

Conflict in your student home

Living in shared accommodation is an important part of student life. Sharing with people who have different lifestyles, habits, customs, and cultures is normally a positive experience, but sometimes problems can arise where there is a clash of lifestyles or differing standards and expectations.

What may begin as a small issue about cleaning, noise or bills can develop into a serious problem. If conflict arises, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have a bad relationship or you dislike each other, it just means that you want different things at the same time or have a different approach to resolving problems. For example, if you are having problems with your landlord or letting agent, you may have different ideas about how to approach this, but it is important that you can decide how to present a united front.

It's important to think about how to avoid issues arising in the first place and what to do if they do arise and how to stop them escalating.

SU Advice are here to help

If you are still having difficulties after you've read the following information, then you can get further advice on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant from an adviser in the Students' Union Advice team:

Email: suadvice@nottingham.ac.uk

Tel: (0115) 8468730

Thank you to colleagues in Loughborough University Student Advice and Support Service for allowing us to use their information in this leaflet.



Minimising Conflict

Sharing a house with your friends is something you'll always remember from your time at university – and as a housemate, you'll play a role in making sure shared living is a fantastic experience.

Here are some day-to-day practicalities to help you have the best time:

Be considerate. Respect your housemates' space, food, and property.

Put together some house rules. Have a chat with your housemates about, for example, having **visitors**, acceptable **noise** levels, **washing up** and sorting out the **bills** and other payments. It's good to talk this through early on to make sure you all agree on house rules.

Create a rota. As soon as everyone has moved in, create a rota of all the chores and tasks the whole household will have responsibility for. Whether that's cleaning the bathroom or putting the bins and recycling out, decide as a group who does what and when.

Don't let things build up. When something isn't quite right, avoid passive aggressive notes and revenge tactics; it's super important to talk to each other rather than letting things build up!

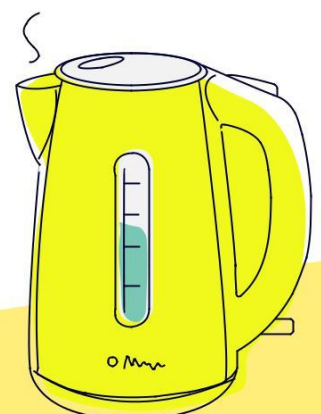
Other Problems

As well as things arising with everyday living, issues may surface with housemates not following lockdown rules, housemates taking drugs at home, housemates feeling isolated, struggling to adapt to living in a new place, not getting on with new housemates and difficulties making friends and/or finding it hard to concentrate when working in a fraught home environment.

So how can you resolve conflict?

Don't leave it to build up. Talk about any issues before things get worse and try and do it face to face rather than via text or group chat.

Not all talking results in effective communication. **Negative communication can result in the conflict escalating!**



Whichever way you approach it consider:

- finding a place and time to talk face to face when you can both/all are relaxed and can sit quietly without interruption.
- you both/all need to understand the other person's viewpoint. So, agree to allow each other to speak and be listened to:

Explain things from your point of view:

- Think before you speak.
- Be honest, tactful and polite.
- Try to deal with the problem, not the person!
- Avoid blame.
- Stay calm and don't get angry.
- Focus on the point in hand and don't bring up other issues!
- Use 'I' when explaining/talking rather than 'you' e.g. *'I need to use the bathroom between 8 and 8.30 because ...'*, rather than *'You always hog the bathroom in the mornings.'*

Listen to the other person's point of view:

- Put yourself in their shoes – how would you feel?
- Make sure that you are listening to understand rather than to retaliate or argue your point.
- Try paraphrasing (i.e., repeat what you have heard in your own words) or summarising (briefly go over the main points) what you have heard (this helps the other person to feel listened to and allows them to correct any misconceptions).
- Be aware of your body language as you are listening – keep an open relaxed posture, maintain eye contact, smile when appropriate.



Work together to find a solution

- Now focus on what can be done to resolve the issue rather than analysing what went wrong or who should have done what.
- Work out what you BOTH/ALL need to do to resolve the conflict.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Be aware that you can't have everything your way!
- Agree a time to get back together to discuss how things are going.

If you are still having problems

Broken relationships can often be resolved, but when this is not possible it can be very difficult for all involved, particularly where you are tied to a binding tenancy contract. If problems cannot be resolved, you may find that the best way forward is to agree that you will be polite and keep your interaction down to a practical minimum in future.

Sources of support

Students' Union Advice

If you are still having difficulties after trying to talk about your issues, then you can get further advice on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant from an adviser, including where you or one of your housemates feel there is no alternative but to move out.

www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice/housing-advice

Email: suadvice@nottingham.ac.uk

Residential Experience team

If you live in University managed or nominated halls, you can ask the Residential Experience team to help you try and resolve the issues.

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/registrars/departmentalstructure/index.aspx>

Email: resx@nottingham.ac.uk

University Student Support and Wellbeing team

If the issues are affecting your studies, you can contact your faculty's SSW officer.

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/services/support-and-wellbeing-service.aspx>

