

New guide on tenants' rights launched ahead of Freshers' Week



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Category: Supporting communities

As the new university year approaches, Belfast City Council has launched a free online guide to help people understand their rights when renting a house of multiple occupancy (HMO).

An HMO is defined as living accommodation which is the main residence for three or more people from more than two different households, where at least one person pays the rent.

'Know your rights – a guide for HMO tenants' covers every aspect of renting an HMO, from the pre-tenancy checks that people should carry out before signing a contract and their responsibilities while occupying the property, through to regulations on ending tenancies, including notice periods required and rules around deposits.

It details how landlords are legally required to provide adequate security arrangements for tenants and includes advice for tenants on keeping safe.

The guide also provides helpful information on how to deal with potential issues including harassment and unlawful eviction.

Councillor Arder Carson, Deputy Chair of the council's Licensing Committee, said: "While anyone can rent an HMO, most HMO tenants are students. The publication of this guide is therefore extremely timely as people will be preparing to begin or return to university over the next few weeks. The guide aims to help them navigate the many challenges of shared housing accommodation.

"First and foremost, I would urge anyone considering renting an HMO to check that it is licensed before they sign a contract. HMO licenses provide assurance that the property complies with legislation and meets safety and quality standards. Properties will also need to include suitable facilities for the number of people living there before a license is granted.

"The guide provides additional support for renters by detailing what rights they have as HMO tenants. It covers basic information around deposits, such as the maximum deposit that landlords can demand and documentation that they must provide to tenants. It also outlines landlords' responsibilities, including minimum standards for maintenance or repairs to their rental property.





“The guide also includes useful information for tenants about the rights of the property manager, such as regulations around allowing them reasonable access to the property to carry out inspections, make repairs and comply with legal requirements such as fire and other safety regulations.

“I would encourage anyone who is about to rent an HMO or already does, to check out the guide. It is important that you know your rights and this information could prove to be invaluable if you get into difficulties or disputes with your landlord.”

Landlords and tenants seeking further advice around HMOs can contact the council’s NIHMO Unit directly on 028 9027 0414 or email nihmo@belfastcity.gov.uk

‘Know your rights – a guide for HMO tenants’ is available online at belfastcity.gov.uk/HMOTenants

 HMO-tenants-know-your-rights.jpg (3.24 MB) 



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