

COVID-19

MOVING-IN & LIVING HOUSING GUIDE

The information that follows is correct at the time of writing, but in the current situation, the information is changing quickly. We therefore recommend you check the links we have included to ensure you receive the most up to date information.

Key points

- If you have signed an accommodation contract for the academic year 2020/21 - this agreement will still be legally binding.
- If you are legally liable for your rent, you should continue to pay it.
- Speak to your landlord or agent and see if you can negotiate an agreement with them. Whilst there is no obligation for them to make any concessions, you may be able to arrange something.
- If you have any questions about your housing situation, you can contact the Advice Service via email at advice@le.ac.uk



Students in Private Rented Accommodation

First and foremost, despite the outbreak of the virus, you are still legally bound to continue to carry out your contractual obligations in relation to your tenancy agreement.

Tenants – including students - remain liable for their rent. For information regarding the available financial support available to students please visit our [FAQ page](#).

This means that, at this stage, (and regardless of whether or not you decide to go back home whilst some teaching has been moved online) you are still expected to continue to pay your rent until the end of your tenancy. This is a legal requirement and, if you do not pay your rent, your landlord could take you to court to recover the full amount.

We would recommend you get in touch with your individual lettings agent or landlord if you have any questions about what will happen to any belongings you leave in a property (if you are not to return before the end of your tenancy agreement for instance), or any other concerns relating to your private rented property tenancies.

A letter, co-signed by the Students Union Executive team and University Senior Management, has now been sent to all private accommodation urging them to release students from their 2019/20 contracts at the earliest opportunity. Once we have any updates on this, or any announcements from the government about the same thing, we will let you know. The letter can be found under the 'Template Letter's' section on our [website](#).

If you need help negotiating with your landlord or agent to make alternative arrangements for paying your rent, you can use our letter template (see [website](#)). You can also attach this useful [Rent Deferment Questionnaire](#), created by Rightmove, to get the ball rolling.

The Government have outlined the support that they can offer to landlords and tenants in the private rented sector. This information is available at [gov.uk](#).

The support focuses on:

- Putting measures in place which delay evictions
- Encouraging tenants to work with landlords to set up a rent payment scheme.

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Moving In

We know that many of you will have already signed accommodation contracts for the 2020/21 academic year and will be due to move-in soon.

Check-In & Inventories

We would suggest that you check the property and complete the inventory on the day the contract starts, if you can. Check the property is clean and ready to move into. Report any repairs or other issues to the landlord in writing or by email and make sure you take photos.

An inventory is a list of the furniture and other items belonging to the landlord but it should also state the condition of the property and furniture.

Make sure you note anything which is already damaged, missing or dirty, however minor. Make sure that it is an accurate record of the property, it may prevent you from being later charged for damage which you did not cause.

Sign and return it to the landlord within the time period specified in your contract (normally 7 days). Keep a copy for yourself and also take dated photos or a video of the property and especially any serious problems.

You may also want to ask the landlord if there are any instruction manuals etc. so that you know how to use any equipment. Find out where the electrical fuse box is and water stop tap. Check any smoke/ fire alarms are working (no property should be rented out to a tenant without these). If the house has a boiler and uses gas, you could request to see the gas safety certificate. We would always recommend that you request a demonstration of how to operate the boiler.

If the property is in a very poor condition and/or you are unable to move in due to the condition, take photographs and seek housing advice straightaway. In the first instance you should inform your landlord/ estate agent; they should tell you when you can expect the repairs to be done. If repairs are not done, contact the [environmental health department](#) at Leicester City Council for help. They must take action if they think the problems could harm you or cause a nuisance to others.

If the property is unfit, and has serious health and safety issues or hazards, you may be able to walk away from the contract, however, this is rare. This would not apply if the property simply needed cleaning.

Cleaning

Letting agents and landlords should take steps to ensure any properties are prepared ready for new tenants. Due to COVID-19 this is even more important. Ideally the landlord will have ensured the property has been thoroughly cleaned to minimise any potential spread of the virus in line with [government advice](#).

However, as there is often very little time between student tenancies this might not always happen. Report any issues to the landlord straightaway, ideally in writing (email, text and make sure you keep a copy/ photos).

If you need to move in and the property has not been cleaned, we advise that you at least clean door handles, surfaces and bathrooms with a detergent to prevent any risk from COVID-19. If you have to purchase cleaning products ask the landlord to reimburse you, so make sure you keep a receipt.

If it is in a really poor condition and the landlord is refusing to clean the property, take photos and seek housing advice straightaway.



Living alone

If you live alone and you start showing symptoms of Coronavirus, you should self-isolate for 7 days.

You should contact your Landlord, they may have procedures in place which could help you.

If you are in University accommodation contact accommodation@le.ac.uk

If you are not sure if you have symptoms see [NHS: Check if you have coronavirus symptoms](#).

The Students' Union Safety Bus will also be available to students, during the COVID-19 outbreak, especially those who are self-isolating/ shielding. If you need a Click & Collect order to be delivered, a prescription to be collected or a letter to be posted please complete the form [here](#) and someone will be in touch shortly to discuss arrangements. Two metres distance will be maintained at all times.

Living in shared accommodation

If you would like advice on how to 'live' within a shared living situation to prevent the spread of infection, the government has released [the following guidance](#).

Stay at home: [guidance](#) for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection

You must let the property manager and anyone else living within the same accommodation know if you have symptoms as you will all need to self-isolate for 14 days. For more information and advice see [GOV.UK: Stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

Landlords do not have to provide alternative accommodation for tenants if others in the property contract the virus.

To maintain health and safety, you should clean more often and use disinfectant cleaning products. For further information see COVID-19: [Government advice about how to clean a property](#).

Shared living spaces & household socialising

Sharing a bathroom

- Set up a rota if you can
- If someone you are living with has the virus, make sure they use the bathroom last for washing
- Use your own towels
- Clean the bathroom thoroughly before leaving

Sharing a kitchen

- Set up a rota system for using the kitchen
- Any self-isolated person should:
 - wear a face mask
 - use the kitchen after everyone else
 - take their food back to their room
- The best way to wash up is with a dishwasher
- Tableware and kitchen utensils should not be shared without being thoroughly cleaned first
- Where possible keep food in your rooms. If the food needs to be chilled or frozen, make sure that each person's item is clearly identifiable as being theirs

Laundry

- Always wash items in line with the manufacturer's instructions
- Use the warmest water setting and dry items thoroughly (in line with the manufacturer's instructions)
- Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an unwell person can still be washed with other people's items
- Do not shake dirty laundry. This will help to minimise the possibility of dispersing the virus through the air.
- Clean and disinfect anything used for transporting laundry with your usual products, in line with the [government's cleaning advice](#)

Getting rid of waste

- Waste (including disposable cloths and tissues) from anyone living in the house who are / have been showing symptoms recently should:
 - put it in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full
 - place it in a second bin bag and tied
- This can then be put it with the normal waste after at least 72 hours.

If storage for at least 72 hours is not appropriate, arrange for collection as a [Category B infectious waste](#), through [Leicester City Council](#). They will give orange clinical waste bags to put your bags into so the waste can be sent for appropriate treatment.

Rooms and lounges

- Do not let people into your rooms and keep a minimum of 2 metres (3 steps) from other people in your building when moving around the house
- Do not allow visitors into the building without the permission of the landlord or property manager.
- Please do not hang around or congregate in the hallways, front of building, lounges or kitchens - you must stand 2 metres away from people at all times

Please remember the current advice from the government is:

- If you have any symptoms you must self-isolate for 7 days. This means staying away from everyone
- Symptoms include a new persistent cough and high temperature
- Do not go to your GP, pharmacy or hospital unless you are asked to by a health care professional
- Wash your hands with soap and water often - do this for at least 20 seconds

Support

Campus support

Advice Service

Free, confidential academic, budgeting, housing and signposting advice and guidance.

Phone: +44 (0) 0116 223 1132/ 1184/ 1109

Email: advice@le.ac.uk

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 10:00am to 4:00pm (Visit our [website](#) for information on our service changes).

Website: www.leicesterunion.com/advice

Location: First Floor of the Students' Union, Percy Gee Building

Free Legal Advice Clinic

Student-led society offering support in various legal areas to the Leicester Community. Students, in particular, can seek advice from the Legal Advice Clinic regarding any issues they have with tenancies.

Email: lawadviceclinic@leicester.ac.uk

Website: <https://www.uolprobono.co.uk/lac>

Student Welfare Service

Provide advice on financial issues, childcare and benefits.

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 09:00am to 05:00pm.

Phone: +44 (0) 116 223 1185

Email: welfare@le.ac.uk

Website: www2.le.ac.uk/offices/welfare

Location: Student Services Centre, Charles Wilson Building

Student Counselling & Wellbeing Service

The Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service offers appointments for emotional and mental wellbeing. They offer booked sessions with trained practitioners, ideal for short-term support.

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm

Phone: +44 (0) 116 223 1780

Email: wellbeing@le.ac.uk

Website: www2.le.ac.uk/offices/counselling

Online contact form: [Self-referral form](#)

Location: Student Services Centre, Charles Wilson Building

Community support

Citizens Advice

An independent charity helping people in the local area by providing free, independent, confidential and impartial advice and offering practical, up-to-date information and advice on a wide range of topics, including debt, benefits etc.

Phone: +44 (0) 300 330 1025

Website: www.leicscab.org.uk

Shelter England

Charity providing expert advice and support regarding housing.

Free helpline (8am to 8pm on weekdays and 9am to 5pm on weekends): +44 (0) 808 800 4444

Online chat: england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/webchat

Housing advice pages: england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice

Leicester City Council

The City Council offers support services and advice to private tenants and landlords.

Phone number: +44 (0) 116 454 1001

Website: leicester.gov.uk/your-community/housing/renting-private-housing/

Additional information: gov.uk/renting-out-a-property

Online Resources

University of Leicester: <https://le.ac.uk/coronavirus/information-for-students>

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Government advice: www.gov.uk/coronavirus



leicesterunion.com/advice

Advice Service

advice@le.ac.uk

0116 223 1132/1184/1109

