember some people will also work at the weekends. You'll want this consideration returned at exam time.

Remember to:

- Keep the noise as low as possible and within your property
- Keep windows and doors shut.
- Be sensitive to the time of night it is if you are using your garden and ask people to come inside at a reasonable time.
- Speak to guests about behaving considerately, remember you are responsible for their behaviour.
- Think about the position of televisions and stereos in your property. Try to avoid placing them against walls you share with neighbours and turn the base down.

If your neighbours want to complain about your behaviour or a party they can complain to the following people and organisations:

- Your landlord or letting agent- They can enforce clauses in the tenancy agreement and take action.
- Environmental Health at the City Council- They can serve warnings about noise and noise abatement notices, which are legally enforceable and if broken you could be taken to court.
- Your University- As a student you have signed up to the Student Charter, agreeing to behave considerately in the community. If your behaviour breaks this then the University has a complaints process in place, including disciplinary action.

Rubbish and recycling

The community you are moving into care about how their street looks, having a clean and tidy street creates a nicer environment for everyone.

There are simple ways to keep things neat and tidy:

- Don't let your bin overflow or leave bin bags next to them. Wildlife may rip them open spilling the contents on the street. If your bin is not big enough ask your landlord for a bigger one or contact the city council
- Check what you can recycle- You will need to put glass in a separate box from the rest
- Some areas of the city have communal bins
- Remember to bring your bins in after the refuse and recycling has been collected so you don't lose your bins or block the pavement
- Any bulky waste you will need to either contact the Council to ask they remove this, there may be a fee for this. Alternatively you can take it to the Council tip.

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- Donate any unwanted items
- For garden waste you will need to get in touch with the City Council to order a garden waste bin. There is a charge for this service.

Your welfare in the area

To keep yourself and your property safe and secure there are a few simple steps you can take including:

- Making sure your windows and doors close properly and lock. Report any issues straight away to your landlord
- When you leave your property check that you have shut the windows and locked the door
- When you move in you may have bought new things, such as a laptop. Make sure you don't leave the empty boxes outside as this shows that you have lots of new and potentially expensive items in the house
- Keep valuable items out of sight
- ID theft –Don't throw your bank statements or other personal correspondence straight into the bin as people can rifle through bins so invest in a shredder
- Get contents insurance for your personal belongings
- Leave a light on in the house or invest in a light timer to make it look like the property is occupied

Anti-social behaviour or harassment

If you experience anti-social behaviour or harassment seek help as soon as possible, there are a number of support services that can assist.

- Safe in the city <http://www.safeinthecity.info/>- A number of Council organisations can be contacted for assistance, for example the Community and Safety team help to tackle anti-social behaviour and hate crimes.
- Environmental Health <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/a-z/a-z-pages/environmental-health-> A Council team who you can get in touch with regarding noise or health and safety issues.
- Brighton Housing Trust <https://www.bht.org.uk/>- Offer specialist housing advice.
- Student Life Centre <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/>- University Service that can offer welfare support.

You should keep a record of any incidences.

Call the Police if necessary. If you are in need of urgent assistance then don't hesitate to call the Police on 999.

If you need to contact the Police for non-emergency incidents call 101.

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Moving out

Giving notice

Check your tenancy agreement for how much notice you have to give your landlord or letting agent to let them know you will not be staying in your property once the tenancy has finished. You will need to give notice in writing.

Cleaning

Make sure you arrange with your housemates the cleaning of the property and remove any rubbish. Don't leave lots of stuff outside of your property, donate what can be and organise for the rest to be taken to the local tip and recycling facilities.

Gardening

Make sure you leave the garden how you found it, so leave enough time to do this before you move out. If you can't do this yourself shop around for a gardener. Your landlord may take money out of the deposit for the garden to be done.

Check out inventory

On the day you move out your landlord or letting agent should have arranged for an inventory clerk to come and take a check out inventory. Usually you should be asked to be present when this is done, if not ask if you can be there.

You can take your own record of how you left the property, and take your own photos.

Meter readings

Don't forget to take the final meter readings for gas, electricity and water. Give these readings to your utility supplier and ask for a final bill to be sent to a forwarding address or via email.

Returning your keys

Check where to hand back your keys and what time. You don't want to be charged for lost or unreturned keys.

Getting your deposit back

Once the check out inventory has been carried out your landlord or letting agent will let you know if they intend to take any money from the deposit. You will need to agree with this decision, and if you don't you can discuss this with your landlord or agent.

You can use the deposit protection schemes dispute resolution service if you cannot agree on the deductions.