

**all you need
to know**

**Information for
Landlords
2010**



K E E L E
UNIVERSITY

**Student Accommodation
Lettings Service**

Thank you for your interest in providing accommodation for Keele Students.

Keele University has over 3000 bedrooms on the main campus. However, we are not able to offer accommodation to all our students who would like it. We recommend that students look for properties off campus using our website, www.keelestudentpad.co.uk. This website is where we display properties and rooms that have been registered with us.

This booklet is designed to give you some helpful hints and tips as well as covering some of the legal aspects of renting accommodation. However, more information can be found at www.studentlandlord.com, www.direct.gov.uk or from your local council.

Registering Your Property

Student Accommodation Lettings Service will be displaying properties from 10 March 2010 onwards and you can register your property with us for any **period of three calendar months** from this date. The cost of this is £25.00 (inc VAT) per property.

You should complete a registration form or a continuation form (if you are re-registering your property/ies) giving all the details of the property or single room in your home. The information is then displayed on the www.studentpad.co.uk website. A copy of this registration form is made available to Newcastle Borough Council and adjoining Local Authorities.

You are required to supply the original copy of the current Gas Safety Certificate, Periodic Electrical Inspection Certificate and Energy Performance Certificate (all will be returned to you) with your registration form and the fee. Properties will not be advertised unless we hold valid copies of these certificates. If your certificates expire during your registration period your advert will be taken off the website until new valid certificates are provided (in this case the registration period will not be extended to cover the time not displayed).

Once your three month registration period has expired your property will automatically be removed from Studentpad. You can re-register your property for a further three calendar months, just ensure that all certificates are up to date and pay the registration fee again. As long as your certificates are up to date you can re-register by telephoning Student Accommodation Lettings Service on 01782 734152 and making a payment using a valid debit or credit card.

Students will then contact you directly and an agreement should then be made between the students and yourself to rent the property.

Types of Accommodation

Generally, there are two categories of accommodation required for student housing which are:

A Private House or Flat

A furnished house or flat for a group of students to rent as a private household. A lounge, kitchen and bathroom would be required in the property. The property would be for the sole use of the tenants. It is worth noting that double bedrooms are not in great demand, but occasionally students are willing to share. However, there are also families needing accommodation, usually in a two bedroomed furnished house.

The type of contract to use for a private house is An Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement, copies of which can be purchased from good stationers, from www.studentlandlord.com/tenancyagreement.asp or the Residential Landlords Association www.rla.org.uk. This is a legal contract when completed and is binding on both parties. A contract can also be drawn up by a solicitor.

A Room in a House with a Resident Owner

A furnished room can be offered in a house with a family or single landlord. The tenant would require use of kitchen and bathroom facilities. Some students look for a home environment which includes some meals, however the most common requirement is for a self-catering arrangement.

There isn't a formal tenancy agreement available when renting a room out in your own home, but a rent book should be provided in order to keep a record of payments made. It is useful to draw up some form of written agreement which itemises exactly what the student and landlord can expect, and giving details of what the rent covers. Some landlords offer a room on an inclusive fee, which means that the cost of lighting, heating, hot water and cooking is already included in the figure quoted. The other option is to have a basic room rent, and then calculate a share of the service bills as and when they come in. If meals are offered it is preferable if the total rent, including the cost of meals, is quoted in advance.

The Best Time to Rent

The academic year begins at the end of September. It is divided into two semesters. The first runs from September until January. The second runs from January until June. Please note that there are students who will only require accommodation for one semester. In addition we have postgraduate students who require accommodation for a full calendar year, or longer.

North Staffordshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme

The aim of the North Staffordshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme is to improve both the physical and management standards of the private rented sector within North Staffordshire. This will be accomplished not only through the provision of encouragement, support and incentives but also by actively working with and publicly recognising those landlords who are willing to attain and adhere to good property standards.

The Scheme is a partnership between Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and the North Staffordshire Landlords Association. For more information please see www.landlordaccreditation.co.uk .

Payment

The rent must be decided in advance and quoted on the registration form. Details of whether or not service costs are included in the rent should be specified. Any deposit or retainer should also be specified.

Deposit

Specify the amount per person. This should be paid to the landlord when an agreement has been reached, and should be refunded at the end of the tenancy if everything in the house/room is in order and all bills are paid. Please be aware that Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) has been in force since April 2007 and the landlord or letting agent must protect tenants deposits through a Government backed tenancy deposit scheme. Landlords are advised to familiarise themselves with this legislation and its implications. More information on the different schemes can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/en/TenancyDeposit/DG_066391.

Retainer

Sometimes retainers are charged by landlords when agreements have been made in advance and the tenants want the house held for them during the summer months. Although this is quite common, we do not encourage students to take properties that carry this proviso.

What Should be Provided

Furniture

There are minimum requirements for furnishings in a student group house and attached is a typical inventory of a student house. Additional items are always welcome, especially where kitchen equipment is concerned. All soft furniture must comply with the relevant Fire and Safety Standards and carry a sewn in label indicating compliance.

Heating

It is necessary to provide adequate heating in every room. (See item headed - Gas Safety)

Kitchen Facilities

The essentials in a kitchen are a full size cooker and a fridge/freezer large enough to cope with the requirements of the household depending on the number of students in the group. Other kitchen equipment like a microwave, washing machine, dryer and dishwasher, although not essential, are now often expected and can make a house more appealing to prospective tenants. All domestic appliances provided should be listed on the house inventory.

Room Size

There is no maximum room size, but a minimum room size, as laid down by Newcastle Borough Council, is 10m², or 6.5m² if there is a shared sitting room in the house. The room should be large enough to hold the normal bedroom furniture as well as a desk suitable for study, and a chair.

Toilet Facilities

If the WC is within the bathroom of the house, then a second WC and washbasin is required in a house accommodating four or more students.

Waste Collection

Items like a Wheelie Bin and Recycling Box should be provided and respective collection dates given to tenants. Please encourage your tenants to re-cycle waste products wherever possible.

Repairs

When students inform you of any repairs you should let them know when you can complete the repairs and who will be doing the work. If these repairs cannot be made immediately then the students should be informed, preferably in writing. To avoid any misunderstandings it is best to communicate with the students directly. Do not relay messages through a third party, such as the person carrying out the repairs.

If you refuse to carry out essential repairs then your tenants have the right to seek help from the local council. The council can serve a repair notice ensuring that repairs are carried out by a specified date. Failure to comply with notices can lead to works being done in your default with the cost of the works being transferred to the landlord. You will also be liable to prosecution for non-compliance of a notice. If you feel aggrieved by a notice you can generally appeal against it.

Legal Implications and Safety

Landlords should make themselves aware of all current legislation with regard to renting property. Further information can be obtained by contacting Newcastle Borough Council or Stoke-on-Trent City Council Urban Renewal Office, the Trading Standards Department of Staffordshire County Council or the local office of the Health and Safety Executive. This is a brief summary of requirements:

Council Tax

A property where all tenants are full time, registered, students will be exempt from Council Tax.

A list of all full time Keele Students is sent to the Local Council Offices on an annual basis by Keele University to determine properties that are discounted or exempt from Council Tax. If students change their full time status for any reason during the academic year they should contact the Local Council Office as this will probably affect whether or not council tax is payable. If you receive any correspondence regarding Council Tax that you feel is incorrect you should contact your Local Council Office straight away and refer them to the "Keele list". If you are asked for a Council Tax

Exemption Certificate this can be obtained by the student(s) occupying your property from The Student and Course Information Office on Keele University campus.

Electrical Certificate

Keele University requires Periodic Electrical Inspection and Testing Certificates, IEE Wiring Regulation 4 (BS 7671) to be provided for all registered properties.

(If you are a Gas-Elec customer please ensure that you ask for their "Periodic Electrical Installation Report" as their "Basic Electrical Inspection" is not accepted.)

Energy Performance Certificate

From 01 October 2008 landlords are required to provide an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) when renting out a property. An EPC gives information on the energy efficiency of a building and is valid for 10 years.

Not all property types require an EPC by law. However, to avoid confusion, property details will not be displayed without a valid EPC. Further information can be found at www.direct.gov.uk.

Eviction

If tenants do not leave your property voluntarily after any notice has expired, you must obtain a possession order from the court to recover possession. Evicting a tenant (or any other permitted occupier) other than through court proceedings is a criminal offence

Fire Safety

There is a legal requirement that all soft furnishings in a house that is offered for rental should carry a sewn in flame retardant label to conform to the current safety standards. Further details can be obtained from the Trading Standards Department of Staffordshire County Council if in doubt. It is illegal to supply any furniture in a rented property that does not carry the necessary flame retardant label. For further information on second hand furniture contact the Trading Standards Office on 01782 277839 or see www.berr.gov.uk/files/file24685.pdf.

Fire safety equipment should be provided in each property. Water fire extinguishers should be placed in the hall and landing (not in a kitchen), fire blankets in the kitchen, and fire alarms fitted, (hardwired preferably). Water fire extinguishers should not be placed in a kitchen. Tenants should be made aware of the appropriate equipment to use in the event of a fire, especially in the case of cooker fires. Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are essential for the safety of your tenants. Please ensure that batteries on smoke detectors or battery operated fire alarms are tested regularly and replaced if necessary. Gas and electricity meters should be encased in fire resistant boxes. Owners of larger properties should ensure they comply with fire regulations and have escape/emergency lighting in place.

Gas Safety

It is a legal requirement that all gas appliances must have an annual safety check by a registered engineer. It is a legal obligation to obtain a certificate every year and provide a copy to the students. Students will be told to ask for the certificate when

taking a property and to inform Student Accommodation Lettings Service if the certificate is not available. It is a legal requirement that gas fitters must be 'Gas Safe Register' engineers (www.gassaferegister.co.uk). Keele University will not advertise properties without prior sight of an original current gas certificate (this will be returned to you).

Harassment

It is a criminal offence for a landlord to harass an occupier of residential premises. The definition of harassment varies from situation to situation but may include:

- entering premises without the occupiers consent, going through the occupiers belongings.
- withdrawing such services as gas and electricity.
- threatening the occupier with, or actually carrying out, violence against them.
- withholding a key, which causes intolerable difficulties. Anti-social behavior towards the occupier
- demanding to carry out excessive repairs.
- failing to carry out repairs that the landlord is legally obliged to do

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

Landlords should be aware that they are required to comply with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System with effect from 1 April 2006. This obliges all landlords to conduct risk assessments across a number of areas to ensure your premises satisfy minimum standards for:

- water, gas and electricity
- personal hygiene
- sanitation and drainage
- food safety
- ventilation
- space and water heating
- identifying deficiencies and generally addressing hazards

Houses in Multiple Occupation

This is a house which is occupied by persons who do not form a single household. If you have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreement drawn up, agreed and signed by a group of students, then this can be considered a group tenancy (single household). However, individuals booking just one room and the group forming by itself can be considered to be a house in multiple occupation and the rules that apply to this type of house are extensive. Under the Housing Act 1984 Part 2, Local Authorities are required to licence Houses in Multiple Occupation of three or more storeys and five or more occupants. Please contact your local council or see www.communities.gov.uk for more information and advice.

House Mortgage

If the property you are intending to rent has a mortgage, it may be necessary to check with your mortgage provider before advertising the accommodation, as some providers do not allow properties to be let without their permission.

Insurance

It is necessary to have insurance cover on your property, and advisable to have

insurance cover on the contents, fixtures and fittings. Any insurance cover taken out by tenants is only likely to cover their personal belongings.

Privacy

Your tenants are entitled to privacy in their accommodation. This means that you should not go into the house/room without giving advance notice and obtaining their agreement on a mutually convenient time to visit.

Security

It is advisable that you make the property as secure as possible. For more information on how to do this please see

www.staffordshire.police.uk/media/10810/leaflets_brochures/pdf/guide_homesecurity

Tenancy Deposit Protection

Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) was introduced on 6th April 2007 and provides protection for tenants by preventing landlords and letting agents from unfairly withholding a deposit. The scheme protects all Assured Shorthold Tenancies in England and Wales. Landlords are advised to familiarise themselves with this legislation and its implications.

Useful Checklists

Things to discuss during visits and before signing contracts

- Rent - how much is it? What does it include? When is it payable? Is the rent payable on an individual basis or collectively by the whole group? Will the students be able to afford the rent?
- Retainers - what rent is due during the Christmas, Easter and summer vacations?
- Deposit - if a deposit is payable, how much is it, what is it for and what is the procedure for returning the deposit (Tenancy Deposit Protection)?
- Inventory - when will an inventory be taken?
- Contract - what sort of contract will you use? Have you checked to ensure that the contract covers your requirements?
- Have plenty of contracts available for students to take away with them and study prior to signing
- Bills - how will the gas and electricity be paid? If the bills are included in the rent then you should give the student(s) a copy of the quarterly bill. If it is going to be the students' responsibility then discuss when the meters will be read
- Telephone - is it clearly written into the contract who pays the telephone rental charge?
- Notice to quit - how many weeks notice would the students have to give to you should they wish to leave the property?
- Repairs - how much notice will the students be given should repairs need to be carried out
- Parking arrangements

If you are providing lodgings then you should also discuss

- Provision of meals - are meals provided? If so, what type and how many per week?
- Use of kitchen - can the student use the kitchen? If so, when and what equipment and storage space can they use?
- Use of other rooms in the house, e.g. lounge and dining area etc
- Use of the telephone and method of payment of calls
- Laundry and cleaning arrangements
- Visitors
- Keys and locking up procedures
- Storage of personal possessions during vacations
- Insurance - the student is responsible for insuring his/her own personal possessions. The landlord is responsible for the cover of the buildings/contents of the premises. Any conditions, which affect your insurance, should be discussed with the student
- Circumstances upon which you will exercise discretion, e.g. use of telephone and TV etc

When you have found your tenants

Discuss all the arrangements and terms with each student

- Provide each student with a written statement detailing exactly what the deposit covers as required by Tenancy Deposit Protection
- Discuss the procedure for returning deposits as required by Tenancy Deposit Protection
- Provide each student with a receipt for any money paid, with details of what it is for
- Confirm the rent arrangements, i.e. how much students have to pay and when
- Explain how the bills are to be paid - are they included in the rent, or are they due quarterly.
- Ensure that you have each student's full name, home address and telephone number (Keele University cannot provide you with these details due to the Data Protection Act)

Recommended Websites

www.studentlandlord.com/legalities3.asp

www.rla.org.uk

www.direct.gov.uk

www.communities.gov.uk

www.landlordaccreditation.co.uk

www.berr.gov.uk/files/file24685.pdf

www.gassaferegister.co.uk

If you want any further advice or information please call Student Accommodation Lettings Service on 01782 734152.

SUGGESTED INVENTORY FOR STUDENT-GROUP HOUSE

COMMUNAL AREAS:

Hall or landing:	Water fire extinguisher Smoke detector
Sitting room:	Settee, easy chairs, dining table and chairs sufficient for the number of residents. Carbon monoxide detector.
Kitchen:	Cooker, refrigerator with freezer, microwave, washing machine, vacuum cleaner, ironing board, iron, kitchen-bin. Fire blanket. Carbon monoxide detector.
Bathroom:	Bath with shower with shower curtain, toilet, washbasin, toilet brush and holder. 2nd toilet if more than 4 tenants. Extractor fan or air brick (for mould prevention)
Heating:	Central heating system which also produces hot water. Gas fire in sitting room. All gas appliances to have current gas worthiness certificate. Gas certificates must be renewed every 12 months.
Electrical points:	At least 2 twin 13 amp sockets per room. A periodic inspection and testing to be carried out.
Lighting:	Adequate lighting in all rooms and corridors. Window for natural light and ventilation.
Locks:	All rooms to have individual room locks with 5 lever locks on front and back doors. Window locks on ground floor rooms.
Exterior:	Dustbin/wheeled bin provided, paths and garden tidy Equipment for garden maintenance if keeping the garden tidy is part of the contract.

All house to be clean and tidy, and cleaned through by landlord between tenancies annually.

Individual study/bedrooms:

- Bed: 3ft. wide single bed and mattress.
- 2 pillows
- Wardrobe
- Chest of Drawers
- Desk - large enough to use for study, preferably with drawers.
- Reading lamp
- Desk chair
- Bookcase (or wall mounted shelves).
- Waste paper bin
- Easy chair (if room size allows it)
- Wall mirror
- Carpet
- Curtains
- Net curtains for ground floor rooms.

How to Make Studentpad Work Better For You

- Are you a member of the North Staffordshire Landlords **Accreditation** Scheme? If you are and you add the expiry date to your Registration Form or mark it on the Continuation Sheet, this will then show on your advert. For more information on how to join please see www.landlordaccreditation.co.uk/content/landlord.asp. If you renew your membership after registering please let us know your new expiry date so that we can update your advert.
- You can now add up to **six photographs** to your advert. Photographs can help attract students to your property and gives them a better idea before they view it. E-mail your photos to accomeng@kfm.keele.ac.uk and we will be happy to add them to your advert. Alternatively you can bring printed photographs or disks containing photographs to the Student Accommodation Lettings Service Reception Desk in the Darwin Building.
- Don't forget to add the **postcode** of your property. The location of your property can then be seen on a street **map**.
- Make more use of the **description**. Add details of the location and any other features of the property.
- This year you need to send us your **Energy Performance Certificate**. We will then make a copy of it and post it back to you. Properties will not be displayed unless we hold a valid Energy Performance Certificate.
- Make sure to mark down which **deposit protection scheme** you are using. If you leave this blank it will come up as Unknown, which will put students off. This can also be written on the Continuation Sheet if you want to be sure that we have the most up to date information.
- If you are completing a Continuation Sheet ...
 - Have there been any **changes** in the past twelve months? If so please write it on the bottom of the sheet so we can amend your advert.
 - Are the **number of bedrooms** available correct? This may have been changed in the previous year and will need to be amended.
 - Is the **number of storeys** completed? This feature was added a couple of years ago and a lot of adverts still say 0. Although it is obvious that this is not correct, it doesn't look good.
- If you have the internet, log on to www.studentpad.co.uk/controlpad. Using this site you can update your own advert should there be any changes. If you do not have the internet, just call 01782 734152/733065 and we will happily make any changes for you.
- Using **Controlpad** you can also manage your property. By adding your tenant's details reminder e-mails can be sent out for rent. Your tenants can send details of any maintenance issues through Controlpad. Inventories can be added. All you need is your Username and Password to log on to Controlpad. If you don't know these just give us a call on the above number.
- Read our booklet "**Important Information for Landlords**". This booklet is full of hints, tips and important information. We update the booklet every year so even if you have read it before you may find more information this year.