

The Book

The University of Lincoln Students' Union
Definitive Student Housing Guide



lincolnsu.com/housing

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Welcome to the Housing Booklet!

If you're looking for somewhere to live, this guide is definitely for you.

This step by step guide will provide you with the information you need to keep you ahead of the housing game whilst looking for accommodation in Lincoln.

It's important that you're clued up whilst hunting for your new accommodation because once you sign you are committed!

Kayleigh Taylor
Vice President Welfare & Diversity 2010/11
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Useful contacts

Accommodation Services	01522 886 051
VP Welfare & Diversity	01522 886 669
Lincoln City Council	01522 881 188
City Hall Beaumont Fee, Lincoln ,LN1 1DD	
Lincoln County Council	01522 552 222
County Offices, Newland, Lincoln	

Moving in to your property

You should:

- Inspect the property with your Landlord or Agent
- Record the content and their condition in an inventory
- Take meter readings and contact utilities providers (when you are responsible for your bills)
- If there is a phone line you are responsible for contacting the telephone company to register as new occupants
- Complete a council tax exemption form
- Get a TV licence
- Dispose of rubbish and packaging correctly
- Have arranged insurance in advance

Your Landlord/ Agent will:

- Provide you with emergency contact details
- Provide you with keys
- Tell you who supplies the utilities
- Agree any work that needs completing that had not been arranged in advance
- Tell you what scheme your deposit (if any) is in

Inventories:

Seem like hard work but they're very useful!

If you keep a good record of the contents and condition of the property now, it could save you haggling over your deposit when you leave. That means.. MONEY for you!

Moving out of your property

You Must:

- Make sure the house/ flat is clean
- Put everything back where it was when you moved in
- Pay all rent up to date
- Give final meter readings
- Pay all final bills
- Return all keys
- Remove everything that is yours from the property
- Dispose of all rubbish

Your Landlord/ agent should:

- Inspect the property (take photos with time and date if possible)
- Give you a list of any reasons for deductions (you will be given opportunity to agree/ disagree)
- Provide proof of costs to put anything right
- Not charge you for wear and tear
- Not charge you for general improvements

It's your money – don't throw it away!

Finding your

PERFECT HOUSE!

Don't allow yourself to be pushed into signing a contract, if you're told that there is a housing shortage in Lincoln and that you won't get a house if you don't sign now, **IGNORE IT!** - There is plenty of accommodation all within walking distance of the University.

Make sure if you agree any changes with the landlord (e.g. redecorating), you have the agreement in writing and not just a verbal contract. Also get a date for completion written on the contract.

Beware of hidden costs, the house looks good, reasonable price but does this include gas, electricity, and water? Will you need to pay for Internet, Cable or Sky TV? Small costs soon add up and you could be paying more than you'd thought.

The University of Lincoln has an accreditation scheme with landlords in the local area; this means that the landlords have to abide by the University's accommodation code of practice

ensuring all accommodation reaches a University standard.

Check that your landlord is accredited by contacting The Accommodation Office or by checking the housing section on www.lincolnsu.com

There are lots of factors to consider when choosing a house; it's important to find the right one as you will be spending a lot of time there and a significant amount of your very limited student income on it.

You have to be happy with it and you have to be happy with any compromises you come to for example a better maintained house for a location that is not walkable or a more expensive utility bill for a cheaper rent.



Consider and weigh up all of the following –

Utilities

Is there Gas, Electric and Water to the property? Is any of it included? If not, ensure it will be turned on and working when you move in.

Are you jointly liable with the other tenants and what would happen if one of them didn't pay?

Do all the appliances work? Is there a GAS SAFE certificate for all of the Gas appliances and has the Gas been serviced in the last 12 months?

How do you use the heating system?

Has the wiring been checked in the last few years?

Do any of the taps leak, do all of the sinks drain away and are there any signs of damp patches where things have leaked before?

Location, Location, Location!

Do you want to be a short walk from the city centre, or a short bus ride, or on a cycle route?

Do you want to be in an area near lots of other students or one that is more family orientated?

Has there been any flooding in the area in the last 12 months?

What is the crime rate like? Do you know who your local PCO is?

Is there a shop near by for bread and milk?

Security

Is the house secure, do all of the external doors seem solid and have working locks? Will you be given enough keys for one each?

Do all the windows open and close and are they fitted with locks?

Are smoke detectors and fire blanket/extinguishers provided?

Is there a burglar alarm fitted, but equally have there been any false alarms in the last 12 months, as this can be especially irritating for you and your neighbours?

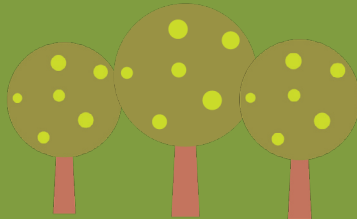
Is there an easy escape route in case of a fire?

Furniture

Is there enough furniture for all of you who intend to share the property? e.g. a big enough freezer, a table with enough chairs for you all to sit round, sufficient cupboards in the kitchen for you each to have one, basic bedroom furniture in each bedroom?

Does the furniture look in good condition and ask whether it meets current fire regulations?

Will the house be cleaned before you move in?



Outside

Are there bins, what goes in each and when are they collected?

Do the gutters and drains look clear and free flowing?

Is there any where to park or to store a bike?

Who is responsible for cutting any grass and is a lawnmower provided if it is you are expected to do it?

CHECK YOUR CONTRACT, IS EVERYTHING YOU HAVE AGREED WITH THE LANDLORD ABOUT WHAT IS/ISN'T INCLUDED WRITTEN DOWN?

How much will you be paying?

Rent		£
Bills		
	Water	£
	Gas	£
	Electricity	£
TV & internet		£
TV license		£
Total		£

Deposits

Tenancies starting after April 2007 are subject to the Tenancy Deposit Scheme; this protects you the tenant from having your landlord or letting agent unfairly withholding your deposit. It also offers a dispute resolution service at the end of your tenancy.

There are two main schemes in which your deposit can be held;

Insurance-based schemes:

In this the tenant pays the deposit to the landlord or letting agent this is then placed in a bank account and the landlord pays a premium to the insurer. Within 14 days of the deposit being paid the landlord should give the tenant details about;

- £ the scheme that they have chosen,
- £ the landlords or agent's contact details,
- £ details to claim the release of the deposit,
- £ information about the purpose of the deposit,
- £ and what to do if there is a dispute over the deposit

At the end of the tenancy, both tenant and landlord have to come to an agreement about how the deposit should be divided, if there is a dispute the full deposit amount is handed over to the deposit scheme until the dispute has been settled. If the landlord or letting agent don't pay the deposit back to the tenant and fail to comply with the deposit scheme, the insurance company will pay the tenants if they are entitled to it.

Custodial Scheme:

This scheme differs from the Insurance-based schemes as the deposit is given to the landlord or letting agent by the tenant and then they give the deposit to a third party - the custodial scheme. Within 14 days of the deposit being paid the landlord should give the tenant details about;

- £ the scheme that they have chosen,
- £ the landlords or agent's contact details,
- £ details to claim the release of the deposit,
- £ information about the purpose of the deposit,
- £ and what to do if there is a dispute over the deposit

When the tenancy ends and agreement is reached about how the deposit will be split and returned by the deposit scheme to either the landlord or letting agent (if applicable) and the tenant. If a dispute arises, the scheme will hold the deposit until the courts or dispute resolution service come to a verdict.

Interest accrued by the money in the deposit scheme pays for the running of the scheme and any surplus may be offered to the tenant.



Contracts and tenancy agreements

All contracts are legally binding, so make sure you're happy with the house and the people you are living with before you sign.

The contract sets out the responsibilities of each party, the landlord and the tenant. Once signed both parties are protected by Law. It is advisable for you to take the contract home and check that you understand all the clauses of the contract, don't be pushed into signing one as you will be legally bound to it. If your landlord doesn't allow you to take the contract away to sign it, you probably shouldn't sign it.

The tenancy agreement should also state;

1. How much the rent is and when and how it should be paid,
2. The Landlord's and Tenants' names and the address of the property being let
3. Date of the start and finish of tenancy period
4. The responsibility for Bills
5. Whether the landlord will provide any services
6. Clauses about landlord and tenants rights to end the tenancy

Renting from Landlord or Agent

Most landlords and agents in Lincoln use an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement. Many of which will run for 11 months, and some even for 12 months. Your contract will list the dates that your tenancy will start and also the date that it ends, and you will be liable for the rent during this period. With this agreement you have exclusive possession of the property and the landlord should give you notice in advance if they require access for maintenance, repairs or inspection.

Living in Halls of Residence

You will be asked to sign a fixed term agreement that will cover the full academic year; this will vary from Accommodation development. You will not be able to give notice to quit once the agreement has been signed. In University Accommodation you will be a licensee, persons acting on behalf of the University Accommodation Services will be allowed access to all common areas, but not individual bedrooms without giving notice.

Contract Liability

Joint Liability – You will have joint liability if you have signed the same contract as you housemates, i.e. all your names and addresses appear on the contract. You will be joint and severally liable with each of your housemates for any rent arrears and/ or damage to the property.

Individual Liability – You will have individual liability if you have a separate agreement between you and the landlord (only you appear on the agreement). You will be liable for damage to your room, the Landlord can make a charge for any damage to the communal areas but they have to first try and find out who was responsible first. This is commonly found in Hall of residence and approved developments.

Terms and Conditions

It is highly important that you understand the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement, including handbooks and additional contract sheets. Do not sign a contract if you don't agree with the terms and conditions, or if there is anything you don't understand in the agreement.



Unfair Contract Terms

Any clauses found in the contract or tenancy agreement deemed to be unfair could be unenforceable. This only refers to the standard terms of a contract.

Guarantor Forms

It is common for landlords and agencies to ask for a guarantor form, this is normally a parent or guardian. The landlord will chase them for any unpaid rent or damage costs if they can not get them through you.

Burglary

How to make sure your house is secure:

- Make sure your wheelie bin is in your yard, and that your gate is shut and bolted.
- Lock all doors and windows, even if you are in the house
- Do not leave your back door keys in the door
- If you can, during the holidays, take all your valuables home or to a relatives or trusted friends house.
- If you have a laptop or computer, back up all your work onto discs and keep them somewhere safe (not with your computer).
- Use timer switches to turn lights on at night.
- If you know your neighbours, give them your contact details so that they can get in touch if anything does happen.

Register all your valuable items at www.immobilise.com free of charge. This is a national database, used by Police Forces across the country. If your property is stolen, and then found by police, it can be returned to you.



Useful Links

www.lincs.police.uk

www.lincolnsaferstudents.co.uk

www.immobilise.com

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

www.askthe.police.uk

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Anti-social Behaviour is:

- Threatening and abusive behaviour
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Drunken and rowdy groups
- Drug related problems
- Noisy neighbours and loud parties
- Abandoned vehicles, dumping and fly tipping

Noise

Opinions differ about noise, and a number of factors are considered to determine if noise is a nuisance, these include:

- The level and type of noise
- its duration
- how frequently the noise occurs
- the time of day or night when the noise occurs
- the behaviour of those involved
- what measures could reduce or modify the noise
- the characteristics of the neighbourhood where the noise occurs
- the number of persons affected



The Consequences



In Lincoln Anti-social behaviour is taken **seriously**. This is what could happen to you:

- ! Visit from University Staff, Lincolnshire Police and the ASB team
- ! Asked to sign a Anti-social behaviour contract (ABC) which you must follow
- ! Breaking the contract will result in an ASBO
- ! Breaking the ASBO will result in a custodial sentence
- ! You can receive an ASBO with out signing an ABC
- ! A formal caution will stay with you for 5 years; a conviction will stay with you for 10 years.

Some sound advice for Living in Lincoln:

- ! If you're having a party, warn your neighbours in advance. You could even invite them! If someone complains, apologise and do something about it.
- ! Amplified music or sound is the most commonly complained about noise. Keep the volume down. This applies to TV's too.
- ! Consider the volume of your voice. In properties with poor sound insulation and outdoors – everyone can hear you.

Viewing Checklist

- Outside** Does the front of the property look safe and secure
- Going In** Does the door lock securely
- Walking Through** Do the staircase, landing and corridors look maintained
- Kitchen** Is the space big enough for the numbers in the group? Are the appliances in working order? Can the area be easily maintained?

- Lounge** Is the space big enough for the numbers in the group? Is the space heating sufficient for the size of the room? Clarify what is supplied with the property and what belongs to the current occupiers.

- Bedrooms** Are they all of a similar size? Do they all have the same fittings? Do they all have working locks on the door? (N.B The doors do not have to have locks) Is one smaller or larger than the others (Does the rent reflect this?) Is the heating sufficient for the size of the room.

- Bathrooms** Do the bathroom(s), toilets look well maintained? Is there heating and ventilation to avoid condensation?

- Outside Rear** Is it secure and well maintained? What is your responsibility for this area?

- Tenancy** Do you understand it? Can you afford it? Are you responsible for more rent if someone leaves?

- Heating and Hot Water** Are there instructions on how to use the system? Do the current occupiers have any problems with heating and hot water supplies?

- All Inclusive Rent** Are there any limits on energy usage? If so, will you receive regular updates for information?

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It's **YOUR** money - don't throw it away!

Pick up some extra viewing checklists from the SOAP Centre or the Accommodation Office



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www.lincolnsu.com/housing

www.studentpad.co.uk/lincoln

*[www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/accommodation/
accreditation.htm](http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/accommodation/accreditation.htm)*