

Getting a place

There are several things to check when you are deciding whether or not to rent a property. Don't feel pressurised into accepting a property you aren't comfortable with.

Look round the area

- Think about safety. Is it dodgy at night? Are there any streets to avoid?
- Listen out for noise. Barking dogs and noisy neighbours could all get annoying.
- Check out the local facilities.
- Find out about public transport. Is it easy and close by? Is it regular? How much is it?
- Look for available car parking or bike racks.
- Are you close to friends, family, work or college?

Find out about the property

- Check what condition the place is in. Are repairs needed? Does it smell damp? Would the landlord be willing to do repairs before you move in?
- Find out about the heating. How much might the bills be?
- Think about security. How do the windows and doors lock? Has it ever been burgled?
- What furniture and appliances are provided? You'll have to buy anything that isn't.
- Meet anyone you'll be sharing with. It can be a bit of a gamble if you don't.
- Check there's a phone line, as installing one can be expensive.
- Make sure its got everything you need, especially if you've got a disability, or a child to look after.
- Look around the garden or yard. Are the fences and walls secure? Would it be a hassle to look after.
- Work out what your priorities are. Very few people can afford their ideal home

Work out the total cost

- Check how much the deposit is. Ask the landlord to confirm how much it is and when you'll get it back.
- Double check the rent details. How much is it, when is it due, who do you pay it to and how?
- Ask about how much the bills come to. Is there a meter? Will you have to pay rates?
- Check if the rent includes services or bills. Housing Benefit won't pay for these.
- Work out how much anything that isn't provided will cost.
- Find out if you can claim housing benefit, or if you can get help to pay your deposit or rent in advance.
- Ask the estate agent about administration costs, there may be extra costs when you sign the tenancy agreement.

Tenancy agreement

- Check what type of tenancy it is. This has a big impact on your rights and how easily you can be evicted.
- Check whose name the tenancy is in. Try to agree some ground rules with anyone you're sharing with.
- Get a detailed inventory. Take photos of the condition of your house - this could help you get your deposit back.
- Confirm how much notice you have to give before you leave. Can you get out of the tenancy early?
- Check your rights on housingadviceNI.org.
- Keep copies of all the paperwork involved. You never know when you might need it.