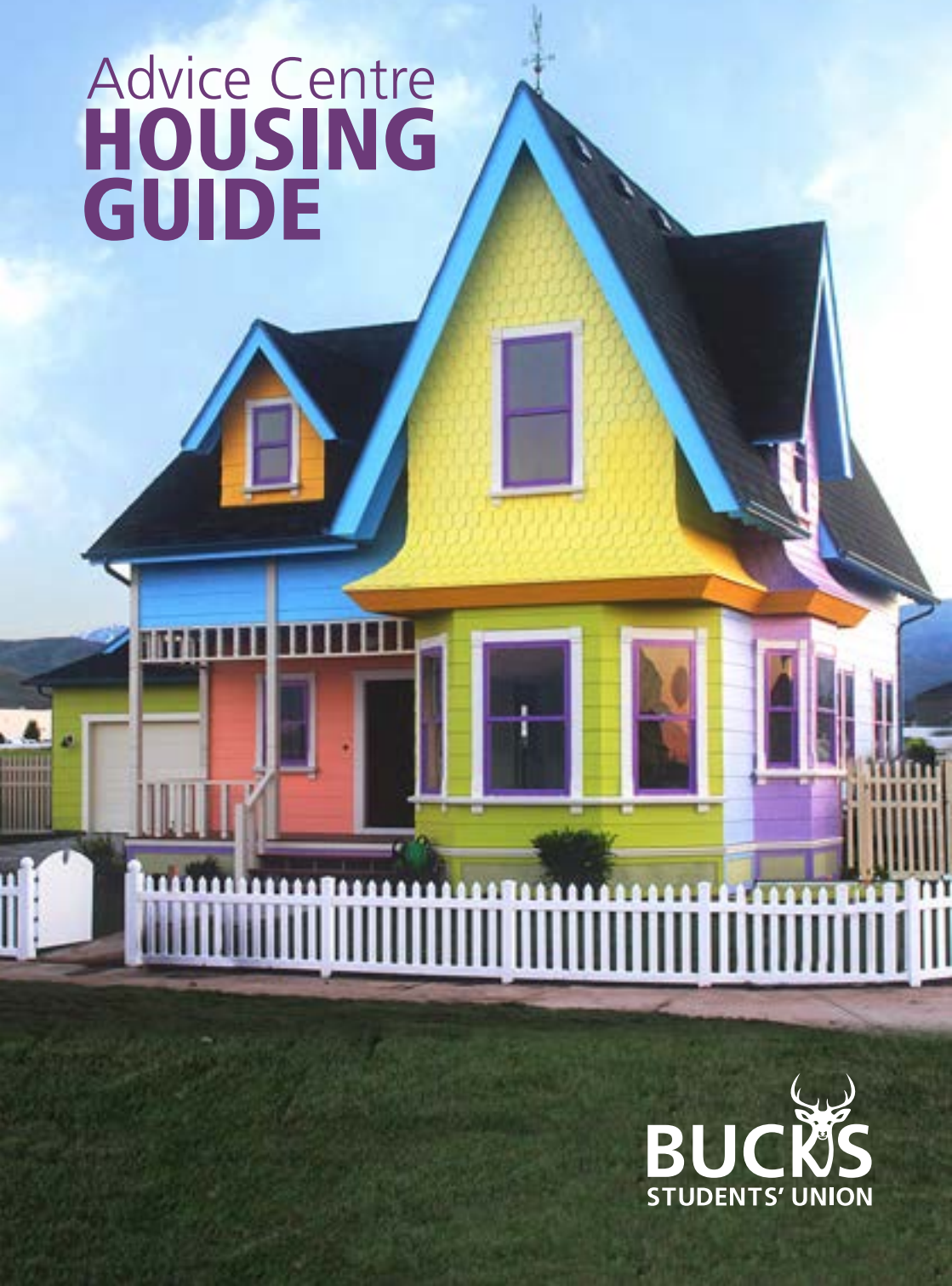


# Advice Centre **HOUSING GUIDE**



## THE GOLDEN RULES OF HOUSE SHARING

- Choose your housemates wisely - take into consideration the habits of the people you will be living with, e.g. playing loud music, not washing up immediately after a meal and whether you are a “morning” or “night” person.
- Having people to stay can also be a bone of contention. Overnight guests such as friends and boy/girlfriends are usually fine, but resentment can brew when said guest takes over the TV remote, eats all the communal food etc.
- Keep a kitty to share cost of things like milk, bread, teabags, coffee, sugar, loo roll, bin liners etc as a house.
- Establish some rules about the washing up and cleaning in general, e.g. a rota system can work.
- Make sure gas, electric, Wi-Fi – any bill that the whole house is responsible for is split equally.
- Decide on how you will communicate any issues between you – a group chat can work or maybe a weekly/monthly house meeting.
- Try to address and sort any issues as soon as they arise – sometimes the smallest problem can build into something huge if it’s not dealt with there and then.

# Things to consider when house hunting

- Work out exactly what you can afford and take into account utility bills, food, living costs and also things like agency fees, upfront deposits and added extras that you may be charged.
- Think carefully about the area you want to live in – you might find an amazing house but are you really going to want to walk 40 minutes to uni every day.
- Use trusted letting agencies and talk to other students about their experience and who to use/avoid.
- View as many properties as you can so that you can compare.
- Make sure to house hunt with everyone involved so that it is a joint decision and everyone is happy with the final choice.



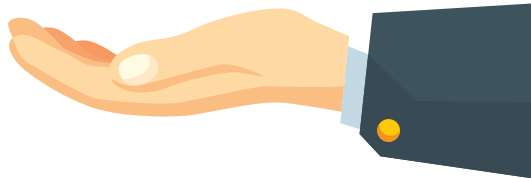
# Things to do when moving into a student house

- Arrange your internet provider.
- Get a TV licence if you have a TV in your house – it is cheaper than the fine.
- Make sure the inventory is up to date and accurate – this is the only proof you will have if anything is damaged/broken when you move in. Do not sign it unless you agree it is correct.
- Check the utility providers and change them if you wish to make a better deal.
- Contact the utility providers and let them know about the change of the names and arrange with them the ways to pay them.
- Give the meter readings to the utility company –this can save you money in the long run as they'll be able to provide you with a more accurate bill.
- You can set up a new bank account for the utility bills. Since this is a shared house for electric, water and gas bills put everyone's name on the bill.
- Take care of the house insurance in terms of the belongings in them. The landlord should have insured the building itself.
- If no one has been using the house for a while run the water in the shower and the sink to make sure there is no stagnant water when you begin to use it.
- Find the switches of the water, gas and electricity. In emergency situations (hopefully they won't occur) you'll be able to react quickly. Make sure the smoke alarms work and test them every once in a while to make sure the batteries aren't dead.





## How to deal with the landlord



Some of the most common problems housemates face as tenants are the landlord's refusal to do repairs, provide reasonable security or respect your privacy. The following are some suggestions for getting the reluctant landlord or agent to do what they should.

- Notify your landlord/agents soon as you become aware of a problem. Complain in person or on the phone and then follow up with a letter/email confirming what was said. Make sure you keep a copy of the letter/email. If you can, take someone along to act as a witness when you first go to see the landlord/agent about the problem.
- If nothing happens, keep phoning and sending follow-up letters or emails. Your letters should clearly outline the problem, what you want done and the history of your complaint, i.e. when you first made contact etc. This will make your case stronger if you have to apply to the Tribunal or another dispute body to deal with the problem. Keep a copy of all of your letters.
- Keep a printout of all e-mails sent and responded to. Be warned that e-mails are often written in the heat of the moment and sometimes people say things that they do not mean, or do not understand their legal consequences. Emails should remain formal and dispassionate. To avoid agents and landlords claiming they didn't get an e-mail, always try and follow up with a formal letter which outlines the key points discussed and decided upon.
- Do not stop paying rent at any stage regardless of what the landlord/ agent does.
- Don't move out without giving the required notice as you may end up losing your deposit.

# Tenant Fees Bill

The Tenant Fees Bill will come into force on 1st June 2019 for all tenancies signed on or after that date.

It will be illegal for letting agents to charge tenants anything that isn't rent, deposit and contract break fees.

Key points of the Bill include:

- Default fees will be limited to charges for replacement keys or a respective security device and late rent payments only
- Holding deposits will be capped at no more than one week's rent, applying to a maximum of one property only
- A civil offence with a fine of £5,000 for a first offence will be created, alongside civil penalties of up to £30,000
- The Consumer Rights Act 2015 will be amended to specify that the letting agent transparency requirements should apply to property portals, such as Rightmove and Zoopla
- Local authorities will be able to retain the money raised through financial penalties, with this money reserved for future local housing enforcement
- Alongside rent and deposits, landlords and letting agents will only be permitted to charge tenants fees associated with:
  - A change or early termination of a tenancy, when requested by the tenant
  - Utilities, communication services and Council Tax
  - Payments arising from a default by the tenant, such as replacing lost keys

With this in mind we would advise you to put off signing any tenancy agreement until after Saturday 1 June 2019.

