

Housing and COVID-19- Frequently Asked Questions

I've been told I have to pay council tax for part of June as I'm a final-year student, can I get around this?

If you live in private rented accommodation and your course finishes before the end of your tenancy, you may be required to pay council tax. Most finalists will finish on or around the 12th with most tenancies finishing on 30th June. Reading Borough Council have estimated that most houses will be charged around £90 in Council Tax for this period. Make sure to pay the tax in a timely manner to avoid extra charges or court summons. If you need any help or support, contact the Advice Service on www.rusu.co.uk/getadvice.

Further information can be found on our website here:

https://www.rusu.co.uk/pageassets/advice/money/Finalists_May_2020_Final.pdf

Can I come back to Reading University or to my accommodation?

Students who left their student accommodation and now wish to travel back for face to face teaching or to recover their belongings that they may do so as long as they follow the precautions.

More information can be found here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/coronavirus-guide-for-students/student-guide-to-coronavirus/returning-to-university-in-2021/>

I left my student house in a rush and I have all my stuff- but do I need to come back to Reading just to do a deep clean?

You are still in contract with your landlord – therefore the terms and conditions are still in place. Costs for cleaning and damages can be taken from your deposit.

If you are concerned about the cleaning of your property, it will be worth speaking with your landlord to see if a cleaning company can be obtained – you may even wish to ask the landlord to go halves on the costs this may incur – however landlords are not obligated to do this.

More information in regard to deposit deductions can be found here:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/tenancy_deposits/what_can_your_landlord_deduct_from_your_deposit

I'm worried that my new house might not be clean enough, especially if a previous resident had Coronavirus. Do landlords/tenants have any extra cleaning responsibilities at the moment?

The Government's emergency measures for dealing with the Coronavirus does not excuse landlords from their legal responsibilities. They are still required to provide and maintain safe and decent accommodation, to provide those certificates demanded by law, to abide

by their side of the tenancy agreement, including allowing their tenants 'quiet enjoyment' of their accommodation. They must also fulfil their 'right to rent' obligations.

Further guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

I have signed a housing contract for next year, but I'm an international student and I might not be able to come back to the UK in September- what happens now?

If you find yourself in this situation, contact the Advice Service as each case is individual and the advice team can support your unique circumstances.

I'm moving into a new house, but someone in that house won't be able to move out. What can I do?

Government advice states that if a person is self-isolating or has tested positive for Covid-19, it is not appropriate to move. More information on moving home can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

I'm an international final-year student still living in Reading, but I'm not allowed to go home - where can I live when my contract runs out at the end of June, and where can I keep my stuff?

If this may be a possibility for you, we ask that you seek advice, as each case is individual.

Some further advice on leaving your belongings can be found on the Department of

Education blog here: <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/04/09/university-students-covid19-faq/>

My landlord/estate agent wants to come into the house for inspections, but I don't think that's safe! What can I do?

Landlords are still required to provide and maintain safe and decent accommodation, to provide those certificates demanded by law. Further guidance can be found under repairs and access to your home here:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus#Repairs_and_access_to_your_home

Can we now book rooms for 2021/22?

Private rented accommodation, estate agents and private halls are now open for bookings. However, it is worth knowing the company or landlords individual cancellation policy due to Covid and what happens in the future in the UK. You can go to the RUSU housing pages to see a list of local agents (although not exclusive).

Further information on private rented accommodation can be found here:

<https://www.rusu.co.uk/advice/housing/finding-accommodation/>

Further information on student University Halls of Residence can be found here:
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/Ready-to-Study/accommodation.aspx>

My landlord is trying to kick me out early- what can I do?

It is best to check what kind of tenancy you have with your landlord. The type of tenancy you have will effect what process your landlord has to complete in order for you to leave a property. A tenancy checker can be found here:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/legal/security_of_tenure/tenancy_checker

Enhanced rules have been brought in around eviction (until 31st May 2021) in light of Covid-19. More information can be found here:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus#Eviction_and_being_asked_to_leave

As many tenancies are due to expire on 30th June 2021 you can refer to the tenancy deposit scheme that your deposit is kept in for further advice and guidance on moving out due to the Covid-19. Further information can be found here:

- TDS Scheme: <https://www.tenancydepositscheme.com/covid-19/>
- My Deposit Scheme: <https://www.mydeposits.co.uk/content-hub/landlord-covid-19-faqs/>
- Deposit Protection Scheme: <https://www.depositprotection.com/news/latest-news/2020/deposit-protection-during-the-coronavirus-crisis-your-questions-answered/>

RUSU Advice

If you have further questions or would like specific advice, please get in touch with the RUSU Advice Service. The specialist Advisers offer a confidential service, independent from the University so they can discuss your case with you in private.

Contact us by email at advice@rusu.co.uk or complete an online client form at www.rusu.co.uk/getadvice.