

RELEASE

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Liverpool Student Homes

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Introduction

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of the LSH Newsletter "Release".

The newsletter aims to give a brief overview of the activities LSH has been involved in and relevant changes which may affect registration.

Market Conditions

The dust has finally settled on what has been a hectic six weeks during August and September. We have seen one of our busiest summer periods for some time. For the first time in around ten years we have seen 1st year students housed in groups in traditional shared houses. Thank you to all the landlords in the Greenbank area who agreed to offer their accommodation to 1st year students.

This was the first year we have launched early and released properties to students. As you will be aware we took the step to move the re-launch of new properties to the beginning of December following a continued trend by students wishing to search for accommodation earlier each year.

The move to December brought mixed reviews from landlords but ultimately we've all had to accept what the market demands and as it stands, students continue to want to begin the process earlier than most of us would wish. The LSH website statistics for the last two years have evidenced this and shown a large spike in traffic searching on the website in December and early January.

The response from students to launch earlier has been positive and has produced a more dispersed searching trend rather than the previous pattern of house hunting being concentrated into one week of the year.

The Larger City Developments continue to attract students in their second and third year with a large number of these halls fully booked for the following academic year by February.

Rent levels across the board are steadily increasing and the Larger City Developments rent levels in most cases are encroaching the £100 per week mark.

The traditional houses and flats market has seen a slight increase in rent charges but this is mainly attributed to the demand from students to have a fully inclusive rental charge. The average rent excluding bills for a room in a shared property this year was £57 per person per week. Fully inclusive rental charges have ranged between £65 -£75 per person.

Demand remains high from students to rent accommodation offering fully inclusive rents. This obviously works for some landlords whilst others are reluctant to offer this due to the additional administrative work involved.

We appreciate that a fully inclusive rent is not always viable for some owners/landlords. But we can merely report back that the most common request from students searching for properties is for a fully inclusive rent.

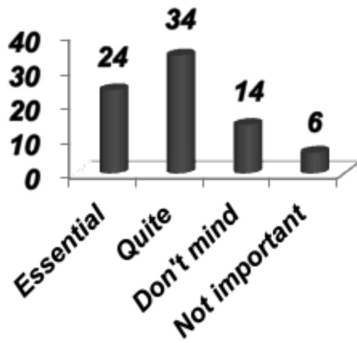
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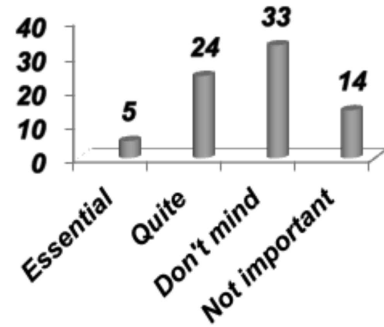
Student Survey – Results Summary

During our last student halls talks we asked 1st year students to complete a survey for LSH which asked a number of questions relating to what they look for when searching for accommodation and the important aspects of finding the right home. The return of completed questionnaires was 85 and this allowed us to have a quick snap shot of the perspectives of 1st year students. The results were as follows:

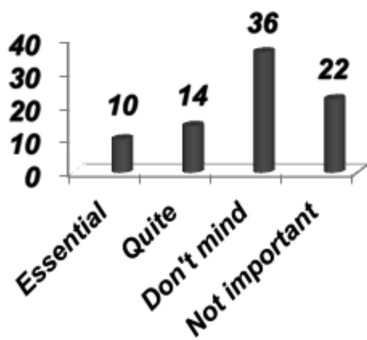
Q: Is it important to have a separate living room?



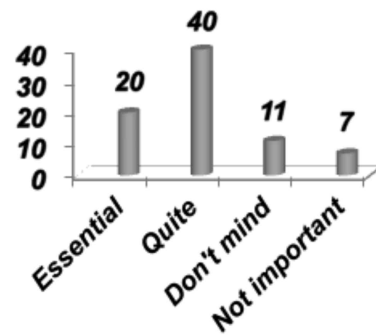
Q: How important is it to be located near the city centre?



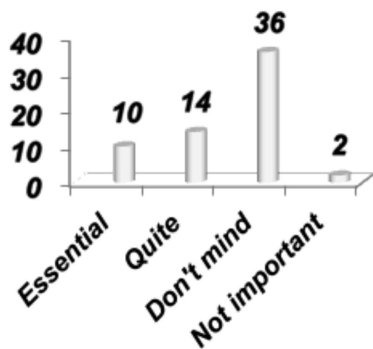
Q: How important is it to have your own bathroom?



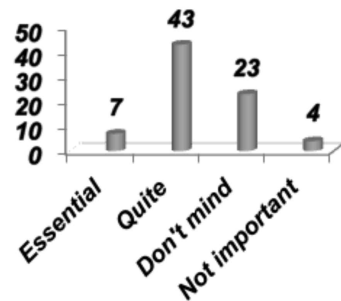
Q: How important is a sense of student community?



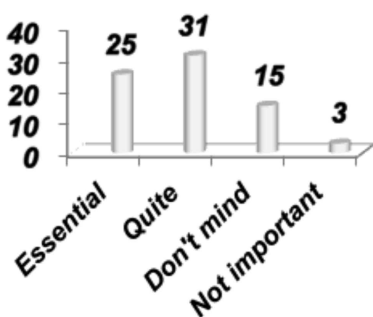
Q: Is cost a primary concern when house hunting?



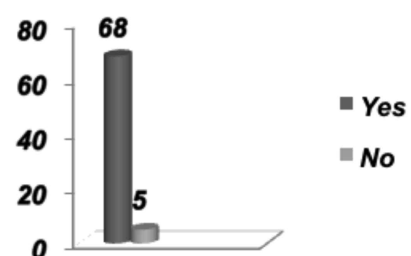
Q: How important is the general attractiveness of the area?



Q: How important is it to have bills included in your weekly rent?



Q: Do you find that the use of photographs can affect your decision about whether to view a property?



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We have encouraged landlords in the traditional houses/flat market to ensure that they are not subject to large utility bills by including a caveat in their tenancy agreements in relation to the usage allowed before additional charges are incurred.

Make the most of your advert

In an extremely competitive market ensuring that you are offering the right product to your customers is of paramount importance. Making the most of your advertising through LSH by adding photographs is just one easy step to attract more views to your advert. Remember to add an external picture of your property is FREE with additional charges for internal shots. Students want to be able to gauge what the property is like from the offset and providing them with a visual introduction to your accommodation will always be a bonus.

Homestay Pilot Scheme

This September we launched a Homestay Pilot Scheme. The scheme will be initially rolled out to members of staff of the universities and subsequently to the general public.

Homestay is a "home from home" offered to students who wish to experience living with a host or family whilst studying in England. The student can have all meals and accommodation provided by the host in return for a rental payment.

The demand for Homestay accommodation has steadily been increasing from international students studying in Liverpool. We have identified this is a gap in the service that LSH offers to students.

So in order to ensure students are given the best choice of accommodation when coming to

Liverpool we have agreed to initially pilot the Homestay scheme. If you know of anyone who would be interested in offering Homestay accommodation please put them in touch with LSH. Registration requirements still apply to Homestay accommodation, registration charges are payable and Homestay providers will have to undergo a CRB check (which we will organise).

Landlord Meeting

Don't forget to book your place at the LSH Landlords Meeting which was rescheduled for **Friday, 4th November 2011**.

You can contact the office to reserve your place. A maximum of two places for each registered landlord is offered. There will be a light buffet and refreshments before the guest speakers.

Presentations will be given by Ed Naylor from Liverpool John Moores University on changes within LJMU and the closure of IM Marsh Campus and Catherine Anderson from The University of Liverpool on their new student developments.

This is an excellent opportunity for you to meet the LSH team and network with other landlords and agents in the student market.

Please ensure you contact Caroline in our office to reserve your place if you haven't already done so.

Liverpool Student Union - 'Rate Your Landlord' Awards

The inaugural Liverpool Student Union 'Rate Your Landlord' Awards

took place in May this year and proved to be a successful event for our registered landlords.

The Liverpool Students' Union conduct an accommodation survey across LJMU and The University of Liverpool to gain feedback both positive and negative on the properties they were living in and service provided by their landlord/agent.

We were pleased to be present and see **Rooms4U** take a clean sweep in all the landlord categories winning, '**Landlord of the Year**', '**Most Recommended**' and '**Quality & Speed of Repairs Award**'.

The Larger City Centre developments awards went to **Atlantic Point** '**Best Hall of the Year**' with **Great Newton Hall** winning '**Best Customer Service Award**'. The '**Best letting agent award**' was given to **R House Lettings**.

Well done and keep up the good work.

Housing Fairs

Following the success of the last Housing Fair held in February 2011 we have decided to run the fairs again during the re-launch period in December.

The next fairs will be held at Guild of Students, Mountford Hall and Hope University and information stands and stalls will be given on a first come first served basis. There is a charge to have a stand at the fair and discount will be given for attendance at both.

Feedback from those landlords who attended the last fair was really positive and we have taken this onboard and moved the date to December in order to capture a larger audience. The fair was well received by students attending who were able to gain information on a range of housing related matters and meet first hand letting agents and companies.

All the agents and landlords who attended managed to secure viewings at their properties from prospective students.

If you are interested in attending the fair to promote your properties please contact Caroline in the LSH office.

We would welcome smaller landlords attending the fair to promote their properties to prospective students.

Changes to the Code of Practice for Student Landlords

This year's registration sees the introduction of a number of new clauses that you should make yourself aware of.

They have been introduced in order to deal with the waste management issues that persist around student properties. The key details of the new clauses are;

- Ensure tenants are provided with an alleygate key (where appropriate)
- Ensure tenants are provided with the appropriate type and number of wheelie bins
- Provide information to tenants on the timing and type of waste collections for the property

A clause has also been introduced to state that unless the letting agreement or landlord has been exempted under Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1988 then it must be an assured tenancy.

Landlords/agents should re-acquaint themselves with the terms of the Code of Practice as by registering with LSH you are committing yourself to be bound by the terms.

Smoke Free Homes

LSH is working in partnership with a smoke free homes initiative to promote the opportunity for students who wish to not live in a property where there has been smoking. Therefore if you do not allow smoking within your property you should tick the appropriate box on the registration form and your property will then be included in searches that students can make if they want smoke free accommodation. To ensure that this condition is enforced you should include a clause within your tenancy agreement to confirm smoking is not permitted within the property.

Good Practice with your Deposits

We have seen a slight increase in the number of complaints from students regarding the return of their deposits. Prior to the introduction of legislation pertaining to the holding of deposits this was the biggest issue complained about to LSH. We are keen to ensure that all registered landlords follow the legal requirements in relation to the administration of damage deposits. It is imperative if you take a damage deposit from a tenant that you follow the appropriate custodial or non custodial options stipulated in the legislation. Please refer to the 'Direct gov' website for further information: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity>.

New Member to the team

We are pleased to welcome a new member of staff to the LSH team. Richard Broome has been employed

to provide housing advice and support to students living in non LSH registered properties and to offer legal advice in housing matters which fall outside the remits of the LSH Code of Practice.

The post has been funded for two years by all three city universities following the withdrawal of the provision of housing advice by the student unions in the city.

Managing your properties on line

We have seen a huge increase in the number of landlords and agents managing their properties on line. This is the most effective and quickest way of maintaining accurate information relating to your advertised properties with LSH. The studentpad system allows you to log on to view and amend your properties at your own convenience. If you are unsure on any aspect of using the landlord side of the system please contact us and we will provide you with the help and guidance to get you started, including providing you with your username and password.

Go to www.lsh.liv.ac.uk and click on the 'Landlords' tab, and then click on 'Manage your properties'. If you are a new landlord to LSH you should click on 'Register now' and you can create your own landlord file to add property adverts.