



Your guide to

# Living in the Community

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## Moving in

We hope you have some great memories of your time living in student accommodation. It's now time to create new ones as you move into your new home.

We've taken some of the stress out of moving in and have prepared some top tips, giving you some first-hand advice about living in a new community.

Good luck!  
The Living Team

**If you have any questions please get in touch 0121 414 8000**





## Before you unpack

There are a few things you need to think about before you start to unpack, like checking your keys work or finding out where the fuse box lives.

You'll need to change your address on the Student Portal. Visit [www.my.bham.ac.uk](http://www.my.bham.ac.uk) and select 'my.programme'.

### Carry Out An Inventory

An inventory is a checklist of items that are in your accommodation. Completing the inventory is your opportunity to raise any issues you have with the accommodation with your landlord. Pointing out any furniture or property damage at the start of your contract means you won't get charged for them when you move out.

It's important that you sign and date the inventory, take photos of any damages and hand this over to your landlord to sign and date. You'll need to do this within seven days of your contract starting. It's also worth keeping a copy too, so you can refer back to it when you leave.

### Gas Safety

By law, your landlord has to make sure that the gas appliances supplied in your rented accommodation are safe. Poorly serviced, badly fitted or faulty gas appliances could put you at risk from gas leaks, fire explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning. By law, a gas check must be done every year on all gas appliances in the property. Your landlord will be able to supply you with a gas safety certificate if you ask for one.

### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

Headaches, dizziness, nausea, breathlessness, collapse and loss of consciousness could be a sign of carbon monoxide poisoning. Why not ask your landlord for a carbon monoxide detector or pick one up from a DIY store?

### Smoke Alarms

Take a look around and check your property has smoke or fire alarms fitted, then check they're working. Change any batteries in smoke alarms that aren't working or contact your landlord to get new ones fitted as soon as possible.

## Getting set up

### Utilities

If your rent doesn't include 'utilities' (otherwise known as the essentials, gas, electricity and water), then you'll have to arrange this directly with the utility companies.

The name of the current utility suppliers should be given to you when you collect the key from your landlord, however if you don't have them, here's a quick way to find out:

**Gas 0870 608 1524**

**Electricity 0845 601 5972**

**Water 0845 709 0646**

First thing's first, take meter readings as soon as you move in – even before putting the kettle on – as you'll be asked this detail by the provider.

Then decide if you'll have the names of all tenants, or one person on the bill. If you're living with other people you'll need to agree how much each of you will pay, there are many apps that you can download that can help you split bills fairly.

## Getting online

Top tips for setting up the internet if it's not included in your rent:

- Shop around for student broadband packages, **www.uswitch.com** can help
- Check what service your area provides
- Consider download speed – if there are a few of you living under one roof you won't want to be left constantly buffering
- Check to see if there's already broadband access, if not you'll have to get permission from your landlord as the provider might have to drill holes to get it up and running

Whoever's name is on the bill will be liable if it doesn't get paid. Why not set up a monthly direct debit, one less thing to worry about.



## Insurance

We can all think of better ways to spend our money, but to make sure your valuable items are covered against any damages you're going to need contents insurance.

There are many providers that offer student packages such as Endsleigh so it's worth shopping around to get the right cover for you.

You only need to take out contents insurance, building insurance is covered by the landlord.

## Council Tax

As a full time student you don't have to pay Council Tax, you just have to provide evidence of your course details and change your address on the Student Portal. Visit [www.my.bham.ac.uk](http://www.my.bham.ac.uk), and select 'my.programme'. To apply for your Council Tax exemption you'll need to call 0121 303 1113 and provide them with the following details:

- Your name
- Student ID number
- Course name, full or part time and the start and end dates

## Electoral Roll

During your time at university you'll have the opportunity to vote in local elections, UK and EU elections, you just have to make sure you're registered to vote. You can do this by logging onto [www.gov.uk/electoral-register](http://www.gov.uk/electoral-register)

By putting yourself on the Electoral Roll it will help if you're looking to open a bank account or sign-up to a mobile phone contract. To register your details visit [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)

## TV Licence

To watch TV programmes live, recorded or on a laptop you'll need to buy a TV licence.

To save yourself a bit of money, if you live with housemates why not split the licence between all of you.

All the detail you need about applying for a TV licence and purchasing one can be found on the website [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk) or you could pick up the phone and call 0300 790 6144

You can be fined if you don't have a TV licence and are watching programmes that are either live or recorded.

# Deposits

As a tenant you'll have been asked to pay a deposit to your landlord when you signed your contract. If you pay a deposit when you move into your rented accommodation you are entitled to a full refund when you move out, unless you have caused any damage to that property.

To receive your deposit back at the end of your contract, you'll need to ensure that there's been no damage to the property amongst other things. Refer back to your inventory checklist to make sure you leave the property as you found it.

Ask your landlord to show you proof that your deposit has been secured, this is a legal requirement which should be done automatically within 30 days of receipt. If you don't receive a response, then get in touch with the organisations below who'll be able to help you confirm it has been secured.

## **The Tenancy Deposit Scheme**

[www.tenancydepositscheme.com](http://www.tenancydepositscheme.com)

Tel: 0300 037 1000

## **Mydeposits**

[www.mydeposits.co.uk](http://www.mydeposits.co.uk)

Tel: 0333 321 9401

## **The Deposit Protection Service**

[www.depositprotection.com](http://www.depositprotection.com)

Tel: 0330 303 0030



## Communicating with your landlord

During your time in rented accommodation you'll have to communicate with your landlord. Good communication is essential for a successful relationship between you and your landlord.

Communicating over email will enable you to keep a record of what is said, setting up a separate folder in your inbox will help you to easily refer back to what's been said and agreed.

### Accidental Damage

It's your responsibility to report any damage that you've caused to your landlord. It's best to phone and then follow up the call with an email so that you can evidence that you've reported the damage. Any damage that's occurred may impact on the amount of deposit that's returned to you at the end of your contract.



## We're Here To Help

If you're having issues with your landlord that you're having trouble resolving, then contact the Living Team and we'll be able to provide you with some advice and top tips. By law your landlord has a responsibility to make sure that the property you are renting follows government living guidelines. However, there might be certain occasions when you're responsible for repairs which we've outlined under minor repairs.

## Minor Repairs

It's worth checking under the tenancy agreement if you or your landlord is responsible for carrying out minor repairs to the property, such as unblocking sinks or replacing light bulbs.

## Quiet Enjoyment

Unless it's an emergency, your landlord must give you at least 24 hours' notice in writing prior to entering the property.

## House Of Multiple Occupation (HMO)

Did you know that if your house is three or more storeys high and has five or more tenants, then your landlord has to have a HMO licence?

This government licence protects those living in the property as they are deemed at higher risk. To check if your property has a HMO licence visit [www.birmingham.gov.uk/hmo](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/hmo)

## Damp And Mould

In many cases the landlord is responsible for damp issues such as rising damp (this affects the lower part of the ground floor), penetrating damp (caused by leaks and cracks) or obvious problems such as a leaking roof. You should report these damp concerns to your landlord. For more information and help about damp and mould issues visit [www.birmingham.gov.uk/privatetenants](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/privatetenants)

## *DID YOU KNOW?*

Damp can be caused by drying clothes on radiators – so you should avoid doing this! Make sure that the property is well ventilated to avoid any other damp issues.

# Tips

## Managing Your Money

Your time at university can have quite an impact on your finances. It's worth taking some time to prepare either a weekly or monthly budget so you know where your money is going and what you've got left over for the odd treat!

- Using a student calculator is a great place to start managing your money and will help you to calculate your outgoings, you can find one at [gov.uk/student-finance-calculator](https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-calculator)
- Set up a kitty with your housemates for everyday essentials such as toilet rolls, tea bags and coffee
- Setting up a joint bank account and then arranging direct payments each month will help you to pay your bills on time and will give you an overview of what you have left each month to play with



## Energy Saving Hints And Tips

Simply turning down your heating, switching off the lights or having a shower instead of a bath will help to bring down the costs of your bills.

- Putting a lid on your saucepan will reduce the amount of energy required to cook your food by 90%!
- When taking a shower or cooking food open a window to avoid any damp issues



## Love your rubbish

We all create rubbish but what we do with it can impact on our neighbours and the environment.

It's your responsibility to put out your rubbish on the right day and in the right place for collection. It is important that your wheelie bins are wheeled out to the pavement the evening before a collection and then returned to the front of your property the next day. Neglecting your rubbish and recycling duties can have a HUGE impact on the local area, not only is rubbish left out on the streets unsightly, but it will also attract pests. Wheelie bins left on pavements can also be challenging for people who have children or a disability.

### What Day Is It?

Check out [www.birmingham.gov.uk/refusecollection](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/refusecollection) to make a note of your collection days.



Junkbusters is the university's award winning community project that collects clothes, shoes, CDs, DVDs, books, stationery and small electrical items for the British Heart Foundation. Pick-ups take place just before the end of the Easter and Summer terms, to find out when the next collection is follow @junkbusters1 on Twitter visit [guildofstudents.com/junkbusters](http://guildofstudents.com/junkbusters)

Birmingham City Council also own a number of recycling banks that you can use, to find out where these are located visit [www.birmingham.gov.uk/refusecollection](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/refusecollection) or visit [www.birmingham.gov.uk/bulkywaste](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/bulkywaste) if you have large items that need collecting.

### Remember

Birmingham City Council can issue Fixed Penalty Notices for waste that is put out for collection on the wrong day.

# Everybody needs good neighbours

SAY HI!...and introduce yourself to your neighbours. It's important that you know each other in case it becomes necessary to help each other out.

## Hands Up For Volunteering

Volunteering in your local community is a great way to meet people and gain extra skills and experience for your CV. The Guild of Students can support you and help find the right volunteer programmes for you.

## News From Your Community

Check out Love Selly Oak, it's a blog and website supported by the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service and the Guild of Students. It provides you with all the latest news from your community.

It's good to remember that when you're living in a community you have the **responsibility to be a good citizen**. Many people that live around you, live there all year round and for long periods of time. We've put together a few helpful tips to make getting to know your neighbours and community a little easier.

### Don't Miss An Event

#### Guild of Students

[www.guildofstudents.com/ents/eventlist/](http://www.guildofstudents.com/ents/eventlist/)

#### Community news

[www.lovesellyoak.com](http://www.lovesellyoak.com)





## **It Might Be Noisy**

If you're considering hosting a party that could be noisy, tell your neighbours in advance. They'll appreciate that you took the time to let them know your plans and together you can compromise on an end time and an acceptable noise level. Remind your guests to keep the noise to a minimum when departing, especially in taxis.

## **Living With Your Housemates**

Occasionally, when living with housemates tensions over things like, bills, cleanliness and noise may surface. It's important to resolve these issues before they build up and get out of control.

Have regular chats with your housemates over dinner and talk through your concerns. If you find that you're unable to move forward then contact the Living Team who will be able to help.

## **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) can take many forms that cause harm to an individual, the community or the environment. If you find yourself a victim of ASB then get in touch with the Living Team who'll be able to help you.

It's important to remember that any complaints received in regards to your behaviour will be investigated by the Guild of Students Community Wardens and where necessary Police Community Support Officers.

The University may be made aware of your behaviour and a record kept on your file. As a student you represent the University so please be mindful of your behaviour and how this reflects on the University.

# Protecting yourself from financial crime

It is important to protect yourself from scams and fraudsters during your time as a student, especially in the early days as you set up your finances using various accounts.

We recommend following the simple set of rules set out below, as well as questioning approaches related to personal or financial information. There is further advice available from [www.west-midlands.police.uk](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk) and all matters of fraud should be reported to [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

## Banking Safely

Banking safely is important not only to protect your money, but also because criminals may want to use your account to pass criminal funds through – leaving you to face potential prosecution.

- Open a bank account in a local branch only
- Never disclose the Personal Identification Number (PIN) for your bank or credit card
- Don't allow other people to use your account
- Never send money to people you don't know or use unfamiliar payment methods
- If you think someone is misusing your bank details, report it to your bank

## Staying Safe Online

- Change passwords regularly, and ensure that they are memorable but also complex
- Don't click links in emails or open email attachments from unknown people — always log onto a website directly
- When buying things online, use the payment method recommended by the site. If you don't you may not be protected
- Don't use public Wi-Fi for things like internet banking, where you have to enter personal details
- Keep your computer anti-virus program up to date
- Don't reply to emails asking for your personal information, such as passwords and login IDs—a bank will never ask you for these



**ActionFraud**  
National Fraud & Cyber Crime Reporting Centre  
0300 123 2040

# Staying safe

Student homes contain a lot of potential valuable and portable items and by following a few simple tips you can limit the risks to your personal safety and that of your property whilst living in your rented accommodation. These tips may sound a little obvious but it's always worth a recap!

Extra safety tips can be found on the University of Birmingham safety app UBSafe, visit [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/callmy](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/callmy)

## Is Your Property Safe?

- If you have a burglar alarm remember to put it on
- It seems obvious but always remember to lock the door, most burglaries happen through open doors and windows
- Move laptops and other valuables away from windows
- Lock any bikes and cars
- Keep windows, doors and your side gate locked when you're not in the house
- Register your valuables for free with [www.immobilise.com](https://www.immobilise.com). That way if any items are lost they can help you find them
- If you're having a party make sure you know who's been invited – don't let just anyone into your house
- Beware of strangers at the door, if they don't have ID or you're not expecting them, don't let them in



## Fire Safety

- Never cover your smoke alarms
- Regularly check they're working
- Plan your escape route and remember not to block your route

## Your Safety

To make sure you're safe whilst out and about we've listed a few observations that are worth bearing in mind.

- Don't wear headphones when walking outside in the dark at night, you'll be unable to hear anyone approaching
- Be mindful of who is around
- Walk in pairs where possible at night
- Don't walk in the dark talking on your mobile phone
- Never leave your drink unattended as someone could attempt to spike it

If you see signs of a break-in, a smashed window or open door – don't go inside. Go to a friend or neighbours' house and call the police.



## Community Wardens

The Community Wardens are a team of trained students who are on hand to create a safe, clean and green community. They work with you and local residents to help deal with community-related issues or problems which we've touched on throughout this guide. Based at the Guild of Students, you can get in touch with them either via email, telephone or arrange a time to drop in and have a chat.

## Here To Help

Community Wardens work in partnership with the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Police and Fire Service – which makes them a great source of advice if you're having problems in the community.

## Get In Touch

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

0121 251 2502

Like us on Facebook: 'ilovesellyoak'

Follow us on Twitter: 'ilovesellyoak'

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

For local information, blogs, crime prevention knowledge, recycling, an interactive map and more visit [lovesellyoak.com](http://lovesellyoak.com)



# Looking ahead

## Leaving Early

Sometimes circumstances change which requires you to leave the property before the end of your contract. If you decide to leave early you must inform your landlord and be prepared to continue paying rent.

In most cases you will need to find a replacement tenant that your landlord and housemates approve.

A short while after moving in it's worth starting to think about where you want to live next year, it might be the case that your landlord will need to know whether you intend to stay at the property or not. Before you make that decision, you may want to consider the following:

- Has your landlord been approachable and helpful?
- Is the property to a good standard?
- Are you going to share with the same group for the next academic year?
- Is the house a suitable distance from the university?
- Think about the cost, can you afford the house for another year?



**StudentBricks Ltd**

Student Lettings Review

StudentBricks provides you with a platform to share your student housing experiences whilst enabling you to use the portal to search for your perfect student home. Review your accommodation experience and read others at [www.studentbricks.co.uk](http://www.studentbricks.co.uk)

# COMMUNITY living

The Living team offers you advice and guidance on all aspects of life in the community, from accommodation queries to landlord concerns. We also offer a free contract checking service and advice on how to make the most of living in the community.

**Birmingham Studentpad** is the University's private sector search engine where you can search for landlords accredited with the Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme (MLAS) or register for new property alerts.  
[www.birminghamstudentpad.co.uk](http://www.birminghamstudentpad.co.uk)

We are please to announce the opening of a Brand New community living shop in Bournbrook in the Autumn Term.

We're here to help you with all your accommodation needs, so get in touch.

Visit: Ground Floor University Centre  
Opening Times: 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday, Wednesday to Friday; 10.00am – 5.00pm Tuesday  
0121 414 8000  
[living@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:living@contacts.bham.ac.uk)  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/accommodation](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/accommodation)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/birminghamaccommodation](https://www.facebook.com/birminghamaccommodation)  
Twitter: @livingatbham

## Your Students' Union guild of students GuildLettings

Guild Lettings is the Guild of Students' very own lettings agency and provides you with free guidance and support when trying to find your perfect student home.

Guild Lettings only advertise accredited landlords who sign up to a code of standards, ensuring you get to choose from quality properties. What's more, students don't have to pay any admin fees for the service.

Visit:  
University Centre  
0121 415 8376  
[guildlettings@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:guildlettings@guild.bham.ac.uk)  
[www.guildlettingsbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.guildlettingsbirmingham.co.uk)  
Facebook: search 'Guild Lettings'

## Do the check

So you've read this guide page-to-page and are now well equipped to live out in the community. However, if you need one final reminder of the important things you need to do we've created a check list for you to 'do the check'.

- Read this guide and find a safe place for it
- Change your address on the Student Portal
- Make sure all the keys work and you have the alarm code (if there's one)
- Check the property for smoke and fire alarms, then test them
- Check everything is working, fridge, freezer, cooker, shower etc.
- Make sure you know where the stop cock is (turning off the water) and fuse box (if you need to switch off the power)
- Complete the inventory and take photos of any damage
- Read the meters
- Set up utilities (or change the names on the bills), internet, contents insurance and TV Licence
- Contact Birmingham City Council for exemption from Council Tax
- Make sure you've set up a direct debit or a method to pay your rent each month
- Say 'hi' to your neighbours



## Useful Contacts

Have you got a question that this guide can't answer?

## University Contacts

### Living

0121 414 8000

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

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/accommodation](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/accommodation)

### Student Funding

0121 414 7391

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/funding](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/funding)

### International Student Advisory Service (ISAS)

0121 414 8464

[www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/ISAS](http://www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/ISAS)

### Guild Advice

0121 251 2400

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

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

### Guild Lettings

0121 415 8376

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

[www.guildlettingsbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.guildlettingsbirmingham.co.uk)

## External contacts

### Emergency Services call 999

### NHS Direct

111

### West Midlands Police

101 (non-urgent queries)

[contactus@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk](mailto:contactus@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk) (not to be used to report crime)

### [west-midlands.police.uk](http://west-midlands.police.uk)

Facebook: [facebook.com/birmingham-southpolice](https://facebook.com/birmingham-southpolice)

Twitter: @bhamsouthpolice

### West Midlands Fire Service

0845 5000 900 (non-emergencies)

[contact@wmfs.net](mailto:contact@wmfs.net)

(not to be used to report fire)

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

### Birmingham City Council

0121 303 1111

[contact@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:contact@birmingham.gov.uk)

[birmingham.gov.uk](http://birmingham.gov.uk)

### Gas Safety Advice Line

0800 300 363

### Electrical Safety

0203 463 5100

[electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice](http://electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice)

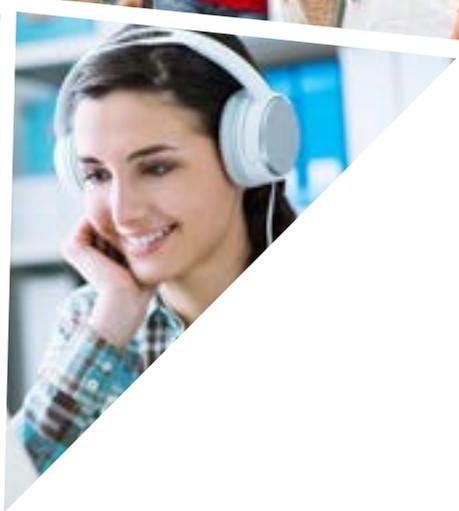
### Severn Trent Water

0800 783 4444

### Citizens Advice Bureau

0344 477 1010

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



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