

Private Rented Housing – Viewing Checklist

Using this Checklist will give you a good idea of the condition of any property you are thinking of renting.

Even if you don't use the SASSH Accredited Property Housing Lists provided online by the Residences Service, **make sure you read this before viewing any properties!**

Safety – Comes First!

- Are smoke detectors or fire alarms fitted? Do they work?
- In the event of fire in the main access passageways of the house, could you get out of the house?
- Is there emergency lighting in escape routes (i.e. corridors)?
- Does the house have fire doors?
- Can you open all the exit doors from inside without a key?
- Is there a heat detector in the kitchen?
- Is there a fire blanket in your kitchen?
- Gas and electricity – is everything checked and tested? Ask to see a copy of a GASsafe safety record for the gas appliances – all the gas appliances in the property should be listed on this, with no faults.
- Does the cooker work? If the cooker is a gas cooker, does the thermostat work?
- Is the heating in the house adequate – will it be ok in the middle of winter?
- Do the electric/gas fires work?

Ensure you have read your gas and electricity meters immediately after you have taken responsibility for the property, and keep a note of the readings in a safe place.

Security – Essential!

Is the house secure?

- Is there a burglar alarm that works?
- Are all the external doors solid?
- Have all external doors been fitted with strong and secure locks?
- Are ground floor windows fitted with security catches?
- Have you identified your own possessions with your home postcode on all your valuables?
- Are the ground floor bedroom curtains lined or thick enough?

Location, Location, Location!

Is the area right for you?

- Is transport easily available?
- Are there shops and services nearby?

Agent/Landlord/Owner – Get to Know them!

- Do you have names, addresses and contact telephone numbers? Don't sign a contract without this information on it!

Outside the Property – Just as Important as Inside!

- Does the roof look sound? You can check for damp from the inside of the house as well as the outside.
- Have the gutters got plants growing out of them?
- Are the drains clear?
- Is any of the woodwork rotting or unsafe?
- Are gardens, walls, fences and boundaries maintained? Will they be your responsibility during the tenancy?

Repairs – Because Wear and Tear is Inevitable!

Do any repairs need doing?

- Have you told the owner in writing what needs doing – have you agreed what will be done, in writing, before you sign the Agreement?

Decorating – Makeover or Major Works?

Does any decorating need doing?

- If so, who is doing it and who is paying? Has the owner set up any upper limit on the cost of materials if you are decorating the house yourself? Get confirmation in writing.

Cleaning – You’ll have to do it when you move in, but you deserve a fresh start!

Is the house clean?

- If not, have you told the owner what the condition is in writing?
- Will you be provided with the equipment to keep it clean?
- Do your prospective housemates have the same understanding as you about tidying up?

Are there any signs of pests, e.g. mouse droppings, slug trails, fleas, in the house if so, what will your landlord do about this? Get this in writing, before you agree to move in.

Plumbing – Pipes, Boiler, Shower, Sink, Bath, Taps, WC . . .

Does the plumbing work?

- Have you tried all the taps?
- Do the sinks drain?
- Does the toilet leak?
- Is there any hot water and how do you pay for it (fixed charge/meter)?
- Is there a shower and does it work properly?
- Are there enough bathrooms/WCs for the full number of housemates sharing?

Furniture – Remember, you need something to sit on and something to sleep on!

- Has the house got enough furniture for the number of housemates sharing?
- Is there sufficient space in the kitchen to store and prepare food?
- Is any of the furniture the property of existing tenants?
- Is all the furniture in good condition?
- Is the furniture fire retardant?

Personal Possessions Insurance – We recommend you consider cover . . .

- Should you be insured? The Students Union Advice Information Centre can advise you on cover.

Money – It’s yours, so spend it wisely!

- What are you paying for in your rent? How does it compare to other rents?
- Have you paid a deposit? If so what is it for? Have you got a receipt for what you have paid?
- Do you, and your landlord, know about the Tenancy Deposit Scheme? This is a legal requirement, so please see our guide (“Tenancy Deposit Protection”) and also www.communities.gov.uk for further information.
- Are you responsible for water charges?
- How much will heating the house cost?

Services – Check out what’s on offer . . .

- What services is the owner providing for you, if any? (Window cleaning, gardening, lighting of common parts, refuse disposal)
- What are the parking arrangements – do you need a permit, and how easy are these to get?

Agreements – Make sure you have one!

- Do you know what your contract means? Read the Residences Service “Private Rented Housing – Contract Guide”, and speak to them or the Advice Centre if you have any questions **before you sign the contract!**
- Have you talked to the previous occupants of the house and asked them if they have any comments that would help you?

LOOKING FOR A HOUSE - DIDN'T REALISE THERE WAS SO MUCH TO IT?

- Pick up a copy of the tenancy agreement endorsed by SASSH, available from the Student Services Centre, and ask your landlord if he would like to use this.
- Pick up a copy of the Southampton City Wide SASSH accreditation standards for student properties
- Pick up a copy of “How to open the door to... Private Rented Housing” from the Residences Service or The Advice Centre for even more information.

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