



Househunting Notes

Relax, take your time, make a good choice

There are lots of houses available and plenty of time to find a suitable place.

Information about the Warwick Accommodation scheme is available here: [Warwick Scheme](#)

Planning is everything

Making a well-informed choice about your accommodation is vitally important.

A good choice should mean a comfortable and happy year, while a poor choice could mean a difficult year. Points to be considered include:

- who am I going to live with?
- where do I want to live?
- how much will it cost?
- what type of property do I want?

Accreditation Schemes

Any house or flat you consider should be part of the local Council's Accreditation Scheme. This ensures that houses and flats meet a reasonable quality level and safety standard. More information about the Accreditation Schemes is available from:

[WDC accreditation scheme](#) for Leamington Spa, Warwick and Kenilworth area.

[Coventry City Council accreditation scheme](#) for the Coventry area.

Joint Tenancies/Contracts

Most private contracts will be for joint tenancies – this means that if someone drops out of the house and stops paying their rent, the remaining tenants may be asked to pay the missing share of the rent. This can be a very complicated and difficult to resolve problem.

Always get advice if someone is leaving your house.

Giving Notice

Most contracts do not allow you to give notice to quit and bring the tenancy to an end early. By simply leaving you could be held responsible for the rent for the whole of the agreed period.

Not sure what it all means?

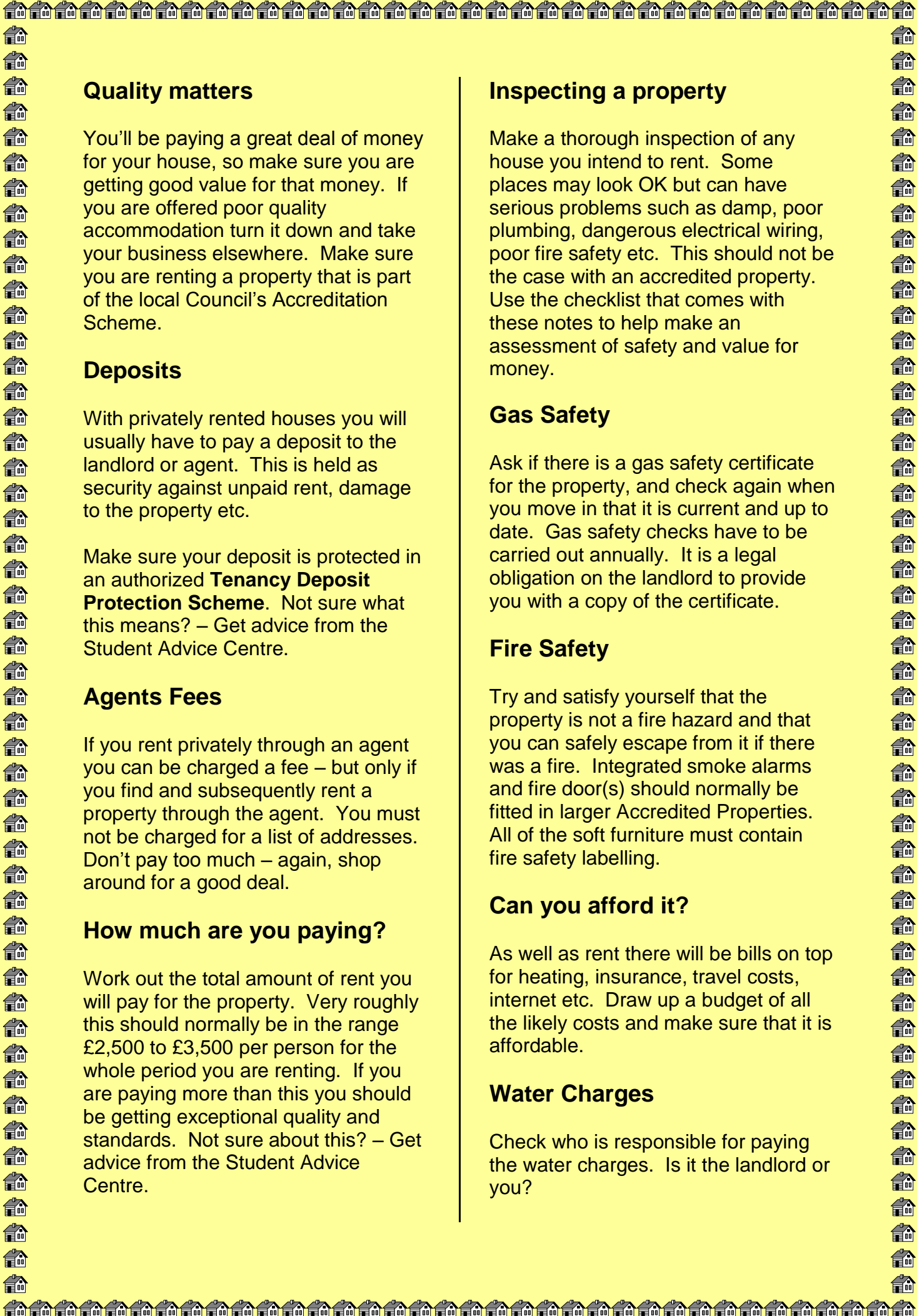
If you are unsure about what your contract means get advice from the Student Advice Centre in SUHQ Level 2 above Xanana's Restaurant.

All or nothing!

Once you sign a contract for a house (private or University) it is very difficult to back out of it. **Do not sign up for a house you are not sure about!**

Group size

Large groups (7-8 or more) may find it difficult to find a suitable house. Some large houses are in very poor condition. Consider splitting a large group and getting two smaller houses.



Quality matters

You'll be paying a great deal of money for your house, so make sure you are getting good value for that money. If you are offered poor quality accommodation turn it down and take your business elsewhere. Make sure you are renting a property that is part of the local Council's Accreditation Scheme.

Deposits

With privately rented houses you will usually have to pay a deposit to the landlord or agent. This is held as security against unpaid rent, damage to the property etc.

Make sure your deposit is protected in an authorized **Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme**. Not sure what this means? – Get advice from the Student Advice Centre.

Agents Fees

If you rent privately through an agent you can be charged a fee – but only if you find and subsequently rent a property through the agent. You must not be charged for a list of addresses. Don't pay too much – again, shop around for a good deal.

How much are you paying?

Work out the total amount of rent you will pay for the property. Very roughly this should normally be in the range £2,500 to £3,500 per person for the whole period you are renting. If you are paying more than this you should be getting exceptional quality and standards. Not sure about this? – Get advice from the Student Advice Centre.

Inspecting a property

Make a thorough inspection of any house you intend to rent. Some places may look OK but can have serious problems such as damp, poor plumbing, dangerous electrical wiring, poor fire safety etc. This should not be the case with an accredited property. Use the checklist that comes with these notes to help make an assessment of safety and value for money.

Gas Safety

Ask if there is a gas safety certificate for the property, and check again when you move in that it is current and up to date. Gas safety checks have to be carried out annually. It is a legal obligation on the landlord to provide you with a copy of the certificate.

Fire Safety

Try and satisfy yourself that the property is not a fire hazard and that you can safely escape from it if there was a fire. Integrated smoke alarms and fire door(s) should normally be fitted in larger Accredited Properties. All of the soft furniture must contain fire safety labelling.

Can you afford it?

As well as rent there will be bills on top for heating, insurance, travel costs, internet etc. Draw up a budget of all the likely costs and make sure that it is affordable.

Water Charges

Check who is responsible for paying the water charges. Is it the landlord or you?

Check List for Inspecting a Property

Use this check list when you go to look at a house - it should help you decide which is the right house for you. (You can photocopy the check list and use a new one for each house you look at).

Exterior of the house

- Does the roof look sound and in good repair?
- Are the drains and gutters clear and in good repair?
- Is the woodwork sound and in good repair?

Security

- Does the house seem to be secure?
- Are the locks on the external doors adequate?
- Are the external doors solid and secure? Would it be difficult to break in?
- Do all the ground floor windows have security locks?
- Are the window frames strong and in good repair?
- Are the ground floor curtains lined or thick enough to stop people seeing in?

Heating and Plumbing

- Does the house have central heating?
- Does the heating system work efficiently?
- How much does it cost to run the heating system?
- Do any taps, pipes or toilets leak?

Gas Safety

- Is there a current gas safety certificate for the house?
- Is a carbon monoxide detector fitted?

Fire safety

- In the event of a fire could you escape easily?
- Are smoke detectors fitted?

Electrical Safety

- Does the electrical wiring and fuse box look modern and well maintained?
- Is there a recent Electrical Inspection Certificate for the property?

Furniture

- Has the house got enough furniture for everyone?
- Are there enough beds, chairs, tables, desks etc?
- Is the kitchen big enough to store and prepare food?
- What items of furniture belong to the current tenants?

Money

- How much is the rent and how does it compare with other properties? What is the total amount you will pay?
- Who pays the **water charges**?
- How much is any deposit - is it protected in a Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme?
- Is there an Agents Fee? How much?
- Are there any other charges?

Accreditation scheme

- Is the property part of the local Council's Accreditation Scheme?

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