Housing Advice Fair
November 2019

Louise Martin & Tash Burden
*Properties closer to the university can be more expensive and there’s more competition for tenancies and pressure from landlords and agents to rush a decision*

*Consider Montpelier, Bishopston, Horfield, Easton, Eastville, Totterdown, Upper Knowle, Southville, Bedminster, Gloucester Rd, Ashley Down, for better availability, potentially better value for money accommodation, better parking and potentially better community relations*
Before you start, think budget...

2019 figures are showing...

Overall, average rents in shared houses are £475 per person per month based on more than 1500 Bristol SU Lettings vacancies.

These rents range from £375 - £625 at the top and bottom of the scale and higher in the more commercial properties.
By area

- Clifton    £500.00
- Redland    £465.00
- Cotham & Kingsdown  £475.00
- City Centre  £475.00
- Gloucester Road  £460.00
THINK BILLS: average per month, per person (4 sharing)

- Gas/Electricity bills (heating, hot water, cooking, lights, appliances) – average £37
- Water/Sewage – average £12
- TV Licence – average £6
- Broadband – average £5
- Contents insurance – average £10
- Landline telephone – average £6 (plus calls)

TOTAL: £76

Factor this into your accommodation budget!
Utility bills and internet/landline/tv packages vary in price
Try sites like uSwitch or Go Compare for comparisons
Tenancy agreements sometimes restrict ability to change suppliers but landlords should not forbid this without good cause
Also... Don’t forget to complete an online Council Tax Exemption form at the start of your tenancy!!
Student Funding

*Can help with funding advice, budgeting advice, and can ensure you are in receipt of the correct level of funding

*Based at 5 Tyndall Avenue and open for drop in Mon – Fri 9 - 4
Before you start, decide if you want to...

1. Share with students you already know?
2. Find new housemates to form a group with or join
3. Take a studio or a room in a flat in a purpose built residence?
4. Live with a resident landlord?
5. Get a self contained flat?
6. Stay in halls? (places limited to more vulnerable students)
When considering who to share with think about...

*How many people do you want to live with? - What about their friends/boyfriends/girlfriends, it’s likely you’ll have to spend time with them too

*Your budget - can you all afford the same level of rent and bills?

*Do your potential housemates have similar ideas about partying? Loud music? Sleeping? Time spent studying?

*Do you all have the same academic demands in terms of your course?

*Will everyone do their fair share of washing up and cleaning?

*Will you feel able to discuss matters comfortably with your housemates as they arise?
Where to Look-University Resources:

**Bristol SU Lettings**
*Run by the SU and have students interests at heart.*
*L/L’s sign a code of good conduct and promise to treat tenants in professional manner*
*They are a member of the local authorities ‘Rent with Confidence’ accreditation scheme*

**Bulletin Board**
*Students mainly advertising for 1 or 2 students to make up a house or looking for individuals to make up a group*
Accommodation in Bristol
A website where landlords advertise shorter term rooms and rooms for couples, often with resident landlords

Homestay
Rooms with resident landlords vetted by the University
Where to look - Agencies

* Dozens of agencies in Bristol
* No signing up fees following Tenants Fees Act 2019
* Check which redress scheme they are with and whether they are a member of a professional body such as ARLA or BALMA
Where to look - other resources

*Other websites: there are lots of other websites to look on, some student specific, others more general

*Commercial providers: e.g. IQ, CRM, Vita. Many are high end, more expensive than shared houses though bills are included
Where to look - Avoiding Scams

*Scams are increasingly common

*Scammers can access Facebook pages, accommodation websites etc unless secure

*Read our factsheet and trust your instincts if they’re telling you something's wrong! Beware adverts that are too good to be true

*If you have any queries or suspicions come and talk to us at the Accommodation Office
**Viewing properties**

- Use the Checklists available, keep a record of properties viewed.
- Take the whole group along if possible.
- Beware properties that look in bad run down/neglected.
- If L/L or agent promise to carry out any work - ask for it in writing.
Viewing properties

Have a really good look around! Try and imagine it without the other tenants belongings in.

Ask the current housemates about their experience in the property and with the landlord/agent.

Look out for damp patches, ask about patches of black mould and have a good sniff around too!

If you’re not all sure, don’t rush, don’t feel pressured. There will be other properties!
HMO’s (Houses in Multiple Occupation)

- Properties with 5 or more tenants must have an HMO license from the local authority and Bristol have additional licensing rules that mean in many areas, properties with 3 or more tenants need a licence.

- They have to pass certain prescribed standards in relation to the management of the property and its facilities.

- If you’re in a licensable HMO and having problems with repairs or safety issues then Bristol City Council or your local authority may find it easier to step in and assist.
Holding Fees

* These are now limited to 1 weeks rent

*Once paid, the tenancy should be signed up for within 14 days unless the tenants have agreed in writing that this period can be extended.

*Within the next 7 days, the fee should either be returned to you or, if you agree, can be used towards your deposit or taken off your first months rent.

* DON’T PAY IT UNLESS YOU’RE SURE YOU WANT THE PROPERTY. If you change your mind without a good reason you will not get your money back. However if the landlord /agent pulls out the money should be returned to you
Contracts

*Make sure you read and understand your contract - you can get your contract checked by the accommodation office

*Most contracts are fixed term agreements for 12 months. You will remain liable for rent unless a replacement is found

*Joint and several liability – If the contract is in more than one name, you are jointly and severally (individually) liable for the rent!

*If you feel terms look unfair come and talk to us
*A person who guarantees to pay your rent or for any damage.

*Joint liability can apply to guarantors

*The guarantor will need a UK address

*If you are unable to provide a UK guarantor you may be asked to pay up to 12 months rent in advance

*www.housinghand.co.uk in partnership with the University can act as UK guarantor for a one off fee
**Deposits**

*A deposit is money paid to the landlord/agent at the start of the tenancy in case you default on your rent or cause damage and incur costs for the landlord*

*Deposit amounts are now capped by law at 5 weeks rent if your annual rent is under £50,000 or 6 weeks rent if your annual rent is over £50,000*

*The law states that all deposits paid on assured shorthold tenancies MUST be protected within 30 days by one of the 3 government approved schemes and the ‘prescribed information’ must be supplied to tenants*

NOTE: To help get your deposit back at the end, ensure you take lots of dated photos at the start of your tenancy and complete a detailed inventory
Right to Rent

*Legislation, from the Immigration Act 2014

*Private landlords are under a duty to check that potential tenants have the right to be in the UK

*By checking documents/visas or contacting the Home Office for confirmation

*Any problems, come and see us
Ensure to get...

*Your contract/tenancy agreement
*Landlord name and address (should be on the tenancy agreement)
*Receipts for any money you pay out
*Promises of work to be carried out before you move in, in writing
*Gas Safety Certificate
*Energy Performance Certificate
*Most recent CLG booklet “How to rent: the checklist for renting in England”
*Deposit scheme details
*Redress scheme details
*and check your deposit isn’t more than 5 weeks rent (6 if you’re annual rent over £50,000)
*and that your holding fee’s not more than 1 week’s rent
Any problems...

* We are here for you throughout the process – before, during and after your tenancy

* We can advise on all housing problems e.g. disrepair, problems with landlord, bills, council tax, deposits and more!

* You can email or phone us or just drop in, Monday – Friday, 9.30 – 4 (closed for an hour at lunch) except Tuesdays when we open at 11