

# A GUIDE TO LETTING YOUR PROPERTY

## ***What type of accommodation do we advertise?***

The College advertises two main types of accommodation: lodging in a private home (homestay) and renting a room in a house/flat (self-catering). With homestay accommodation, the owner lives in the property and will need to provide room and board for either 5 or 7 days per week. This type of accommodation is usually required for students aged under 18. Self-catering accommodation is advertised to adults (aged over 18) and usually involves a number of students/tenants sharing a house or flat, each with their own room. The owner does not usually live in the property. For both types, students usually seek accommodation for the full academic year (September to June), although we have a growing number of students on block-release courses who require accommodation for 12 week periods at various times of the year.

## ***How do we inform students about available accommodation?***

We have a database that advertises all vacant accommodation. This database provides students with information about the properties available and the landlord/landladies contact details. The student is then able to see which property best suits their needs.

## ***How do you advertise your property on our database?***

To advertise your property on our database you will need to complete a 'Property Information Sheet'. The information from this form will be recorded on our database to advertise your property. It is advisable to provide as much information as possible to ensure that we are able to accurately advertise your property.

## ***You will also need to have/provide:***

- comfortable, clean, safe accommodation in a good state of repair, suitable for the accommodation of students
- current Gas Certificate
- evidence of listing on the Multiple Occupancy Housing Register, where applicable
- written agreement/contract with your tenants setting out your terms and conditions

In homestay accommodation, if there are students under 18, you will have additional levels of responsibility. You will have to discuss with the parents the levels of supervision provided.

## ***What happens next?***

If, having read this leaflet you would like us to advertise your property to students, please complete the 'Property Information Sheet' and return to Student Services. Once we have received this information we will add your property to our database. This database will be sent to students who require accommodation. The students will then contact you directly to arrange a viewing and ask any question they may have.

## ***Once your property is full, you should contact us so that we can update our database.***

You must ensure that you have a written agreement/contract signed by you and your lodger/tenant, setting out clearly your terms and conditions, which will help to avoid any misunderstandings during the tenancy. The contents of the agreement should be made clear to the lodger/tenant before they move in.

## ***The agreement can be very simple, and should cover the following:***

- the amount of rent to be paid and when (e.g. end of the week, start of the month)
- what exactly the rent covers e.g. meals, electricity, heating, water rates, etc.

- any services included e.g. laundry, cleaning, etc.
- how much notice you and your lodger will give to end the agreement
- whether guests can stay overnight
- arrangements for cleaning any shared areas, e.g. kitchen, bathroom, etc
- any other details such as use of telephone, garden, etc.

In addition, an inventory should be drawn up listing the contents of the room you are letting, and any existing damage. When your lodger moves in you can both check and agree the inventory. This can be repeated when the lodger moves out, and any loss or damage for which (s)he is responsible can be identified, and deducted from the deposit.

### **Deposit**

It is advisable to ask your lodger for a deposit to cover any loss or damage caused to your property. A receipt should be provided, specifying what it covers, e.g. breakage, damage, carpet cleaning, rent arrears, etc. A deposit should NOT be used to cover wear and tear and is normally equivalent to the weekly or monthly rent.

Remember that the deposit is your lodger's money which you are holding on trust, and its return is often essential to enable them to move into a new home.

### **Setting the rent**

You need to decide whether this should be paid weekly or monthly. You also need to decide what it includes. Including all costs within the rent is simpler and can prevent your being left picking up bills after your lodger leaves. However, charging your lodger a proportion of fuel bills separately when they come can reflect actual costs more accurately, and can encourage economy. Charging for telephone calls can be done with an itemised bill. All payments should be recorded in a rent book to avoid disagreements.

### **Collecting payments from students**

It is your responsibility to collect your rent directly from your students, as agreed in your contract. If your student is being funded by the College's Learner Support Fund an invoice should be sent to Student Services, clearly stating the student's name and period the invoice relates to.

### **How do I resolve problems with a tenant?**

In the event of a problem/disagreement, we suggest that you first try to resolve it directly with the student. The College may be able to advise/mediate in the event of failure to resolve problems directly.

According to the law, if you are a resident landlord and share more of your accommodation with your lodger than the entrance hall and stairs, you do not require a court order to evict him/her. However, you must give him or her reasonable notice. Where the lodger pays rent monthly, one month's notice is normally considered minimal, but a longer period would give him or her a better chance to find alternative accommodation. The notice should be given in writing, signed and dated. A copy should be kept.

Once the notice period has run out, you can evict your lodger so long as you do not use any kind of force. If he or she refuses to move out contact the Housing Advice Service or Citizens' Advice Bureau.

### **What if my lodger leaves owing me money?**

If your lodger leaves owing you money, you may need to apply to the Small Claims Court to recover what is owing to you. It is advisable to write to your lodger first, setting out the amount owed and that you intend to apply to the court for a hearing.

At this stage they may settle the debt, but if there is still a disagreement you may need to serve them with a claim form detailing the amount you are claiming.