

Avoid the pitfalls when choosing your home



Follow these steps and ensure you're in the know when looking for a property in Cardiff's private rented sector.



@cardiffdigs

Before you start:

Don't rush – House hunting before the winter holidays is not necessary. Houses are available all year around, so take your time, look around and don't feel pushed into signing an agreement. Please be aware of agents who insist that all good houses go early – this is not true!

Who do you want to live with?

Be confident you know who you want to live with. In rented accommodation, you will have to share communal spaces, household chores and responsibilities, and you may be jointly responsible for paying bills. Can you ensure other people will pay their share of bills reliably? You will have to put up with habits, good and bad, so pick your housemates carefully.

Tenancy agreements are legally binding contracts.

Contracts are usually joint, meaning that all tenants who sign it are **legally bound** by it. You are stuck with that house and those people until the end of the contract, even if your circumstances and social group change. You will be responsible for each other's rent and any charges. So take your time and think carefully before you sign. If in doubt, you can seek advice from your University Accommodation office or Student Union Advice Service.

How much you can afford

Set a budget. Bills are usually not included and a deposit on the house will be needed. Remember tenancy agreements usually last for 12 months.

Research, research, research!

Quality House, happy days.

Houses in Cardiff with 3 storeys and 5 or more tenants needs a Council issued licence. This licence is only given if the property meets Council criteria for safety and living standards. If the house is in Cathays or Plasnewydd (Roath), it requires this licence if there are 3 or more tenants, no matter the size of the property. Email Housingenforcement-cardiff-srswales@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk to check if a property is licensed.

Rent Smart Wales

The law now requires all landlords to register with Rent Smart Wales. The register tells you who owns and/or manages the property. The landlord or agent responsible for managing the property must also obtain a licence. Check that your landlord is registered and the managing agent/landlord is licensed at www.rentsmart.gov.wales or call **03000 133344**

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Get an **accommodation list** from your University – Cardiff MET and University of South Wales provide a list of available accredited accommodation from private landlords. Cardiff Met - get yours on Student Portal or email accomm@cardiffmet.ac.uk. University of South Wales, check the USW Studentpad listings or email accom@southwales.ac.uk. Cardiff University do not hold an accommodation list, however the Cardiff University Student Union can support you with housing advice.

House Hunting:

Decide your “must haves” as a group—Think about location, distance from university, room size needed, communal areas e.g. space and storage, car parking, double glazing, furniture. Make sure you see all the rooms, including locked ones, before handing over any money. **Set aside a time to view houses together.** Make sure you and your housemates are on the same page and view lots of properties so you can make comparisons between them. **Remember once a contract is signed it is almost impossible to reverse.**

View houses with a critical eye, does the property look well cared for – look for signs of damp or mould. If previous tenants are around, ask their opinion. **Be aware of verbal promises** of future maintenance work to be ready for your move in date. Make sure these are written into the contract before you sign.

Certificates

An Energy Performance Certificate should be displayed in the property. The higher the rating the more energy efficient the home is and lower the fuel bills will be. A Gas Safety certificate should also be available. Ask to these for each property you view.

Fees and Deposits

Agencies are no longer permitted to charge administration fees. Holding fees are permitted but are usually fully refundable. Deposits are charged as security against the state of repair of a property when you leave or unpaid bills etc. Your landlord must put your deposit in a government-backed tenancy deposit scheme within 30 days of receiving it and inform you where it is being held.

If in doubt – ask!

There are many things to consider when signing your tenancy contract and you have 24 hours to take it away to review. You can use this time to seek impartial, free advice from your University Accommodation Office or Student Union. If something doesn't feel right or if you would like a second opinion, those services are there to offer support.

Cardiff Digs works in partnership with Cardiff Council, Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University and the University of South Wales, to provide a central resource for student housing and living needs.

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