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# Accommodation

## Security

Shared houses can provide rich pickings for burglars, offering them the chance to pick up five laptops and five cameras, for example, in return for one break in. Houses with lots of tenants are often targeted for burglaries. There are some things you can do to make it less likely to happen to your house.

### Look for a secure property

When you are house hunting keep security in mind. Things you should look for include:

- Front doors (non PVC) should have a rim lock (Yale lock) PLUS a 5 lever mortice lock, usually known as a deadlock that operates with a traditional key.
- Rear doors should have a deadlock plus good strong slide bolts top and bottom
- Locks on all accessible windows
- Letter box cowl, cage or covering, preventing anyone from getting access.
- Unrestricted view of front door and windows from road i.e. no trees, bushes etc a burglar can hide behind. Be especially careful about basement flats.
- Use time switches – available from DIY shops – to turn on lights and radios etc when you're out or away
- Make friends with your neighbours, exchange phone numbers and let them know when you're away so they can keep an eye on things. You can do the same for them. You could even join the local Neighbourhood Watch
- Keep all valuables out of sight
- Never hide spare keys outside e.g. under the doormat or in a flowerpot by the front door – this is where a thief will look
- If you live in a flat, never buzz open the door for strangers, hold the door open for someone who is leaving as you are arriving or let someone follow you in.
- If you are going away, don't clean up too much, leave a few cups and plates about, make sure the place looks lived in.
- Mark your property with the initials of your university (e.g. UoB – University of Bristol) and your student ID number - this makes it harder for a burglar to sell stolen goods and can help the police to return items to you. Free marker pens are available from the Security Lodge at Royal Fort
- **Always, Always** make a back up of your course work and keep it somewhere well hidden, laptops can be replaced, 6 months' research is far more difficult.

If the property you are viewing doesn't fit these criteria you could ask the landlord or agent to consider doing the work.

### Take precautions

Many of these are obvious but we still all forget or neglect to do them at some point or other. You and your housemates should keep reminding each other of the importance of these basic tips:

- Never leave your accessible windows open even for a short time unless you are in the room.
- Always use window locks and deadlocks
- Remove keys from locked windows and doors and keep them out of sight

## Responsibilities of the landlord

Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 makes landlords responsible for keeping property in good repair if you have a tenancy there. If there's a security problem at the property, which is due to poor repairs, e.g. the windows are swollen and won't close or the back door is rotting away, then the landlord should take action to remedy this.

The other relevant legislation is The Housing Act 2004, which brought in a new system for local authorities to measure the health and safety risks in properties, the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) This is based on a list of hazards, one of which is the risk of 'entry by intruders'.

If the local authority identify that a property is at risk, it could ask the landlord to take action to remedy this. Examples of the type of issue that could be classed as hazardous are - no locks on external doors and rotten, flimsy or faulty doors or windows. If you have already had break-ins and are at risk of more then this could also be seen as a hazard.

If you feel that your property falls into this category you should contact the Accommodation Office. We may refer you to Bristol City Council's Private Rented Team to

assess the problem. If they deem it to be a hazard they will ask the landlord to take action to sort out the problem.

## If you are concerned about the security of your accommodation

Unless the matter is urgent, put your concerns to your landlord, preferably in writing, making sure you keep copies of all correspondence.

If the matter is not dealt with satisfactorily or if it is urgent, please contact the accommodation office and we will be able to advise you on your options.

## What to do if there is a break-in

Obviously the first step is to call the police – either on 999 if you feel it's an emergency or on the Avon and Somerset constabulary number 101.

They should come to visit you, take statements if necessary and arrange for fingerprinting to be done if appropriate. If it appears that there could be weak security that needs to be dealt with then you can ask for a crime reduction assessment where the police can recommend what needs to be done to improve security. As well as contacting your local authority for an HHSRS assessment.

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## Useful Contacts

University of Bristol Security Services:	☎ 0117 9287848	🌐 <a href="http://www.bristol.ac.uk/securityservices">www.bristol.ac.uk/securityservices</a>
Avon and Somerset Police:	☎ 101	🌐 <a href="http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk">www.avonandsomerset.police.uk</a>
Crimestoppers:	☎ 0800 555 111	🌐 <a href="http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org">www.crimestoppers-uk.org</a>
Home Office Crime Prevention:		🌐 <a href="http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk">www.homeoffice.gov.uk</a>
Bristol City Council:	☎ 0117 352 5010	🌐 <a href="http://www.bristol.gov.uk">www.bristol.gov.uk</a>

**The University of Bristol Accommodation Office runs a housing advice service for 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)**

*The contents of this fact sheet are for information only. You should consult the Accommodation Office or an advice centre such as the CAB before taking any action.*