

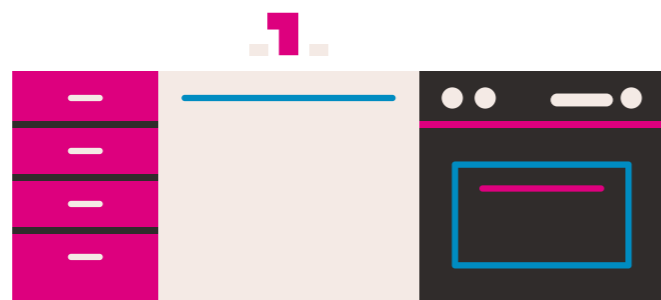
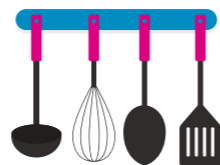
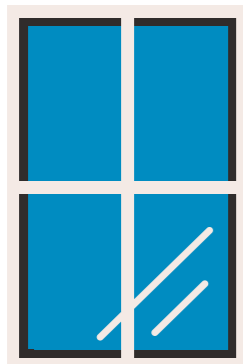
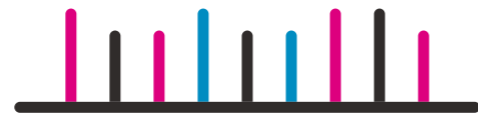


UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



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# This guide is brought to you by...

the Student Mentor Scheme and Living, Accommodation Services at the University of Birmingham.

Finding where to live can be easy to do if you know where to look but it can also be a stressful experience. It is really important that you **don't rush** to sign a contract simply because you are worried that there aren't enough properties. **THERE ARE!**

**There are more houses than students in the surrounding area** - don't fall into the trap of signing a contract because you feel pressured to do so, or because you feel all the good properties will be gone.

**There are online housing guides available through both the University and Guild websites taking you through the process of looking, moving and living in the community. Look out for these resources that you can access all year round!**

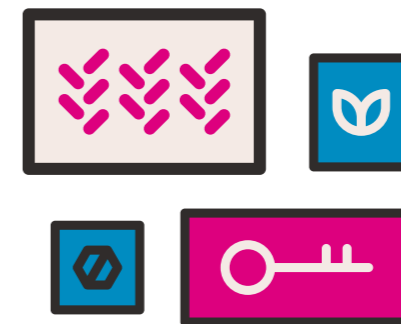
[community-living.org.uk/student-information](http://community-living.org.uk/student-information)  
[guildofstudents.com](http://guildofstudents.com)



The Living team is based in University Centre, whilst the Community Living team can be found in Bournbrook Pavilion. Living helps you find accommodation in halls of residence, often in your first year - Community Living is here to help you make the most of your time in the private sector, often in your second year and beyond. Whether it's when you're looking for a house, when you move in, or when you're living in the community, we're here for you every step of the way.



The Student Mentor Scheme is a team of 14 current students who have been trained to provide free, peer to peer, advice and guidance to students living in University and Partner accommodation. They are available to help you, from when you receive your accommodation offer, to moving in and throughout your time in University accommodation.



# Advice from your Welfare and Community Officer



Hey everyone, Charlotte here! Your Welfare and Community Officer.

As your student representative for all things welfare, housing and community related, I want to help you make the best decision when signing for a house. Having gone through

the renting process for five years running, and seeing friends do the same, I've learnt some valuable lessons along the way that I'd like to share with you!

The most important thing these experiences have taught me, is that housemates make a home. My best experiences living in a shared house, weren't necessarily good because of the actual property, but more because of the people I've been with.

I'd encourage everyone to take their time, even if it feels like everyone has got a house already. There's so many houses in Selly Oak and Landlords/Letting Agents are really keen for you to live in them. This means they might try and persuade you to sign quickly, but make sure you check your contract thoroughly before doing so. You can even send it over to Guild Advice or Community Living to have a look through.

Hopefully this booklet, with tips and advice from Officers and the Rent Right teams, will help you with this exciting endeavour! If you have any specific questions that you want answering, then don't hesitate to get in touch.

Happy house-hunting!

Email - [welfare@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:welfare@guild.bham.ac.uk)

## Officer top tips

### Tobiloba Adeyemi- President

If you're unsure about a housing contract, make sure you go to Guild Advice. They offer clarity on renting and general advice, so you know what to look out for when moving to a new home. Once that's all sorted and you have now moved into your new place – try not to unpack all at once. Ease into it, order a nice takeout, get some rest and take it one step at a time!

### Wei-Lun Chen- International Officer

Live with friends with similar routines and lifestyles

### Rebecca Cutler- Postgraduate Officer

Try to find a house where the bedrooms are all similar sizes – it's easier than negotiating on who gets which room or whether someone should pay more for a bigger room

### Amie Raphael- Activities and Employability Officer

When moving out and moving in, take a photo of anything which is broken or breaks right at the start. Have a video of the room before you move your stuff in (this could save you some money at the end).



# Choosing your new housemates

## Finding the right people to live with

They say that you only get to know somebody when you live with them...and they couldn't be more right.

Think about people's habits, hobbies, routines and personalities before you decide to move in together. Best friends do not necessarily make the best housemates!

There is no set rule to say that you must live with who you are living with now, so work out how many people you would like to live with and go from there. If you would like a house, these usually have 3 bedrooms or more. Only search for properties that have the right number of rooms for who you want to share with - it may be tempting to get a bigger house if you really love it, but you may have to pay for those extra rooms in addition to your own rent if you can't find somebody to fill them!



## Student Mentor Scheme

The Student Mentors are trained to provide free, peer to peer advice and guidance to students living in University accommodation. We are available from 4-8pm, during term-time weekdays for virtual zoom chats, phone calls, instant messenger chats or emails.

You can access the Student Mentor Scheme for information, guidance and support in a range of areas including:

- Shared living and housing
- Your academic studies
- Settling into University life
- Financial queries
- General wellbeing

**Before you start viewing houses, you need to decide who you are going to live with. The Student Mentor Scheme can help you meet like-minded people. Drop us an email or phone call and we can help support you with any housing questions or worries!**



**No Problem Too Big, No Problem Too Small!**



To contact us:  
Email - [mentorwelfare@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:mentorwelfare@guild.bham.ac.uk)  
Telephone - 0121 415 8568  
Website - [guildofstudents.com/studentmentors](http://guildofstudents.com/studentmentors)  
Instagram - studentmentors  
Facebook - studentmentorscheme

## Ways to Meet New People & Housemate Finder Events

Though it can be difficult at any time to meet new people, this year has proven even more difficult to make new friends. If you haven't met anyone who you would like to live with yet don't panic. Lots of people are in the same position as you, and are looking to meet people to live with next year.

### Housemate Finder Events

The Student Mentor Scheme run Housemate Finder events during housing season. These events facilitate opportunities to meet others, who similarly to you, are looking for housemates.

To find out more about these events:  
**Visit the Guild of Students' website** - [guildofstudents.com](http://guildofstudents.com)

Follow the Student Mentor Scheme on social media:  
**Instagram** - studentmentors  
**Facebook** - studentmentorscheme

### Match Up, Catch Up

Match up, Catch ups run monthly throughout the year. Sign up online and we'll introduce you to up to 3 other people with similar interests. You can sign up every month if you want to, you never know this may connect you with someone that you want to live with!

For details on signing up to Match up, catch up:  
**Visit the Guild of Students' website** - [guildofstudents.com/studentmentors](http://guildofstudents.com/studentmentors)

Follow the Student Mentor Scheme on social media:  
**Instagram** - studentmentors  
**Facebook** - studentmentorscheme

### Join your Hall Rep Events



Hall Reps host a variety of fun activities and events for students in accommodation. Each hall has a dedicated Hall Rep who is there to make sure you have the best time in your accommodation.

The best way to get involved in your halls activities is to join your dedicated halls Facebook page.

**Find this page by visiting -**  
[guildofstudents.com/hallreps](http://guildofstudents.com/hallreps)

### Join a Student Group or volunteer

Joining a Student Group or volunteering are really great ways to meet people. From activity-based groups to associations, there are so many options and there's something for everyone.

**To search for a Student Group for you visit -**  
[guildofstudents.com/studentgroups](http://guildofstudents.com/studentgroups)

### Facebook Community Pages

Sometimes students will post vacant rooms in existing properties on community Facebook pages. We strongly encourage you to get to know the people living in the property before you agree to any spare rooms!

Here's a couple of UoB specific pages you can search for on Facebook:

- The Official UoB Student Housing Group
- Fab n Fresh – new

## Things to think about when living with people

Once you've decided who you want to live with, you then have to think about how you plan on living together. Do you want to put in some house rules to help everyone get along? Do you need silence to be able to sleep properly? What about cleaning and taking the bins out? Here are our top tips to think about once you've found your new housemates.

### Talk about security

Everyone has a responsibility to keep your new house safe. Maybe agree that the last person in should check the front and back door are locked? Any way you decide to do it, talking about the security of your house is a must.

### Private spaces

Each of you will have your own room and you should all communicate how you feel about people coming into that space. Whether it's that you would like people to knock before coming in, or if you would prefer no one to come into your room, you need to communicate this to your housemates.

### Having people over

Talk about how you feel about guests coming to the house, or having partners staying over for the night. Try to be understanding of each other's position on this. Maybe you could have 3 nights a week where you can have guests over?

### Cleaning and Bins

It's important to discuss cleaning and cleaning standards in the house. Shared areas should be everyone's responsibility to clean. Maybe a cleaning rota will work, or could you work out between you a day you all clean together? Now you live in the community you also need to take the bins and recycling out each week. Decide who is doing this each week as you don't want to miss your bin day!

### Shared items

Work out if you want to share the cost of food or if you will buy your own items. Tea, coffee, milk and cleaning supplies are basic items that you may decide can be shared. More expensive items such as meat you may want to keep separate. However you want to share it make sure everyone understands what food is to share and what they should leave.

### Bills

Your household bills should be set out in your contract, but you might want to pay for extras like WIFI and extra TV channels. You will also need to set yourselves up with a TV licence (this applies to all devices whether you have a TV, computer, tablet or mobile phone). Work out how you plan on sharing the cost of these things and who will be setting up the direct debit.

### Enjoy it!

Enjoy living with your new housemates! Why not set up a moving in dinner and cook some food together? Planning some housemate activities is a great way to enjoy your new found home in the community!



# Housing services and support



So, you've begun your search into the private housing sector. You're finally going to get your own space, with your chosen group of housemates, living life on your own terms. There are, however, loads of new things to consider, to organise, to overcome, and that's where Living and Community Living come in.

### Useful resources

You can find housing through our search engine, Birmingham Studentpad. We won't advertise any landlord or agent unless they've completed compliance training with the Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme, so you can rent with confidence.

### Contract checking

Alongside Guild Advice we can also check your contract for you, so you know exactly what you're signing up to before you make any legal commitment.

### Private sector advice

Not sure where to start house hunting? Fallen out with housemates? Worried about your contractual obligations? Noisy neighbours keeping you up at night? No concern is too big or too small, and it's always better to come and ask than worry about it. If we can't help you right there and then, we can put you in touch with somebody who can.

### Local and relevant

We're right here with you, in YOUR community – the Community Living hub is located at Bournbrook Pavilion, only a 2 minute walk from central Selly Oak. Pop in for a chat and a coffee, and access to our expertise. We've also got you covered if you're on campus – just visit the Living shop in University Centre.

### Ongoing support

While we're here to support you if things don't go to plan, we also know that it's not all doom and gloom - living in the local community is an incredible opportunity that's not to be missed! That's why we run a number of events and initiatives to help you really make the most of your time here.

[birmingham.ac.uk/study/accommodation/renting-accommodation-privately](http://birmingham.ac.uk/study/accommodation/renting-accommodation-privately)



Community Wardens support students living in the community to enjoy their time in Selly Oak and the wider area, feel proud to be part of the community and get the most out of living there! Community Wardens focus on five areas: community cohesion, student safety, cleaner streets, a greener environment and housing support. We conduct regular patrols to identify issues such as insecure properties and waste problems; respond to issues and complaints raised by students and non-student residents; educate students on crime prevention and housing issues; and run activities to improve the local community such as Junkbusters. We work in partnership with University teams such as Living and Security, West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service and Birmingham City Council to share information and resolve issues affecting students in the community.

[guildofstudents.com/community-wardens](http://guildofstudents.com/community-wardens)



Birmingham Studentpad is the official University of Birmingham property search engine aimed at students looking for a house.

Only landlords accredited through the Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme can advertise their properties through this website. Properties include short term and long term leases, many within close proximity to the University.

[birminghamstudentpad.co.uk](http://birminghamstudentpad.co.uk)

### Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme (MLAS)

We recommend that you always let your new home through a landlord or lettings agent that is accredited by MLAS. This means that they will have been on training and signed a code of conduct which commits them to a number of good practices.

[mlas.org.uk](http://mlas.org.uk)



Guild Advice is a free, impartial and confidential advice service for students at the University of Birmingham. They offer practical advice on all kinds of subjects relating to student life and housing is one of the areas that their Advisors specialise in.

[guildofstudents.com/guildadvice](http://guildofstudents.com/guildadvice)



Marks Out Of Tenancy is a website that enables tenants in the private rental sector to rate and review their tenancy experience. You can also use it to store important housing documents – such as your contract or photos of the property's condition – online.

[marksoutofTENANCY.com](http://marksoutofTENANCY.com)

### Lettings Membership Scheme

The University of Birmingham Lettings Membership Scheme (LMS), brings together landlords, lettings agents and students to have a positive impact on the private sector housing market. The LMS Charter outlines best practice and ethical standards for landlords and lettings agents. By choosing a landlord or lettings agent who has signed the LMS Charter, you'll have the confidence to Rent Right and have a great experience in your new home.

[community-living.org.uk](http://community-living.org.uk)

# Making a property shortlist and going on a viewing

## Things to think about when making a shortlist:

- Location
- Condition
- Security
- Fire safety
- Gas safety
- Energy performance
- HMO – House of Multiple Occupation
- Marks Out of Tenancy review rating

### Location

Make sure you discuss a location that suits you all. Remember being close to the University doesn't always mean that you are getting the most for your money. Have a look around different areas and think about transport links that can help you get about.

### Condition

Keep an eye out for damage to the property, including loose carpet, cracked windows or door frames, damp and mould on the walls or ceilings, and broken furniture. Take pictures of damage or poor conditions and keep these for future reference.

### Security

The security of your property should be a priority when choosing a house. Student houses are especially vulnerable to burglary due to the high numbers of valuable items and sometimes poor security. Check the following things:

- Do the doors and windows shut correctly?
- Is there at least one, preferably two secure locks on your front and back door?
- Does the house have a burglar alarm and does it work?
- Is the garden adequately fenced and secured?

### Fire safety

- Check the fire alarms; do they work? Are they in the kitchen and communal areas?
- Does the house have fire doors? Fire doors can be identified via a blue 'fire door' sticker on them, or by the fact that they swing shut automatically.
- Is there a quick escape route out of the property?
- Do the plug sockets appear to be safe and working?

As soon as you move into your home it is recommended that you book a free 'Safe and Well visit' through West Midlands Fire Service. They will check your home, talk to you about fire safety and also fit free smoke alarms (if required).

For more information about this service and to book an appointment, please

email - [contactcentre@wmfs.net](mailto:contactcentre@wmfs.net)

visit - [wmfs.net](http://wmfs.net)

or call - 0800 389 5525



### Gas safety

It's the landlord's responsibility to check your appliances and make sure they are working and safe. You can ask your landlord for a copy of the Gas Safety Certificate before you move in to the property.

### Energy performance

The Energy Performance Certificate should be provided free of charge. It is a legal requirement. It will be provided to you at the beginning of the contract period but you can also often find it online when you book to go on a viewing – this way you can estimate whether your future bills will be expensive or more affordable. If you haven't received it, ask your landlord or letting agent where it is.

To check the energy performance for the property you want to view, visit - [epcregister.com](http://epcregister.com)

### HMO – House of Multiple Occupation

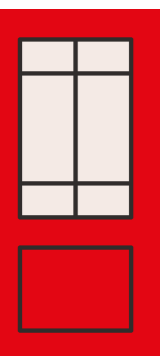
Under the Housing Act 2004, from 1 October 2018 any landlord who lets a property to 5 or more people – from 2 or more separate households – must be licensed by their local housing authority. A HMO is classed as a property that is more at risk. Therefore the landlord has extra legal responsibilities to fulfil. This would mean the landlord applying to Birmingham City Council to ensure the safety of the home before renting it out to occupants.

If you decide to live in a HMO property, then by law there should be some contact information clearly on display once you've moved in. This will detail the name of the HMO Manager (typically the landlord or agent), a phone number and address.

### Marks Out of Tenancy review rating

Reviews left by previous tenants are invaluable information for your house search. It is always worth checking whether the property you are going to visit has been reviewed on Marks Out Of Tenancy and how it has been rated. Previous tenants might be able to share information that you would not find out from the landlord or viewing!

[marksoutofTENANCY.com](http://marksoutofTENANCY.com)



# Housing checklist

<b>Address</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
House 1	
House 2	
House 3	

<b>General</b>	House 1	House 2	House 3
<b>Essential</b>			
MLAS accredited landlord	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HMO licence (property with 5+ people with shared facilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smoke alarms (non-HMO minimum of 1 per floor/ HMO more specific fire safety requirements)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Up to date Gas Safety Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Up to date Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electric meter (with access to read)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Up to date PAT (portable appliance test) on portable appliances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heater timer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Burglar alarm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal window locks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Central heating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secure front door (Wood: preferably with a separate mortise lock. UPVC: try lock to make sure it is secure)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secure back door (providing adequate security with an easy to use lock)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

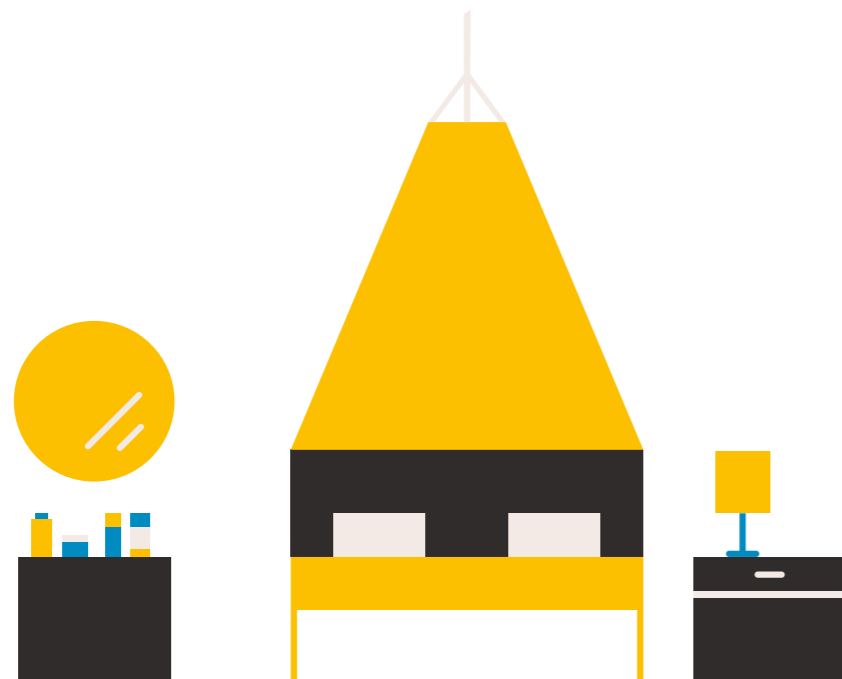
<b>Kitchen</b>	House 1	House 2	House 3	<b>Outside</b>	House 1	House 2	House 3
<b>Essential</b>				<b>Essential</b>			
Cooker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lockable gated alleyway (if there is a side gate)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate fences, not broken (if there is a garden)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Freezer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	External lighting/ security lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Washing machine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Area to store rubbish/recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 cupboard per person (storage)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Desirable</b>			
Fire blanket/Extinguisher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Garden/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Desirable</b>				Clear maintained outside space (if no garden)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tumble dryer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Side gate/entrance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dishwasher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lawn mower (if there is a garden - check who is responsible for maintaining it)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kitchen bin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Microwave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Toaster	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Kettle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Curtains/Blinds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

<b>Bathroom/s</b>	House 1	House 2	House 3	House 1	House 2	House 3
<b>Essential</b>				<b>Desirable</b>		
Bathroom/Ensuite	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensuite	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shower (over bath/ cubicle)/Bath	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Curtains/Blinds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Sink	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Mirror	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Living Area				Bedroom			
Essential	House 1	House 2	House 3	Essential	House 1	House 2	House 3
Sofa (enough space for everyone?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single/double bed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet access (cable or phone point)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Desk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curtains/Blinds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Desk chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Desirable</b>				Wardrobe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coffee table	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chest of drawers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Curtains/Blinds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sky/Cable TV point	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plug sockets (check there are enough!)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dining table	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Desirable</b>			
Dining chairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Storage space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Storage cupboard/shelving/bookcase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Bedside table/cabinet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Sky/Cable TV point	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Questions for current tenants

	House 1	House 2	House 3	Additional comments
Have you been happy living here?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Would you recommend the property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Do you feel that you have a good landlord?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Do they respond quickly to queries/maintenance issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Is it easy to get in touch with them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Do they give you notice (at least 24 hours) before they enter the property for any reason?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Can you give me an idea of how much the bills will be?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Do you feel safe living here?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>





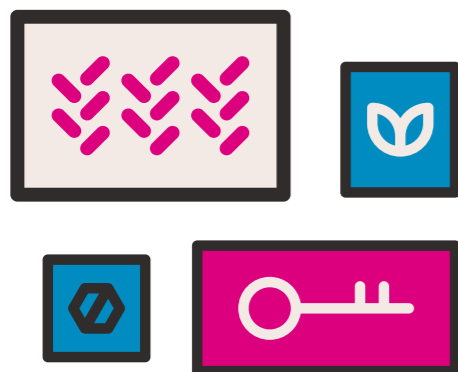
# Costs involved in private renting

## Rent

Rental figures in Selly Oak are typically between £75 - £140 per person per week. You will find that rent varies depending on the finish, size, and location of the property – for example, the houses closer to the University tend to be more expensive. Your rent will be agreed in your contract and you will be asked to pay your rent by standing order – this means that you have to manually set up a regular payment to the letting agent's or landlord's chosen bank account.

Do also remember that contracts normally start from the 1st July, therefore even though you may not plan to move in until September you are likely to be liable for rent over the summer period.

A common mistake is to multiply the weekly rent advertised by four to calculate the monthly payment. That can make monthly rent seem more affordable, but remember only one month of the year (February) has four weeks in it, the rest have more. To get an accurate monthly figure, multiply a week's rent by 52 and divide by 12. On a property costing £100 a week, this makes the rent £434 a month – not £400.



## Deposits

The deposit is paid to the landlord or letting agent to provide them with security against any damage that you may cause in the property or unpaid rent during your tenancy. The amount of deposit depends on the total rent for the property but is usually the equivalent of 5 weeks rent and 6 weeks if total rent exceeds £50,000.

**Make sure you budget for the deposit** at the time of contract signing as it is a considerable sum of money.

Whenever you pay a deposit for an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (you may see this abbreviated to 'AST' – this is the most common student tenancy), the landlord or letting agent must protect your deposit by registering it with one of three government authorised tenancy deposit schemes:

- Deposit Protection Service
- MyDeposits
- Tenancy Deposit Scheme

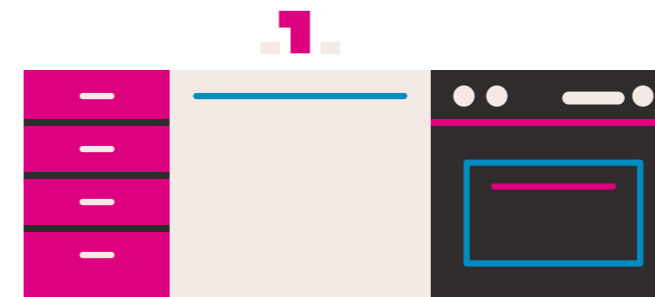
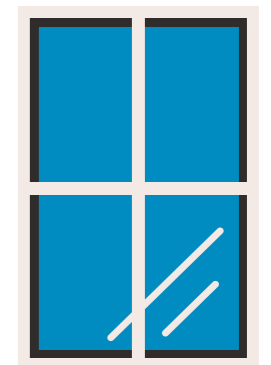
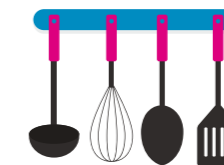
Your landlord or letting agent must secure your deposit within 30 days of getting it, and must provide you with details of where they have protected your deposit, including:

- A certificate as proof that your money has been paid into one of the schemes
- Information on how to apply for release of the deposit
- The purpose of the deposit and what to do if there is a dispute

If you do not receive confirmation of where your deposit has been paid or you are unsure about the deposit amount, please contact Guild Advice or Community Living for advice.

### Tenancy deposit schemes make sure you'll get your deposit back if you:

- meet the terms of your tenancy agreement
- don't damage the property
- pay your rent and bills



## Hidden costs

Before taking a property, think carefully about your budget and how much you can afford to spend. **As well as the rent and deposit, you will have to think about the cost of bills, food and other living costs.**

Since 1 June 2019, most fees charged by landlords and agents are banned. This ban covers assured shorthold tenancies and student housing. You can now only be charged fees in the following situations:

- Rent
- Deposit
- Holding fee/deposit
- A default fee for late payment of rent and replacement of lost keys or fobs
- Ending your tenancy early and finding a replacement
- Payment in respect of utilities, communication services, TV licence and Council Tax

You can't be charged for:

- Referencing
- Administration
- Credit and immigration checks

**Always ask for advice if you are unsure about additional charges.**

# Signing your contract

When you think you've found the right house, it may be tempting to sign the contract (also known as a tenancy agreement) immediately so you don't lose the property. However, once you have entered into a contract you will be legally bound to it. It is too late to make changes, cancel the contract or get your deposit back if you change your mind. **Once it is signed, you cannot go back, so make sure you don't rush into signing anything.**

Any reputable Landlord or Lettings Agent will allow you to take the contract away to read and understand for 24 hours – so bring it to Guild Advice or Living and **get it checked for free** before you sign. Contracts are usually long and complex documents full of legal jargon that you may not fully understand - we strongly recommend that students get their contract checked.

Due to current Covid restrictions virtual viewings of properties are recommended by the government.

## Guarantor

When signing a contract, it is likely that you will be asked to provide a guarantor based in the UK who can guarantee the rent payment if you are unable to pay.

Usually this will be a parent or guardian, but if you are unable to provide a UK-based guarantor then there are also guarantor companies who can act as a guarantor for a fee.

Some lettings agents and landlords may let you pay more of the rent money upfront – but before you pay any extra money over, or if you have any concerns or questions about guarantors, please get in touch with Guild Advice or Living for information and support.

## Right To Rent checks

Landlords are prohibited, by law, from letting a property to an individual who does not have the right to remain in the UK for the duration of their tenancy.

- International students: you will need to secure your immigration status in order to secure a tenancy.
- UK and EU students: be prepared to show proof of your right to rent property in the UK, for example a passport.

## Negotiating your contract

If you have noticed issues with the property on your viewing, you may be able to negotiate certain improvements into your contract. For example, you could say to your landlord that you will sign the contract, but only if they stipulate in the contract that they will put locks on each bedroom door before you move in. Remember, if you don't ask, you don't get!

**Guild Advice is open from 12-2pm term time**



Guild Advice is an independent, free, and confidential service for all students at the University of Birmingham. They specialise in five main areas:

Academics, finance, housing, international student support and wellbeing.

You can access support from Guild Advice by emailing your concerns. You will be responded to by an advisor who will provide you with guidance and support. You will receive a response usually within 3 working days.

Guild Advice are able to read through and check your tenancy agreement/contract before you sign it. To request this please email Guild Advice and attach the tenancy agreement that you wish to be looked over.

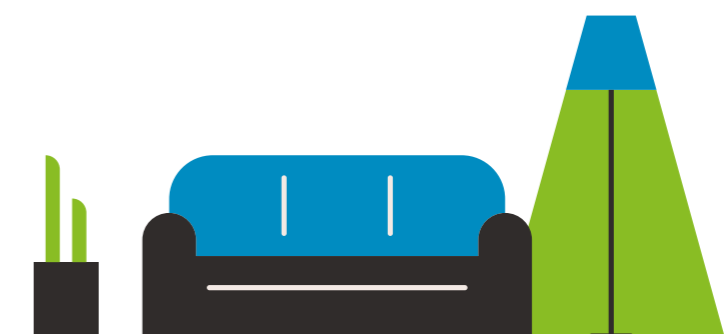
[guildadvice@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:guildadvice@guild.bham.ac.uk)

**Living is open from 9-5pm Monday to Friday term time**



Both Living and Community Living can review any contract for private sector housing, and will explain any parts you don't understand before you decide to sign. They are also able to help with advice and information should you have any problems with your letting agent or landlord, or with any aspect of living in the community, at any point during your time in Birmingham.

[living@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:living@contacts.bham.ac.uk)  
[communityliving@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:communityliving@contacts.bham.ac.uk)



# Moving into the community!

## The fun doesn't stop when you leave accommodation!

It might seem daunting to be leaving university accommodation, but fear not, because when you're living off campus, you can turn to the Community Wardens for support with any community issues.



## Meet your Community Wardens

Your Community Wardens are a team of students based at the Guild, working for a safer, cleaner, greener and more cohesive community for all. We want all residents of Selly Oak – students and non-students alike – to play an active part in and feel proud of their local community!

We work to make your community better by providing you with information, advice and activities to ensure you feel supported, and are able to resolve any issues you may face in your time in the private sector.

## Myth-busting Selly Oak

Selly Oak can get a bit of a bad reputation amongst students – but we're here to shed some light on the myths!

### Myth: Selly Oak is the crime capital of Birmingham!

**Truth:** Although being careful about safety is important, a lot of the safety concerns aren't as bad as people say. Statistically Selly Oak actually has less crime than neighbouring Edgbaston! Crime does happen but that's like in any other big city in the country and there are sensible precautions you can take, like locking your doors and windows, to prevent crime.

### Myth: Selly Oak is a dump!

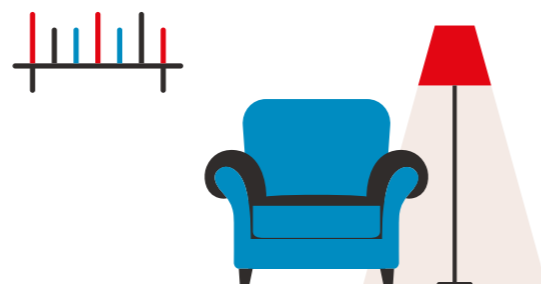
**Truth:** Selly Oak has a rich history and a really diverse population. Due to the high proportion of students in the area, it sometimes gets a bit messy – particularly after big nights out! The best way to make sure your new neighbourhood stays clean, is to take your rubbish out on time, recycle correctly and bring your bin in once it's been collected. Your Community Wardens also work hard to keep the local area clean and green by carrying out regular waste patrols and litter picks.

### Myth: Only students live in Selly Oak.

**Truth:** There's a high proportion of students in the area, but there's still hundreds of permanent residents including young professionals, families and the elderly. Most residents are perfectly happy to be living around students, but issues can arise when loud, late-night parties keep working people and children awake at night. Make sure you take the time to meet your neighbours when you move in, and hopefully there won't be any problems!

### Myth: Landlords don't care - they never fix anything and take your deposit if anything is broken.

**Truth:** Community Wardens, Guild Advice and Community Living will help you if you are having issues with a landlord or getting your deposit returned. There are also a lot of really good landlords in Selly Oak who care a great deal about their tenants. To have the best chance of getting a good landlord make sure they are MLAS and LMS registered.



# Top tips from your Community Wardens on leaving accommodation

## 1. How do I deal with my bins?

"When you move in you will usually have two wheelie bins, one will be for household waste like food and wrappers and one will be for recycling. You can tell which one is which as there is a separate plastic pod in the top of your recycling bin. The pod is for paper and cardboard items and below this is where you put bottles, cans and plastic.

Bin day is every Wednesday. When using your waste wheelie bin you must always make sure black bin bags are put inside the bin, and that it isn't overflowing. Your bin should be wheeled onto the street for bin day, then moved back off the streets onto your property after it is empty. If your bin is left on the street you may be fined."

## 2. What are my responsibilities as a tenant?

"Landlords will detail specific responsibilities in your contract so be sure to read it carefully. Most landlords will expect you to keep the house clean, report any damage or problems, dispose of your waste properly, change light bulbs yourself and take gas/electric meter readings, as well behave responsibly and respectfully towards your community. You may have issues like losing part of your deposit if you don't do these things! At the same time, your landlord is responsible for maintaining the overall house, including any repairs that affect safety."

## 3. How do I set up my gas and electric?

"You can choose your own gas and electric supplier. This could be a company you already know such as British Gas or use a comparing website to get the best deals. Once you've found your preferred supplier apply online to sign up. Whoever the account is registered to will be held responsible for any missed payments so talk to your housemates about how you plan to pay your bill amongst you. You will need to send monthly meter readings to your supplier unless your landlord has fitted a smart reader. Your landlord can tell you where the meters are in the property."

## 4. How do I get into the city centre from Selly Oak?

"Selly Oak train station is located next to the Bristol Pear pub and can be accessed from entrances on Bristol or Heeley Roads. It will get you to the city centre in less than 15 minutes. There are also 2 buses that run on the Bristol Road that will take you into the City Centre; these are the numbers 61 and 63."

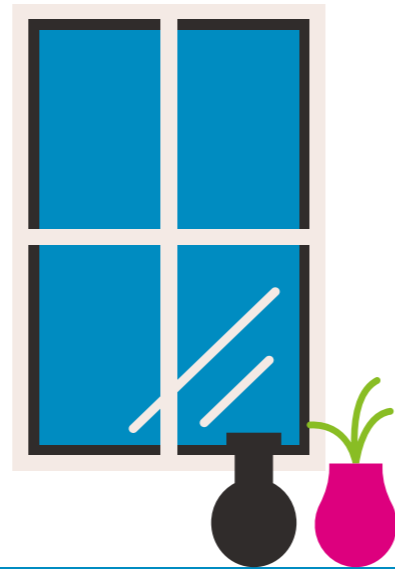
**If you need any help when you are living in Selly Oak, or having any worries beforehand, please speak to a Community Warden about it!**

**Email - [community@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:community@guild.bham.ac.uk)  
Social media - [@ilovesellyoak](https://www.instagram.com/ilovesellyoak)**



## Useful contact details

Hopefully this guide gives you the information you need to start looking for a new home, but always make sure you are as prepared as possible before signing up to anything. You really don't need to rush the house hunting process and it is important to take your time and make sure you are 100% happy with the decisions you are making. It can be difficult to step back and take your time when the pressure is on but remember - you are in control!



### Guild Advice

**Office hours** - 12-2pm, Monday-Friday  
**Call** - 0121 415 8965  
**Email** - [guildadvice@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:guildadvice@guild.bham.ac.uk)  
**Online** - [guildofstudents.com/guildadvice](http://guildofstudents.com/guildadvice)

### Community Living

**Call** - 0121 414 5376  
**Email** - [communityliving@contact.bham.ac.uk](mailto:communityliving@contact.bham.ac.uk)  
**Online** - [community-living.org.uk](http://community-living.org.uk)

### Community Wardens

**Email** - [community@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:community@guild.bham.ac.uk)  
**Online** - [guildofstudents.com/community-wardens](http://guildofstudents.com/community-wardens)

### Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme

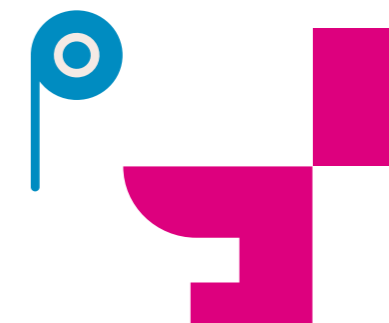
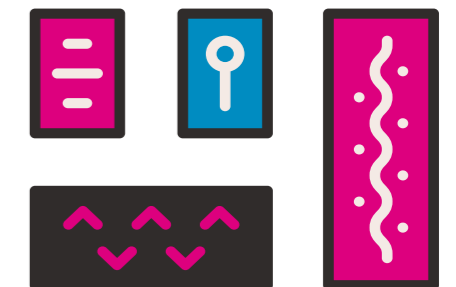
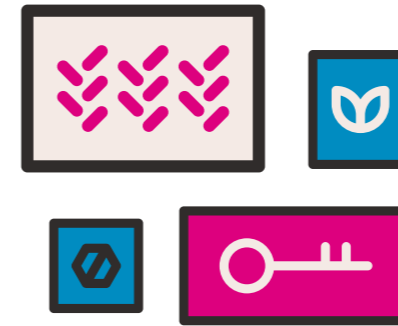
**Call** - 07999 961171  
**Email** - [talk@mlas.org.uk](mailto:talk@mlas.org.uk)  
**Online** - [mlas.org.uk](http://mlas.org.uk)

### Living

**Office hours** - 9am-12pm and 2pm-5pm, Monday-Friday  
**Call** - 0121 414 8000  
**Email** - [living@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:living@contacts.bham.ac.uk)  
**Online** - [birminghamstudentpad.co.uk](http://birminghamstudentpad.co.uk)

### Student Mentor Scheme

**Office hours** - 4-8pm, term time weekdays  
**Call** - 0121 415 8568  
**Email** - [mentorwelfare@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:mentorwelfare@guild.bham.ac.uk)  
**Online** - [guildofstudents.com/studentmentors](http://guildofstudents.com/studentmentors)





This booklet is part of Rent Right, a joint campaign between the Guild of Students and the University to empower students to make the best house hunting decisions during your time at Birmingham. Rent Right is about more than just looking for a house – it's about providing knowledge, support, and confidence at every stage of your time in the private housing sector.

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