



Your guide to finding a home and living in Aberdeen



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UNIVERSITY
OF ABERDEEN



AUSA STUDENT ADVICE CENTRE



Contents

Introduction	3
Moving from Halls of Residence to Private Accommodation	4
Top Tips When Moving In	6
Popular Student Areas in Aberdeen	7
Searching for Accommodation	9
Viewing a Property	11
Signing a Tenancy agreement	14
During your Tenancy	20
Moving Out and Notice	26
Things Gone Wrong?	27
Useful Contacts	32

Introduction

Welcome to the Accommodation Handbook, your guide to finding and living in accommodation in the private sector.

This guide has been produced by the Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) and the University's Student Advice and Support Office (SASO) to help you through the process. Living in private accommodation means you can exercise your independence and live somewhere that matches your needs. The first step is finding your property.

You should plan to be in Aberdeen when you start your search as this is the only reliable way to choose something that is right for you. It can take a month or more to find somewhere you like and, if you have particular requirements, it can be harder. For example, cheaper accommodation gets a lot of interest and is often taken quickly, and properties with lots of bedrooms (4/5/6) are rare.

Private accommodation can sometimes work out cheaper than student accommodation, but remember that the cost of rent rarely includes bills. Plan to spend at least £50 on gas/electric, £15-£20 on phone and internet costs and £120 on food, cleaning and laundry per month. For support on drawing up a budget have a look at the Shelter website, http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/advice_topics/paying_for_a_home/budgeting

Moving from Halls of Residence to Private Accommodation

As your time in Halls comes to an end there are a few things you need to consider. Before you move out, chat with your flatmates about sharing the cleaning responsibilities. This will mean that not one or two people are left with it all do to at the end of the tenancy.

If you need help with moving your belongings to your new home or need somewhere to store belongings over the summer break there are a number of companies in Aberdeen who offer this type of service. Try www.simplyselfstorage.co.uk, www.sswstudentservices.com/storage/ or www.flexistore.co.uk/mobile-storage-aberdeen/ for a quote.

When you leave university accommodation it is your responsibility to have your mail redirected to your new address. You will need to contact Royal Mail to make these changes, <https://www.royalmail.com/delivery/inbound-mail/redirections>

You will also need to change your address with your employers, dentist, doctor's surgery and the University through Registry.

Another thing to consider is who you want to live with. Do you want to live with class mates, current flat mates or

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someone else? It is useful to think about how you have gotten along in the past if you have lived together previously, are there habits that you know will annoy you or have you been experiencing difficulties with people in the past? This is an important consideration as when you sign a tenancy agreement with someone, there is no legal obligation on the landlord to release you from the tenancy agreement if you fall out with flat mates. A top tip is to make sure you set out some agreed rules which you are all happy to stick to. Property disputes can be difficult to deal with and can lead to ruined relationships, it is important to be open and honest with each other from the beginning.

Turn over the page for some Top Tips When Moving In...

Top Tips When Moving In

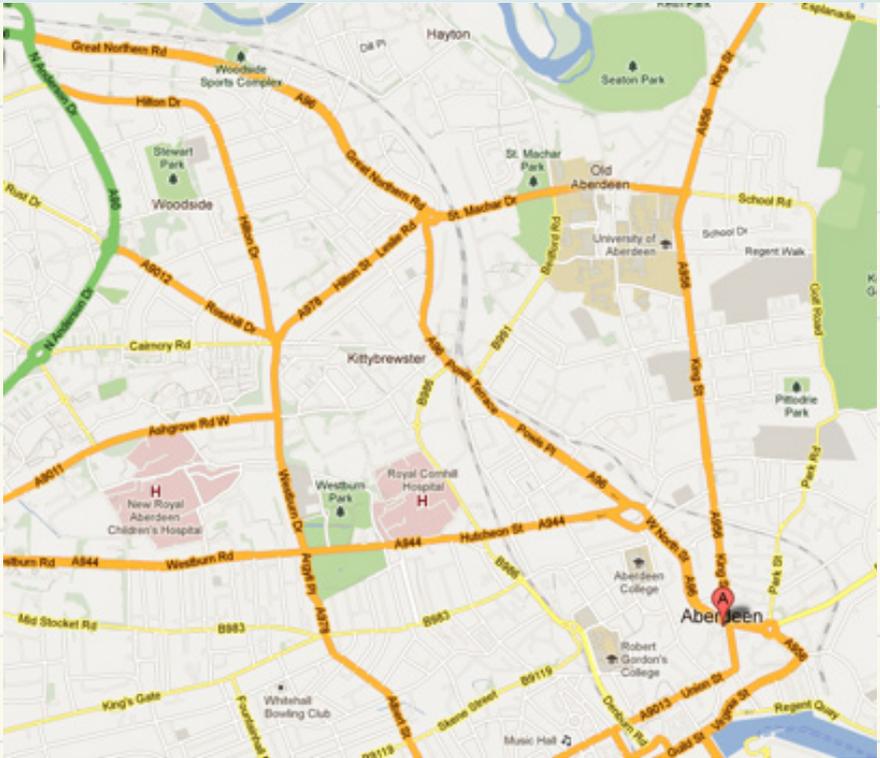
Inventory - Make sure you check the inventory that you are given and be certain you are happy with it. If there are any discrepancies with it, inform your landlord of them as soon as you move in. If you are not provided with an inventory, make your own. Go through each room and note down everything in it and any blemishes on walls, marks on carpets, anything not working etc so that you are not held responsible for it. Make sure both you as a tenant and your landlord sign the inventory checklist and keep a copy.

Photos - take photos of every room in detail to document the condition of the property and everything in it. This will help if you find yourself in a dispute about deposits at the end of your tenancy. If you have an iphone you could download the Free HouseMate app which can help you build an inventory! Download it here <http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/housemate>

Meter Readings - take meter readings the day you move in and report these to the gas and electric companies, if you fail to do this you are likely to be charged for any unpaid bills from the previous tenants.

For more useful tips check out the 'During Your Tenancy' section.

Popular Student Areas in Aberdeen



King Street – probably the most popular area for students as it is very close to campus. If you live on King Street you can expect anything between 2-20 minute walk to university. It is also very close to the main shopping area of the city and has plenty of amenities.

Hilton & Westburn areas – another popular area particularly for students studying at the Foresterhill campus which is approx 15-20 minute walk and campus which is approx 30-40 minutes

City Centre (Union Street etc) – many students prefer to live closer to the city centre especially those who might have part time jobs in the area. Lots of local shops and facilities and about 30 minutes walk to campus along with many bus routes passing the university.

Bedford Road area – depending where you live in this area, the walk to campus could be anything from 5 to 15 minutes.

Old Aberdeen – there are some properties within the campus itself or very close by. Look out for flats on the Spital and College Bounds as you will practically be on the doorstep of the University.

George Street – one of the busiest streets between the city centre and the university, lots of students live on George Street. Approx 15-20 minute walk to campus and 5-10 minutes from the shops in the city centre.

Rosemount – a little further away and more expensive than some other areas but a lovely, quirky area to consider.

Tillydrone – cheaper accommodation about 10-15 minutes walk from campus make this a very popular choice with students.

For information on bus routes around Aberdeen check out: - www.stagecoachbus.com or <http://www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/aberdeen/>

Searching for Accommodation

See the list below for a variety of places to find private and student accommodation, both rooms and flats. If you see accommodation you are interested in, contact the landlord or letting agency to organise a viewing.

AUSA Student Advice Centre – Butchart Centre, University Road

This is the first place to go to when looking for private accommodation. The AUSA Student Advice Centre has an accommodation website which lists available rooms and properties. All adverts have contact details, so students can phone up landlords directly. You can also contact AUSA Student Advice Centre if you would like to advertise your own room or flat for rent for free.

The AUSA Student Advice Centre will only advertise properties for landlords that are registered with Aberdeen City Council and hold the required HMO license.

Visit www.ausa.org.uk/marketplace/category/12/ and follow the links for accommodation. If you have any further questions call +44 (0)1224 274200 or email: ausaadvic@abdn.ac.uk

Searching Online

These websites are an easy way to search for accommodation, with a variety of properties or rooms advertised by letting agencies and private landlords. They tend to be advertised 4-6 weeks in advance – good if

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you're looking for a property in the near future.

If the property you like is provided by a letting agency, they may ask you to pay administration costs for a credit check or creating the inventory, etc. (also known as premiums). Please read the "Signing a Tenancy agreement" section for more information on these charges. You may also be asked for references, so have them at the ready to save time.

Check out the AUSA Student Advice Centre Website for information on letting agencies!

Room Searches

The websites below are specifically for those looking to rent a single room. However, to access the details you need to pay a sum of about £5 - £10. Try the free websites first and, if you are still struggling, then check these out!

www.spareroom.co.uk - www.easyroommate.com
www.roombuddies.com

Student Accommodation Providers

University accommodation and privately owned halls- both can offer single rooms and student flats, some with en-suite. Family accommodation is not available from these providers.

UNITE www.unite-students.com

Hunter Construction www.hunter-construction.co.uk

University of Aberdeen www.abdn.ac.uk/accommodation

Ardmuir www.ardmuir.co.uk

Liberty www.libertyliving.co.uk

Local Newspapers

These are especially good for looking for both rooms and properties from private landlords. Either buy the newspaper on the following days or visit their joint property website:

Evening Express (Friday) Press & Journal (Tuesday)

<http://yourhome.ajl.co.uk>

Viewing a Property

Before going to view a flat you should have an idea of what you are looking for. Read the guide below for useful tips.

Heating

Check what type of heating the accommodation has - if there are key or pay-as-you-go meters, be aware that sometimes these can be very expensive. If the property is heated by gas, make sure that the gas system has been given its annual maintenance service and ensure that if it is Gas Central Heating, that it has a Gas Safety Certificate.

Repairs

Check to see if there is any sign of damp or mould, or any general repairs needing carried out in the property. If you spot anything, it is important to inform the landlord of the required repairs and to ensure that they are carried out before you move in. Don't move in until the problems are sorted, or get a written agreement to carry out the repairs before you sign your tenancy agreement.

Safety

Make sure that your property has smoke detectors. Newly installed or replacement smoke alarms must be mains operated. If not, the local Fire Service can arrange a home visit to install a smoke detector free of charge.

Check out their website for further information

<http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/for->

[householders/home-fire-safety-visit.aspx](https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/householders/home-fire-safety-visit.aspx)

Security

Ensure that the property has a secure entrance and that the locks are in good condition. If your flat is on the ground floor, you should ensure that windows close securely or ideally have locks. Is there a back entrance and is it also secure? Is there adequate hallway lighting? You don't want to come home at night and have to find your way to your front door in the dark.

Plumbing

Check that all taps and pipes are in good working order. Do they switch off properly, does the toilet flush, does the shower run well?

Area

How does the area look to you, does it suit your lifestyle (e.g. are you looking for quiet and peaceful or trendy and sociable)? Check the area during the day and at night. Be aware of pubs or clubs nearby that might make it noisy in the evenings. Is it far from University and if so what are the transport costs? If you have found somewhere cheap that is miles away add in the costs of transport to make sure you are still getting a bargain. If you have a car check to see if you have a parking space and if you need a parking permit (available from Aberdeen City Council).

Landlord Registration

All landlords letting properties should be registered with Aberdeen City Council unless they are letting a room in their own home. Landlord Registration ensures that landlords meet minimum standards, so it is in your interests to let from a registered landlord. If you aren't sure if your landlord is registered you can contact Aberdeen City Council to check

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(contact details at end) or search the Landlord Registration website; <https://www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk>

House of Multiple Occupancy - HMO

It is a legal requirement that you seek accommodation that has an HMO licence, if you are living in a flat with three or more flatmates. This licence is issued to landlords who maintain certain standards of repairs, services, fire safety, etc. More information on HMO requirements is available from the Aberdeen City Council website.

If you are uncertain whether an HMO licence is required or whether your landlord has one, you can contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or contact Aberdeen City Council directly to check (contact details at end).

Signing a Tenancy Agreement

When you decide to rent a property, you will come to an agreement with your landlord about when you will move in, how much rent you will pay and how long you will stay. Usually a tenancy agreement is put in writing and signed – this is known as your tenancy agreement (or lease) and is legally binding on both parties. If you are a private tenant, you will probably have either a short assured tenancy or an assured tenancy.

If you are unsure about your tenancy agreement visit the AUSA Student Advice Centre, they will be happy to help you.

It is important to read through your tenancy agreement before you sign it, and ask if there is anything you don't understand. Your tenancy agreement should explain all the details you have agreed with your landlord. It should say what your rent payments are (how much and when you should pay rent) (please note that if your rent is due weekly, your landlord has to provide you with a rent book) and how your rent is to be paid.

You should wait until you have exchanged a signed tenancy before paying any money. If your landlord asks you to pay your rent in cash, you should ask for a dated and signed receipt every time. The tenancy agreement should state the amount paid as a deposit (if not you must ask for a receipt). The tenancy agreement should also give the address of the property, the contact details of your landlord, and the start and end dates of the tenancy. If it is a joint tenancy, it should contain the names of all tenants.

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If your potential landlord asks you to pay money via a transfer company (e.g. Western Union, Moneygram), gives you a very short tenancy or refuses to give you a tenancy at all, be cautious. If you have any reason to be concerned about a potential landlord, contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for advice before handing over any money.

Deposit

Most landlords will ask you to pay a deposit which is returnable at the end of your tenancy, provided you have not caused damage to the flat or left unpaid bills. The maximum deposit a landlord can charge is twice the cost of your monthly rent. Please note that, if you pay a deposit and then later decide not to take the flat, your landlord is legally entitled to keep your deposit.

If you are starting a new private tenancy, it is now a legal requirement that your deposit is held in one of the three Scottish Government approved tenancy deposit schemes. This ensures that your deposit is protected for the length of the tenancy agreement. When you pay your deposit, make sure you get a receipt. Within 30 days of signing your tenancy agreement, your landlord/letting agency must give you (in writing) the name of scheme your deposit is held in, the date they paid the deposit into this scheme and the contact details of the scheme. If you do not receive this you should request it, and if you have any problems contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO. If your landlord lives with you in your flat, your deposit does not need to be held in a scheme, however it should still be returned at the end of your tenancy minus allowable deductions.

For further information about deposits see “Things Gone Wrong?”

Premiums

Scottish Law prevents landlords/letting agencies charging any money (apart from the rent and deposit) to set up a tenancy agreement. However, in the past, these fees have commonly been charged (particularly by letting agencies). The Scottish Government has recently clarified the law in this area to explicitly state that service or administration fees (in addition to the rent and deposit) are illegal. If you are charged additional fees when you start a tenancy you do not need to pay them. If you have already paid premium fees, don't worry, as it is possible to reclaim the fees later.

You can visit the Shelter Scotland Reclaim your fees website, <http://www.reclaimyourfees.com/> for step-by-step information on reclaiming these fees. You can also contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for advice and assistance.

Inventory

Often the landlord will ask you to read and sign an inventory. This is a list of the contents of your flat and the condition that they are in. It is very important that you check through this list and agree with everything, as it can affect your deposit at the end of the tenancy. When you move out, the landlord will check all the items in the property against what has been listed on the inventory and, if damage has been caused to an item, you are likely to be charged for it.

On the other hand, if you see an item listed on the inventory as being in good condition and you know it is damaged, you should change the inventory to reflect this. If the landlord does not give you an inventory, you should make your own and ask your landlord or an independent witness to sign it. You may also like to take pictures as a record. Template

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inventory forms are available from the AUSA Student Advice Website.

Tenant Information Pack

The Tenant Information Pack gives information to tenants in privately rented houses. It provides you with information on your home, tenancy and landlord. It also outlines the responsibilities of you and your landlord. The pack ensures that all tenants in privately rented homes receive the same information. If you sign a tenancy agreement, your landlord has a legal obligation to give you a Tenant Information Pack. Even if a letting agency manages your tenancy you should still receive a pack. You can view the Tenant Information Pack online at www.scotland.gov.uk/tenant/info or by heading to www.rentingscotland.org

Legal Responsibilities

Once you have signed a tenancy agreement, you are agreeing to pay rent for the entire period of the agreement and it can be very difficult to get out of an agreement early (see “Moving Out and Notice“). If you are moving in with other people, you should be aware that you will most likely be equally liable for rent and other expenses. Unless you are the only tenant whose name is on the tenancy agreement, you will notice a phrase in your agreement “joint and several” liability. This means that each individual tenant is liable for all costs should any of the other tenants not meet their payment. For example, if one flatmate cannot raise their share of the rent, the other flatmates will still be expected to cover the full rent due.

Legal Rights

When you are given your tenancy agreement, you have two kinds of rights, statutory rights (Scottish law) and rights that your landlord gives you above your statutory rights. For

example, Scottish law does not entitle you to keep pets, but your landlord may allow this by adding it to your tenancy agreement. Your landlord cannot give you less than your statutory rights. For example, your landlord cannot state that he/she is allowed access to your property without notice at any time (statutory law states that you must have 24 hours notice). If it appears in your tenancy agreement that undermine your statutory rights, these cannot be legally enforced.

What if my landlord does not give me a tenancy agreement?

If you are not given a tenancy agreement, you should ask for one. However even if your landlord does not give you a tenancy agreement, it is important to remember that you still have rights. If you pay rent to your landlord and your landlord allows you to live in his/her property, then this implies you have a tenancy agreement. You will, therefore, be entitled to your statutory rights.

International Students

Some landlords/letting agencies will ask for a guarantor to prove that rent payments will be met. A guarantor is a person that agrees to take on the debt of another person if they fail to pay (in this case pay rent if the tenant is unable). Usually, only a UK based guarantor will be accepted and this makes it difficult for international students. If this is something that you are struggling with please visit the AUSA Student Advice Centre for further information

Landlords or letting agencies may charge rent for the full tenancy agreement period (usually 6 months) or may ask for a 3 month payment of rent, if a suitable guarantor is not given.

Disabled Students

If you are disabled, you have additional rights to improve your experience of living in the private sector. Your letting agency or landlord is required to make “reasonable adjustments” if requested by you. Examples of “reasonable adjustments” include installing a ramp if you use a wheelchair, or if you need your tenancy agreement in Braille, large print or audio, this should be provided. The nature of what is considered to be reasonable is likely to differ, depending on individual circumstances –e.g. what might be reasonable to expect from a large accommodation provider might not be reasonable for a landlord with a single property.

There are some exceptions; if your landlord does not use a letting agency or if the landlord is renting a room in their own home they can legally decline to offer the property to a disabled person.

This is a complex legal area so please contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO or visit Shelter Scotland’s website (see “Useful Contacts”), if you would like further information about your rights.

During Your Tenancy

Meter Reading and Phone Connection

If you are moving into a new property (not just a room with existing tenants), you should take a meter reading as soon as you move in, then contact your utilities company to give them this reading. A meter reading is the record of gas/electricity used at your property. Your landlord can tell you the name and contact number of your utilities company.

You should also ask your landlord about your phone line and which company provides your service. If the line is working, you will just need to inform them you are there. If the line is disconnected, you will need to call them and arrange for your line to be re-connected (the company will explain how much this costs). The company that provides your phone line can also provide you with internet access, though you may wish to search around for the best deal.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Your flat should come with a working smoke alarm, however you must test it regularly (there should be a test button on the alarm) to make sure it is in working order.

If you have Gas Central Heating, it is highly advisable to get a carbon monoxide detector, and the battery operated ones are preferable to the cheaper “dot” detectors (as you must check these manually and they cannot wake you should carbon monoxide build up as you are sleeping). Carbon monoxide gas can kill quickly (within hours). If your alarm

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indicates carbon monoxide is present you should phone the Gas Emergency Line on [0800111999](tel:0800111999) and move into fresh air. For more information and where to buy Carbon Monoxide detectors visit

www.carbonmonoxidekills.org.uk

TV Licence

If you have a joint tenancy agreement, you only need one TV Licence for the flat no matter how many TV sets you have. If tenants have their own separate tenancy agreements each tenant must have their own TV licence. If the landlord provides the TV, ask to see the licence. If you watch live TV in any format (over the internet, through a digital box or a standard TV), you need a licence and you can be fined up to £1000 if you do not have one.

For more information on the cost and how to pay visit

www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Please note that if you do not have a TV you must declare this to avoid being contacted by TV Licensing, <http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one/topics/what-if-a-tv-licence-is-not-needed-top12/>

Insurance

Most students have an average of £3,000 worth of possessions at University and it can cost from just £10 a month to insure them. It is recommended that you organise insurance for damage, loss and theft for all your valuable possessions. There are lots of insurance companies and some offer policies specifically for students. Shop around or search the internet to find the one that is best for you.

Bills

If you are living with other flatmates make sure you have come to a decision about paying the bills. Usually flatmates will split bills equally but, if someone is paying more, make sure they have agreed to this and know exactly what they are to pay. Try to organise the bills fairly so that each flatmate takes responsibility for at least one of your bills (e.g. one person pays the gas bill, another pays phone/internet, etc). If you leave bills unpaid when you leave, your landlord can legally deduct these from your deposit.

Council Tax

Council Tax is a tax payable to the Council for the property you are living in. Most full-time students are exempt from paying Council Tax but, once you have moved into private accommodation, you will need to inform the Council that you are a student so that you are not charged. You should fill in and return an exemption form which you can collect from AUSA Student Advice Centre. If you receive a bill or demand for payment, contact the Council and fill in an exemption form as soon as you can. You will not be charged Council Tax for any period that you have been studying full-time and your exemption will be backdated to reflect this.

Full-time international students are also exempt and, if you have brought your family as dependants, they may also be exempt. If their visa states “No recourse to public funds”, they are exempt and must bring their passport and visa to the Council Tax Office to verify this. If you are unsure about this, please visit SASO and ask to speak to an International Student Adviser. Anyone under 18 is also exempt from paying Council Tax.

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Full-time PhD students continue to be exempt from paying council tax during their writing up year.

If you are registered as a part-time student you are eligible to pay Council Tax.

A property is only exempt from Council Tax if every tenant is exempt. If you are a full-time student and are living with others who are not exempt, the property will still receive a Council Tax bill and the burden of paying it will fall to the non-exempt resident(s). You can collect a Council Tax Exception form from the AUSA Student Advice Centre. For further information on this visit the Aberdeen City Council website (see "Useful Contacts").

Being a Good Neighbour and Noise

Complaints

The experience of living in the private sector can be great, not just because of who you live with, but also your relationship with your neighbours and the area you live in. You have a responsibility to be a good neighbour to those around you and the advice below gives you tips on how to do this.

Introduce yourself to your closest neighbour – don't be shy, this is a great way to break the ice and form a positive relationship. Your neighbour may be able to tell you more about the area and help with questions you have.

People are more sensitive to noise in the early morning, late evening and night time. Be respectful towards your neighbour and turn things down. If you can still hear music from within a closed door, your neighbours can hear it too! One of the most common complaints is doors slamming

or loud chatter when returning home late at night. It is nice to let your neighbours know if you are planning a party, but don't use it as an excuse to be noisy.

Put your rubbish out on the day it is due to be collected (or the night before), then put the bins away once they have been collected. Leaving bins or other rubbish lying around makes the neighbourhood look ugly and can create a hazard or attract pests. If you need another bin or if you have items that are too large for the bin, contact Aberdeen City Council who will help. To find out when your bin day is or when your recycling day is checkout the Aberdeen City Council's Website; http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/environment/waste_aware/rub_waste_aware_aberdeen.asp

If you are suffering with bad neighbours, try talking to them first. Often neighbours are genuinely unaware of your discomfort. For example, not everyone appreciates how easily sound travels and it may be possible to agree between you times when noise is more acceptable.

If this does not work, you should contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for advice, alternatively contact Aberdeen City Council directly.

Environment and Greener Living

If you are in rented accommodation a large portion of your expenditure is likely to be spent on utility bills. The average person can reduce this by cutting down the amount of energy the average home wastes. AUSA's Sustainable Futures Project is concerned with reducing student CO2 emissions (related to energy use) and they have been helping students to stay warm, reduce their energy bills

and reduce their CO2 emissions. There are loads of tips to prevent wasting money on needless energy bills on their website and you can also get a FREE energy audit where a staff member will pin-point ways for you to save energy. Check out the website for details.

There are lots of other ways you can “green” your home with the help of the Sustainable Futures Project! They can help you set up home composting, reduce your food waste, fill your house with low-cost and sometimes free goods from our Student Swapshop at Butchart. You can contact them by email at climatechangeproject@abdn.ac.uk

Moving Out and Notice

If you decide that you want to move out, then you will have to give your landlord notice. The amount of notice depends on whether you want to leave before or after your tenancy agreement has come to an end.

Before the end of your tenancy agreement

When you sign a tenancy agreement, you are signing an agreement to pay the specified rent for the full duration of the tenancy. If you decide that you want to leave before then, you must check your tenancy agreement to see if this is allowed. If your tenancy agreement allows you to leave early, it should state how much notice you should give to your landlord. It is advisable to put this in writing and ensure the landlord accepts it.

If your tenancy agreement does not mention leaving early, it may still be possible to leave but only with the permission of your landlord. Sometimes the landlord will allow you to leave early if you can find someone else to take your place (to ensure the landlord does not lose income. Please note that the landlord has no legal responsibility to let you leave early, regardless of your circumstances. If your landlord makes an agreement with you, ensure that this is put in writing.

At the end of your tenancy agreement

Even if you have reached the end of your tenancy agreement, you must still give notice, otherwise the landlord will assume you are extending your stay. The period of notice you must give will be specified in your tenancy

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agreement and you should put your notice in writing and ensure your landlord has accepted it.

If your landlord would like you to leave he/she, must also do so in accordance with the notice period specified on the tenancy agreement .

If you are unsure about the notice you must give, or if you do not have a lease, contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for advice.

Things Gone Wrong?

Deposits

When you move into a property, your landlord will usually ask you for a deposit. When you leave that property, you are entitled to that money back so long as you do not owe your landlord money. The allowable deductions are listed below.

If you have caused damage to the property, the landlord is entitled to take money for this. Your landlord is not entitled to take money for 'fair wear and tear'. For example, normal wearing down of carpets caused by walking on them could not be deducted but, if you have left a red wine stain on the carpet, your landlord can deduct money from your deposit to repair or replace it.

If you have not kept the property clean, your landlord is entitled to take money to pay for cleaning services.

If you have left unpaid bills or you have not paid your rent, your landlord is entitled to deduct money from your deposit to pay for these.

One of the main reasons for landlords keeping all or part of the deposit is to cover the costs of cleaning. Your aim is to leave the property in the same condition (or better) compared with when you moved in. Key cleaning areas are the cooker and oven; fridge and freezer; shower, toilet and carpets and don't forget to dust the skirting boards!

Once you have left the property, you must give your landlord time to check the property before returning your deposit. There is no specific time frame for this but, if you have not heard from your landlord within two weeks, it is advisable to contact your landlord or deposit scheme where your deposit is being held to ask the reasons for the delay. If your landlord intends to keep all or any of your deposit, then the landlord will inform the deposit scheme of this and they will contact you directly to agree or dispute the landlords claim.

If you are having difficulties getting your deposit back, contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for guidance. Further information about deposits, including applying to get your deposit back from a tenancy deposit scheme, and the process of taking a small claims court action, are available online at the Shelter Scotland website http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/advice_topics/paying_for_a_home/deposits

Repairs and Maintenance

If there is a problem in your property, you must report this to your landlord as soon as possible. Reporting faults & problems is your responsibility and you must do this, even

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if you don't mind whether the problem is fixed. Some problems may get worse over time (e.g. damp) and, if you do not report it as soon as you notice it, it may cost your landlord more to fix it. In this case, your landlord is entitled to take this extra repair money from your deposit. It is best to keep a copy of any letters or emails you send your landlord, so that you have proof that you have reported the problem.

Some landlords may try to get out of their responsibilities by adding a clause into your tenancy agreement stating that they don't need to carry out repairs, or that you will have to pay for any repairs that need completed. These are unfair terms and are not legally binding. If your tenancy agreement doesn't mention repairs at all, your landlord is still legally required to get certain repairs done.

Your landlord is responsible for keeping your flat structurally sound and fit to live in. All appliances/ installations/ furniture that were provided when you moved in must be kept in good working order. If they do not work properly or become unsafe, your landlord has a responsibility to fix or replace them. However if items become damaged but are still safe and usable your landlord does not need to replace them, unless this is specified in your tenancy agreement. Be aware that, if repairs are needed because of damage you have caused, your landlord has the right to deduct the cost of repairs from your deposit. If you cause damage to the property that costs more than the amount you paid for the deposit your landlord is entitled to pursue you for payment.

If you have written to your landlord and he/she has refused to fix a problem, or has simply ignored it, you should contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for advice.

Eviction

If your landlord wants to evict you before the end of your tenancy agreement, he/she must give you appropriate notice (depending on what is written into your tenancy agreement and the type of tenancy agreement). Unless you voluntarily agree to leave, your landlord cannot force you to leave without following certain procedures and the landlord must ultimately obtain a court order to legally evict a tenant. The landlord must present the tenant with a notice to quit, a notice of proceedings (i.e. notice that the tenant is being taken to court) followed by a summons (this gives further information about the court case and gives the tenant/ or a representative the opportunity to make their case). If your landlord has threatened you with eviction, you should contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for further advice.

Illegal Eviction

If you have been illegally evicted, this is a serious offence. The first step should be to speak to your landlord and explain this (they may not realise what they have done is illegal). Your landlord cannot evict you by changing the locks or by using force or intimidation to force you to leave. Only a sheriff officer has the authority to evict tenants. If you have any evidence of your landlord's actions (letters, photographs etc), you should keep these safe.

If your landlord is trying to evict you illegally or has already done so, you should contact the police in the first instance and AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for advice immediately.

Homelessness

Homelessness does not have to mean you are sleeping

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on the street, but rather that you are living in temporary accommodation (at a friend's, in a hostel), or that you are staying in overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation (for example if you are subject to violence or unhealthy living conditions).

If you find yourself homeless, contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or SASO for advice. You can also contact Aberdeen City Council, Shelter Scotland or the Citizens Advice Bureau for support (see "Useful Contacts").

Flatmates and Relationships

Were you best of friends before you moved in together? Not so much now? Living with friends or new acquaintances can be great fun and lead to lasting friendships but, after time, you may get frustrated with their habits or your personalities may clash.

Before considering moving out, try discussing any grievances face-to-face with the whole household (don't leave post-it notes!). Some tenants may not have realised there was a problem and it is usually possible to come to an agreement or compromise (like establishing quiet times).

If talking doesn't help or you can't come to an agreement, you may start to think about moving out but this can often be complicated. If you decide to move out before your tenancy agreement is over, remember you will still be liable for the rent for the remainder of your tenancy agreement unless you come to an agreement with your landlord (see "Moving Out and Notice").

If you ask a flatmate to leave when you hold a joint tenancy, remember that the remaining tenants will still be liable for

the total rent costs unless you can come to an agreement with your landlord (see “Signing the Tenancy agreement”).

If you are renting with your partner and you break up, your rights depend on whose name is on the lease and the legal status of your relationship. You have legal rights to remain in a property if your name is on the tenancy agreement or if you are married or have a civil partnership.

If you require further information about your rights when a relationship has ended you should contact AUSA Student Advice Centre or Shelter Scotland (see “Useful Contacts”).

Useful Contacts

Aberdeen University Students’ Association Student Advice Centre

Butchart Centre, University Road

Tel: 01224 274200

Email: ausaadvice@abdn.ac.uk

Web: www.ausa.org.uk

Student Advice and Support Office

Ground Floor, the Hub

Elphinstone Road

Tel: 01224 273935

Email: student.advice@abdn.ac.uk

Web: www.abdn.ac.uk/student-support/support-office

University Accommodation Office (Halls)

2nd Floor, the Hub

Elphinstone Road

Tel: 01224 273502

Email: studentaccomm@abdn.ac.uk

Web: www.abdn.ac.uk/accommodation/living_in_halls

Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO) Unit

Housing & Environment

Business Hub 1, Lower Ground Floor West

Marischal College

Broad Street

Aberdeen, AB10 1AB

Tel: 01224 522870

Email: HMOUnit@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Web: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/housing/private_housing/hmo/hoa_MultipleOccupancy.asp

Marischal College Customer Service Centre (Council Tax)

Ground Floor

Marischal College

Broad Street

Aberdeen

AB10 1AB

Tel: 08456 080921

Email: csc@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Web: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/council_tax_benefits/discounts_reductions.asp

Private Landlord Registration

Housing and Environment

Business Hub 1, Lower Ground Floor West

Marischal College

Broad Street

Aberdeen AB10 1AB

Tel: 01224 522299

Email: landlordregistration@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Web: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/housing/private_housing/landlord/hoa_landlord_registration.asp

Shelter Scotland

Free housing advice

Mon – Fri: 09.30 – 1600

Tel: 0808 800 4444 (Freephone)

Web: <http://scotland.shelter.org.uk>



Your Guide to Finding a Home & Living in Aberdeen

Citizens Advice Bureau

41 Union Street

Mon – Fri: 09.30 – 1500

Tel: 01224 586 255

Web: www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/aberdeen-citizens-advice-bureau

Electrical Emergencies

Scottish Hydroelectric

Tel: 0800 300 999

Or

Scottish Power

Tel: 0845 27 27 999

Gas Emergencies

National Gas Emergency Service

Tel: 0800 111 999

Notes

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY
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