Housing Helpsheet

Finding a suitable private rented home in Bristol

Private renting in Bristol

The demand for private rented accommodation in Bristol is high.

We know that the process of finding somewhere to rent can feel extremely overwhelming.

To help with this, and to maximise your chances of finding somewhere suitable, we have put together the following tips.

Sign up with letting agents

Go into the letting agents' office, if possible, rather than telephoning them. If they have met you in person, they are more likely to think of you when a new property becomes available. When you visit the letting agencies, make sure you are 'renting ready' (see here).

You may register with more than one agency. It is probably more effective to register with agencies located in, or near to, the area where you would like to live if you have a specific area in mind. For example, to be near to your child's school.

Tell your friends and family what you are looking for

You can do this both in person and via social media. Ask your friends and family to keep an eye out for any adverts/notices of available properties.

Word of mouth is often the best way to find something suitable for you in the areas of Bristol you are familiar with.



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Put up adverts on local Community noticeboards or in shop windows

Print out some "Property Wanted" adverts (if you do not have a printer at home, try your local library). Adverts should include:

- your requirements (e.g., number of bedrooms needed, budget, garden, disabled access, pets allowed etc.);
- the date you want to move;
- your contact details.

Sign up to a property search tool

Through these, you can search for properties or rooms in shared houses that fall within your budget.

We recommend starting with the following websites:

- Spare Room
- Right Move
- Gumtree
- Prime Location
- Zoopla
- Letting a Property
- Open Rent
- Facebook housing advertisement pages e.g.,
  - Rooms For Rent in Bristol-UK | Facebook
  - Bristol Alternative Community Abodes | Facebook
- Facebook Marketplace
- Other local buy/sell pages

As well as using these websites for property searches, you can also use some of them to put up your own posts: "Property Wanted", "Looking for House Share", "Room Wanted" etc.

You can sign up for automatic email alerts on these websites so that you are notified as soon as new properties which meet your criteria are added.

This could mean that you are first to respond to a new advert and so could increase your chances of being first to view the property.

Once you have signed up to these pages, try to check them for new adverts regularly (every day if possible), as competition for viewings is often high, and desirable properties are often not listed for more than a few days. Beware of scam adverts, and *never* pay any money upfront without seeing a property first.

See if you qualify for support from the Council's Private Renting Team

Depending on your needs, the council's Private Renting Team can provide financial help towards a deposit and rent in advance. Sometimes, if you cannot afford all of your rent, they can pay the difference to your landlord/letting agent.

They may be able to offer you a tenancy from their list of private providers.

To access support from the Private Renting Team, you will need to be referred by the council's Homelessness Prevention Team.

You will come into contact with the Homelessness Prevention Team if you tell them you are in need of support because you're homeless or at risk of homelessness. They will assess your needs and decide what support you need, and whether you need to be referred to the Private Renting Team.

Please note, you do not have to be without a home to access the council's homelessness support – they should still help you if you are *at risk* of becoming homeless in the next eight weeks, or living in really unsuitable housing.



The process of accessing support from the Private Renting Team

The diagram on the right shows the process you would go through to access support from the Private Renting Team.

Use university accommodation support

If you are a student at the University of Bristol or UWE, have a look at their support pages on renting privately and/or get in touch with someone who can help.

Access support from UoB

Access support from UWE

Use information and tips provided by Shelter

This will help you understand your options, rights, and responsibilities when it comes to renting privately.

Information on private renting

Information on finding landlords who accept tenants on benefits

Make sure you are 'renting ready'

This will give you the best possible chance of securing a private rented property. Being 'renting ready' means you have the following things available to give to any prospective landlord or letting agent.

Proof that you have a 'right to rent' in the UK (i.e., you are a UK citizen or have a valid visa). Landlords and letting agents will need to check your documents or carry out an online right to rent check before any tenancy starts. Check the requirements here.

Proof of your income such as:

- recent payslips (can be printed off or ready to send via email) if you are an employee for a company/organisation.
- accounts or proof of payments if you are self-employed.

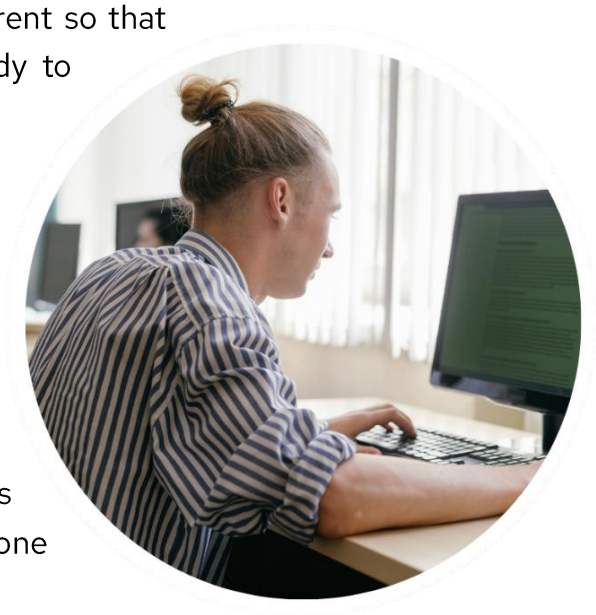
Benefits letters showing any recent claims you have made and your benefits entitlements. If you do not know whether you are entitled to claim Housing Benefit/Universal Credit, you should get some benefits advice about this (see here).

Recent address history. You will need to list your addresses over the past five years, and the dates you lived at each address.

References from previous landlords. Contact your previous landlord or letting agent to request these. If you have not rented before, you can usually use a character reference instead (below).

Character reference – a letter/email/statement from someone you have known for a long time, but who is not related to you. This type of reference is particularly important if you do not have any landlord references. Ideally, it will help reassure any prospective landlord that you are a reliable and responsible person who will be a good tenant.

Save money for a deposit and your first month's rent. If you are not able to do this, speak to Great Western Credit Union about a loan. You can sign up for an account with them before you have found a property to rent so that when you find a suitable property you are ready to proceed without delay.



Speak to family/friends about being a guarantor for you. A guarantor is someone who agrees to pay your rent if, for some reason, you are unable to. Not all landlords require a guarantor but some do. It is good to know with certainty whether you can offer a guarantor before you start viewing properties. You can find out more about guarantors here, including what to do if you do not have anyone who can act as yours.

Put together a property viewing checklist. This is a list of things to check for when you look round a property e.g. working lightbulbs; working heating, cooking, and washing facilities; secure doors; and good transport links. Do not be afraid to ask the landlord/letting agent questions at the viewing. Some property search websites offer viewing checklist templates e.g., this one from Zoopla.

Check you are receiving benefits you are entitled to

If you are not already claiming benefits to help you pay for your rent, consider making an application for Universal Credit, and any other benefits you may be entitled to.

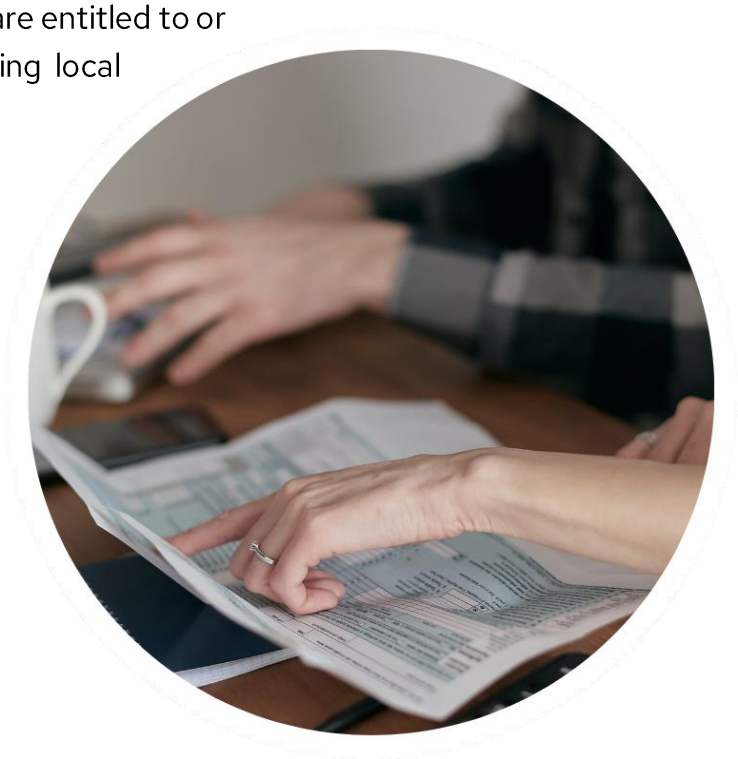
Applications for universal credit can be made:

- Online
- In person, by visiting the council's Citizen Service Point

  - Address: 100 Temple Street, Bristol, BS1 6AG
  - Opening Hours:
    - Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri 9am-5pm,
    - Wed 10am-5pm

If you want support in working out what you are entitled to or making a claim, you can contact the following local organisations for support:

- Citizens Advice Bristol
- St Pauls Advice Centre
- North Bristol Advice Centre
- South Bristol Advice Service
- Talking Money



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