Make Yours a SmartMove
Your guide to house hunting in Sheffield
Introduction

If you are a student about to start looking for somewhere to live, this guide is for you.

Whether you’re looking for accommodation straightaway or thinking about finding a place to live for the next academic year, this guide should help you through the whole house hunting process and give you all the information you need to make a Smart Move.

If you have specific housing needs and require further advice, the Student Advice Centre is here to help. We have specialist housing advisers who can advise you at every stage of your housing journey, from checking over a new contract through to getting your deposit back when the tenancy ends. Contact details for the Student Advice Centre are at the back of this guide.

Additionally, you can find comprehensive information and advice on a wide range of housing, money, academic and immigration issues on the Student Advice Centre website at http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/student-advice-centre

Message from Anna Mullaney
Welfare Officer 2016

Freshers’ week was only a few weeks ago but some students will be tempted to start looking for housing already. Landlords may use clever tactics to get you to sign early but really, taking your time means you will end up with a much happier home.

There’s an abundance of housing in Sheffield and loads of 4-bed houses, so if you’re in a big group, consider splitting up- you’ll get more for your money too! Don’t sign until you’re happy with your housemates (particularly if you’ve only known them since Freshers!).

Look out for the amazing work that your Welfare Committee is doing, such as the Housemate Finder events which are perfect if you’re not sure who you want to live with.

But most importantly don’t even start thinking about house-hunting until you’ve been to the Housing Fair on 22nd November. You can meet landlords we endorse and get loads of quality housing advice.

If you need help or advice then contact the Student Advice Centre on advice@sheffield.ac.uk and make sure you know your rights with housing!

Welfare love, Anna xo
The Sheffield Student Housing Market

Around November each year in Sheffield, local letting agents will start marketing properties for the next academic year and the annual house hunting season begins. There really is no need to start house hunting this early and it is possible to find accommodation of a good standard and close to the University whenever you choose to start house hunting.

Most shared houses are for groups of four or five and splitting into groups of this size will offer you the widest choice of properties and could also be better for your budget. There is also a good supply throughout the year. The supply of larger houses is more restricted so if you are in a group of six or more you may find it necessary to start house hunting before Christmas. If you are a large group it would be worth considering splitting into two smaller groups and you could even find houses on the same street or flats in the same block. Students with specific housing needs, such as students with children who want to live near particular schools, or students with a disability who might need a particular type of property, may also find it beneficial to start house hunting earlier.

Self-contained accommodation, such as one bedroom flats in the city centre, can be advertised much nearer to the contract start date. There has been large scale development of purpose built student accommodation in the city centre over recent years and there is a surplus of studio apartments. If you are a single person looking for a room in shared house you can wait till next summer to find a room as there are always spare rooms available in shared properties.

Top Tip: Don’t start thinking about house hunting for next year until you have been to the SMART MOVE Housing Fair in the Students’ Union on 22nd November 2016 11-3pm. You will have a chance to meet reputable landlords, agents and get information and advice to help you make a SMART MOVE.

Step One: Deciding Who To Live With

Friendships and personal circumstances can change over the course of a year, so take your time in deciding who to live with. If you like a quiet night in and lots of sleep, think twice about sharing with someone who parties a lot and stays up late!

Sharing can be great fun but it can also sometimes bring out people’s worst habits. Small disputes over things like not washing up can cause friction. One way to avoid these types of problems is to agree some ground-rules on things like guests, partners, cleaning, sharing food and paying bills before you commit to a contract. Good communication between housemates and a willingness to compromise will help you deal with any potential disputes.

Don’t panic if you haven’t found someone to share with. Single rooms are available in larger purpose built
student accommodation blocks or you can find a room advertised in a shared house with other students. Look out for events in the Students’ Union such as housemate finder sessions for house sharers usually held in February and May. You can also look for housemates on the Studentpad message board https://www.propertywithus.sheffield.ac.uk/MessageBoard. It’s never too late to find a housemate!

Make sure you are completely happy with your potential housemates before you sign a contract. Don’t feel pressurised into signing a contract for next year with people that you may have only known for a couple of months, as relationships and personal circumstances can change. Getting out of a contract can be tricky and you will not normally be released from a contract unless you have found a suitable replacement tenant. If you find yourself in this position, you can get advice from the Student Advice Centre.

Top Tip: Finding the people to share with is as important as finding the right property, take your time in deciding who to live with.

Step Two:
Looking For Accommodation

There is plenty of good quality and affordable student housing in Sheffield available throughout the year. There are also a number of accreditation and housing standards schemes which you can look out for. These may help you find a reputable landlord or agent and ensure that your next property meets the required health and safety standards.

propertywithUS

A good starting place is the propertywithUS Studentpad website which you can find at http://www.propertywithus.sheffield.ac.uk/

propertywithUS is part of the University and advertises both university and private sector accommodation. All properties on their website will have been assessed for fire safety, gas and electrical safety, security, amenity standards, repairs and maintenance. The landlord has also agreed to manage the property responsibly. Some of the standards required to achieve registration exceed minimum legal standards so it is a really good idea to consider registered properties first when you start house hunting. Contact details can be found at the back this guide and you will find them on level three in the Students' Union building.

Top Tip: Contact propertywithUS if you need help using their search facility or if you would like to talk to someone there about your housing options.
University Accommodation
If you would like to live in University owned or managed accommodation then visit www.sheffield.ac.uk/accommodation or email accommodationoffice@sheffield.ac.uk.

This is not just an option for first years but also returning students. They offer self- contained and shared accommodation in halls, including standard, en-suite, deluxe rooms and studios at Endcliffe, Ranmoor and City Centre locations. There are also a limited number of shared houses and you can also choose to rent accommodation with your friends. You can express an interest in University accommodation from November onwards but you will not usually be required to sign a contract until around Easter time.

Snug
Sheffield City Council has a property registration scheme called Snug. Properties which are part of this scheme will have been inspected and assessed for fire, gas and electrical safety, security and amenity standards, repairs and maintenance. The landlord will also have agreed to abide by a code of management standards. Look out for the Snug logo on landlord websites. Details of Snug can be found at www.sheffield.gov.uk/snug

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and licensing
Properties with at least three storeys which are occupied by at least five people must be licensed by the council. The properties will have to meet stringent safety and amenity standards to be issued with a licence and landlords can be fined if they let a property without a licence. If you are thinking of signing for a property which meets these criteria you can check to see if it is licensed at www.sheffield.gov.uk/hmo

If the property does not have a licence, be cautious about signing a contract as it may mean the property and/or landlord is not of a good standard.

The council welcomes notification of any houses not on the list. Telephone 0114 273 4680 or Email hmo@sheffield.gov.uk.

Finding Accommodation Online

Landlords
Most landlords will now advertise online. It is easy to find properties by searching using key words such as ‘student’, ‘accommodation’ and ‘Sheffield’.

Remember that larger agents are likely to appear high up on search engines, these can be a more expensive option in terms of administration fees, so look at properties from a range of providers. There may be some benefits of going to a landlord directly, such as lower fees and sometimes rent levels.

Top Tip: Do not send money to a landlord/agent before you have viewed an actual property and you are sure it is a genuine letting. There have been scams involving bogus properties for let on some website forums.

Letting Agents
There are many lettings agents in Sheffield who target the student housing market. Many have offices close to the University, for example in Broomhill and Ecclesall Road, or they can be found via a quick search online. An agent may simply arrange the initial letting or provide a full tenancy management service. Many students find properties via letting agents.
From 1st October 2014 letting agents must be members of one of the following redress schemes. (Be aware this does not apply to landlords who let and manage ONLY their own properties.)

- The Property Ombudsman
- Ombudsman Services Property
- The Property Redress Scheme

Each scheme will have its own a code of practice and procedures which allow you to complain if you have a problem with a member agent. All lettings agents should display a logo of the scheme that they belong to in their office and on their website. They should also provide you with details of the scheme when you enter into any tenancy agreement and you can check directly with the scheme to find out if an agent is a member.

**Top Tip: Do not use a letting agent who is not a member of one of these schemes.**

Be aware that agents often charge fees for things like administration and credit reference checks, this is especially true of the larger city centre agencies. The fees are sometimes high and may be non-refundable if you change your mind about the accommodation. Make sure that you know what fees are payable from the start. New laws mean that all fees must be clearly set out on the agency's website and should only be charged after you apply to take a specific property.

**Top Tip: Do not pay any money to an agent unless you are really sure you want the property and can meet the terms of the contract. Ask from the start what fees will be payable and get a written receipt for all monies paid.**

Some agents will require students to provide UK based guarantors. If you can't provide this, for example if you are an international student, you may be asked to pay large advance rent payments. There are Guarantor Schemes such as [www.housinghand.co.uk](http://www.housinghand.co.uk). For a fee such companies will act as your rent guarantor. The University is also planning to introduce a Guarantor Scheme for second and third year students.

**Top Tip: it is possible to find accommodation in Sheffield without paying agent’s fees or having to provide a guarantor. If an agent is demanding high upfront fees or huge advance rent payments, consider finding another landlord/agent. Many landlords don’t charge fees at all.**

Keep in mind the fact that agents are primarily a business and their main purpose is to act on behalf of the landlord/owner of the property, not you as a tenant. There are of course both good and bad agents, as there are landlords.

**Top Tip: Check out online reviews and/or bring the contract to the Student Advice Centre for checking. The housing advisers have a good knowledge of local landlords and agents!**

You may be asked to provide documents proving your immigration status due to the introduction of Right To Rent Checks when renting in the private sector, further information about this can be found at [http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/student-advice-centre/housing/right-to-rent](http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/student-advice-centre/housing/right-to-rent). If you have problems in relation to Right to Rent, please contact the Student Advice Centre. Purpose built student residences and university owned accommodation are exempt from RTR checks. You can also request a Right to Rent nomination letter from the University (via SSiD) to give to a private landlord. This means that the landlord does not need to carry out further RTR checks as the property will be exempt.

**It is illegal for a landlord or agent to discriminate against you on the grounds of race, colour, gender or sexual orientation. If you believe this has occurred please contact the Student Advice Centre as soon as you can.**
Step Three: Deciding Where You Want To Live

Luckily all popular student areas are relatively close to the University and it shouldn’t take you more than 20 minutes to walk to lectures or make your way home after a night out at the Students’ Union. There are also good public transport links.

Below is a brief guide to the most popular student areas and you can also use the map to see where they are in relation to the main University Campus.

Top Tip: If you have never really ventured out of your local area in your first year, it is worth exploring other areas - they are probably not as far away as you think.

Broomhill

...is a very popular area for students due to its close proximity to the University and has excellent local facilities, including lots of pubs, a variety of shops and plenty of take-aways. The accommodation comprises mainly flats and shared houses for larger groups of five or more. This area is expensive so be prepared to pay full rent for 12 months. Typical rent for room in shared house between £70–£85 per week + bills.

Crookesmoor

...is also very popular due to close proximity to the University and U sport. There is a good range of shops nearby and the accommodation is mainly flats or shared houses for groups of four or more, plus a few bedsits and studio flats. Be prepared to pay full rent for 12 months. Expect to pay £65–£80 per week + bills.

Broomhall

...is extremely close to the University with a few small corner shops nearby. The accommodation is mainly flats or shared houses for larger groups of five or more plus some bedsits and studio flats. Expect to pay £65–£80 per week + bills.

Crookes

...is popular as it is quite close to the University and has excellent local facilities with plenty of shops, take-aways, pubs and an excellent bus route if you don’t feel like walking up the hill. The accommodation is mainly terraced houses for groups of three or four. Rents are typically £60–£75 per week + bills.
Walkley

...is a little further from the University but offers a good range of shops and pubs. Rents are generally lower than in areas closer to the University and some landlords will agree summer reductions. Like Crookes, the accommodation is mainly terraced houses for groups of three or four. Average weekly rents would be £55 to £65 per week + bills.
Netherthorpe/Upperthorpe/St Georges

...is an area growing in popularity with students. Has local shops but main attraction is proximity to main campus. There is a mix of accommodation, including shared houses but also purpose built student halls and apartments. Rents vary depending on property type from £65 to £100 per week. This may include bills.

Ecclesall Road/Hunters’ Bar

...is slightly more popular with Sheffield Hallam students and is about a 15 to 20 minute walk from Western Bank. The area is very vibrant and offers excellent local facilities with plenty of pubs, shops, cafes, restaurants and take-aways. The accommodation is mainly terraced houses for groups of three or four with a number of flats. Average rent £65-£80 per week + bills.

West Street/Devonshire Quarter/City Centre

....is very close to the University but also has all the amenities of the city centre close at hand. The accommodation is mainly purpose built en-suite flats of a high standard. The area is popular with students from both universities and rents are high averaging £100 to £120 per week per person. This may include bills.

Top Tip: In general the closer to the University you live the more rent you will pay. You may get more for your money if you are willing to live a little further out. Don’t sacrifice quality for location.
Step Four: Viewing and Choosing a Property

Where possible try and find accommodation that is registered with the University or Snug.

Ask the current tenants if there have been any problems with the house or the landlord or agent. This may be difficult if the landlord or agent is present but tenants can usually warn you of any pitfalls or reassure you that it would be a good move.

For your own safety, never view a property alone and preferably visit the property in daylight so you can have a good look around the outside and the area in general.

If you are part of a group, make sure everyone views the property and agrees that it is suitable before a contract is signed or you pay a deposit.

Set a budget that you can afford and stick to it. Remember to factor in things like utility bills, TV licence, contents insurance, food and other living costs. It’s difficult to provide accurate figures, but we suggest around £10-15 per week for bills if in a shared house. This may be considerably higher if you are in single self-contained accommodation.

Top Tip: Do not rush into taking the first place that you see, view a selection of properties and take your time. Use the checklist at the back of this guide to help compare houses, get answers to important questions and choose the right property for you.
Step Five: Signing The Contract

Never sign a contract unless you have read and understood it. Contracts can be confusing and full of legal jargon. Most reasonable landlords will give you a copy of a contract to look over and not rush you into signing it.

Top Tip: Get your contract checked at the Student Advice Centre or pick up a copy of our Contract Checklist.

The Student Advice Centre produces two housing contracts - a letting agreement for use by resident landlords and an Assured Shorthold agreement. Both are available free to students from the Student Advice Centre or at a small cost to landlords.

If your prospective landlord does not use a Student Advice Centre contract, check that the contract includes the following essential details.

- The landlord’s name, address and telephone number or other emergency contact
- The name of every tenant
- The address of the property
- If you are in a group and the contract you are signing is a joint tenancy for the whole property, it is not necessary to specify individual rooms. If you are signing separate contracts, rooms should be specified.
- The start date of the contract and if it is fixed term, the length of the contract and/or the end date. Virtually all student private sector housing contracts are fixed term. This means they last for a fixed period of time, typically twelve months.
• The amount of rent, what is included in the rent and frequency and method of payments.

• Details of any deposit paid and the Deposit Protection Scheme which the landlord/agent uses. More information about deposits can be found at [http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/student-advice-centre/housing](http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/student-advice-centre/housing) or pick up a Deposits Handbook from the Student Advice Centre.

The bulk of most written contracts is taken up by a long list of clauses outlining what the tenant is expected to do or not allowed to do. These may cover looking after the property and allowing the landlord access (eg to carry out inspections and repairs), general behaviour (eg not causing a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours) and handing the property back at the end of the contract.

Some contracts specify charges that may be made during the tenancy such as for late payment of rent, replacement of lost keys, or calling out the landlord to attend to a problem which the tenants have caused. Sometimes a list of charges is provided separately.

**Top Tip:** Make sure you have read and understood what is expected of you and what charges may apply. Be wary about signing a contract which is full of high charges, has contract terms which could be ‘unfair’ or lacks basic information about the landlord.

Most written contracts include only a brief list of the landlord’s obligations. The most important (which applies even if it is not mentioned) is the obligation to carry out repairs under Section 11 of the Landlord & Tenant Act 1985. For more information on repairs go to [http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/student-advice-centre/housing](http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/student-advice-centre/housing)

If the landlord promises to improve the house, for example redecorate before you move in, ask for this to be written in the contract. Try to agree a deadline date for the work and what will happen if the work is not completed on time. This could be compensation or provision of alternative accommodation if you are unable to move in. Do not rely on verbal agreements. This is very important if the property is currently under construction or undergoing a major refurbishment.

**Top Tip:** Be cautious about signing for a property which is under construction, needs or is undergoing major works before you move in, as it may not be ready on time.
Checklist

This list provides a guide to some of the things that you should consider when looking for houses to rent. They are not all legal requirements.

**Property 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Condition of the Property</th>
<th>Property 1</th>
<th>Property 2</th>
<th>Property 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the roof and exterior in good repair?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there double glazing and are the windows in good condition?</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are inside walls free from damp, mould and cracks?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there adequate heating in all rooms?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there any signs of problems with the plumbing, leaking pipes etc?</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there sufficient electrical sockets in each room?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there adequate facilities and communal space for the number of people sharing?</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check what furniture will be provided, is it adequate and fire resistant?</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Safety and Security**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property 1</th>
<th>Property 2</th>
<th>Property 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a current gas safety record for the house?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there instruction manuals for appliances?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there any working fire detection equipment, such as fire/smoke alarms and a fire blanket in kitchen?</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there an electrical safety certificate or has wiring been checked within the last 5 years?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there adequate security – solid doors with good locks, window locks, external lighting, burglar alarm?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Contract**

Who is the landlord and/or agent and is their address on the contract? [ ] [ ] [ ]

Is it a joint or sole contract? [ ] [ ] [ ]

Is there a copy of a contract available to look over and get checked by the Student Advice Centre? [ ] [ ] [ ]

Are there any fees? (if so get details in writing) [ ] [ ] [ ]

How long is the tenancy? [ ] [ ] [ ]

What is the rent, how is it paid? [ ] [ ] [ ]

Are the bills included? Is there a cap? [ ] [ ] [ ]

How much is the deposit, and in which scheme is it protected? [ ] [ ] [ ]

Are there any extra charges a landlord might make? [ ] [ ] [ ]

Will the landlord provide an inventory when you move in? [ ] [ ] [ ]

Does the landlord intend to carry out any improvements/repairs before you move in? [ ] [ ] [ ]

If so, can this be written into the contract with details of compensation if not completed on time? [ ] [ ] [ ]

Does the property have a HMO licence? (applicable if the property has 3 storeys and 5 or more people) [ ] [ ] [ ]

What redress scheme does the agent use? [ ] [ ] [ ]

**Comments**

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Useful Names and Addresses

The Student Advice Centre
Tel: 0114 222 8660
Email: advice@sheffield.ac.uk
Website: http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/student-advice-centre
twitter@SheffieldSAC

propertywithUS
Tel: 0114 222 6058/6042
Email: propertywithus@sheffield.ac.uk
Website: www.propertywithus.sheffield.ac.uk

The Student Advice Centre and propertywithUS are both located on Level 3 in the Students’ Union building on Western Bank, S10 2TG.

University owned and partnership accommodation

Accommodation and Commercial Services
The Edge
34 Endcliffe Crescent
Sheffield
Tel: 0114 222 8800
Email: accommodationoffice@sheffield.ac.uk
Website: www.sheffield.ac.uk/accommodation

Sheffield City Council

Private Housing Standards
Tel: 0114 273 4680
Email: phs@sheffield.gov.uk

Private Housing Standards are based at Howden House, 1 Union Street, Sheffield S1 2SH.