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1841

YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY

# Accommodation Guidebook



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# Different types of accommodation

## University accommodation

Managed by our own Accommodation team, there is a great range of room sot choose from, with different facilities to suit all. Our University Accommodation sites are all in the centre of York, 1 mile or less from campus.

## Private student accommodation site

Owned by third party accommodation providers, these dedicated sites are normally a block of flats with en-suite rooms and access to self-contained cooking facilities, as well as other recreational facilities such as a games or film room. They often have gyms on site too.

The rent of purpose-built student accommodation is usually higher than rented student houses, but it usually includes Council Tax and bills, and the services available would not be accessible in a private house or flat.

They are safe environments to live, with fellow students going through the same experience as you.

## Private house/flat

A house rented through an estate agent or private landlord, where you and your flatmates have exclusive living in an individual property.

## House/flat share

A house rented through an estate agent or private landlord, where you rent a single room with other people you don't know. They may or may not be students.



# Living alone or in shared accommodation?

Living alone brings freedom. You can do what you want, when you want. It can be lonely at times though, so it's good to have friends nearby when you feel like a bit of company. Living on your own can be quite expensive when it comes to bills, as there's no one to share the cost with.

## Living alone

- Living independently
- More expensive
- Great privacy
- Sole responsibility for rent, bills, and the overall condition of the property

## House sharing

- Good way to meet new people
- Cheaper
- Shared bathroom and cooking facilities
- Joint responsibility for the rent, bills and overall condition of the property

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## Finding other YSJ students to live with



The York St John Accommodation team have a useful Find a YSJ Housemate Facebook group to help you to meet fellow students looking for housemates. Scan the QR code to access the group.

**[tinyurl.com/YSJHousemates](https://www.facebook.com/YSJHousemates)**

# Viewing a house

## House viewing

When you view a property, it is important to pay close attention to the facilities and structure. Keep an eye out for signs of dampness, mould and electrical faults.

- Does the property include furnishings, such as bedroom furniture?
- Do you like the area and can you see yourself living there?
- Is the street too noisy (or quiet) for you?
- Does the property feel safe? (Are there smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, fire escapes?)

## Questions to ask when viewing a property

- Who is the main manager of the property?
- Who do you report repairs or faults to?
- Is there an out-of-hours contact number?
- Are bills included?
- Are there any agency fees?
- What is the contract length?
- Is outdoor maintenance included?
- Can you park your car at the property or is there bike storage, if you need it?
- Are pets allowed?
- Where is the gas, electric and water meter? (Upon moving in, always take pictures of the readings!)

# Finding properties

To find a property, you can use an online accommodation search portal that enables you to deal directly with the landlord, such as **OpenRent**. If you're looking for a single occupancy room, there is also **SpareRoom**.

Alternatively, you can use a general property search engine and search under Rentals.

You will need to decide where you want to live so you can input the town and postcode to see what is available and search the type of property and set your budget. The main search portals are **Rightmove**, **Zoopla** and **On The Market**. Scan the QR codes on the right to visit their websites.

## How these sites are managed

These sites list properties that are usually managed by agents, or where landlords have asked agents to find tenants for them, so you deal with the agent first.

**In the UK, it is illegal for agents to charge a fee to find and arrange property rentals for you. So, if anyone asks you for a fee, do not pay it.**



**OpenRent**

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



**SpareRoom**

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



**Rightmove**

[www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent](http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent)



**Zoopla**

[www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent](http://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent)



**On The Market**

[www.onthemarket.com/to-rent](http://www.onthemarket.com/to-rent)

# Rental laws and regulations in the UK



Strict laws and regulations exist for renting property in the UK. However, not all landlords follow those laws, so it is essential that you find a landlord or agent who is acting legally. We advise you read the **How to Rent guidebook**. Scan the QR code to access or visit the website below.

**[tinyurl.com/How-to-Rent-guidebook](https://tinyurl.com/How-to-Rent-guidebook)**

## Legal rentals

The property should be legally rented which means you should receive an **Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) Agreement** or, if you end up renting part of someone's house, a **Lodger Agreement**. These agreements should be for 6 to 12 months minimum.

# Signing a contract

Once you have decided on the house you would like to live in for the next academic year, contracts are given to you. Before you sign anything, it is vital that you thoroughly read through all the small print. It is also a good idea to ask a parent or guardian to read through it as well. York St John is unable to read contracts for you. The most important things to look out for in a contract are:

1. Does the landlord own the property?
2. Are there any unfair aspects of the contract?
3. Does the contract reflect what you verbally agreed with the landlord?
4. Do you understand all aspects of the contract?

Remember, as soon as you sign the contract, there is no going back!

## What should your contract include?

- Your name, your landlord's name and their address
- The address of the property you are renting
- Start date of the contract
- Length of the contract
- How much you pay for rent, including the monthly rate
- When your rent is due
- If bills are included
- What type of contract it is (for example, joint tenancy or occupancy)
- List of utility bills covered/provided in the rent, if any. For example Council Tax, water, gas, electricity or a TV Licence (if you are renting a whole flat or house then you usually have to pay these in addition to your rent, so you should budget for these)
- Responsibility for cleaning the property
- Responsibility for maintaining and repairing the property



# Contract length

Most student contracts are a fixed 12-month contract, if you are wanting a shorter contract, then you will need to negotiate this with the landlord and/or agency.

## What is a break clause?

A break clause allows either the tenants or the landlord to end the tenancy by giving early notice. If this happens, then we would advise you to seek advice on the wording of this. A break clause may be used unfairly and give the landlord greater flexibility and rights.



# Deposits

## Deposit

When you have found a house that you like and would like to sign for, the landlord or letting agent will ask you to pay a holding deposit. This is normally equivalent to 1 or 2 weeks' rent.

## What happens to this deposit?

Once the deposit is paid, the landlord or letting agency will stop advertising the property. The deposit will be entered into a deposit scheme. Be sure to get full information about the deposit scheme that the deposit is entered into. At the end of your tenancy, the landlord or agency will return your deposit. They can take deductions if they feel there are any repairs or cleaning that needs to be done to the property.

## What if I change my mind?

If you pay the deposit and then back out of the house, you may lose some or all of the deposit. However, if the landlord changes their mind, you will receive the deposit back in full.

There are 2 types of deposits, a housing deposit and a holding deposit - it is important to distinguish between the 2. You should check the terms and conditions, given to you by the letting agency before you pay your deposit; this will also allow you to see how your deposit will be treated.

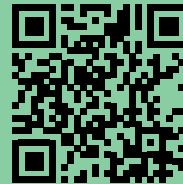
If you think your deposit is being withheld unfairly or used in a wrong way, you can seek advice from the 3 schemes available:



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



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



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

# Guarantor

## Finding a guarantor

Most landlords or agents will ask you to provide details of a guarantor, when applying for a private let. This is someone who would be responsible for paying your rent, in the event of you being unable to make the payment yourself.

As an international student, it can be difficult for you to find a guarantor, as they must be based in the UK.

There are services available which can assist you with securing a guarantor, such as **Housing Hand** and **UKGuarantor**. These are services developed for students, graduates and professionals; they act as your UK guarantor, so that you can secure private accommodation. These services do have associated fees. UK Guarantor has a handy **Guide to Guarantors**, which is well worth a read.

**York St John cannot, under any circumstances, act as your guarantor.**



## Housing Hand

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



## UK Guarantor

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



## Guide to Guarantors

[www.ukguarantor.com/what-is-a-rent-guarantor](http://www.ukguarantor.com/what-is-a-rent-guarantor)

# Your rights and obligations

## Do you have any rights?

- **Exclusive Possession** - your landlord cannot come into your home without permission, without giving at least 24 hours' notice.
- **Tenancy Deposit Protection** - your deposit needs to be protected
- **Protection from eviction** - your landlord will need a court order before you can be evicted from your home.
- **Notice period** - your landlord usually needs to give at least 2 months written notice on a standard form to end the tenancy. However, notice periods can differ.
- **Repairs** - your landlord will be responsible for carrying out repairs within a reasonable time frame

## What are my obligations?

These obligations should be set out in your contract. If they are not then you must bring this up with your landlord before signing the contract:

- Paying rent
- Keeping the property clean and tidy
- Reporting repairs to the agency or landlord
- Replacing light bulbs and smoke alarm batteries
- Preventing the property from sustaining damage



# Moving in

After all the paperwork has been completed and you've been given the keys to your new home, there are still some things to bear in mind. Make sure you have:

- A copy of the tenancy agreement
- A check-in inventory and and schedule of condition
- Taken photographs of the conditions of the rooms in the property as evidence of the state of the property, when moving in
- A gas safety certificate
- An energy performance certificate (EPC)
- A How to Rent booklet
- A Deposit Protection Certificate and prescribed information

Make sure to keep copies of all paperwork that is given to you by the landlord or letting agency.



# TV Licence

If you watch or record live programmes, whether on a TV or an electronic device, you will need to have a TV Licence. It costs around £170 for a colour TV Licence.

Please be aware that you can be heavily fined for having an unlicensed television. You can visit the **TV Licensing website** for further information.

**[www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk)**



# Council Tax

## What is Council Tax?

Council Tax is a tax on residential properties by local authorities.

## Do students need to pay for it?

If you live in a property occupied only by full-time students, the property is exempt from Council Tax.



You and your housemates will need to apply for a “Council Tax Exemption”.

You can do this online by scanning this QR code or visiting:

**[www.york.gov.uk/StudentDiscount](http://www.york.gov.uk/StudentDiscount)**

If not everyone in your house is a full-time student, then they will have to pay Council Tax. If they are the only person living in the house who is not a student in full-time education, then they will be entitled to a discount on Council Tax. More information can be found by scanning the QR code below or visiting:

**[www.york.gov.uk/student-council-tax](http://www.york.gov.uk/student-council-tax)**



# Living with others

Living with people can be a great experience, but sometimes practical things can get in the way. We are all different and it is inevitable that these differences might sometimes cause a bit of friction. The important thing is how issues are dealt with, if they arise. No matter how different you are from your roommates, spending time with them can show you aspects of their personalities you hadn't been aware of and may appreciate.

## Discuss Expectations

- If you have a behaviour which is non-negotiable, such as someone using your pans or eating your food, then you should politely make this clear at the start.
- It can make things simpler if you agree a cleaning rota for communal areas and stick to it. If you divide all the tasks equally and make sure you are doing your share, it will avoid difficulties.
- If you think there are items that you will regularly use communally, such as washing up liquid, toilet rolls, tea, coffee and milk, it may help to set up a petty cash that you all contribute to in an agreed time frame, such as £5 per housemate a month.
- Since bills are usually in a single person's name, the other roommates should make it a priority to get their money to this resident as soon as possible. Technology has made excuses obsolete, since it is simple to transfer money online.
- Communication is key. If something is bothering you, then talk to the person about it. Letting things build up, or talking about it with people who are not directly involved, can make a situation worse.

# Feeling homesick?

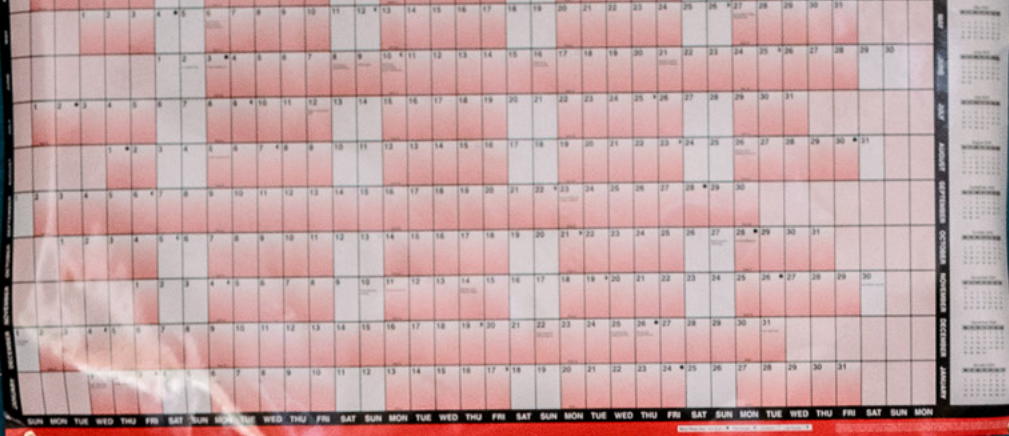
Being homesick is a normal experience when transitioning to university life. If you feel homesick, it is important to remember that you are probably not the only one feeling that way. Here are some things you can do to help:

- Talk to your housemates. They can probably relate and might have a few of their own helpful tips
- Personalise your new room, and make your accommodation feel comfortable
- Keep yourself busy
- Join a society or try a new sport; explore the city centre with your new housemates
- Eat properly and make sure you are getting enough sleep. If you are tired, it can be harder to process your emotions. Being unwell can make you feel worse, so it is much better to look after yourself
- If you do not want to share your thoughts with your housemates, talk to the Wellbeing team at [wellbeing@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@yorks.ac.uk) or reach out to the Global Campus team at [globalcampus@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:globalcampus@yorks.ac.uk), who can offer advice or support.

## Have fun!

It can be easy sometimes to focus on the negatives, but remember university is a time for having fun! It can be a good idea to schedule in time doing a house activity, whether that is weekly, fortnightly or monthly. This could be visiting a tourist attraction, having a meal together or having a film night.







# Advice - Issues and repairs

## Reporting an issue

If you have an issue, you must report it! You can do this over the phone, in person or via email. It is important to keep a record of what was discussed and the date and time. It is also useful to send a follow-up email to check on progress and put everything on record.

## What details should I include in the report?

- What is broken/faulty or not working
- When the incident occurred
- All the problems resulting from the issue
- Provide evidence and photograph everything

## How long should it take for a problem to be fixed?

A landlord should fix any problems as soon as possible. If you feel things are taking too long, then you should seek advice from your letting agency.

## Repairs

Your contract should outline what you are responsible for and what the landlord is responsible for. The law implies that it is the landlord's responsibility to keep the property safe and in good condition. If you are unsure about who is responsible for certain repairs, then it is best to seek advice from the letting agency.

## Landlord's responsibilities

- Heating, hot water and other water supplies
- Basins, sinks, baths and toilets
- External structure of the property
- Gas appliances
- Fixed electrical installations

## Tenant's responsibilities

- To report any repair issues to the landlord or letting agent
- Change light bulbs
- Test smoke alarms
- Keep the inside and outside of the property clean

# Advice - Issues and repairs

## **What can I do if the problem does not get fixed?**

If your landlord or letting agency is not seeing to any repairs or maintenance within a reasonable time frame, they may be in breach of the tenancy agreement. It would be worth writing a follow-up letter/email to the landlord/letting agency. You can also reach out to the City of York Council for their advice on such matters.

## **Am I allowed to carry out repairs myself?**

It is extremely risky for you to carry out any repairs yourself. You would be responsible for any defects or further damage caused to the property; the landlord could also refuse to reimburse you for the money you have spent. You must not do any work that could endanger you or your housemates, such as electrical work.

## **Am I allowed to stop paying my rent if this happens?**

We would not advise you to stop paying rent if you are having maintenance problems. Your obligation to pay rent is separate from the landlord's obligation to carry out repairs. If you decide to stop paying your rent, your landlord is entitled to evict you. They can also take you to court for rent arrears.

# Advice - Mould and damp

## Mould and damp

If you have stale smells, and discoloured walls or ceilings, then these are signs that you could have mould in your house. Most dampness is caused by condensation and not structural. If you experience any problems with dampness or mould, you should report it to your landlord or letting agency. Letting agencies and landlords can be very quick to blame the growth of dampness and mould on students.

## What causes dampness or mould?

- Condensation
- Lack of insulation
- Leaking pipes
- Rainwater coming through external walls
- Blocked guttering or overflowing drains

## Things you can do to prevent the growth of mould

- Wipe down any condensation that is on walls or windows
- Check extractor fans are in working order
- Keep the property adequately heated and ventilated
- Don't dry clothes on radiators
- Ventilate (open windows)

## Handy tips

- You can buy mould cleaners and removers. Use these immediately
- If it keeps returning, take regular photos to show the landlord or letting agent
- Inform the landlord/letting agent about any changes or updates to the situation









**F.R.S.**  
**IRON**  
FIREPLACE  
SPECIALIST



# Further Advice

## Key contacts

- **York St John Students' Union**  
01904 629 816  
[su@yorksja.ac.uk](mailto:su@yorksja.ac.uk)
- **Global Campus Support**  
[globalcampus@yorksja.ac.uk](mailto:globalcampus@yorksja.ac.uk)
- **City of York Council**  
01904 551 550  
[york.gov.uk](http://york.gov.uk)
- **Citizens Advice**  
0808 278 7895  
[citizensadviceyork.org.uk](http://citizensadviceyork.org.uk)
- **Deposit Protection Service**  
0330 303 0030  
[contactus@depositprotection.com](mailto:contactus@depositprotection.com)
- **Tenancy Deposit Scheme**  
[www.tenancydepositscheme.com](http://www.tenancydepositscheme.com)
- **My Deposits**  
[www.mydeposits.co.uk](http://www.mydeposits.co.uk)

## Shelter

Shelter is a housing and homelessness charity. Their website is full of useful information and advice, including an online deposit checker to make sure your deposit is protected. They also provide template letters around deposit and repair issues. For more information visit their website at **[england.shelter.org.uk](http://england.shelter.org.uk)**

## Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice provide excellent resources on its website at **[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**

## City of York Council

The Council can point you in the right direction. If you cannot get through to their phone line, you can also start a web chat on their website at **[www.york.gov.uk](http://www.york.gov.uk)**

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