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# Accommodation

## Moving in

Tips and information on what to think about when moving in to a property - how to protect your deposit, which bills you'll need to pay, home safety and getting on with your neighbours etc.

### Inventory

Ensure you complete an inventory (a list of the furniture and contents in the property and their condition to demonstrate the state of the property at the time you moved in) Make a note of any marks or damage on walls, furniture and carpets and the standard of cleanliness of e.g. skirting boards, bathroom tiles, windows, blinds.

If anything is not in full working order or if previous tenants have left items behind, make sure you write all this on the inventory. Don't sign it until you're sure you have noted all problems. If further problems materialise in the first few weeks ensure to let the landlord know to add these to the Inventory. Keep copies of any correspondence you send to the landlord.

The Accommodation Office website has a link to a blank inventory if the landlord does not provide one, see

[www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/inventory-record.pdf](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/inventory-record.pdf)

### Photographs

To back up your inventory you should take lots of photos of the property, especially of any dirt/damage/poor decoration etc to act as evidence to show the state of the property at the start of your tenancy. This could be invaluable if there is a dispute over the deposit at the end of the tenancy. Ensure the photos are dated.

### Deposit

Also ensure that your deposit has been protected in one of the 3 government approved schemes, and that you have received the prescribed information. See more on our Deposits factsheet:

[www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/factsheets/deposits.pdf](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/factsheets/deposits.pdf)

### Safety

Check that your property has a smoke detector on each floor which is a legal requirement. If your property has any solid fuel appliances such as an open fire, then there should be a carbon monoxide detector in that room as well.

From 1st July 2020, for assured shorthold tenancies entered into after 1st June 2020, an electrical safety check should be carried out every 5 years and tenants should be supplied with a copy of the report.

Properties with 5 or more tenants should also have an HMO (House in multiple occupation) license. Bristol City Council runs additional licensing schemes which cover many student areas and which dictate that properties with 3 or more unrelated people should be licensed. You can find more information, including how to report it if you think your property should be licensed but isn't, here:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/licences-permits/types-of-licence>

If you are living in a licensable property but the landlord hasn't obtained a license you could be entitled to apply for a Rent Repayment Order, i.e. a refund of rent. Please contact the Accommodation Office or contact Bristol City Council's private sector team for more information on 0117 3525010 or [private.housing@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:private.housing@bristol.gov.uk)

For home security advice we would recommend you look at our factsheet at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/factsheets/security.pdf>

### **Documents you should have received**

As well as the prescribed deposit information, your landlord should also ensure you have received a copy of the gas safety certificate, an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) and a copy of the most recent version of the government booklet, "How to rent: the checklist for renting in England". Additionally landlords must now provide you with an electrical safety report that should be carried out every 5 years.

### **Utilities**

You should make a note of the meter readings for your electricity, gas and water supplies (if applicable) on the day the tenancy starts and then contact the utility company, tell them you're the new tenants and give them the readings (you should also call them on the last day of your tenancy with meter readings).

Give them the names you want on the bill. Try to make sure that different people are responsible for each bill. Around £50 - £70 per month per person should be enough to ensure your bills are more or less covered.

If you don't know who the utility suppliers are, keep an eye out for letters addressed to 'the occupier', that will come from the previous tenants suppliers and will tell you who is supplying your property. If you don't receive these and you can't tell who your suppliers are, OFGEM's website can show you how to obtain this

information: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/connections-and-moving-home/who-my-gas-or-electricity-supplier>

### **Changing Utility supplier**

Some contracts state that tenants may not switch utility suppliers but this is challengeable - tenants have the right to choose their own energy supplier unless the bills are included in the rent. If your landlord is refusing to let you switch supplier, please contact us.

### **Council tax**

Full-time students are usually exempt from Council Tax. Complete the Council Tax on-line exemption form: [https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-tax/student-](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-tax/student-exemptions-and-discounts)

[exemptions-and-discounts](https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/council-tax/council-tax-discounts-exemptions-support/council-tax-discounts) for Bristol tenants, or <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/council-tax/council-tax-discounts-exemptions-support/council-tax-discounts> for North Somerset tenants or <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/documents/Council-Tax-Student-application-form-2.pdf> for S Glosc tenants

North Somerset and S Glosc councils require a certificate of full time education to accompany your application and you can request these from your faculty office. Bristol City Council do not usually require a certificate but if they need one they will write to you and ask for you to provide this as well, once you have submitted your online form.

All tenants in the property should do this individually. If it's a joint tenancy it is not enough for just one of the group to complete the form.

You should apply as soon as possible after the start of your tenancy. If you don't apply you run the risk of accruing arrears and court costs.

If you have any further queries then check out our Council Tax factsheet <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/factsheets/council-tax.pdf> or contact us at the Accommodation Office

### **TV Licence**

You currently need a TV licence if you watch live TV and also from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 you are also required to have a license if you download or watch BBC programmes on demand. This applies to all devices. If you share a house with other students and are part of a joint tenancy then you will only need one licence. If you and any other tenants have individual tenancy agreements then a TV licence is required for each person with a TV or who watches catch up on any device. Contact 0300 790 6071 or visit: [www.tv-l.co.uk](http://www.tv-l.co.uk)

### **Insurance**

Take out insurance to cover your possessions. You can get policies that also cover accidental damage to the landlord's possessions. Some insurers will only insure your belongings if the property has window locks and locks on bedroom doors so make sure you check whether this is a requirement in the policy. See more on our Contents Insurance factsheet: [www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/factsheets/contents-insurance.pdf](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/factsheets/contents-insurance.pdf)

### **Blu-tac**

Check whether your tenancy agreement allows you to use blu-tac on the walls before sticking things up. Most landlords don't allow it as it leaves greasy stains or rips wallpaper when it's removed. Many students have deductions from deposits for redecoration costs due to blu-tac damage.

### **Rubbish and recycling**

Make sure you know how to deal with your rubbish and recycling, and the collection days for your property. As much as 70% of your household waste can be recycled every week using the Council's recycling services.

Visit Bristol City Council website for full details: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/bins-recycling/what-goes-in-your-bins-and-boxes>

### **Be a good neighbour**

Introduce yourself to your neighbours and give them a contact number for you. The vast majority of students and non-student residents live in harmony, but lifestyle differences can cause distress and conflict. If you are on friendly terms it will be easier for you to appreciate any concerns they may have, and they will be more likely to approach you with any issues, rather than complain to the police or council. There is more information about community living on our website:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/privately-rented/living-in-privately-rented-accommodation/living/>

### **Problems at the new place**

It can be disappointing to arrive at your new home and find that it's not up to scratch.

electrics, gas, heating, hot water and sanitary installations however there is not necessarily a duty for them to provide a clean property or to deal with tatty fixtures and fittings, unless there is something in the contract about this.

If you are not sure what the landlord is responsible for or if you need assistance with a situation like this, please contact the Accommodation office for further advice.

If you are not happy with the state of your property, we suggest that firstly you make a clear list of what the issues are and take dated photos of the defects. Once you have your list and your photos send these to the landlord/agent politely requesting the matters are dealt with ASAP.

Because the turnover time between student tenancies can be very short in Bristol, if the property has been left in a state by the previous tenants the landlord may not have had a chance to sort out cleaning etc and may acknowledge the problems and tell you what they intend to do and when. Some landlords may only become aware when you contact them and may take longer to sort things out. Try to get any assurances of work in writing and keep a chronology of events as they unfold.

Unfortunately, there will be some landlords who do not deal with this type of issue in a timely manner in which case please seek advice from the Accommodation Office.

Please be aware that it is not lawful to withhold rent in this situation.

**The University of Bristol Accommodation Office runs a housing advice service for all staff and students, if you have any problems with your private rented accommodation please contact us.**

**Due to Coronavirus our office on campus is closed but our services are available remotely. Please contact us by email and an adviser will get back to you: [accom-office@bris.ac.uk](mailto:accom-office@bris.ac.uk)**