



Harper Adams
University

Housing Guide



Student Services

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The Essential Housing Guide

Everything you need to know... from house hunting to housekeeping

HOUSE HUNTING

Firstly ... do not panic! There is no great rush to find a house; there are plenty of properties available so take your time and have a good think about the following before you make any decisions:

BUDGET, BUDGET, BUDGET ...

Average rent in this area is between £65 and £80 per person, per week, excluding bills. You will see houses outside of this bracket but bear in mind that, at the lower end, you get what you pay for and, at the top end, you may find that once you have paid your bills you are left with a lot less cash for fuel, clothes, photocopying, food and entertainment. Do a few sums before making any big decisions, speak to your parents about the realities of renting and only when you are confident that you will be able to live within your means should you sign on the dotted line.

Some landlords are now moving to all-inclusive rents. This means that bills are included. This can be a good idea as it means you will know exactly what you need to pay, which will help you to budget, and you don't need to worry about unexpected or dreaded bills coming through.

KNOW YOUR FRIENDS

You might share clothes, you might share secrets and you have no doubt shared taxis back from town... but that doesn't guarantee you could share a house amicably. Be really honest with yourself and ask the all-important question, 'Could I live with this person?' You may think that after living in Halls with someone you know them pretty well, BUT their 'amusing' nocturnal habits, their 'endearing' trail of mess, their 'flattering' habit of borrowing your lecture notes could very quickly become utterly irritating and unbearable. Better to acknowledge this possibility and maintain a friendship (albeit from a safe distance) than find yourself approaching the end of the autumn term coming to blows over the washing up.

If you are struggling to get a group of friends together to rent a house, please contact the Accommodation Office in Student Services so that we can build a list of people still looking for accommodation. We can put you in touch with each other so that you can form your own group and rent a house. You can also access the Accommodation Forum online where students can post available rooms within their houses or, alternatively, the fact that they are looking for others to share with. Go to: <https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/accommodation/s/students/login.cfm>. Don't panic - there are always students who do not get accommodation sorted straight away, and there are always rooms and houses available until late summer.

ACCOMMODATION WEBSEARCH FACILITY

[www.harper-adams.ac.uk/accommodation/property search](http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/accommodation/property%20search)

From Friday 20th January you will be able to log on to the website above and search for available properties. Do keep checking as it is regularly updated as more properties offering off campus accommodation are logged. Ensure that, when you meet the landlord/agency, you confirm all details, including the property address, landlord contact details, rental amount and payment schedule etc.

HMOs & THE ACCREDITATION SCHEME

An HMO is a 'House in Multiple Occupation' ie. the residents are individual tenants, such as students, but share communal areas. The residents of HMOs are normally considered to be more vulnerable and steps must therefore be taken to ensure your safety and minimise risk. You will see on the housing list that there are both accredited properties and non-accredited properties. Accreditation means they have been inspected by the Local Authority and have met all necessary health, safety and fire requirements. The minimum requirements are mains linked smoke alarms and self-closing fire door in the kitchen. A representative from the Local Authority assesses the property and advises the landlord of any essential requirements/changes that need to be made. The non-accredited list does not necessarily imply that properties are sub-standard; they may simply be awaiting initial inspection or approval following completion of work. Should you have any concerns about a property, you can collect a housing checklist from Student Services or contact the Council to arrange an inspection on (01952) 381818 or by email to environmental.health@telford.gov.uk.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Every year the same issues in the same areas are brought to our attention. It is well worth being aware of the issues – and how to address them - prior to taking on a house and definitely before moving in.

Traffic Congestion

Boughey Road is notorious for congestion, particularly during peak times such as the school run. If you are a group of 5 or 6 students all with Land Rovers or other 4x4 vehicles, think carefully before moving to this area. However for potential residents of Boughey Road, as long as you are mindful of neighbours' driveways, keep the pathway/pavement clear (ie. wide enough for pedestrians with prams to pass comfortably) and avoid parking too near to the junction, you should not encounter problems on these grounds. The congestion in this area is something which local residents, the police and student residents alike are keen to overcome.

Parking

Some areas, such as Audley Road, have limited parking space. To help combat this HAU and Waitrose have an agreement whereby students living on Audley Road are permitted to park on Waitrose car-park overnight. You must see Student Services to obtain a permit in order to utilise this facility. Also do not forget that there is ample free parking in the main car park behind B&M and adjacent to Jones' Fish & Chip shop. Areas such as Pen-y-Bryn Way and Tan Bank also pose problems for parking and, due to the layout of these streets, it is essential that motorists are able to turn around at the bottom of the cul-de-sac and that large vehicles or the emergency services are able to get through at all times without imposing on other people's properties. If you live in such a street please remember to allow enough room for cars to manoeuvre, do not park on pavements forcing people to walk into the road to pass by (including people with prams or mobility scooters, as mentioned) and do not block other people's driveways. If you do you are likely to find yourself with a parking ticket from the Police. It isn't always cars that cause the problem, sometimes it is your feet; please do not walk over your neighbours' gardens or driveways as a short cut to access your own house. That is certain to upset people and sour relations.

Anti-social Behaviour & Noise

Terraced houses, and semi-detached properties can be particularly problematic for noise (such as those in Gravelly Drive, Victoria Park and Sandiford Crescent.) The biggest problems seem to arise when students live directly next door to families - imagine four or five 20 year olds on one side of a thin wall and two adults and two or three children on the other, all with conflicting lifestyles - you come in late and get up late, they go to bed early and get up early. Unfortunately many local residents forget that they make noise too and they do sometimes have to be reminded of this by Student Services when making a complaint. However, their noise is generally family noise whereas your noise is all too often drunken bellowing, running up and down stairs, loud music, loud laughter and door slamming. Please be aware and make effort to consider your neighbours and keep noise at an acceptable level – if you wouldn't do it at your parents' home then don't do it at your Harper home.

As regards anti-social behaviour we have even had to deal with the occasional student who believes it is acceptable to have a quick toilet stop outside theirs or their neighbour's home. Please be civilised and use the proper facility. This kind of behaviour is antisocial, thoughtless and, moreover, entirely avoidable. Do not bring the University into disrepute by behaving in such a way.

Drivers

Everyone appreciates having a designated driver on nights out but please note that, whilst that is a good idea and responsible, revving your engine, beeping your horn, slamming doors and shouting greetings/farewells is not acceptable at any time of day or night.

Children

Newport and the surrounding area is popular with young families. Wherever you choose to live please remember that there are likely to be young children in the neighbourhood. You must be extra vigilant when driving (particularly reversing) and keep your eyes peeled for children playing in the street and nearby.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A HOUSE

About the house

1. Address of the property – is it a good location?
2. Name of the landlord and contact number
3. Is the property in a good state of repair?
4. Do the windows shut properly?
5. Do the doors lock properly?
6. Does the property look in good condition and well looked after?
7. Is there a communal area?

The condition of the property may also give you an indication of the likely response to any requests for repairs.

All Rooms

1. Are there any loose wires or dangerous-looking fittings?
2. Is there enough furniture, and to an acceptable standard? (ie not broken or poor appearance)
3. Is there an adequate escape from fire?
4. Does the house have central heating? If it does, does it have a working thermostat? Is it gas or oil-fired?
5. If there is no central heating, what heating is provided?
6. If gas or electric, do the heaters work?
7. Is there a carbon monoxide detector in place if there are gas-fired appliances present?

Kitchen

1. Is there running hot and cold water?
2. Do the cooker and fridge appear to be in safe working condition?
3. Is there sufficient work surface and cupboard space?
4. Are cleaning and cooking utensils provided?
5. Are there any fire extinguishers or fire blankets?
6. Is there a washing machine?

Bathroom

1. Is there any damp or mould?
2. Do the taps work?
3. Does the toilet flush?
4. Does the shower curtain/door stop the water leaking on to the floor?
5. Is there sufficient ventilation?

Bills

1. Are the bills to be paid by the tenants?
2. How much are the bills likely to be?
3. Are the bills to be paid quarterly?
4. Are any of the bills included in the rent?
5. Are there any card/key meters?

Before moving in

1. Have you read through the contract before signing it or verbally committing to the property?
2. Have you seen a gas certificate and an energy performance certificate?
3. Is there an inventory? If one is not provided, complete your own with accompanying photos and agree it with the landlord.
4. Does the inventory state the condition of the items?
5. Will damaged items be repaired before you move in? Make sure you get in writing anything that the landlord states will be repaired or replaced before you sign a contract.

General

1. Are there any restrictions to having visitors/pets/posters?
2. Is there a storage area for bikes?
3. Are rubbish and recycling bins provided?
4. Have you asked the previous tenants what the property is like to live in?

Check all things carefully before committing yourself to a property. If there is anything you are unhappy with, or anything wrong with the property, inform the landlord in writing and keep a copy for yourself.

WHEN YOU HAVE FOUND A HOUSE YOU LIKE

Deposits

Once you have found a house or flat you like, you will usually be expected to sign a contract and pay a deposit to the landlord. It is worth noting that there are two types of deposit that a tenant may be asked for. They are a holding deposit and a security (or damage) deposit. When you pay any form of deposit ensure that you get a receipt.

Holding deposit

This is a sum of money paid to the landlord or agency to guarantee that the prospective tenant wishes to take up the tenancy. You should not pay a holding deposit unless you are certain that you will sign the contract. If you agree to pay a holding deposit and then decide not to sign the contract, the landlord or agency may be entitled to keep the deposit.

Security (or Damage) deposit

This form of deposit is usually paid to the landlord at the same time as you sign your tenancy agreement. It is used to safeguard against any damage caused to the property beyond normal wear and tear and, if specified, against any unpaid rent and bills.

Retainers

Many landlords will reserve a room or a property for you at a reduced rent over the summer months. Some will allow you to live in the accommodation during this time, others will not. The retainer is a sum payable for reserving the accommodation and is non-refundable, regardless of whether you live in the accommodation or not. Retainers are commonly asked for by lodgings landlords to reserve an individual room in their home.

Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme

The Government's Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) scheme was launched in 2007. It was conceived to make sure tenants' deposits are protected. The scheme means that:

- Tenants get all or part of their deposits back, when they are entitled to it.
- Any disputes between tenants and landlords or agents will be easier to resolve.

There are three government-backed tenancy deposit schemes offering deposit protection. If the tenancy is an assured shorthold tenancy then the landlord will need to place your deposit in one of these schemes within 30 days of receiving the deposit. He/she will also need to inform you in which scheme the deposit is being protected.

Your landlord needs to tell you:

- contact details of the tenancy deposit scheme selected
- their contact details or those of the agent
- how to apply for the release of the deposit
- why they might keep some or all of the deposit
- what to do if there is a dispute about the deposit

For more information on the different government-approved deposit schemes go to the following site: <https://www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection/overview>

Right to Rent Document Checks

Anyone who lets private property (including lodgings) is required by law to make Right to Rent checks of their tenants. Tenants will be asked to provide the landlord with the required documents (usually a UK passport or Biometric Residence Permit but there are a number of other acceptable documents too) at the beginning of the residency and the landlord will require to retain a copy.

TENANCY AGREEMENTS

These can be 'joint and several,' meaning the agreement is for all residents as a group, or they can be for each individual resident.

Joint and Several Agreement

Each and every housemate has a responsibility to meet the terms of the agreement, whether that means all of you paying the rent on time, or remembering to put your dustbin/recycle bins away after being emptied. You are all jointly obliged to fulfil your obligations as tenants. The disadvantage with this type of agreement is that, if one housemate decides to withdraw from the house for any reason, then the remainder of the group still have responsibility for paying the full rent until a new tenant is found – the onus is on the remaining residents to do this.

Individual Agreements

When contracts are issued on an individual basis the tenants will still have the same obligations but they have an individual responsibility to meet them. This type of agreement is useful when landlords are charging different amounts of rent to tenants eg. one room may be cheaper due its smaller size or they may be letting to a group of strangers. In contrast to joint agreements, if one housemate then decides to withdraw there is no obligation for the remaining tenants to cover the cost of the vacant room. However, many landlords avoid individual agreements for this very reason so it is very important to think carefully about who you wish to live with before you sign anything. Once you have signed you cannot simply change your mind without financial liability.

Guarantors

The landlord may ask you to provide a guarantor. This is generally a parent or guardian who is willing to guarantee your rent payment and general obligations of the tenancy. Be careful if you have a joint contract – your guarantor can be held jointly responsible for the payment of rent for the whole property.

Look out for the following details:

- Landlord's name and address: this should be clearly shown on the agreement and you are entitled to know this information.
- Name(s) of tenant(s): if you are signing a joint contract, all tenants' names should appear on the contract. If the contract is individual, then only one person should be named as tenant and rent details should be for one person.
- Property address: check that the full address of the property is entered on the agreement and is correct.
- Rental amount and frequency of payment: the rent shown on the contract should be the amount you agreed to pay. If the rent is payable monthly but was advertised as weekly, make sure that this sum has been calculated correctly and that you are not paying more than you should be. The date that the rent is due should be stated on the contract, as should the rental period and the length of the tenancy.
- Method of payment: if possible, request that you pay the rent monthly, either by cheque or standing order, but you must be able to manage your finances well to do this.

- Payments in cash are strongly discouraged. However you pay the rent, ask for a receipt of payment.
- Subletting: subletting clauses are quite common and most will forbid any form of subletting without prior permission from the landlord. As a general rule, only those named on the agreement should reside at the property.
- Landlord's access: the landlord should only enter the property with your permission. This is usually only after prior notice of a minimum of 24 hours. You must give your landlord reasonable access to the property to carry out all necessary repairs. If your landlord fails to give you reasonable notice, you are able to refuse right of entry.

Details of Tenancy

Find out how much the rent is, when it is payable (weekly, monthly, termly) and what bills are included, if any. You should also check if this includes rent over Christmas and Easter breaks. Ensure that you know the start and end date your tenancy. Even if you have not moved in on the start date of your tenancy, you are still liable for it, unless you have agreed otherwise with the landlord.

Energy Performance Certificates

Since 1st October 2008 landlords have a legal obligation to show all new tenants an Energy Performance Certificate for their new home. An EPC gives information on the energy efficiency of a property. The basic guidelines indicate that any property with shared facilities but individual agreements do not need to have an EPC, but properties let to a group of sharers with ONE joint contract between them do need to have an EPC. You may see the EPC as soon as you view a property and before any rental contract is signed; it should be made available to you free of charge. The EPC will give an energy rating from A – G, where A is very efficient and G is very inefficient (this is based on how much the home would cost to run.) It will also show the environmental impact of this rating (based on how much CO2 is released into the environment) The EPC will give you some idea of how much it will cost you to run the home – a key factor when drawing up your budget. When the property is assessed, a list of recommendations and their typical cost/energy savings per year will also be drawn up – although these are not legal requirements some funding may be available for landlords who wish to take action to carry out the recommended work. For more information go to www.nationalhmonetwork.com

Gas Safe Register

Gas Safe Register (formerly CORGI) oversees the registration of all (legal) plumbing and heating engineers working with gas. If you/your landlord have gas central heating any work that is carried out should be done so by a Gas Safe Registered engineer or business. The Gas Safe Register ensures that all work involving gas is carried out safely, responsibly and legally. You have a right to ask for evidence of this as all registered engineers are required to carry a card. If you are unsure and would like to check you can call Gas Safe Register on 0800 408 5500. Your landlord should

should have a gas safety inspection of all gas appliances every twelve months and show you the Gas Safety Certificate. Visit <http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk> for more information.

Private Landlords vs Letting Agents

Dealing with private landlords (who manage and let the property themselves) will always be the cheaper option for both the landlord and the tenant. Letting agents charge landlords between 15% and 20% of the rental income so, as you might imagine, the properties managed by agents usually have a higher rent than those managed privately. Agents earn their income by taking responsibility for advertising the property, vetting potential tenants, handling contracts and deposits as well as dealing with anything from routine maintenance through to more serious problems (if they are managing the property too.) Private Landlords take on these responsibilities themselves and, more often than not, they are managing their student house in addition to their main job. Although it is fair to be patient and acknowledge that your landlord may have other responsibilities, do not forget that you are paying for a service and, if you have concerns over a broken boiler or a dripping tap, then you should report them and ensure that problems are resolved as soon as possible.

MOVING IN

Moving in and meeting the neighbours

It is important to create a good first impression with your new neighbours. If you rock up with your windows down, music blaring and proceed to block someone's driveway as you park your large 4x4 on the pavement to unload your four crates of beer and big sound system your presence will be met with hostility, suspicion, fear and distrust from the outset. On the other hand, if you arrive without causing chaos or drawing attention to yourselves it is possible to settle into the community without ruffling feathers and upsetting the neighbours. Your relationship is much more likely to be cordial and cooperative.

The general feeling can often be that students are not 'permanent' residents and that they simply arrive for a short time and cause disruption to the neighbourhood, showing no respect to those living around them. You will most likely only be resident during term time and whilst community living is about give and take, given the reputation that often accompanies students nationwide, you may have to do a little more of the giving initially to get your neighbours onside. Unfortunately many students are tarnished with a poor reputation from previous years of 'nuisance students' - in reality it may have been one difficult group from a few years before but this means that you have a lot to prove before you even arrive. All too often the inconsiderate actions of a small minority can make life difficult for the majority of well-behaved and decent students.

Time spent cultivating good and polite relations with your neighbours will pay significant dividends and make everyone's lives happier. Old fashioned good manners go a long way; a knock on your neighbour's door, a round of handshakes and introductions and even an invitation to join you for a cup of tea once you've unpacked will all stand you in good stead for the remainder of the year. If you are on good terms with your neighbours your residency in the community is far more likely to be a happy, peaceful and trouble-free one.

Your responsibilities (*to name a few ...*):

- Put your wheelie bin out...and remember to take it in again once emptied!
- If you have filled your wheelie bin then make sure you take any excess rubbish to the tip - the bin men will not collect loose bin bags left beside the bin.
- Recycle as much as possible, the Council provides containers for recycling cans, glass, card, paper etc. as well as issuing details about what items can be recycled.
- Keep the property looking presentable and in keeping with neighbours' property (this is a joint responsibility with your landlord). Please be aware of neighbours with houses for sale - house prices can be adversely affected by a rundown student house in the locality.
- Windows should be kept clean - with curtains closed at night and drawn back in the day. Pyramids of beer cans are not acceptable window displays.
- Keep the garden in order. You are not expected to be green fingered but your garden should always be neat and tidy and indistinguishable as a student house. Check your contract to see what your obligations are regarding maintenance of the outside space.
- Do not collect sign posts/ trolleys/ traffic cones. Not only will you get a criminal record for this, it also makes properties look unsightly and upsets local residents, vendors and the police.
- Park sensibly and with consideration—this also applies to visitors.
- You are responsible for visitors' behaviour, as well as your own.
- Prompt reporting of faults/damages/issues to your landlord.
- Pay your rent and all bills on time and in full by agreed dates.
- Keep in regular contact with Student Services and your landlord.

Your Landlord's Responsibilities:

- Allow tenants quiet and pleasant enjoyment of the property.
- Prompt repair of reported faults / issues.
- Provision of 24 hour emergency contact details for the landlord and/or details of plumber/electrician/maintenance person.
- Provide tenants with 24 hours' notice prior to entering the property.
- For landlords wishing to carry out regular inspections, three visits per academic year is reasonable (ideally one per term) and then a final inspection upon vacation of the property.
- Maintain the property in keeping with those in the locality and to an acceptable standard.
- Provide Energy Performance and Gas Safety Certificates.
- Adhere to all regulations /demands made by the Local Authority.
- Adhere to the regulations concerning protection of security deposits.
- Keep in regular contact with Student Services and your tenants.

Inventory

An inventory is a list of the furniture and furnishings within the property and should describe the condition of each item listed, including the wall and floor coverings. It is very important that an inventory is compiled, either by yourself or the landlord, as this will often be the only evidence of the condition of the property at the start of your tenancy. If the landlord does not provide you with an inventory, compile one yourself and get someone to witness and agree its contents (ideally the landlord). Without the inventory it is difficult to prove you did not damage the property and could mean there is a dispute over getting all or part of your deposit back at the end of your tenancy.

Inventory essentials:

- State the condition of every item in the property. If the supplied inventory does not describe the condition of a particular item, it would be wise for you to do so – we suggest using terminology such as new, fair, poor, scratched, torn and stained.
- Back it up with photographic evidence. This can be crucial if a dispute occurs.
- Note the gas, electricity and water readings (if appropriate.)
- Get the landlord to agree to and sign the inventory.
- If the landlord refuses to sign the inventory, get an independent witness to do so.

Council Tax

Full time students are exempt from paying Council Tax, even whilst on placement; in order for this exemption to be applied you must provide proof of your student status by way of a Proof of Student Status / Council Tax Exemption Certificate issued by HAU. Your landlord will request this at the start of your tenancy so that it can be submitted to the Council. Remember that if just one of you fails to provide this or if one resident is not a full-time student, then the property will be liable for a Council Tax bill so it is essential that you provide this evidence. A Confirmation of Student Status letter (which can be used for council tax exemption purposes) is obtainable online by going to e-vision: student records and assessment on the University portal.

TV Licence

If you have a television, or if you watch programmes live or on iPlayer on any device (computer, mobile phone, tablet etc) you will be expected to have a television licence – if you are caught without a licence you could receive a fine up to £1,000. If you have signed a joint tenancy agreement with your housemates, you will only need one licence to cover all the television receivers in your house. If you have signed an individual agreement, and are planning to have a television in your own room, you will need a licence of your own.

Paying Bills

One of the hardest transitions to make when moving from home or halls of residence to a shared house is remembering to budget for and pay utility bills. Gas, electricity, water rates, phone and internet all have to be accounted for each month. Many groups of students choose to appoint one person to be in charge of handling bills, ensuring that everyone has contributed and also acting as a point of contact for both the landlord and utility companies. This should not necessarily be the

bossiest and loudest person of the group. Decide between yourselves who is the most responsible, trustworthy and organised. Things will become very tense very quickly if someone is always late in paying their share or, worse still, if they never have the cash. It is essential that all housemates have an honest relationship with each other about who needs to pay what. Remember bills are an essential fixed expenditure, Wednesday night drinking is not!

Price Comparison Sites

Your landlord may have arranged suppliers for you and issue you with a bill each month, alternatively you can arrange your own suppliers and pay them directly.

Remember it doesn't hurt to shop around and find the best deal for you; price comparison websites are the simplest way of sourcing the cheapest deals and some even offer rewards and incentives for using their switching service. Be aware that if you set up any accounts to be paid automatically by Direct Debit each month, it is vital that you have the funds in your account and that you take regular meter readings to ensure that you are keeping an accurate record of gas/electricity usage.

Meter Readings

If you switch to, or already use a service which charges you a set amount of money each month (usually by direct debit), this is based on an average, assumed consumption. Therefore it is important that you take frequent meter readings which you then forward to your energy provider. This will ensure that your account can be updated regularly and thus that you are either credited for any amount that you have overpaid (eg. in warm months you may be overpaying on your gas usage) or conversely, if you are using a lot more electricity/gas than had been estimated, you will not suffer the nasty shock of a big bill at the end of the year, as your provider can re-evaluate your monthly payments and spread them more evenly across the duration of your tenancy.

Saving Energy

As well as saving money it is also a good idea to try and save energy. In doing so your wallets as well as the environment will feel the benefit. The following tips are good ways to save energy:

- If you have heating and water thermostats, turn them down - even 1 degree can make a difference.
- If you have the heating on, close your windows (and curtains too if its dark) as this stops heat from escaping.
- Always turn off lights and appliances when you leave the room.
- Don't leave appliances such as the TV and games consoles on standby as this wastes energy too.
- When you boil the kettle, only boil as much water as you need.
- Dripping taps - get them fixed. A dripping tap can waste enough water in one week to fill a bath.
- Use energy saving light bulbs, they last ten times longer than ordinary bulbs so you'll save pennies as well as energy.

- Recycle - the Council provides recycling receptacles that are collected every other week. Make sure you know when this is, ask your landlord or neighbours if you are not sure, make the most of this service and recycle papers, bottles, cans etc.
- Whenever possible share lifts to and from campus / shops etc or use the free shuttle bus.
- Encourage your friends to do the same when they visit – this will avoid parking congestion and nuisance too.

Condensation

Often students complain that their student house is damp when it can be due to condensation caused by their lifestyle which is causing the problem and can (and should!) be avoided. Simple measures such as keeping the house adequately warm, ensuring it is ventilated to allow moisture to escape, avoiding drying wet clothes on a radiator or on an indoors airer with the window closed, putting lids on saucepans to avoid steam, opening the window (or using an extractor fan where fitted) when bathing or showering and leaving it open for a period to allow moisture to escape can all help to reduce condensation to a level so that it doesn't cause problems. For further information go to:

<http://www.nhbc.co.uk/NHBCPublications/LiteratureLibrary/HomeownerDocuments/filedownload,31929,en.pdf>

LIVING TOGETHER

Living, studying and socialising together can become quite claustrophobic. They say you never really know someone until you have lived with them and this is a lesson learned by many every year. Little habits that were funny or at least bearable when living in halls of residence can become very irritating, even insufferable, when sharing a house. The key to avoiding major fallouts is the ability to be open, honest and calm without being confrontational or insulting. However, this can sometimes be easier said than done when communicating with close friends.

Some groups of students find that drawing up a rota early on (and sticking to it) can avoid disputes over washing up and cleaning. Others find that an agreed list of job responsibilities seems to work, eg one person is designated chef, another in charge of the washing up and someone else taking responsibility for vacuuming.

That said, if someone isn't pulling their weight, cracks will soon appear in this plan and as a group it is in all your best interests to nip problems in the bud. If someone is happy to eat every meal placed in front of them but then suddenly disappears when it is time to wash up, don't forget to point this out - a light-hearted joke is sometimes enough to get your point across but keep the relationship intact.

However, sometimes communication amongst you is not enough to resolve the problem, especially if the problem is more than a simple domestic dispute. If you feel that you cannot resolve the problem alone do not be afraid to contact your landlord (if appropriate), speak to Student Services on (01952) 815286 or call the University Counsellor, Marcia Williamson on (01952) 815 395 or e-mail mwilliamson@harper-adams.ac.uk for a confidential chat and advice.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

The Good

A good landlord will respect your right to enjoy your home in peace, will respond to requests and grievances as quickly as possible, and will carry out a termly, pre-arranged inspection. Additionally landlords should meet all expectations of the Local Authority with regard to student housing, place your deposits in an approved deposit scheme, provide you with clear and concise contracts, agree set dates for rent collection, liaise with HAU, maintain their properties in keeping with the neighbouring homes and ensure that your tenancy is as smooth as possible right up to the return of your deposits.

The Bad

Bad landlords generally fall in to one of two categories:

The 'Elusive' Landlord - rarely answers the phone, takes weeks to respond to requests for maintenance and repair work - yet is quick to bill you for any costs, neglects property during empty periods, does not keep in regular communication with HAU and fails to keep up with the changing demands of student lets eg. fire safety monitoring.

The 'Big Brother' Landlord - ever have the feeling you're being watched? Although an efficient landlord is a godsend, there are those who may seem over efficient. If your landlord makes surprise visits as he was 'in the area,' or calls you up once a week just to "see how you're doing," then do not be afraid to politely remind him of your rights as a tenant. Although he is permitted to carry out occasional inspections you are entitled to a minimum of 24 hours' notice. Additionally your Landlord should not, during your residency, use his keys to enter the property without your knowledge or permission unless it is an emergency.

The Ugly

Unfortunately students are frequently stereotyped as 'the great unwashed.' Harper students also face preconceptions of being beer-swilling, tractor-driving, signpost-stealing, loud-mouthed layabouts. Whilst some of these accusations may bear a hint of truth...always be aware that, when you live in the local community, you are representing Harper Adams as a whole and the reputation of the University. It is important that you create a good impression both to your neighbours and your landlord. A good student tenant is one who is polite and friendly to the neighbours, pays the rent on time, reports any problems as soon as possible, looks after the property as though it were his/her own home and to all intents and purposes integrates into the community without fuss. Ultimately if your landlord would be happy to have you as his tenant for another year and your neighbours do not want you to leave, you are a model tenant and a model ambassador for Harper Adams University.

LANDLORD, TENANT AND NEIGHBOUR DISPUTES

You may not always see eye to eye with your landlord or even your neighbours. At these times, more often than not, issues can be resolved by communicating – an old fashioned notion but it seems to work! However, on occasion relationships between landlords and tenants and/or neighbours can deteriorate so much that both parties find it too difficult and distressing to

communicate with each other. In these circumstances Student Services can mediate between both parties, arrange meetings on neutral territory and help to provide impartial advice to all concerned.

Although student welfare is of utmost importance and the University wants all its students to have a happy experience, it is also essential that the University provides support for landlords and local residents too. For this reason it is important for students to acknowledge and understand that, if they are in the wrong and are behaving inappropriately, this will be communicated to them in no uncertain terms and action may be taken.

As well as Student Services, Telford & Wrekin Council also provides independent and useful advice for both landlords and tenants. Disputes over rent, deposits and environmental health issues can often be resolved by the Council rather than going through Small Claims Courts or involving legal representatives. If you are ever concerned over your obligations, rights or where you stand on a particular issue Telford and Wrekin Council can provide you with up to date, impartial advice. Please contact them on (01952) 381940 (for tenant relations), and (01952) 381818 (for environmental health matters.)

MOVING OUT

Moving out can be almost as stressful as moving in. However, provided that you followed the advice given earlier in this booklet and took photographs of the house when you moved in then it is possible for everything to run smoothly.

Remember:

- When you vacate a property ensure that you have moved out ALL of your belongings and have not left your landlord with old clothes, shoes and assignments to dispose of. Ensure that the property is clean and tidy; please bear in mind that you may be charged for additional or unreasonable cleaning costs.
- If you have filled your wheelie bin then make sure you take any excess rubbish to the tip - the bin men will not collect any of your loose bin bags.
- Leave the property clean and tidy - hopefully the way it was when you moved in.
- Check the inventory, make sure that everything on the list is accounted for. If you have lost, broken or packed something then the landlord will be entitled to deduct the cost from your deposit. It is simpler to replace things yourself.
- Look at the photographs that you took at the start of your tenancy—is the house in the same state? Make a note of any damage you may have caused as this will be deducted from your deposit.
- Take new photographs of the house (and set the date on your camera) so that you have a record of how the property was left.
- Many students find it beneficial to have a parent present on moving out day; an extra person to confirm the state of the property can help.

- If you are all vacating on the same day it is sensible to invite the landlord to inspect the property immediately prior to your departure.
- It is everyone's responsibility to make sure the property is left clean and tidy so do your fair share. Just because someone is leaving early, starting a job etc. it doesn't mean that they can't do their bit prior to departure. The mopping and tidying still has to be done.
- Provided that there are no issues then your deposit will be refunded at the end of your agreement once the amount has been agreed between landlord/tenants. Any claims for deductions by the landlord will be addressed to the service handling your deposit. They will then submit the landlord's claim to you, for you to agree or dispute. This is why your photographic evidence and inventory are so important - they are your proof if you have grounds to dispute the landlord's claim.
- Student Services are always available to advise you on issues such as deposit disputes, however Telford and Wrekin Council can also assist in managing these disputes through their Tenancy Relations team. Contact the Team on (01952) 381940, email: telfordhomefinder@telford.gov.uk

LODGINGS

Lodgings are rooms in private houses where the landlord or landlady lives on the premises. They may be family households, although some are offered by single people or other students. Accommodation is usually offered on a room-only basis, with rents calculated weekly. Most lodgings include access to cooking facilities, and in most cases shared toilet and shower facilities (although some have the benefit of en-suite facilities.) The weekly rent should include the cost of heating, lighting and hot water, and sometimes internet connection.

Contracts

You may not be expected to sign a contract. However, you should expect to abide by, and perhaps sign, basic house rules.

Deposits

You will usually be asked to pay a small deposit when you move in. This is generally equivalent to two weeks' rent, although there is no set amount. Ensure that you get a receipt for your payment. Please note that, as you are classed as a lodger or licensee, your deposit is not liable for protection under the Deposit Protection schemes.

Leaving

It is important that you agree notice periods before you move into the property. If possible, get this in writing to avoid further complications. You might agree to give notice equivalent to one rental period, which may be one week or one month. If you have not agreed notice terms, you should expect to give either 28 days or one rental period notice, whichever is longer.

Finding suitable lodgings

Lodging details are published on the online search facility, when these are available. However, it is also worth having a chat with the Accommodation Office in Student Services for some advice, particularly if you do not know where to start. Some lodgings may not be available currently but staff may be able to advise you so that you can make your enquiry well in advance.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Accommodation Office

(01952) 815 286 / accommodationoffice@harper-adams.ac.uk
Student Services, Faccenda Centre, Harper Adams University

Student Services

Student welfare, general and finance advice
(01952) 815396 / studentservices@harper-adams.ac.uk

Counselling Service

Marcia Williamson
(01952) 815 395 / mwilliamson@harper-adams.ac.uk
TG9, Foulkes Crowther Building, Harper Adams University

Telford & Wrekin Council

Tenancy Relations Team – Private housing advice & liaison service
(01952) 381940/ telfordhomefinder@telford.gov.uk

Environmental Health Team – inspection, housing accreditation
(01952) 381818/ environmental.health@telford.gov.uk

Linden Hall Surgery

Station Road, Newport
01952 820400 / www.lindenhallsurgery.co.uk

Shropdoc Out of Hours

0333 222 66 55/ urgent (but not life threatening) health care and advice when the surgery is closed. www.shropdoc.org.uk

NHS 111

If you need medical help fast, but it isn't a 999 emergency
www.nhs.uk/111 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Calls are free, including from mobiles

Police 101

This is the non-urgent number to report less urgent crime or disorder or for general police enquiries.
Eg. Stolen car or other theft, if your property has been damaged, to report suspicious activity/concerns etc

My Useful Numbers

Landlord Name.....Number.....

Landlord e-mail address

Agency (contact name).....Number.....

Agency e-mail address.....

Emergency Plumber.....

Electrician.....

Gas/Energy Provider.....

Internet provider

Notes.....

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