

# HOUSING GUIDE

Private accommodation information  
for students 2020–21



# CONTENTS

PG2 STARTING YOUR  
SEARCH

PG7 PLANNING

PG9 LOOKING

PG13 MOVING IN

PG15 RENTAL SCAMS

PG16 FURTHER INFORMATION

## Disclaimer

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(Student Services 2020)

# STARTING YOUR SEARCH

## WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

Before considering where and what type of property you might want to live in, first consider the different options:

### SHARED STUDENT HOUSES OR FLATS

A 'house share' or 'flat share' are popular options for students as you can live with friends and fellow students with more independence. These are often joint tenancies (see page 12), so it is advisable to share with people you know and get along with.

### LIVING WITH A RESIDENT LANDLORD

Also known as 'lodging', this is where you live in the same house as your landlord. Your experience will vary depending on the landlord. The rent is normally cheaper and often includes bills. Other benefits can include more flexibility over the length of stay and the property normally being kept in good repair.

Disadvantages can include having less freedom to bring friends home or use of the communal areas. As a lodger you will normally be an "excluded occupier" in legal terms, which means you can be more easily evicted. Speak to a Student Adviser or check the Shelter website **shelter.org.uk** to find out more.

### HOST FAMILIES

Host Families are resident landlords who offer accommodation (sometimes including meals) and the opportunity to live as part of their family. A host family is a popular option with some students who are new to London and for international students; it is seen as a great way to engage both with the culture and the language of the country. You can also arrange short stays if preferred.

Homestay Accommodation: **homestay.com**  
Hosts International: **hosts-international.com**

## STUDIO FLATS

Studio flats are typically one room with a kitchen and a separate bathroom, either in a block of studio flats especially for students or as part of new housing development. Be aware that living on your own can be costly and rents can range from £200-£400 per week. If you're looking for independence and privacy this could work for you, but it can be a lonely and costly experience for those moving to London for the first time.

## STUDENT HALLS

If you have been unsuccessful in getting a room at McMillan Student Village but would still like to live in student halls, there are alternative options. There are a number of student halls around London which offer a safe and convenient (but slightly more expensive) options to students moving to London for the first time. The following halls are located nearby:

**Farndale Court** - Charlton  
[farndalecourt.com](http://farndalecourt.com)

**Chapter Living** - Lewisham  
[chapter-living.com/properties/lewisham](http://chapter-living.com/properties/lewisham)

**Landale House** - Surrey Quays  
[wearehomesforstudents.com](http://wearehomesforstudents.com)

## FINDING HOUSEMATES

If you are a current student you can place an advert on the accommodation forum on Moodle, in the Student Services section.

Incoming and current students can email [privatehousing@trinitylaban.ac.uk](mailto:privatehousing@trinitylaban.ac.uk) and we will put you in touch with other students.

You can find students from other institutions and non-students to live with also. See: [spareroom.co.uk](http://spareroom.co.uk) Or the the "South East Housemate co-op group" on Facebook

## TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

If you live far from London, you may want to stay in temporary accommodation for a short time whilst you look for permanent accommodation. Here are some places you can start looking:

**hostelworld.com**

**airbnb.co.uk**

**staycity.com** (Staycity offer TL students a discount - contact [studentservicesenquiries@trinitylaban.ac.uk](mailto:studentservicesenquiries@trinitylaban.ac.uk) for details).

## WHEN TO LOOK

The majority of students don't secure their housing until the summer. However, it is recommended you start an initial search, including identifying who you might want to live with, as early as possible (ideally starting in April/May). Provided you are well organised, it should take around 4 weeks to find your housing. You may need to apply months in advance for a student hostel or private halls of residence.

## WHERE TO LOOK

### Online

Letting agents and landlords often advertise their properties through websites such as:

**zoopla.com**

**rightmove.co.uk**

**primelocation.com**

You can set up property alerts so you receive an email as soon as a property with your preferences becomes available.

You can also find properties to rent on **gumtree.com** However, there are some fake adverts on this website so make sure to check details (see info panel "Looking up an agent")

## Letting agents

Many landlords use letting agents to advertise and manage their property. If an agent operates in an area you are interested in, and has properties in your price range, it is worth registering with them directly. They can then contact you as soon as an appropriate property is available. Properties advertised online can be taken quickly and adverts go out of date, so it is worth contacting the agents directly.

## Message boards

Some of the best housing in London is passed on from one group of students to another by word of mouth. Online flat-sharing message boards are very popular and can assist students looking for private accommodation and in finding people to share with.

If you are looking for co-shares, you might find it useful to join and post a message on our 'Trinity Laban New Students' Facebook group, set up by the Student Union.

Enrolled students can post on the Accommodation Advert forum on **Moodle**. You might want to also consider using a website such as **spareroom.com** to assist in finding a flatmate or a room.

## LOOKING UP AN AGENT

When choosing an agent to use, check whether they are a member of a professional body, such as:

- Association of Residential Letting Agents
- National Approved Letting Scheme
- National Association of Estate Agents

All letting agents must also be members of a letting agent redress scheme (an independent service for resolving disputes).

Be aware that there are scam agents operating who aim to take your money without finding you accommodation. See the Rental Scams section for more details.

For customer reviews of agents, see the website: **allagents.co.uk**

If you are unsure about an agent, contact Student Services for help.

# PLANNING

## AREA & TRANSPORT

Before you start looking for somewhere to live, it is advisable to find out about different areas of London.

When you are considering an area to live in, think about how long it will take and how much it will cost to get to Trinity Laban and other locations. You can look up travel information on **tfl.gov.uk** or **citymapper.com**. Savings made by in renting far away from Trinity Laban can be wiped out by the additional travel costs, so think about the cost of travel.

**Tip:** For those of you who will have gigs/performances and might be travelling at unsociable times of the day, you might find it helpful to consider the night buses near your potential home.

## BUDGETING

The cost of accommodation is usually the biggest part of a student's budget. It is therefore important that you establish your accommodation budget before looking for somewhere to live. Once you know approximately how much money you will have to live on for the year, you can calculate a weekly budget, and decide on the maximum rent that you can afford. For help with this, you can visit **studentcalculator.org** or **get in touch with a student adviser**.

**Tip:** To calculate your weekly rent you need to multiply the monthly amount by 12 and then divide it by 52 (weeks in the year).

## RENTAL COSTS

Rental costs vary depending on your location and choice of house. Broadly speaking, the further out from the centre of London you live, the lower the rent will be. For cheaper areas you may want to look at Lewisham Central, Lee, Charlton and Woolwich. For slightly higher rents you can look in Greenwich, Deptford, New Cross and Brockley.

For more information on rental levels in London, have a look at the London Mayor's rents map, which provides average rents for different types of homes across London: [london.gov.uk/rents](https://www.london.gov.uk/rents)

**Tip:** Remember when looking for a room in a private rented flat or house that alongside your rental costs you will also be required to pay various bills, such as gas, electricity, water, internet and TV licence. Some advertised properties may include bills in the rental price; if this is the case, ensure you check which "bills" are being referred to, as often landlords may only include the payment of water rates when stating "bills are included".

## GETTING AROUND

If you are enrolled on a full-time course of study you will be eligible to apply for an 18+ Student Oyster photo card. With this you will save 30% against the price of adult rate Travelcards and Bus & Tram Passes. To apply you will need the last 6 digits of your Trinity Laban ID number. More information is available at: [tfl.gov.uk](https://tfl.gov.uk)

You can also apply for a 16-25 or 26-30 railcard.

More information is available at: [16-25railcard.co.uk](https://16-25railcard.co.uk)

## LIVING WITH FRIENDS

Living with someone is a big undertaking. A good friend does not necessarily make a good housemate. You should take time to think about and discuss what kind of living situation you want with potential housemates.

Think about how tidy you want the house to be, whether you like peace and quiet or a party house, what time you like to go to bed, how many house guests is acceptable, how much can you afford on rent and social activities, and whether you want the same type of accommodation.

If disputes between co-tenants occur, and you're not sure how to manage them, you can come and speak to a Student Adviser.

# LOOKING

## INSPECTING A PROPERTY

Take a checklist with you for all house viewings so you don't miss anything and you can compare properties more easily. You can find a checklist for househunting on **Moodle** or **request it via email**.

It is strongly recommended that you view any property you are interested in before accepting it and paying any money. Where possible, try and combine looking at a few on the same day in a similar part of London.

**Student Tip:** "I'd always recommend that people make sure that they look at the place they are considering living in. Sounds funny but so many friends I know accepted rooms through photos and even descriptions of the accommodation rather than checking it out first" (BA2 Dance Student)

## IS YOUR PROPERTY AND LANDLORD LICENSED?

If your property is three or more storeys high and has five or more occupants it will need to be licensed as a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO). This is so the local authority can ensure the property meets a minimum safety standard. Some councils have additional licencing schemes which mean more properties must be licenced; in Lewisham, flats above commercial properties must be licenced and in Greenwich, any property let to three or more individuals must be licenced.

If a landlord doesn't have a HMO licence, they can be fined by the council and you may be able to get some of your rent back through a rent repayment order. Please speak to Student Services if you think your accommodation should have a licence and does not.

## GAS SAFETY

Unsafe gas appliances produce a highly poisonous, potentially

deadly gas called carbon monoxide. All gas appliances in the property must be checked every 12 months by a qualified engineer. You are entitled to see the gas safety certificate before you move in. If there has not been a recent inspection, ask for one to be arranged.

## NEIGHBOURS

Make sure you ask the current tenants, the agent or the landlord about your neighbours. Hopefully they will be lovely but if there have been issues in the past, it is best to know before signing a contract.

## NEGOTIATING

You should be prepared to bargain and even walk away from a deal if you are not comfortable with it. If you agree on extra items to be provided or repair work to be done, make sure this is in writing.

## GUARANTOR/REFERENCES

When renting in the private sector, you will normally be asked to provide a financial guarantor who must be living in the UK (in most cases this will be a parent or guardian). Guarantor agreements give the landlord a measure of financial security; whoever you nominate would be prepared to pay for any damage or your rent if you don't. If you are unable to provide a UK-based guarantor, you may be asked to pay 3-6 months' rent in advance.

Alternatively you can pay companies to act as your guarantor. You can get a partial refund (10% up to 50% depending on length of contract) at the end of your tenancy. Providers of this service include **housinghand.co.uk** and **ukguarantor.com**

You will normally be asked for a reference from a previous landlord to show your new landlord that you will be a good tenant. If you are a second-year student who lived in halls of residence for your first year, you can ask for a reference from Student Services.

## CONTRACTS

Once you have seen and agreed on where you want to live, the next stage is to ask your landlord or letting agent for a written contract

(referred to as a tenancy agreement). This document will give you details of the agreement between yourself and your landlord and should clearly lay out your rights and responsibilities.

## Joint Tenancies

If a group of you are renting a property together and you are all named on the contract, it is likely that you will have a joint tenancy. This means that you are each liable for the whole rent and for any other obligations under the tenancy.

## Individual Tenancies

If you are individually renting a room from a landlord or agency in a House of Multiple Occupation you may have your own tenancy agreement. If a group of you are living in a property together, but you want to avoid a joint tenancy, you could try to negotiate individual tenancies for your own rooms. This means that you are only liable for the rent of your room but have access to all the communal spaces (i.e. bathroom, kitchen and lounge). However, this would be at the discretion of the landlord and those you are sharing with.

## Living with a landlord

If you share accommodation with your landlord, either in their home as a lodger or in a converted property where you and the landlord live in different parts of the building, you will be an “excluded occupier”. This means you will have fewer rights. For instance, your landlord is not obliged to protect your tenancy deposit and it is easier for them to evict you.

**Tip:** If you are a musician, remember to check with the landlord and/or other tenants whether you’re allowed to practise at home as some contracts stipulate that occupants can’t make a lot of noise, e.g. between 11pm at night and 8am in the morning.

## HOLDING DEPOSITS

A holding deposit is paid to the landlord or agent to hold the property for you once you have made an offer whilst the landlord decides whether they will let the property to you. Normally, this means they

should not show the property to anyone else. The landlord, however, does not have to agree to rent the property to you after you pay the holding deposit. If they do not rent the property to you, they should return the holding deposit. If you decide not to take the property, you will likely lose the holding deposit. However, you can challenge this (please speak to Student Services).

Make sure you get a receipt for your holding deposit and that it outlines the main terms of the offer such as rent, length of contract and start date of tenancy. You should also try to read the proposed tenancy

agreement before paying a holding deposit in case there are terms you are unhappy with.

Only pay a holding deposit if you are sure you want to rent the property.

## TENANCY DEPOSITS

A tenancy deposit is a sum of money paid to the landlord or the agent at the start of the tenancy to cover the cost of any damage, unpaid rent, missing items or cleaning. An inventory check is normally carried out at the beginning and end of the tenancy to determine if any deductions should be made from your deposit.

Your tenancy deposit must be protected in a government-backed scheme if you are an Assured Shorthold Tenant (most private tenants are). If your landlord has not signed up to a scheme they may have

## CONTRACT CHECK

Contracts are legally binding documents so carefully read and check them before you sign anything or hand over money. You must also ensure any verbal agreements are reflected in the written contract. For example, if the monthly rental due date is amended or the landlord promises the washing machine will be fixed, ensure this is in writing!

If you are unsure about terms in the contract, Student Services can check it with you.

to pay a penalty to you. If there is a disagreement about how much deposit should be returned, your landlord is taking too long, or not communicating with you, the scheme will help resolve the issue. For further details: [gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection](https://www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection)

**Tip:** If your landlord hasn't protected your deposit within 30 days (and you are an Assured Shorthold Tenant) they can be made to pay up to three times the amount of the deposit as compensation.

## AGENCY CHARGES

Most tenancy related fees are now banned. If you've been charged a banned fee get in touch with a student adviser about what to do.

From 1 June 2019 all upfront fees for tenants were, the only fees that you can be charged will be:

- for the cost of replacing a key if you lose one
- if you are more than 14 days late with your rent
- if you want to change your tenancy or bring it to an end
- changing or transferring your tenancy.

Agents will still be able to ask for a holding deposit and Tenancy deposit. You can only be charged up to 5 weeks rent for a tenancy deposit.

# MOVING IN

## INVENTORIES

An inventory is a list of everything supplied with the property for the tenants to use; it will also describe the condition of the property. An inventory is helpful in settling disputes between landlords and tenants over deposits at the end of the tenancy. It is in the interests of both parties to have a detailed written record of the condition the property was in at the start of the tenancy. You should check the inventory at the beginning of your tenancy and ask to amend it where

there are inaccuracies or missing details.

At the end of the tenancy, the landlord or agent will carry out a final inspection with you present, to determine the current condition of the property and see if any items from the inventory are damaged or missing.

It is strongly advisable that you keep a copy of the inventory for proof and your records. In the case of an inventory not being issued at the start of the tenancy, it is essential you take photographs of the condition of the property at both the beginning and end of the tenancy (dating the photographs where possible).

## UTILITY COMPANIES

When you move in to the property, you will need to arrange for the supply of water, electricity and gas to be transferred into your names unless they are included in your rent. This is a relatively straightforward process. For the gas and electricity, you will simply need to contact the current suppliers and provide meter readings. The water is not usually metered so it is just a case of contacting the supplier and transferring the account into your names.

You may be able to save money by transferring to a different supplier but you must get permission from your landlord before doing so. Many savings are gained over a 12 month period, so make sure you look into this at the beginning of the tenancy.

## COUNCIL TAX

Council Tax is a charge made by local councils on residential properties to pay for local public services; it is not a tax on an individual. If everyone in your house or flat is a full-time student, and you are joint tenants, the property will be exempt from council tax. You can get a letter from Registry at Trinity Laban to prove to the council that you are a full-time student.

If some tenants are not students, or part-time students, then there will be some council tax liability for the property. You will have to decide how to pay this between yourselves.

If you have a tenancy or licence to occupy only part of a dwelling then your landlord may be responsible for council tax. Speak to Student Services if you are unclear about who should pay council tax.

## RENTAL SCAMS

Whilst most property advertisements are genuine, there are some people who pretend to be landlords or agents to get money from you when they have no property to rent. Below are some key things to beware of. Contact Student Services if you have concerns.

**Adverts** Have you noticed another advert for the same property, using different language or pictures? Does the same phone number, email address or contact name appear in different adverts? Be cautious of any prices which seem too good to be true. It is not a good sign if pictures on the advert are different from the property you are shown. Sometimes agents show people a property they don't have the permission to rent, which may mean they don't have regular access to take pictures of it (hence the wrong pictures online).

**Letting Agents** Sometimes fake letting agencies are set up on the internet, so avoid an agency which doesn't have a physical office you can visit. Check whether an agent is a member of a professional body and a redress scheme (see 'looking up an agent' above).

**Weak Contact Details** Make sure you have more than just a mobile number for an agent or landlord. An address (for the landlord especially), a landline and a business email address will help you verify a genuine landlord or agent and will help down the line if you have any issues with the property.

**Google the Landlord, Agent and Property** Searching the internet for the landlord's name, phone number, the landlord's own address (always ask for this) as well as the property address can turn up discrepancies. You might find the property listed somewhere else by the genuine letting agent or landlord. If a letting agent has been found to be involved in scams before, you may find references to this – if in doubt, move on!

**Ownership** If you want to check that your landlord actually owns the property that they are renting, you can do a Land Registry search. This will cost £3.00 per search: [landregistry.gov.uk](http://landregistry.gov.uk)

**Money Upfront** Never pay anything upfront. Scammers mostly request money in advance, before a viewing. A genuine landlord or agent would never ask for this; the only time you pay anything before signing a contract is for a holding deposit and admin charges related to reference checks and credit checks. Please note that from 1 June 2019 all upfront fees for tenants will be banned.

**No Viewings Allowed** Never rent a property that you are not allowed to view at least twice. A fake landlord or agent will use excuses for why you can't view the property. If you live outside London or abroad, you should either make time to view or have someone view for you.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

**Lauren McKillop, Student Adviser, Trinity Laban**

*Face-to-face, phone and email advice and guidance*

**L.McKillop@trinitylaban.ac.uk** – 020 8305 9350

**moodle.trinitylaban.ac.uk** – Student Services > Accommodation

**trinitylaban.ac.uk/accommodation**

### **Shelter**

Advice for housing issues – **england.shelter.org.uk**

Telephone advice - 0808 800 4444

### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

Guidance and information – **citizensadvice.org.uk**