



Student Housing Guide

Renting in the Private Sector

Welcome

Congratulations on your place at Durham University, we are so glad to have you joining us for a new academic year!

At the Community Relations & Housing Unit we work alongside the Accommodation & Allocations Office in the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Colleges & Student Experience. We also work really closely with Durham Students Union on housing related matters.

The most important thing you need to know is that there is support available to you on your student housing journey here in Durham.

We want you to be able to make an informed decision when you are thinking about your housing options. In this simple guide you will therefore find signposting to a wide variety of information about renting in the private sector.

We cover three aspects of getting started on your housing journey – affordability, location and housemates. We then look at three stages of a typical housing journey – searching for, securing and settling into your accommodation. Finally, we share other useful links in a handy ‘fast access’ index.

We wish you the very best of luck and we are all excited for you to be part of our beautiful city and everything it has to offer.

See you soon!

Community Relations & Housing Unit

Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Colleges & Student Experience

Getting Started

Here we will cover some of the basics you might want to think about early on in your housing journey: Affordability, Location, and Housemates.

Affordability

Budget - A great starting point, when thinking about your housing options, is to work out how much rent you want to pay. This will help with your searches and it will also give you an idea of the overall cost of renting - not all tenancies include bills in the rent.

[How much rent should a student pay? | UCAS](#)

[Student living costs in the UK 2024 - Save the Student](#)

[Rent and Hidden Costs - UNIPOL](#)

[How to budget at university - Save the Student](#)

[Rent Calculator - Save the Student](#)

Upfront Costs - Everyone's financial circumstances are different, but it's always helpful to know what upfront costs you might have when renting in the private sector. Here are some useful sources of information to help you understand these:

[Tenancy Deposit Protection: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

[Advice & Support - Durham Students Union](#)

[Upfront costs of private renting - Shelter England](#)

[Deposits: A Guide For Students - UNIPOL](#)

Money Advice - Durham University has its own Money Advice Service. You can reach out any time about budgeting, money management, government benefits banking or other financial concerns:

[Student Money Advice - Durham University](#)

Financial Support - visit our Fees & Funding pages, and Cost of Living Hub to check if you are eligible for any further support:

[Fees and Funding - Durham University](#)

[Cost of Living Hub - Durham University](#)

Location

Most student accommodation in Durham is within either walking distance or a short bus/cycle ride from the city centre and main University sites.

Knowing where your College is and where your teaching buildings are going to be is a good start. You might also want to think about:

- where other University spaces you might frequently use are (e.g. Library, Sports & Wellbeing Park, student theatre/music practice/performance spaces, boathouse etc);
- any specific community spaces you might want easy access to such as prayer spaces, local GP services, swimming pool etc;
- proximity to public transport – how close do you want to be to the bus or train station and connecting services?

The City has six different areas, each with their own character, where you'll find a good amount of student accommodation (map here: [Househunting Tips - Durham University](#)). You can find plenty of student opinions on these areas with a quick search online, and we share our own views in our Student Housing Webinars. The six city areas with student housing are known as:

- Peninsula
- Claypath
- Viaduct
- Elvet
- Gilesgate
- Neville's Cross

You'll also find some student accommodation in suburbs and towns outside the city, but still accessible to the University. To the north we have students living in Aykley Heads, Framwellgate Moor, Pity Me and Newton Hall. To the east we have students living in Belmont and Carrville. To the west we have students living in Langley Moor, Meadowfield and Brandon. To the south we have students living in Shincliffe and Bowburn.

Importantly (no matter what you might read), there is NO 'party area' in Durham. There are many pubs, clubs, bars and social spaces, as well as community, arts and cultural events happening throughout the year in our vibrant city. You'll also have College events and University social spaces to attend throughout your time here. We recommend prioritising your search for a home on a space you can live comfortably in, study well in and relax in.

Want to know how many other students live where you're looking? This [map](#) will give you an idea of this - the darker the shading, the higher the percentage of students in the postcode. Thinking about safety in the city? This handy [NIGHT LIGHTS](#) map shows the lit walking routes through the city at night and [Durham Constabulary](#) provides local policing information, including crime statistics.

Housemates

Whether you've taken up the option for us to connect you with other house hunters in your College, or you are conducting your own search here's some handy information about housemates.

Finding housemates is a common student experience so there is plenty of guidance out there. Although many of the guides relate to the experience of undergraduates searching for second year housemates, the following advice is a good starting place:

[Housing toolkit @ Durham SU](#)

[Choosing the right housemates - The Uni Guide](#)

[What to do if you haven't secured your housemates - Student Roost](#)

[TOP TIPS WHEN CHOOSING HOUSEMATES - Student Cribs](#)

[The Student Guide: How To Find Flatmates For University - Prestige Student Living](#)

(n.b. Student Roost, Student Cribs and Prestige Student Living are all private, non-university student accommodation providers – other providers do exist).

Some conversation up front at the outset of your housing journey can help a lot in the long run. As a basic starting point you and your prospective house mates might want to talk about:

- Sleeping Patterns
- Attitudes to Sharing
- Money – and how you plan to split and pay for shared bills
- Sociability
- Interests
- Cleanliness

Durham Students Union has a [housemate quiz](#), or you could search for one of many 'housemate' checklists that are out there.

Searching, Securing and Settling In

Here we provide a variety of information to help you with your search for a home, signposting for when you are signing up to a tenancy and a little to get you started on settling in at Durham.

Searching

Getting started

There is a **Code of Practice for Student Lettings** in Durham and we encourage you to read this. A number of letting agents and landlords have signed up to the Code, which supports students searching for a private rented home in Durham. You can find the Code [here](#) along with a list of the members.



Remember that your College may also have information available for you – we encourage you to reach out to the Welfare Team and/or Livers Out ‘Rep’ if your College has one.

[Durham Uni Find a Housemate | Facebook](#) platform is a great place to find tenancy take-overs, single rooms in larger houses, small groups who want to make a bigger group, or simply to connect with other house hunters. It is operated, monitored and moderated by Durham Students Union.

Specific search engines exist to find ‘roommates’ such as Spare Room’s [Find a Roommate](#), but there can be costs associated with these and you should make your own checks as to what these might be.

StuRents is a third party provided student accommodation search platform: [Student Accommodation Durham - Houses, Flats | StuRents](#). Rightmove is another site you can search for student accommodation in Durham on: [Student Accommodation in Durham | Rightmove](#). Not all landlords / agents use both or either of these platforms so we encourage you **to do your own research beyond the signposting here. We have only suggested these to get you started.**

Viewings

Always view the accommodation on offer (preferably in person) and consider using this handy [Viewing Checklist](#) from Durham Students Union when you view. You can find more information here on [what to look for \(Save the Student\)](#). If you cannot view a house as a group this advice from [The Uni Guide](#) is helpful:

“If you’re in a larger group, it might be difficult to find a time to view a property that suits everyone’s schedule... it might be that only some of your group can attend a viewing and they’ll have to report back. If this is the case, pick someone who’ll ask the right questions. Remember to take photos to show those who can’t make a viewing.”

Signing Up

When you've found 'the one' we can't stress the following guidance strongly enough:

- Always communicate directly with the letting agent or landlord;
- Always read the small print;
- Always ask for clarity on anything you do not understand, or are uncertain about – preferably do this in writing, and ask for the response in writing.

A tenancy agreement will be **legally binding** so it is important to understand what you are signing up for. Here are some useful places to read about what to expect at this stage of your housing journey:

[How to rent - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Private rented housing for students - Shelter England](#)

[8 things to check before signing a tenancy agreement - Save the Student](#)

When you get a contract to sign Durham Students Union provides a [contract checking tool](#). We also provide some guidance on terminology here: [Housing Terminology - Durham University](#)

If you're going to be living with 2 or more other students, and only with students, you may also wish to look at the information on the following pages provided by the local authority, Durham County Council:

[Money off Council Tax for students - Durham County Council](#)

[Durham Student Assured Housing Scheme - Durham County Council](#)

[Multiple occupancy homes - Durham County Council](#)

[Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation - Durham County Council](#)

Settling In

Planning your move in, don't worry we have some signposting to help with that too!

Household Essentials

You should receive an inventory and clear information from your landlord or agent on what will be in your home when you move in. Once you know what you need to provide don't worry too much about getting it all in advance. Durham has a fantastic local market, many shops and a number of larger retail areas catering for your every need when moving in including:

- [Durham Market](#)
- [The Arnison Centre](#)
- North Durham Retail Park (Old Pit Ln, Pity Me, Durham, DH1 5ST)
- Dragonville Retail Park (Dragon Lane, Durham DH1 2WP)
- Durham City Retail Park (McIntyre Way, Durham, DH1 2RP)

Food supplies

You needn't worry about bringing too much food with you when you arrive. There are smaller local food shops including Tesco, Sainsbury's, Iceland, Best-One Dunelm Foodstores, Durham Food Store, Anderson's Greengrocers and more in the city centre. We have two Asian grocery shops: Taste The Orient and 7 Day Store. And two health food shops: Grape Tree and H&B. There are also several food sellers within the Durham Markets. Larger supermarkets Tesco, Sainsbury's, Aldi, Lidl and more are just a short bus ride away.

Eating out

Too tired to cook when you arrive or maybe you just want to celebrate arriving in Durham? Large app-based (e.g. Just Eat, Uber Eats, Deliveroo etc) and independent delivery services all operate around the city. We have a large number of cafes, restaurants and take aways near to most student accommodation. You'll mostly always be able to go somewhere local for a bite to eat after unpacking.

Second-hand / New-To-You items

Get a head start with your environmental efforts. Every year during Green Move Out we collect tonnes of items that can be used again from students leaving Durham. Our charity partner [County Durham Furniture Help Scheme](#) hosts these items at its warehouse in neighbouring town, Ferryhill.

Budget Travel

Arriva offer travel discounts for students across a large area in and around Durham. You'll need your Durham University ID card but once you have it you can travel from as little as £1.50 a day. Find out more here: [Durham University | Bus Routes & Tickets | Arriva Bus](#)

Other Useful Information

Here are a number of other information resources which you may find useful on your housing journey. Everyone's experience is unique but you aren't alone – reach out to your College, advice services and more here at Durham.

- **Advice Service** - Durham Students Union offers a wide range of [advice services](#) including a Housing Support advice service with a number of useful resources.
- **Student Associations** – Durham Students Union has eight associations where students can find support within a community space: International, LGBT+, Estranged & Care Experienced, Mature, Disabilities & Carers, People of Colour, Durham Womxn's, Trans, and Working Class. Access groups [here](#).
- **Postgraduates** – Durham Students Union provides a [PG Housing Guide](#)
- **International Students** – Money advice for International students can be found [here](#). International 'Freshers' can also access a guide from the International Students Association which covers many housing topics, connect with the ISA [here](#)
- **LGBTQ+** - LGBTQ+ students house hunting may find this guidance from Shelter helpful: [How to find an LGBTQ+ friendly home - Shelter England](#)
- **Right To Rent** - Landlords, home-owners and Letting Agents are required by law to make sure that someone has the right to rent in England before letting the property. Your landlord will ask you to [prove your right to rent in England \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Guarantors** - Durham University works with Housing Hand, the UK's leading provider of rent guarantor services that enable students to access private sector accommodation where a UK guarantor is required. Read more at: [Rent Guarantor Scheme - Durham University](#)
- **Tenant Fees** - For a quick guide to Tenant Fees Durham SU has this [factsheet](#)
- **Tenants Unions** – the NUS provides links to Tenants Unions on its [Student Renters Hub](#)
- **Living Out Sustainably** - Our Student Community Warden service provides a wealth of well-researched content on their social media channels (Instagram / Facebook) that will help you while Living Out: [DU Student Community Wardens - Instagram](#), [DU Student Community Wardens - Facebook](#)
- **Accessibility** - Two independent guides by local residents may be useful if you are concerned about access through the city: [Accessible Durham — Durham Pointers](#), [Durham City Access For All - Disability Access Information Guide](#)