



Students Guide To Renting

Introduction

We've been helping Treforest / Pontypridd students find the right properties for over 10 years. We feel our experience gained in local student letting market over the years has come to be invaluable and the knowledge helps both landlord and students.

We have put together a guide for student renting. Once you've completed your first year of University unscathed (hopefully!), it'll be time to move on to your second year accommodation. Let Right is here to help you decide where and with whom to live with.

Choosing who you should live with

Living with friends is always a popular choice for second year students – it's cheaper than renting alone, you can split the bills and best of all it's the most fun!

Before you begin to look at properties with your friends it's important that you carefully consider which of your friends, if any, would make suitable house/flat mates. Thinking sensibly about your future house/flat mates could help to alleviate any tensions in the future and will help ensure your next year at University is as great as the first!

In order to determine how 'living' compatible your friends are, answer these 5 questions:

- What is their attitude towards housework?
- Are they a night owl or an early bird?
- Do they have any bad habits which could annoy you over time? E.g. Smoking, laziness, poor hygiene.
- Do you have common interests such as music, cinema, sport etc?
- How sociable/private are they? Does this mirror what you are looking for in a housemate?

Remember: Most contracts will run for a 40 week period and so it is important to ensure you can live with these people (albeit not always harmoniously). Though it can be hard telling a friend that you don't want to live with them, it is often much easier than losing the friendship altogether because of lifestyle and personality clashes.

Where to Live

House-hunting can be exciting but it's also likely to be a stressful experience. The best student properties are often snapped up quickly so it's important to be organized and ready to begin looking for accommodation as soon as possible.

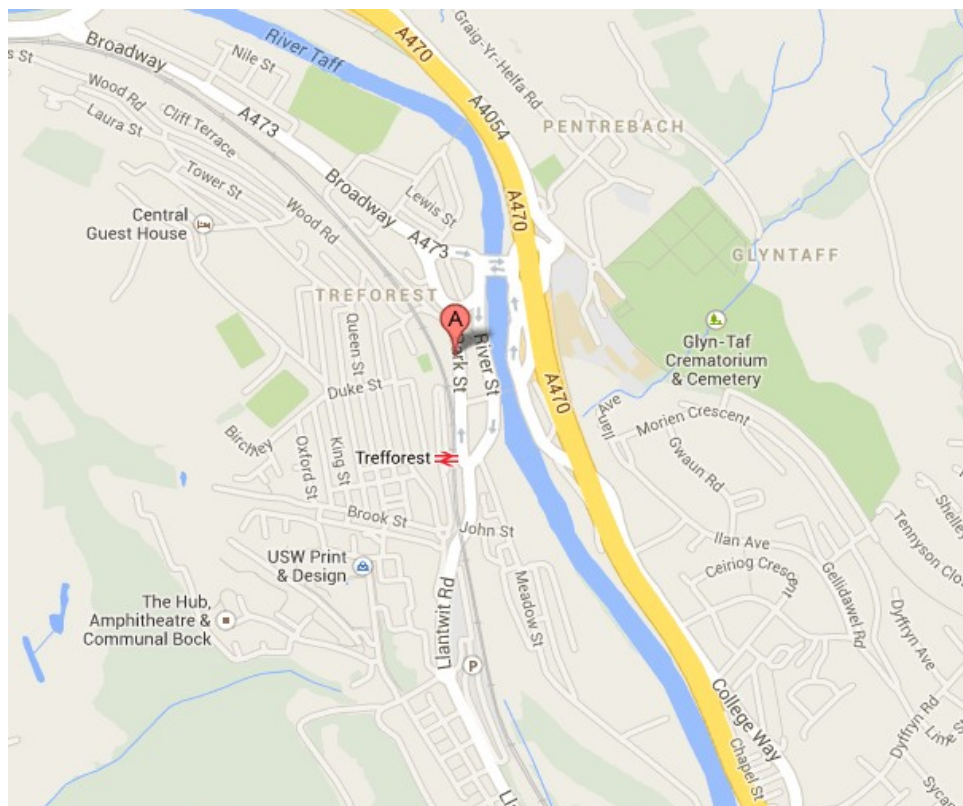
Most student towns and cities have established areas which students tend to favour. If you're not aware of them already, speak to your friends and University who will be able to help identify them.

The pros of living in a renowned student area usually include:

- Good public transport links
- Close proximity to University campus
- Supermarkets and convenience stores nearby
- Close to other students

The cons of living within a renowned student area may include:

- Higher noise levels
- Increased crime rates



Be realistic about what you can afford

When renting a property, the monthly rent is unlikely to be your only expense. There will be other costs you should consider in order to calculate how much you and your new housemates can afford each month.

Some factors can include:

- **TV license:**

This can be paid either annually or in monthly installments. If you are renting a property on a group tenancy then you will be liable for only one license, however if sharers with individual agreements will need a license for each occupier that owns and uses a TV. If you're renting a room in a private hall, you need to check if you need a TV license for a TV in your living area or bedroom. You're also required to purchase a TV license if you watch live streaming via your PC or laptop.

- **Utility bills:**

These are payable in a number of ways and it is advisable to check with your landlord/letting agent what exactly they require from you (many will ask for proof of payments before returning your deposit).

- **Internet/Digital TV:**

Optional. Internet can be highly useful when it comes to coursework and revision, and more importantly, checking your facebook!

- **Contents insurance:**

Definitely something to consider and well worth the money just in case something were to happen.

- **Council tax:**

Whilst full-time students are exempt from this, part-time students are not. If you are planning on living with part-time students, you will need to take council tax into consideration.

- **Food:**

Food can be expensive. Cut down the costs by eating together – it's a great social activity and it'll save you money.

- **Cleaner:**

Optional, but worth thinking about if you're not so keen on housework!

Viewing Properties

You've found the perfect housemates and have decided where you want to live... now you just need to find the property!

Most letting agents will take you to view a few properties in one go, often with several other groups of students who are interested in the same property type; this can put pressure on you to make a decision. Be patient and try to see as many properties as you can to give yourself a fair idea of the accommodation available.

In order to make the viewing process as stress-free as possible, consider the following when arranging/going to viewings:

- Can everyone you will be living with make the viewing appointments?
Decisions are far easier when made as a group.
- Have you remembered a camera?
A camera is particularly useful when you are seeing several properties in one go and will help you remember which ones you liked and didn't like.
- Have you remembered a notebook and pen?
Use this to write down answers to any questions you have asked the letting agent, as well as any other notes that will be useful later on.

Remember: It's far easier to avoid a property that doesn't meet your requirements, than it is to live in a property that you are not happy with!

To avoid living in a property you're not all please with, try and ensure that you and your housemates can all make the viewings so you can make decisions as a group on the spot if necessary.



Securing a Property

Once you've found a property that you all like and agree upon, your landlord or agent may ask for a holding fee or deposit. This will prevent the property being shown or offered to anyone else for a set amount of time (specified by the agent or landlord). Holding fees are a perfectly normal procedure, so don't worry if you are asked to provide one. Do however make sure that you are provided with a receipt or written confirmation of the payment.

Dependent on whether you are renting as an individual, or as a group, the deposit amount will be variable. It is usually the equivalent of between one calendar month and six weeks worth of rent.

Recent laws have been put into place regarding deposits and it is now a legal necessity that all deposits are paid into a Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDP). This scheme is a cautionary measure to protect all renters (not just students) and their deposits.

Once you've handed over your deposit, your landlord must ensure that they have provided you with contact details of this scheme within 30 days, regardless of how long it takes for the money to clear in their account or how long they hold onto the money for.

The Government approved schemes for you to look out for are*:

- Tenancy Deposit Scheme Ltd
- Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd
- Deposit Protection Services

*These are the only Government approved schemes available.

Don't be surprised if you are asked by an agent or landlord to provide details of a guarantor. This means that if you miss any rent payments, they have a backup from whom they can take the money owed. This is usually a parent, but could be any adult as long as you have their consent.

When providing a deposit, you will also need to ensure you sign a tenancy agreement, which will lay out the terms and conditions that both your landlord and all tenants need to adhere to.

It is advisable that you read through the document thoroughly and ask your landlord/letting agent to explain anything you are unsure about. If you still have questions that have not been answered you can speak to a member of your student union who will be able to assist you further.

Securing a Property

Your tenancy agreement will provide you with all of the details regarding when your lease comes to an end along with anything else you are required to do. Some landlords/agents may insist that you have the property professionally cleaned before you move out. If you are unsure about anything, speak to your landlord/letting agent.

If you think there could be a lot of rubbish to dispose of on moving day, try to stagger the amount of waste you put out for collection over a few weeks. Many councils now limit the amount of waste that will be taken per household; organising private disposal of rubbish can be very costly.

In the weeks building up to moving day, gather as many boxes as possible along with as any other items you feel may be useful for transporting your possessions.

- Supermarkets and shops are usually a good place to find unwanted cardboard boxes that can be reused for free.
- Try to eat as much of your leftover food (probably a lot of baked beans!) as possible before you move to save cash and space.

Tips to ensure you get your full deposit back:

- Ensure all refuse has been removed from the property (including any gardens/yards)
- Wash walls and skirting boards to remove any marks and grime
- Repair/replace anything which has been broken
- Vacuum carpets and mop floors
- Give the bathrooms, kitchen and all other communal areas a thorough clean
- Air the property as much as you can
- Defrost the freezer and clean the fridge (as well as empty them)
- Take pictures of the house once you've cleaned and removed your possessions just in case there are any disputes over the condition the house has been left in