

Finding a House

In the Private Rented Sector



Hints

- The best properties are not necessarily available earliest in the year. There is a surplus of Private Accommodation in Newcastle so do not be rushed.
- Think carefully about who you want to share with!

Council Tax Alert: If one or more members of your household are not full-time students (or cease to be in mid contract) the property may become liable for the Council Tax. See our 'Council Tax' leaflet.

Can you afford it?

Housing Benefit: Most full-time students are not able to claim Housing Benefit.

The exceptions are the following: part-time students; certain students with disability or long-term illness; students aged over 60; students who are eligible for income support (most are not); students with dependent children; those on certain government schemes.

NB students from abroad with limited leave to remain in the UK are not eligible for Housing Benefit. If this applies to you do not claim it, as you will endanger your rights to remain in the UK.

Rent: Most landlords require at least one month's rent in advance. You will probably also have to pay a **Deposit**, sometimes call a **Bond**. If the landlord is asking for any other money from you (e.g. a 'premium' or 'key money') **DO NOT pay it - seek advice.**

Remember when you are budgeting that most contracts are for 12 months period, and have no 'get-out' clause. Some landlords ask for **post-dated cheques**; to issue one is not against bank terms and conditions unless you know you do not

have sufficient funds to meet it. Note that more than three quarters of such cheques clear early if presented early. The practice is therefore not advisable.

Bills: Remember that in addition to rent, you may have to pay water rates, gas/electricity (the cost of heating in particular is high), and an advance quarterly charge with telephone connection. (See 'Moving In' leaflet under section - Telephone). You may also want to rent a TV, washing machine or other items. The cost involved will have to be discussed with others you are sharing with.

Where to look

The University Accommodation Office, 19 Windsor Terrace : Monday - Friday : 9am - 4.30pm : Telephone 0191 222 6360 : e-mail Accommodation.enquires@ncl.ac.uk : web-site www.ncl.ac.uk/accommodation

(Private properties managed and sublet to students by the University Accommodation Office), and private rented houses and flats to rent. They produce a free leaflet on finding accommodation.

All private properties advertised by the Accommodation Office comply with the minimum standards of Newcastle Accreditation Scheme. Details are available from the Accommodation Office. The scheme has been put in place as your safeguard. Use it or lose it! The annual 'big list' of properties comes out at the end of January.

Local Newspapers

The Evening Chronicle is the best newspaper for local rented property. It comes out at around 12.45pm - Thursday's edition is best for accommodation ads.

The Courier

The voice of the Students since 1948. Representing the best in Student Journalism. Breaking news, features and information on clubs and societies.

Student Housing

Joint Publication between Newcastle and Northumbria Universities on housing in the Private Rented Sector. Published December/January.

Newsagents and Local Shops

Local shops often have display boards which may have accommodation to let advertised on them.

Noticeboards

Check departmental noticeboards and those in the libraries. The Union does not advertise properties or rooms to let because we cannot ensure that properties have valid gas safety certificate.

Ask Around

Many flats and houses get passed on by word-of-mouth - so it is worth asking around. People leaving their flats may be able to tell you of any advantages or disadvantages of the property.

Estate Agents & Letting Agencies

Some Estate Agents handle rented accommodation, and may be worth contacting. There will normally be a charge for their service. Agencies also usually charge a fee (typically two weeks' rent) for finding you somewhere to live. **IT IS ILLEGAL FOR AN AGENCY TO CHARGE YOU A FEE BEFORE THEY FIND YOU A PROPERTY.** If you are asked for money before you have made an agreement for a property, **DON'T PAY.**

If you've already paid, contact the SAC or Accommodation Office immediately. Always obtain a receipt for any money you hand over. See our leaflet 'House Hunting using Accommodation and Letting Agencies'.

The Council & Housing Associations

Some students find it worthwhile registering on the Council waiting list, or applying to Housing Associations. Both give priority to people who are "in housing need", and some students (for

example, students with families) may fit this category. If you are single and have no children, you are unlikely to be offered anything other than "hard to let" accommodation. Further information is available from the SAC.

NB Students who are not 'habitually resident' in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, or the Republic of Ireland are not eligible for Council Housing. These does not include **Refugees** and those with **Exceptional Leave to Remain** in the UK. EU students should seek advice.

Students from outside the European Economic Area must be especially careful, since an application for Council Housing may result in your Leave to Remain in the UK being terminated. Seek our advice if in doubt.

Restrictions on the right to Council Housing do not affect your right to apply to Housing Associations.

Emergency Housing

If you are threatened with homelessness and need accommodation quickly, seek advice from one of the following places:

- Shelter North East Housing Aid Centre
- The Housing Advice Centre (Council)
- University Accommodation Office
- SAC

For telephone numbers, see the 'Moving In' leaflet in this series.

You can access our Website at www.unionsociety.co.uk/sac

The Student Advice Centre
Union Society, Kings Walk
Newcastle University
Tel: 0191 239 3979

Email: sac.reception@ncl.ac.uk

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The SAC is a member of Advice UK
(The independent advice network)