

Security in your home

Union Advice Centre

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Open:

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11am - 5pm

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ueastudent.com/advice

HOUSING ADVICE

The majority of students live in shared accommodation. When arranging to share a property it is important to be clear about your own 'wants' and 'needs'. If these are not made clear in the house hunting phase then difficulties can emerge during what is normally a fixed term tenancy, when it can be difficult to leave the property.

Selecting Housemates

There are no golden rules that make for a good house share. There is a theory that mixed households tend to work better than single sex households, and that one woman sharing a house with several men tends not to be a good arrangement. Think about the kind of house share you would prefer and remember that you may be living with those people for a year.

It is worth considering the pros and cons of living with people you know and people you do not know. Sharing with strangers can mean a more formal arrangement, which can protect you from the squabbles that living with friends can bring. The disadvantage is that you will not know what the people are like until you move in with them. On the flip-side, living with friends can mean the end of a beautiful friendship once you realise that they never wash up or do the cleaning.

Finally, you may feel perfectly at ease with the group you are to share with, but there may be times when you are alone at night with just one member of the group. Will you still feel secure?

Considerations before signing an agreement

When viewing a property prior to letting it is important that you are accompanied. Never arrange to meet a stranger at a property by yourself.

If you are considering taking a property then try and visit it after dark before you sign any agreement, to check the safety of the house and the area it is in:

- Is the property set back from the road?
- How much street lighting is there nearby?

- Is there a dark alley leading to the house/on the journey to the house from campus?
- How far is the nearest bus stop/shop and what is the route like to each place?
- If women are already living in the house ask them what the area is like and how they have felt about living there.

Household Security

Consider the level of security of the building before signing an agreement. Check the front and rear door. The house should have solid wood external doors. Ideally, external doors should also be fitted with five lever mortice locks.

Internal locks are not a security necessity. However, it is important that internal doors (bedrooms in particular) are fitted with a privacy bolt which keeps people out of the room when you are in it.

Ground floor windows should either be locked or, if sash/sliding windows, have blocks fitted to prevent the window from opening more than about 10cm. Windows on upper floors overlooking an offshoot or outbuilding roof should also have locks.

If you would feel happier with a spy-hole in the front door ask for one to be fitted. Chains on doors are important and should be used.

Living in Rented Accommodation

You are paying rent to live in the property as your home and have the right to 'quiet enjoyment'. The owner of the property, or their agent, has a right to inspect the property, or come round, only at reasonable times of the day and with 24 hours notice of any visit. If your Landlord is coming round without notice this is harassment and they are breaching their agreement with you.

Any kind of interference with your personal belongings, threats, verbal abuse, intimidating behaviour, sexist and/or racist remarks are also harassment, which is a criminal offence.

Contact the Union Advice Centre if you experience harassment of any kind, or in an emergency contact the Police. If the Police do become involved, even if you do not press charges, a report will be made of your complaint and this could be useful in any legal action for compensation that you may wish to pursue.

Some Tenancy Agreements indicate that the tenants are responsible and legally liable for the behaviour of other people that they invite into the property. Again, talk through the situation with an Advice Worker in the Union Advice Centre and explore what options are open to you if you are being harassed in any way by a guest.

Useful Numbers

Police (emergency)	999
(non-emergency)	08454 564567
Rape Crisis	01603 667687
Samaritans	08457 909090
UEA Nightline	01603 503504
UEA Security Lodge	01603 592352
Union Advice Centre	01603 593463

Women's Room

Any women who does not feel safe in her own home or who needs a safe space to be alone can request to stay in the Women's Room for a few nights. If you need a key call into the Union Advice Centre (see front of leaflet for opening hours) and out of hours contact the Security Lodge.

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