

Avoiding the pitfalls when choosing your house



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



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Don't Rush Don't be pushed into signing an agreement. Houses become available all year around. There is no panic so look around and don't feel threatened into an agreement. Please be aware of agents who insist that all good houses go early – this is not true!

Don't panic – house hunting before the winter holidays is not necessary. There are more houses than students themselves so you have plenty of choice.

Don't be blinded into signing a contract by fancy logos on cars, location, advertising and sharp suits – check to see if the letting agency is registered with a regulatory body, such as ALMA, ARLA or NALS. They provide minimum set standards that letting agents have to abide by. You'll be surprised who is and who isn't registered, take your time to look around. www.cardiffdigs.co.uk

Get an **accommodation list** from your University – all universities in Cardiff 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 email accomm@southwales.ac.uk. Cardiff University email residences@cardiff.ac.uk

Landlords

From 23rd November 2015 landlords and agents must become registered and licensed via Rent Smart Wales. Landlords and agents have 12 months in which to comply with the new legislation. Check that your landlord is aware of his/her responsibilities. You can find more information here www.rentsmart.gov.wales

Don't assume that someone else will know all the details of moving into private rented accommodation. Get your facts and figures straight before starting to look around. Your best friend may think they are the next property tycoon but if they don't know the facts then you could end up out of pocket.

Who you want to live with

You may have only known your friends for a few months now, and perhaps only in a haze of the union. You will be sharing a bedroom wall and kitchen – is that mess really creative and slightly amusing or just plain lazy and annoying? You may also 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.

How much you can afford

Set a budget. Bills are usually not included and a deposit on the house will be needed.

What are you looking for – Set a standard and stick to this – think about location, distance from university, room size needed, necessity of communal area e.g. lounge or dining area, car parking, double glazing, furniture. Make sure you see all the rooms, including locked ones, before handing over any money.

Make a list of things to look out for like obvious signs of damp or problems that may cause grievance later

Set aside a time to view houses together and be prepared to look at a number of different houses. Organise a time when everyone is able to make all viewings, never look at houses alone.

Standards Remember everyone has different standards and an opinion, so make sure all housemates view the property and are content with any decision. Remember once a contract is signed it is almost impossible to reverse.

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.

Size matters Houses with 3 storeys that house 5 or more students anywhere in the city have to be licensed by the Council to meet legal standards of living. Cathays and Plasnewydd are areas where **all** shared rented houses with three or more tenants **have to** have an additional licence and meet minimum safety and living standards. Email privatesectorhousing@cardiff.gov.uk to check if your property is licensed.

Protected Bond

Your landlord must put your bond (deposit) in a government-backed tenancy deposit scheme. Your landlord or letting agent must put your deposit in the scheme within 30 days of getting it and inform you where it is being held.

Joined at the hip

Contracts are usually joint, meaning that all tenants who sign it are **legally bound** by it. There is no notice period. You are stuck with that house and those people until the end of the contract. You will be responsible for each other's rent and any charges occurred. So before you sign, get advice from your Accommodation Office and don't rush.

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. and Gas Safety certificates should also be available. Ask for these for each property you view.

Seek advice – you may know some friends who have been renting – perhaps they can tell you their experiences and give some advice. Taking student advice is the most impartial and quickest way to cut through a lot of groundwork so ask around.

Housing advice from your University or Student Union. Make your accommodation centre at your university the first stop for queries, information and advice on all areas of housing.

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.

Find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter [@cardiffdigs](https://twitter.com/cardiffdigs) for handy tips and advice, or visit www.cardiffdigs.co.uk for more information



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