

# Housing Advice



**University of  
Sunderland**

# University of Sunderland – Housing Advice

We are so excited that you have chosen to study and live in Sunderland.

Our wonderful vibrant city has a lot to offer students living here.



We understand that finding somewhere to live can be overwhelming, especially in a new city. This guide has been produced to offer you simple advice and act as a checklist of what to do if you are not living within university managed accommodation at Scotia Quay, Panns Bank or Clanny House.

Please note that this guide should not be relied upon as a substitute for legal advice should you require it. If you require support with a specific situation, please contact the Students' Union who can signpost you to the best places to receive support and advice.

[www.sunderlandsu.co.uk/advice](http://www.sunderlandsu.co.uk/advice)

## Finding the right housemates

It's good to remember that sometimes even the best of friends don't make good housemates!

Living with people can be difficult and a good way to avoid arguments is trying to live with people on a similar budget, with a similar attitude to cleanliness and with a similar lifestyle. If you're looking for a quiet place to live and study, choosing to live with someone who wants to have a party every night is bound to lead to conflict.

## Knowing when and where to start looking for accommodation

Sunderland has a lot of accommodation specifically designed and marketed at students as well as family accommodation. The private housing market is fast paced however there is ample accommodation available across the city so do not allow yourself to be pressured into deciding before you are ready.

We would advise that you use a reputable source to search for accommodation such as:

### Rightmove

[www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent/Sunderland.html](http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent/Sunderland.html)

### Zoopla

[www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/property/tyne-and-wear/sunderland/](http://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/property/tyne-and-wear/sunderland/)

## Budget

Ensure you know what your budget is before you start looking for accommodation. Most providers give a weekly cost to rent their property, ensure you understand how much this will cost for the whole tenancy. Remember that you need to budget not just for rent but also gas, electricity, water, internet and council tax. Full-time students are exempt from council tax, but if you are living in a property that is not fully occupied by other full-time students there may be council tax to pay. Ensure you understand if you have exemption and if so, how much. Remember you will also need to budget for books, travel, food/groceries etc.

## Research

When considering a property do some research on the landlord or letting agent. Simple online searches could help you check for poor reviews from former tenants. If you are able to speak with other students living in Sunderland, ask for experiences with landlords in the city.

Sunderland City Council provide an accreditation scheme for landlords in the city. Providers on this list have agreed to a set code of standards and conduct. Ask if your provider has signed up to this accreditation. There are other professional accreditation schemes available, so it is useful to ask if they are members of any schemes. A landlord should be more knowledgeable about their obligations if they are a member of a scheme.

## View the property

Ensure that you view the property before you sign any agreements.

Look for signs of mould, broken furniture (if taking a furnished property), pest infestation or faults. Ensure that any agreements to repair or replace items is given to you in writing, do not accept verbal promises. If the current tenants are home when you view the property, ask them questions about their experience of living there.

We would recommend that you look for a property that provides the below:

- Heating which comes with clear instructions of how to use.
- Secure door locks fitted to all external doors which meet the minimum British Standard.
- Windows that close securely.
- Adequate smoke/fire detection for the property specifications. E.g. for a house there must be a minimum of 1 smoke detector on each floor of the property.
- All fixtures and fittings must meet the British Fire Standard.
- A carbon monoxide alarm (in any room where solid fuel is used).





## What a landlord may require from you

- **A reference**

Some landlords will require a reference from you if you have had your own home before.

- **A guarantor**

A guarantor is someone who agrees to pay your rent for you or reimburse the landlord for damages caused by you if you fail to do so. Guarantor agreements are legally binding. Ensure that if you are required to complete one that you read and understand it.

- **Right to rent checks**

Landlords and letting agents have a legal duty to check that their tenants have a legal right to live in the UK for the entire period of their tenancy agreement. This means that you should expect to be asked to show your original passport and any relevant visa/immigration documentation before you can be offered a property. You may be asked for a 'share code' from the GOV.UK website. For more information on this please refer to:

**[Check your tenant's right to rent:](#)**  
**[Who you have to check - GOV.UK](#)**  
**[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**





## Signing a tenancy agreement

Request to see the contract and all terms and conditions before signing it. Ensure that you have read and understood it fully. Do you clearly understand:

- When can you move in?
- When are you required to move out?
- How much is the rent?
- What does this include? Rent only, wifi, gas, electricity, water?
- When do you need to make rent payments?
- Who owns the property and what is their registered address and contact details?
- Who is managing the tenancy (if not the property owner eg a letting agent) and their contact details?
- How do you report repairs? Including how to report an emergency outside of normal office hours?
- What works are agreed to take place before you move in?
- Is this a joint tenancy with other parties? If this is the case you need to be aware that you are jointly liable for the costs of the whole property and not just your portion. If a co-tenant fails to make payments you (and your guarantor if you have one) can legally be pursued for these costs.
- Where do you have exclusive possession of the property and what areas are shared?
- Do you have a list of what furniture is provided?

## Legal Requirements

Landlords must adhere to some minimum legal requirements to rent you a property. Ensure that you are given all of the below information:

- A written tenancy agreement which clearly explains your terms and conditions.
- An EPC certificate – This tells you how economical the property is to heat and light. The best economy is A. No property should be less than an E. If you paying your own energy bills this rating is very important. The better the grade the less you will pay to heat your home.
- A gas safety certificate provided by a gas safe registered engineer. These are valid for one year so ensure that your landlord has this renewed before it expires.
- An electrical safety certificate.
- DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) booklet entitled 'How to Rent'
- If you pay a deposit, you must receive Deposit Prescribed Information & DPS Terms & Conditions.

## Your obligations as a tenant

Before signing an agreement please ensure that you understand that you have obligations to your landlord. These should be set out in your terms and conditions and will include:

- To pay rent – there will be a set requirement of when you pay.
- To keep the property clean and tidy.
- To not cause nuisance to co-tenants or others living around you.
- To report repairs and damages.

## How to spot a scam

Not all websites perform checks before allowing people to advertise properties with them. Not all offers of accommodation are genuine. Be sure to be on your guard for a scam. Scammers have been known to target students, particularly those looking for accommodation from abroad.

### Scam warning signs:

- The price is lower than similar properties.
- You are asked to pay a deposit before viewing.
- You are asked to transfer money via a money transfer service such as Western Union.
- All communication is via a messaging service such as Whatsapp.
- Things just don't seem right.





## Other top tips

- Some fees are prohibited by law. This means that a landlord or letting agent cannot charge you for - tenancy set up fees, admin fees, inventory fees, check in/check out fees, fees for viewing the property. For information on what fees you can and cannot be charged please visit:
- Take meter readings as soon as you move in.
- Update your address details with the University and request proof of council tax exemption. Send this to the council to ensure you are not billed for council tax if you are exempt.

### [Shelter Legal England - Banned tenant fees and penalties for landlords - Shelter England](#)

- Complete a written inventory on the day you move in. Clearly record the condition of each room, all appliances (and garden if there is one). Take date stamped photographs where possible.
- If you are responsible for your own gas, electricity and water bills ensure that you put these in your name when you first move in. If you are sharing a property ensure that all tenants are named on all bills jointly.
- Remember that if you plan to watch or record live TV or use the BBC iPlayer you are required to have a TV licence.

### [Full time students - Sunderland City Council](#)

### [University students and the TV Licence - TV Licensing](#)

- If your tenancy agreement does not include contents insurance consider getting your possessions insured. Use a comparison website to find a policy. Ensure that it covers the full cost of your belongings.



## Useful Contacts:

### Students' Union

[Advice & Support @ University of Sunderland Students' Union \(sunderlandsu.co.uk\)](https://sunderlandsu.co.uk)

Tel: 0191 515 3030

Email: [yoursu@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:yoursu@sunderland.ac.uk)

### UoS Student financial guidance

[Student Financial Guidance | The University of Sunderland](#)

Tel: 0191 515 2284

Email: [studentfinancialguidance@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:studentfinancialguidance@sunderland.ac.uk)

### UoS Wellbeing

[Wellbeing | The University of Sunderland](#)

Tel: 0191 515 2933

Email: [wellbeing@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@sunderland.ac.uk)

### UoS Accommodation Services

[Accommodation | The University of Sunderland](#)

Tel: 0191 515 2943

Email: [accommodation@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@sunderland.ac.uk)