

LetSU – Tenant Handbook

This Handbook has been prepared to provide information on the following:

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Introduction

Welcome to Hertfordshire Students' Union

Welcome to your Student Union's housing department, LetSU.

The Students' Union is the voice of 27,500 students, offering support, advice, opportunities and more.

We are also a registered, not for profit charity, which means that every penny you spend with us in our venues, departments, shops and bars goes straight back into providing the services to you. We really hope you will enjoy living in your chosen property this year.

Your safety and comfort is extremely important to us and in order for us to ensure this, we carry out monthly inspections of the property to assess the maintenance needs and necessary safety checks.

We also see how well the property is being looked after, provide any advice if you are experiencing any issues and ensure that the welfare of our tenants is always a priority.

We have many different departments within our Students' Union and will always be able to find someone to help you, if you ever require any assistance, advice or support.

Who are LetSU?

We started in 2000 as the first Students' Union lettings agency in the country and unlike other high street agencies. We offer quality and affordable student housing in Hatfield close to both campuses, therefore provide a choice of properties with a variety of rent levels to suit your budget.

Our Team

The LetSU team are available during office hours (Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm) to assist with your housing queries and maintenance issues. We are a licensed ARLA (Association of Residential Letting Agents) agent and accredited by the NLA (National Landlord Association). Our knowledge and understanding of the requirements and concerns that students have, makes us your first choice accommodation providers within the Private Rented Sector. We also have an out of hour's emergency number to ensure you have the best support when it's needed.

More information about this service is provided within this handbook.

Our contractors used for repairs and maintenance are instructed by us. We hold all their necessary qualifications and public liability insurance, so we ensure you are in safe hands. If your landlord has chosen to use their own contractors we still ensure they have the legal requirements to carry out the works.

How to be a good neighbour

In order to enjoy living in the area in which you reside it's important to respect those around you. Those who experience trouble from unpleasant neighbours can suffer from stress and anxiety which can lead to an overall poor quality of life.

As students living in private accommodation you are part of the local community and should therefore consider the diverse range of cultures of those around you. Noise generated from DIY fanatics and children in the garden at weekends is acceptable; loud music at 3 in the morning is not!

The main factors contributing to a breakdown of neighbourly relationships can range from noise, rubbish and general tidiness of property. We want you to enjoy university life to the fullest without the negative experiences of neighbourly disputes which can interfere with your everyday life and in some extreme cases, when the University's name is brought into disrepute, can lead to dismissal from your course. We believe that introducing yourself to your neighbours is not only polite but will also provide a positive step towards amicable relationships and therefore allow you to enjoy life as a student. Here are a few extra tips which might help:

- Be considerate of your neighbours' lifestyle patterns – remember they may be working full-time and need their sleep!
- Noise travels – walls between properties can often be very thin. Try not to slam doors and keep music volumes down to a reasonable level.
- If you've been out for the evening, please return to your house quietly. Don't forget that noise travels long distances, particularly late at night.
- Please try to park considerately.
- Make sure you recycle as much as possible and use the correct bins. Excess rubbish will not be taken; it will look unsightly and upset your neighbours.
- Let your neighbours know if you're planning to have a party. Choose a suitable night, either a Friday or Saturday which will hopefully mean that your neighbours haven't got to get up for work in the morning. Stick to an agreed finishing time and make sure your guests leave quietly.
- If you do have complaints from a neighbour – try to respond in a courteous way and take responsibility for your actions. Think how your parents or guardians would feel if they were living next door to you!
- Don't forget that it's not an excuse to say you were drunk and therefore not aware of how loud you were being! Also, being a student isn't an excuse for bad behaviour!
- More than anything take pride in where you live – it's your home too!!

Tenancy Commencement – Advice on what to do within the first week.

Moving In Checklist

Inventory

1. Check all items on the inventory are correct
2. Make comments on if you disagree or incorrect
3. Returned signed within 7 days

Utilities

4. Have you read your gas and electricity meters on the day you moved in?
5. Have you registered the gas and electric in your names?
6. Can you find the stop taps of water, gas and electricity?
7. Do you have the gas safety certificate located near the boiler?

Contacts

1. Tell friends, family and update your details on the Uni student system (Studynet) in case they need to contact you in an emergency.

Fire Safety

1. Identify your means of escape in the event of a fire
2. Ensure you and you housemates are familiar with the fire safety advice and information provided

Insurance

1. Have you thought about insurance?
(your personal items are not covered by the landlord)

Inventories

Prior to the commencement of your tenancy, an independent company took an inventory of your property. This provides all the items present at the commencement of your tenancy and their current condition. The fabric of the building will also be included for current condition. The report provides full photographs including if there are any damages such as stains, chips or burns. During the first week of your tenancy you and your housemates must check the Inventory report and return signed with any comments to us within 7 days. We will then discuss any comments you have made and once an agreement has been made the Inventory will be signed by us.

Introductory Meeting

A meeting will be arranged by the Housing Team which must be attended by all tenants. The meeting will provide important information on your property, our service and your responsibilities. If you lived on campus during your first year they are much the same as the kitchen meetings you would have attended with the out of hour's team. It is also your opportunity to raise any concerns or issues you may have.

Advice and Support Centre

The Advice and Support Centre offers free and confidential advice and support on a range of issues; including personal, academic, social and health matters.

They have an open door policy from Monday to Friday

Call them on **01707 285022**, email **asc@herts.ac.uk**, or call in for a chat. ASC is situated within the Students Union in the Elehouse Resource Centre.

The Advice and Support Centre has a selection of Personal Alarms and Pregnancy Testing Kits available at reduced prices and condoms that you can pick up for free.

Agreements

Fixed Term Tenancy Agreements

All our tenancies are fixed term, Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST). Once you have signed the tenancy you are liable to pay the rent for the full stated term. There are no 'get out' clauses within our agreements. If you have extenuating circumstances and can find a replacement tenant you may be able to agree with us to end your tenancy. Further information on the process of this is in this handbook.

Joint Tenancy Agreements

These are fixed term ASTs and have the names of all those living in the property. The definition of the 'Tenant' on your agreement are all those named in the agreement as living at the property. You are jointly liable for any arrears and damages caused at the property.

Guarantors

Your guarantor will be liable for your financial commitments under the tenancy agreement. It is important to understand that where a tenancy has joint liability then a guarantor could be responsible for any tenant who defaults in their rent or payment for damages. Our procedure for dealing with outstanding rents is as follows:

- Week one in arrears – first reminder
- Week Two – second formal reminder
- Week Three – contact the individuals guarantor
- Week Four - contact all tenants and guarantors under the joint tenancy
- Week Five – Formal reminder and warning that landlord will be advised to begin legal action

We will always do our best to deal with reminders with the individual – if you find that you are experiencing financial hardship it is always best to advise us prior to the payment due date. We may be able to help you in finding further support.

Bedbugs

While not a public health pest, Bedbugs can be an unpleasant and persistent nuisance. Infestations are more common in places where people are very transient such as hotels and in student accommodation. If you suspect you may have bedbugs then contact us immediately for further advice and information.

Condensation and Mould Prevention

Condensation is the most common cause of dampness within a property. It is caused by moisture from inside the property, coming into contact with a cold surface (a window or wall). Corners of the rooms or near windows are often the hardest hit areas of the property. Areas where there is poor air circulation also have issues, such as a bed pushed up against a wall or behind furniture. Overtime, the dampness will allow black mould to grow.

Tips for Reducing Condensation and Mould Growth

- Don't air your clothes in a bedroom, dry outdoors where possible. If outdoors is not possible, dry them in the bathroom with the door shut and window open or extractor fan running.
- Ventilate your bedrooms when you are inside the property.
- Wipe the window sills and windows down to remove the excess moisture.
- Always open a window when using the kitchen or bathroom and close the doors to prevent the spread of moisture.
- Do not allow furniture to be pushed up against a wall, leave a gap.
- Do not block air vents that are fitted within the rooms.
- If mould does appear remove carefully with a damp cloth. Do not brush mould as this releases spores into the atmospheres. Wipe down affected areas with diluted bleach or fungicidal wash.

Cleaning

Ensure that you keep the property in a clean and tidy condition throughout your tenancy. Problems can often arise due to poor care and unhygienic conditions (such as pests and vermin). We encourage all tenants to have a monthly clean (prior to our inspections) as this makes your lives easier, than doing a big clean at the end of the year!

Keeping the **cooker** clean (inside and out) is important, dirt that builds up can damage the surface of the appliance and be difficult to remove if burnt on.

The fridge and freezer must be kept clean to prevent hygiene risks. Regularly check the fridge to ensure any expired products are disposed of correctly and that anything that may leak is upright. If something has leaked, please ensure you clean it up immediately by using a hot soapy cloth or cleaning liquid suitable for fridge/freezers. Do not use harsh abrasives or cleaning products as this will not only damage the appliance but contaminate your food.

Making use of the vacuum that is provided. Ensure you check it regularly for blockages and empty as and when necessary to ensure the motor does not burn out. Do not Hoover any objects that may cause a blockage or damage to the vacuum.

Worktops and tables must be kept clean for hygiene reasons. Try not to let pots and pans build up, just wash them up as you go or create a cleaning rota within the property.

Bathrooms must be regularly clean, again for hygiene reasons. Use the correct cleaning products (such as bathroom cleaner) to kill all bacteria and germs. If you notice any mould, clean where necessary and ensure you are ventilating the room correctly. Advise us immediately so we can assess the situation and provide further information. When showering, ensure that the shower curtain is tucked inside the bath or the shower door is fully closed. It is very expensive to repair flood water damage to the ceilings and floorings due to this. If you notice any flooding or issues with poor sealant, refrain from showering and let us know immediately.

Furniture - You are not permitted to bring any furniture into the property without prior consent of the Landlord or Landlord's Agent. The furniture within the property is not to be moved outside of the room it is in, without prior permission. Ensure that you make use of mattress protectors and use bedding throughout the year.

Council Tax Exemption

There will be no Council Tax charge where a house is **only** occupied by full time students. There are specific rules governing who is classed as a full-time student. If you feel that you belong to this group but the council disagrees, seek advice.

An exempt dwelling applies only to students who are:

- Are defined as full time by the University or who are studying 21 hours a week or more
- A qualifying student, under 20 years, studying 12 hours or more a week
- A foreign language student
- A placement student
- Full-time international students and spouses (a dwelling is exempt if it is the main residence of a student and spouse, provided the spouse is not a British citizen and he/she is prevented under immigration rules from taking paid employment or claiming benefits).

Exemption is only valid for the duration of your course and a new certificate must be provided to your landlord or council each year.

If the property is exempt then there will be no council tax charge although you will need to prove your student status to the Local Authority to prevent being charged. If one member of the household is not a full-time student they will have to pay 75% of the total liability. If two or more members are not full-time students, then the full tax is payable.

You are a student from the point of registration to the end of your course. If you receive a Council Tax Demand in the summer months between academic years you are still exempt.

Council Tax Exemption Certificate requests are fully online via StudyNet > Student Support > Student Centre > Forms and Letters > Council Tax Exemption. Once you have completed your request and registration/self-enrolment online and swiped your ID card on campus, a certificate will be emailed to the council you have selected and confirmation will be sent to you.

If your tenancy ends after you have graduated you will be liable for Council Tax for the relevant months.

Fill out your council tax exemption form at the Student Centre as soon as your tenancy begins. If you move in before September and then go home for the summer months you might come back finding a council tax demand. Get it sorted!!

YOU CAN BE SENT TO PRISON FOR NON-PAYMENT OF COUNCIL TAX.

Crime Prevention

Personal Belongings

- Make sure all your personal property, especially phones, laptops and portable media equipment, is marked with a UV pen.
- Never leave belongings, including your car keys, unattended or on show when you leave your home or car, even if it's only for a moment.
- Ensure all credit and debit cards are kept safe. In the event of them being lost or stolen, cancel them and report it immediately.

Home Security

- On leaving your home always ensure all doors and windows are securely locked.
- At night it is advisable to leave a light on or invest in a timer to allow lights to come on automatically.
- Never leave spare keys hidden in out-buildings or gardens.

Car Security

- If you have a garage, use it.

- Remove all valuables from your vehicle. Don't leave anything on display.
- Always remove the fascia of the CD/radio and take it with you, don't hide it in the glove compartment.
- Always remove your SatNav and the holder. Clean all traces of the pad from the window. Take the SatNav with you.

Deliveries and post

Please be aware of deliveries which are not addressed to anyone on the tenancy agreement. Do not sign for parcels if the person does not live in the property. Previous years have shown that criminals use student let properties as a means to commit credit card fraud. You don't want to find yourself caught up in any criminal investigations.

Additionally if you receive post addressed to 'The Occupant' – open it – that's you!!

Electrical Safety

Do not overload sockets, stick to one plug per socket. Each room must have a minimum of four sockets (two doubles) as per the local authority's requirements. If this is not the case, please let us know as soon as possible and we will rectify this.

Extension leads have limits regarding the number of amps it can safely hold. Don't risk a fire hazard, not everything needs to be plugged in at once. Do not allow wires to trail across floors.

If you have any concerns about any of the electrical appliances or sockets in the property, please let us know immediately.

Financial Hardship

If you are experiencing financial hardship, we recommend you contact our Advice and Support service (within the Students' Union), who will be able to assist you and advise you whether there is any support they can provide for you.

Phone: 01707 285022

Email: advice@hertfordshire.su or asc@herts.ac.uk

Opening Hours are:

Monday to Friday, 10-4pm.

Fire Safety

Did you know that people living in rented or shared accommodation are seven times more likely to have a fire (Fire Safety, 2012).

Ensure that all fire exits are kept clear at all times. The fire doors must be kept closed at all times and not propped open. Please ensure that the hallways, staircases and landings are kept free from clutter (such as, boxes, unwanted mail, takeaway menus and shoes). The fire blanket mounted in the kitchen is there for your safety and must not be removed.

Ensure that you test your smoke alarms (unless these are operated via a fire panel) each week, if you require assistance with this or advice, please let us know.

Ensure that you do not remove batteries from a smoke detector or interfere with the operation of a fire detector. Not only does this compromise yours and your housemate's personal safety, it can endanger lives. We take a very strict approach on this and we do apply charges to tenants whereby there is evidence of interference (refer to the Tenant Tariff of Charges for further information).

Do not prop open the fire doors in any room of the property. These are installed for your personal safety and must not be interfered with. We take a very strict approach on this and we do apply charges to tenants whereby there is evidence of interference (refer to the Tenant Tariff of Charges for further information).

Do not use candles or tea lights. They are one of the main causes of house fire in student accommodation. When left unattended they can cause other items to catch fire. Incidents in the past have seen aerosols explode and causing severe damage to property – thank fully no one was hurt in the event – please think twice!

For your own safety, we also advise you to plan an escape route within the property and be aware of anything to consider, making sure everyone knows how to escape. Ensure that all fire exits are kept clear and do not prop fire doors open – they are fitted for your safety.

Do not smoke within the property. It is not permitted to smoke on the grounds of the property and again we take this very seriously. Cigarettes result in more household fire deaths and injuries than any other causes. You will be fined if evidence of smoking is found.

If you do discover a fire, don't panic. Raise the alarm, ensure everyone in the property is aware and that fire doors are closed behind you. Exit the property immediately. Call 999, asking for the Fire Service, speak clearly and let them know if everyone is accounted for. If you do not have the phone on you, go to a neighbour and use their phone.

DO NOT RE-ENTER THE PROPERTY.

Health Services

Registering with a GP

If you are moving into the Hatfield area, either on campus or in the community, you need to register with a GP. You may do this at the Medical Centre or with another local GP. The Medical Centre is situated in the heart of College Lane campus. It provides a full range of medical and nursing services for its patients.

Medical Centre opening hours are:

Mon-Fri (term time) 9am – 5pm

Mon-Fri (vacation time) 9am – 12pm

If you require a doctor please make an appointment.

Tel no: 01707 284444 – off campus

Ext. 4444 – on campus

You may also see a nurse between 9am – 12 noon without an appointment.

If you are ill during the day contact the Medical Centre. If you are ill at night or at the weekends and you require a doctor, one is available outside of office hours for emergencies only and may be contacted on the above number.

Housemates

Sharing can be very difficult at times. Any annoying habits will be magnified and therefore hard to ignore. You don't have cleaners for your bathrooms or kitchens and you all have to be responsible for bills being paid. If you are the lead tenant we will communicate, in most cases, directly with you. The lead tenant is responsible for ensuring all information is passed to all tenants.

There are no golden rules for a successful house share.

If someone has joined an already established group please bare this in mind and welcome them.

Successful sharing is based on patience, making allowances and an effort to work together. Do your

bit when it comes to cleaning and don't leave it all to one or two housemates they will soon get fed up with the responsibility

Insurance – Personal Possessions

It is your responsibility as tenants, to adequately insure your personal belongings within the property. The Landlord will have buildings insurance; however it is strongly advised that you get adequate insurance. Please speak with us if you require any advice.

Internet

Most of our properties have existing broadband facilities installed. You are by all means allowed to set up your service using the existing facilities; however you cannot make any changes to the service installed without the Landlord's permission. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Landlord's Agent.

Leaving mid-tenancy

If you need to leave your property mid-tenancy, it is important to remember that all our agreements are for a fixed term, which does not permit a tenant to leave and surrender their financial legal obligations. However, you are able to replace yourself within the tenancy and surrender your legal obligations. Your liability will end when the new tenant signs the new tenancy agreement.

We can provide advice when looking for a replacement, so please pop in to discuss this with us.

Once you have found your replacement tenant, you will both need to come in to the office to organise the change. As you are part of a joint tenancy, all tenants currently within the property, must email us a confirmation that they are happy with the proposed replacement tenant. Once we have received confirmation, we will then issue new agreements (this allows the new tenant and current tenants, seven days to sign and return). Please be aware, your liability for the rent and property do not end until the new agreement has been signed by all parties and returned to us.

There are charges that apply to leaving mid-tenancy, as outlined within your tenant tariff of charges. There is a prevailing charge for a professional interim inspection by our external company. This inspection will assess the condition and cleanliness of the property once you leave, to assess if there are any deposit deductions that need to be made from your deposit before we return it.

If you do decide to leave mid-tenancy, we cannot guarantee you will find a replacement tenant. We can only provide advice regarding where to look for those needing rooms. It is your responsibility as the tenant to find your replacement tenant.

Light bulbs

These are the tenant's responsibility to replace as and when required. Strip lights are however, not the tenant's responsibility. Please contact us to report a strip light or other bulb that requires replacing.

Monthly Inspections

We inspect your property every month (unless stated otherwise), however we are always happy to bring inspections forward if there are issues you wish us to look into. We will always provide 24 hours' notice prior to accessing the property unless there is an emergency situation. If an inspection appointment has been made and you cannot attend, you must inform us as a minimum of 4 hours

prior to the inspection taking place; otherwise you may be liable for a failed inspection charge of £25.

We inspect the property in order to assess many areas (some we have already mentioned; safety, cleanliness and condition of the property). If there is any feedback to report to tenants, we will give this verbally if a tenant is present and then also in a report that will be emailed to all tenants.

If you have a Grade A Smoke Alarm System and Panel in place, our instructed Fire Safety team will inspect and test all the alarms each month, again 24 hours' notice will be provided. The contractors will have keys to access the property, once notice has been given.

Out of Hours Emergency Contact

The contact service for out of hours is provided by a third party who we have an agreement with.

If you have an emergency out of hours issue then call **07970869315**. You will receive an automated response and provided with a number of options. If your option does require immediate attention you will speak to an advisor who will help you with your emergency and if necessary call the relevant contractor to resolve. They will also contact the Housing Manager if necessary.

Please remember this service is for emergencies only.

Even though emergencies are rare, it is important for our tenants to be aware of the types of emergencies that can arise when in a property and how to deal with these.

Gas Leaks (suspected or just smell gas?)

This must be reported to the LetSU team as soon as possible if during office hours (Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm) on 01707 286152 or 01707 286338. Or out of hours, please call **07970869315**.

Call the National Grid on 0800 111 999. You will need to be prepared to answer some questions regarding the suspected gas leak and provide an accurate address of the property.

You will need to:

- Turn the gas off at the meter
- Open all doors and windows
- Notify all tenants in the property
- Avoid any naked flames or electrical switches

If this occurs, please ensure once it has been assessed by the National Grid, inform us if not already done so in order for our contractor to be contacted to ensure it is all safe.

Locked Out (locksmith related issues)

If you are locked out of your property during office hours, then please come down to our offices and we will assist with getting you access.

If you lose your key, you will be charged for replacement key.

If out of hours, then you will need to find an alternative place to stay (where possible) and contact us the next morning. If this is not possible, you will need to contact our out of hour's number on **07970869315** – out of hour's service who will call a locksmith to come and gain access to the property. Please note you will be charged for the locksmith to attend.

Serious Water Leaks/Flooding

In the event of a serious water leak, please turn off the water supply and any electrics (via the fuse board) that may be in contact with the water and contact us immediately on **07970869315**.

Fire Alarms and Smoke Detectors Faults

All smoke detectors and alarms are both mains interlinked and backed up by battery. You must not tamper, interfere or remove the batteries from any detectors or alarms in the property. They are installed for your personal safety and are a legal requirement. Tampering with fire alarm systems is a criminal offence and can be subject to prosecution by fire authorities.

These are checked monthly either by us during our inspections or if a Grade A system by Black and White contractors. We are legally obligated to carry out inspections and further information on this can be found in this handbook.

It is your responsibility to ensure you inform us immediately if you suspect that your fire system has a fault. If you have a **Grade A** fire alarm system and panel in place and find there is a fault on the panel, then please call the number displayed on the panel for **Amida Fire Safety on 01462 689078**. This is a 24 hour covered system.

If your system is a **Grade D** system then you are asked to test the smoke detector in your room once a week in addition to the communal areas. You will be advised upon this during your introductory visit.

Parties

Noise carries much further late at night especially in the summer. Complaints are at their highest at Start of Term and when the weather gets warmer.

If you are thinking of having a party then please be aware of the following advice and warnings:

- Discuss with your neighbours and negotiate a time to finish – maybe invite them?
- Don't think that posting a note through your neighbours doors makes it OK for a party
- Do not have a party mid-week when most people have to get up for work/school in the morning
- Keep doors and windows closed as much as possible.
- Do not advertise on Facebook and limit the number invited
- You are ultimately responsible for the behaviour of those you invite
- If the University receive a number of complaints or a report from the Police or Environmental Health you may be disciplined for bringing the University into disrepute which may seriously affect your academic career; see Sanctions and Penalties at the end of this book.
- Clear up any mess left by your guests outside the property
- Ensure your guests leave quietly
- Control noise levels as much as you can. Position speakers carefully. Keep windows closed if possible

Posters

We do not advise the use of posters in bedrooms, however if you choose to do this, they must only be affixed to the walls with white-tac. All markings must be removed prior to the end of the tenancy, including any grease marks that the white-tac may leave behind. You may need to clean these off. It is very expensive to have rooms repainted due to white-tac markings, so please use responsibly.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted within any of the student houses. If we see any evidence of smoking within the property, we may apply a charge to the tenant group of up to £200.

Repairs and Maintenance – how to report

Repair Response Times

We aim to achieve the following response times depending upon the type of issue and whether it can be resolved upon the first visit. If parts need ordering these times may vary however if the issue relates to heating in winter for example you will be given alternative means whilst completion is pending.

The times are also dependent upon your cooperation when arranging works to be carried out.

Priority One – Emergency repairs – within 24 hours

Any repairs required in order to avoid a danger to health, risk to the safety of residents or serious damage to buildings or internal contents. In circumstances where this is not practicable, landlords will make best temporary arrangements.

Examples include:

- Damage that puts people or buildings at serious risk
- Total loss of heating in winter months
- Total loss of gas supply
- Total loss of electrical power
- Loss of water supply or a burst water main
- Serious water leaks/flooding
- Insecure outside doors or windows
- Blocked or leaking foul drain or soil stack
- Blocked or no-flushing toilet (if the only toilet in the property)

Priority Two – Urgent repairs – within 3 working days

Repairs to defects, which materially affect the comfort or convenience of the residents

Examples include:

- Blocked drains, sinks, basins and toilets (where there is another one working in the property)
- Total loss of hot water in summer months (except vulnerable households)
- Minor plumbing leaks
- Minor electrical faults
- Defective flooring or stair treads if causing trip hazard

Priority Three – Routine repairs – within 30 days

Reactive repairs not falling within the above categories – within 30 working days of report of defect.

Examples include:

- General joinery repairs, for example easing/adjusting doors and windows
- Non-urgent electrical work not listed above

For reporting Monday to Friday 10am-5pm

Call: 01707 286152 or 01707 286156 (leave a voicemail if no answer)

Email: studenthousing@hertfordshire.su

For reporting out of hours (emergencies only)

Call: **07970869315**

Recycling and Rubbish

Correct Presentation of Wheelie Bins

- On the boundary of your property.
- Ready for collection from 5am on the day.
- Lids should be closed.
- No excess waste
- Overflowing bins will not be emptied
- Do not present any earlier than 5pm the night before.
- Return them to your property, preferably in your back garden.

Contaminated Wheelie Bins

If you put incorrect items in your bin it will not be emptied and you will be notified via a leaflet on the contaminated bin. You will then need to either remove the incorrect items or arrange for it to be collected with a charge

Household Waste Recycling Centre

Excess waste and bulky items can be taken to the local tip for free

Further Wheelie Bin Information and booking of council services call 01707 357000 or www.welhat.gov.uk

Week One

Recycling bin – Black bin with blue lid

Recycling should be loose, do not bag

Glass and cans

Disposable plastic packaging

Inner box - Paper

Do not put the following in your recycling bin

Crisp packets

Polystyrene

Juice cartons

Compost bin – Brown bin

Food waste

Cardboard including shredded paper

Organic garden waste

Do not put the following in your compost bin

Plastics

Waterproofed card

Week Two

Rubbish bin – Black bin

For all rubbish which cannot be recycled and will go to landfill. This rubbish is best bagged before placing in bin

Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP)

Landlords are required by law to protect deposits with a Government Authorised Scheme. This will help to safeguard your money and also offers an Independent Adjudication Service in the event of a dispute. TDS ensures that you receive all or part of your deposit back at the end of your tenancy when you are entitled to it. Disputes are easier to resolve under the schemes and tenants are encouraged to look after the property whilst they are living there. Your deposit is protected by The Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS). We provide you with:

- Contact details of tenancy deposit scheme used
- Contact details of the landlord
- Information explaining the purpose of the dispute
- How to apply for the release of the deposit
- What to do in the event of a dispute

At the end of the tenancy the condition and contents of the property will be checked against the Inventory list as agreed and checked at the start of the tenancy. We then agree with you and the Landlord, as to how much of the deposit will be returned.

TV Licence

The Law

If you are going to be sharing a house, a separate tenancy agreement would normally mean your room is classified a separately occupied place. In this case, if you have a TV in your room, you will need your own TV License. However, if there is only one TV in a communal area, then only one TV License is required. Similarly, if your house can be treated as one place shared by all, then only one TV License is required - a joint tenancy agreement would normally indicate that there is only one separately occupied place.

If you are going away for summer and you're not going to need your license again before it expires, you can claim a refund for any completely unused quarter (three consecutive calendar months e.g. July, August, September). You'll probably need to buy your TV License at the beginning of your first term in order to receive a refund, so the earlier you get it, the better chance you have of claiming some money back. Contact the TV licensing agency on the website for more information.

You watch or record television as they're being shown on TV – online, on a TV, or on any device (laptops apply)	Whatever device you use (laptop, PC, mobile phone, games console, DVD recorder or anything else). This includes programmes watched online at the same time as they're shown on TV (e.g. live sport).
You live in a shared house	If there is a joint tenancy agreement for the whole house, you may only need one license. If unsure, you must call 0300 790 6131.

Breaking the law

If you break the law you will face the consequences which could include the following:

- Your house may be visited by an Enforcement Officer
- You may be cautioned and have a statement taken as evidence
- If the decision is made to prosecute, you will receive a summons to court
- You risk a fine of up to £1,000 plus legal costs... plus £145.50 for the TV License you should have bought before you used your TV at university.

How to pay:

The current cost of a license for a colour TV is £147.00 annually (November 2017).

This can be paid in one lump sum or be broken down into smaller instalments which can be paid by a debit or credit card (Switch/Maestro, Solo, Delta, Visa or MasterCard are acceptable) or you can set up a direct debit with your bank.

Alternatively you can pay the full amount by cheque, payable to 'TV Licensing'

(Be sure to write your name and address on the back of the cheque) and post it to:

Customer Services

TV Licensing

Bristol BS98 1TL

You can also now pay for your license online by visiting www.tvlicensing.co.uk/students

Or if you prefer to pay for your TV License by phone then call 0300 790 6131 or via PayPoint

Utility Bills – the how's, what's and when's?

When you move in, ensure you take all the meter readings and contact the Utility companies to ensure that they provide you with an accurate bill.

When you register with the Utility companies, ensure that all tenant's names are provided. You may be required to submit a copy of your tenancy agreement for proof of this.

You may find some post labelled 'The Occupier', so please open this and follow the instructions (normally explaining the registration process for setting up the bills). If there are no obvious signs of who your energy supplier is, you contact the numbers below:

To find out your Electricity Supplier: 0870 196 3082

To find out your Gas Supplier: 0870 608 1524

You must ensure that you register with the utility companies, otherwise you will be disconnected (especially if the previous tenants have unpaid bills outstanding). Reconnection will often carry a charge and this can be fairly costly (the tenant would be liable for this due to failure to register their tenancy with the suppliers).

Vacation Periods

To ensure that you enjoy your university study breaks and holidays as much as possible, we have included a few tips below to ensure you have a safe and secure property to return to;

- Ensure that all doors and windows are locked and secure prior to leaving
- It may be worth investing in a couple of timer switches and plugging in a lamp to deter burglars. However make sure this is done safely and ensure the lamp is PAT tested and away from fire risks.
- Don't leave valuables in the property when you are away, if you do leave belongings, ensure they are not on display to anyone walking by
- Ensure you empty the fridge of any food products that will expire whilst away. If you decide to empty it completely and turn it off, leave the door open otherwise it will go mouldy
- Empty all internal rubbish bins before leaving. If you have a good relationship with your neighbours or landlord maybe ask them to put out your external rubbish bin out on collection day. Do not leave excess bags out for collection as these require pre-booked arrangements with additional payment. If left over the vacation period may result in environmental enforcement.
- If during winter months, leave the heating on a low background temperature such as 10°C, so that the radiators and pipes are kept in a good condition and do not freeze over
- If your property does use an energy meter (pre-paid card), ensure that it has adequate funds to keep the electricity running over the vacation period, otherwise the electricians may cut out

which can cause issues for your freezer contents, smoke alarms/detectors and emergency lighting (which are very costly to repair)

End of Tenancy – what to do and what to expect

Section 21 Notice

Two months prior to the end of the tenancy, you will be issued with a Section 21 notice. This is a legal requirement to inform you of the date that the Landlord will require legal possession of the property again and that you must have vacated. You just need to keep this for your records.

Checkout Guidance Support

About a month before your end of tenancy, we will email you our 'Checkout Guidance Notes' that will help you and your housemates clean your property and not forget vital areas before your checkout inspection. We want to support you as much as possible regarding your deposit returns and if you follow the guidelines we provide, this will help. We also carry out our own mini checkout inspection (as part of our last monthly inspection), to highlight any particular areas that will require attention.

Checkout Inspection

Our external inspectors will contact you to arrange your checkout inspection (usually the date of your end of tenancy or the following day).

The inspectors will take photographs, assess condition and document any damages or areas that do not meet the standard of the agreed inventory (when your tenancy commenced).

Returning your Keys

If your inspection is taking place on your end of tenancy date, you will hand all keys back to the inspector.

If you have arranged for your inspection to be after your end of tenancy dates, you must return all of your keys to us by 5pm, on your move out date.

If you choose to move out earlier (whilst retaining your liability for the property until your end of tenancy date), then you will need to hand your keys to us in the office and complete our 'Early Key Return' form.

If you do not return your keys to us, you will be charged (as per the tenant tariff of charges) for key/lock replacement or the costs of daily rents.

Deposit Deductions

You may be subject to deposit deductions if:

- The property is not up to the clean standard it was when you moved in (unless otherwise informed)
- You have left rubbish in the property or outside (which is outside of the refuse bin or contaminated waste)
- You have outstanding rent or charges owed to the LetSU housing team
- You have not returned your keys at the end of the tenancy or have not returned them on time
- There is damage caused in the property that was not noted during on the inventory at the start of the tenancy

Deposit Returns

Once the checkout inspection has been completed and a report received, we will discuss the findings with the Landlord and propose a set of deductions which will then be presented to you and the

other tenants. Once an agreement has been made between all tenants and Landlord's Agent (on the Landlord's behalf), we will return the deposit to you (if applicable) within ten working days. This is providing you have paid all your utility bills and proved the accounts are closed.

If you are unhappy with the proposed deductions then you can discuss this with us further; please put your proposals in writing. If we are unable to reach an agreement, the matter will then need to be raised as a 'dispute' with the Tenancy Dispute Service Limited (money protection scheme). The case will be assessed by them and they will make the final decision based on the evidence presented by both parties.

For further information please refer to your TDS leaflet presented following your deposit payment and within your Tenant Information Pack, or follow the link: <https://www.tds.gb.com/tenants-overview.html>

If there is money outstanding, despite using the remaining deposit, this will be owed directly to LetSU.

Refuse Disposal

When vacating the property, remove all rubbish from the Property, except one black refuse sacks worth which must left inside the appropriate refuse wheelie bin as per the local authority's requirements. If you have a lot of rubbish, you can contact the Council to pay for their collection service. Visit: <http://www.welhat.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5550> for further information.

Redirection of Post

Don't forget to redirect your post to your new address.

This can be done by following this link: <https://www.royalmail.com/personal/receiving-mail/redirection> and completing your details.

Tenancy Renewal

If you are not finishing University, why not consider renewing your tenancy with LetSU? We offer first refusal to all current tenants (before we advertise the properties for the next academic year).

If you decide to change group size and your current property is no longer suitable for you, please contact us and we will help find you the best house for your group.

Feel free to come and see us at any point to discuss this.

Your DEPOSIT – What to do prior to your vacating the property at the end of your tenancy

To ensure all or the maximum deposit refunded to you use the check list below. Students seriously underestimate the cost of repairs and simple cleaning costs. We use a third party to carry out our checkout inspections to ensure it is unbiased and you are invited to be present. A full account of the condition and itemised list is taken in direct comparison to the inventory which you would/should have checked and returned signed at the start of your tenancy. The report will also have full photos to support it. From this report, any damages or condition will be assessed as to whether they are your responsibility. Costs are determined with our contractors and then you are notified. Once an agreement is made the remaining or all of your deposit will be returned within 10 working days of the agreement. If in the event of your not having taken care or caused criminal damage to the property the cost exceeds to total deposit amount then the landlord may consider taking action to recover costs plus court costs.

Those of you who lived on campus in your first year will also know that returning your keys late may incur costs such as further rent charges and changing locks.

We will send out advice prior to the end of your tenancy to support you in getting your maximum deposit returned in addition to the checklist provided in this handbook.

If you are paying the energy and telephone bills they need to be sorted out. You should contact the utility companies and arrange for final reading to be taken. It is your responsibility to tell them you are moving out and to have your name taken off the bills.

Arrange a house meeting to divide the work between you. Individuals should be responsible for their own rooms but come to an arrangement for the communal areas. Try not to leave individually and leave the responsibility on one person. You all have an interest in the property and want your deposits back.

End of year parties:

Really not a good idea!! Parties can result in horrendous cleanups and in some cases damage which will come out of your pocket. They can also result in disciplinaries at the University if they cause upset your neighbours. This can lead to students receiving first warnings and fines of over £100 each for bringing the university into disrepute – **DON'T DO IT – IT'S NOT WORTH IT!!**

To give you an idea of what an owner will expect:



Bedroom not properly cleaned

cleaning the room would cost about **£50 (not including vat)** and moving the furniture back to the appropriate room could cost a further **£20-£30**.



Clean all communal areas

To clean up the coffee stains and remove the rubbish from this table could cost **£10 (not including vat)**. There also may be a call out charge.



Clean your toilet regularly

This could cost **£50 (not including vat)** to descale otherwise.



Fridge/freezer not defrosted

to have this defrosted, the water mopped up and wiped clean would cost about **£65 (not including vat)**.



A kitchen left in very bad condition

To return this kitchen to a good condition would cost about **£250 (not including vat)**.



Cooker not cleaned

To clean a cooker in a very bad condition can cost up to **£95 (not including vat)**.



Bag it and bin it

This would cost you over **£80 (not including vat)** to remove.



Vacuum all communal areas

This corridor could cost **£30 (not including vat)** to have cleaned commercially. Have you used any fire equipment inappropriately - these fire extinguishers cost **£30** each to refill.



An iron burn on the carpet

If an ironing board is provided then any iron burn is entirely your fault. Iron burns on new carpets or in the centre of any carpet will mean paying for a new carpet - it is never possible to "patch" a carpet. The cost of a carpet will vary according to the size of the room and the type of carpet, but in the carpet is of industrial contract quality then a cost of **£200-£400 (not including vat)** is possible.



Failing to return keys on time

The cost of replacing a key (depending on whether it is a suited system) can be between **£10 - £30 (not including vat)**. If a number of keys are not returned or there is a security implication then the locks and all keys may have to be replaced at very short notice (for incoming tenants) and this can cost around **£200 (not including vat)**.

DEPOSIT CHECKLIST

Kitchen

- The cooker including the oven cleaned thoroughly – no greasy residue or burnt on food
- The fridge/freezer is empty – defrosted – cleaned – switched off with the door left open
- All surfaces and floor cleaned
- Cupboards emptied and wiped clean
- Bins emptied

Lounge and Passageways

- All communal areas have been vacuumed
- All rubbish has been removed
- Walls free of scuff marks and dirt
- Skirting wiped

Bedrooms

- All rooms have been vacuumed
- All personal possessions removed
- All posters, blue tack and sellotape removed
- All rubbish is removed
- All furniture that was in the room at the beginning of the tenancy has been put back
- The curtains are hung properly
- Paintwork and window sills have been wiped
- Furniture is empty and polished
- Skirting wiped

Bathroom

- The toilet, sink and bath have been cleaned
- All surfaces are clean including floor
- All toiletries have been removed and all bins emptied
- Tiling and sealant free from mould and grease

Garden

All rubbish placed in correct wheelie bin and any excess removed by arrangement with the council payable by you or taking to the local dump.

Complaints Procedure

Hertfordshire Students' Union and more specifically LetSU take the safety and needs of their tenants very seriously.

We welcome feedback on all our services and contact you may have had with us, in order for us to be consistently improving and better tailoring our service to your needs and expectations.

We deal with all complaints promptly, effectively and in a courteous manner, above all remaining professional at all times.

Our complaints procedure is below:

In the first instance, please discuss your concerns with the LetSU staff member you have been dealing with to try and find a resolution as promptly for both parties. This discussion can be in person in our office or in writing.

If you are unhappy with the response, or the complaint warrants a further investigation, then you must submit your complaint in writing to:

LetSU Housing Manager
Hertfordshire Students' Union
College Lane
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL10 9AB
Email: s.dempsey@herts.ac.uk

The complaint must contain a clear outline of your concerns, any supporting information and provide your expected outcome.

If you feel that the department has still not been able to resolve your complaint, or the complaint is about LetSU then please submit your complaint in writing to:

Director of Engagement and Communications
Hertfordshire Students' Union
College Lane
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL10 9AB
Email: r.hobbs@herts.ac.uk

Timescales

LetSU aims to provide a response to your complaint within 14 days of receiving your concerns. However, in more complex cases this may take longer to include investigations. Although, we will keep you up to date with the progress of your concerns and outline any delays that we may expect.

What next?

Whilst dealing with the complaint, LetSU can:

Uphold the complaint and take the appropriate course of actions

Dismiss the complaint, where it is deemed that LetSU can take no action in order to resolve the situation or where there is no case to answer, or that the complaint is malicious.

Exclusions to this procedure

LetSU cannot be involved in any complaints that have already been involved with the Courts or is pending police action or a criminal charge is in process.

Useful Phone Numbers

LetSU office number	01707 286152
LetSU out of hours number	07970869315
University of Hertfordshire number	01707 284000
Office of the Dean of Students	01707 284096
Welwyn & Hatfield Borough Council	01707 357000
Police Non-Emergency number	101
National Grid UK (gas supplier check)	0870 608 1524
Electricity Supplier Helpline	0870 196 3024
Emergency Services (police, fire, ambulance)	999
National Grid Emergency	0800 111 999

Useful Websites

LetSU website

<https://letsu.co.uk>

Hertfordshire Students' Union

<http://hertfordshire.su/>

Welwyn and Hatfield Borough Council

<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5550>

Hertfordshire Constabulary Police

<http://www.herts.police.uk/>

National Grid UK

<http://www2.nationalgrid.com/uk/>

Electricity Safety

<http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/>

Fire Safety Hertfordshire

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/commsafe/commprotect/hfrs/>

The Tenancy Dispute Service Ltd

<https://www.tds.gb.com/tenants-overview.html>