Housing Advice Fair
November 2017
Pru Archer & Tash Burden
Before you start, think location...

*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 Bishopston, Horfield, Southville, Bedminster, Gloucester Rd for cheaper/better quality accommodation, better parking, lower burglary rates and better community relations
Before you start, think budget...

2017 figures are showing...

Overall average rents in shared houses are around £440 per person per month based on 1500 Bristol SU Lettings vacancies

These rents range from £325 - £550 at the top and bottom of the scale
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
Student Funding

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

*Based on ground floor of Senate House 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
3. Take a room in a shared house that’s already established where they have vacancies for housemates?
4. Take a studio or a room in a flat in a purpose built residence?
5. Live with a resident landlord?
6. Get a self contained flat?
7. Stay in halls?
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**

*All properties have valid gas safety certificate*

*L/L’s sign a code of good conduct and promise to treat tenants in professional manner*

*L/L’s advertising property only allowed to charge max £30 admin fee*

**Bulletin Board**

*Students mainly advertising for 1 or 2 students to make up a house or looking for individuals to make up a group*
Where to look - Agencies

*Fees – Agencies usually ask for at least 35% of a month’s rent plus VAT. This fee is non refundable.

*This is legally only payable when the agency has found you a property that you’re actually going to move in to

*Sometimes agents purely find tenants for landlords, organise the paperwork and have no further involvement. More often they then manage the property throughout the tenancy. You need to establish the role of the agent before you move in.
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

- Take the whole group along if possible
- Use the Checklists available, keep a record of properties viewed. Have a really good look around!
- If L/L or agent promises to carry out any work ask for it in writing
- If a property is pristine at the start, will you be able to hand it back in the same state?
Disrepair problems

*Landlords are responsible for repairs to the structure of the building plus fittings for the supply of water, heating and sanitation – once they have been put on notice.

*Report repairs and subsequent issues by email as well as by phone so that you have evidence of what you’ve said and take photos of the problems and of any damaged belongings.
Damp

- Rising damp and penetrating damp, i.e. moisture coming into the property from the ground or through the walls or roof are disrepair and the landlord’s responsibility.

- Condensation is seen as the tenants responsibility to deal with unless caused or worsened by a disrepair problem.

- To avoid condensation you may need to heat and ventilate the property more than you expected.
HMO’s (Houses in Multiple Occupation)

- Properties with 5 or more tenants on 3 or more storeys need a license from the local authority.
- They have to pass certain health and safety standards.
- If you’re having problems with repairs or safety issues then Bristol City Council or your local authority may be able to step in.
Holding Fees

* This is a sum paid to reserve a property for you. Amounts vary from around £100 up to a months rent.

* When the tenancy starts, the fee should either be returned, 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!

*Look for ‘Unfair Terms’ – not enforceable
 Guarantors

*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

* This 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.

* 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.

* To get your deposit back ensure you take lots of photos at the start of your tenancy and you complete a detailed inventory
Right to Rent

*New legislation, from the Immigration Act 2014

*Private landlords 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
*CLG booklet “How to rent: the checklist for renting in England”
*Deposit scheme details
* 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 much more!

* You can email or phone us or just drop in, Monday – Friday, 10 – 4 except Tuesdays when we open at 1
KEEP CALM YOU WILL FIND THE RIGHT PLACE