

Living Together in Accommodation

Moving into university accommodation is an exciting part of university life. For many students, it is the first time living away from home and sharing a space with people who are not family. We hope that this is a positive experience for you, and in some cases, you'll make friends for life.

When people with different backgrounds, cultures, lifestyles, and routines live together, disagreements are bound to happen from time to time though. Most flats will have a few ups and downs during the year, and that is completely normal. The good news is that most issues can be resolved early with clear communication, patience, and a willingness to compromise.

This page explains:

- Common causes of disagreements between flatmates
- What we expect students to try first
- Practical steps to help resolve issues
- How and when our team can support you

Common causes of tension in flats

Most disagreements we see come down to different expectations about shared living and shared spaces.

- **Cleanliness and hygiene** - washing up, bins, kitchens and bathrooms
- **Use of shared spaces** - kitchen cupboards, fridge space and communal areas
- **Respecting personal belongings** - using someone else's food or belongings without permission
- **Noise and considerate behaviour** - coming in late, playing music loudly, guests, and being mindful during exam periods
- **Communication and expectations** - assumptions, misunderstandings, or frustrations that have not been discussed early

If these issues are left unaddressed, they can quickly affect relationships within the flat. Taking small concerns seriously, and raising them in the right way, can prevent them from becoming much bigger problems later.

Cultural differences and shared living

Living in university accommodation means sharing space with people who may have very different backgrounds, routines, beliefs, and expectations. This can be a really positive part of the student experience, but it can also lead to misunderstandings if people assume that everyone will approach shared living in the same way.

Different does not automatically mean wrong, and something that feels obvious or normal to one person may not be obvious to someone else. This can apply to things like food, cleaning, noise, visitors, personal space, religious practice, communication styles and use of shared facilities. It is important that flatmates are respectful of these differences and willing to understand each other's perspectives.

At the same time, shared accommodation also means recognising that not everyone will have the same preferences, routines or cultural practices as you. It is reasonable to ask for consideration around things that directly affect you, but requests also need to be realistic in a shared flat. For example, a vegetarian student may reasonably ask that meat products are not stored against their

food or that their pans are not used without permission. However, it would not usually be reasonable to expect that no one else cooks or eats meat in the shared kitchen.

The best approach is usually to talk about expectations early and respectfully. If something matters to you, explain why in a clear and calm way, while also being open to compromise. If you are unsure about someone else's needs or routines, ask questions considerately rather than making assumptions. Focusing on the specific issue, rather than someone's background or identity, will usually make the conversation much more constructive.

If a concern involves harassment, discrimination, hate-related behaviour or someone being made to feel unwelcome because of their identity or background, this should be reported to us straight away. That is different from an everyday flat disagreement, and we will take it seriously.

Step One: Take a moment to reflect

Before raising a concern about someone else, it is worth taking a moment to think about your own actions and expectations. Living with other people involves compromise from everyone, and sometimes approaching a situation differently can stop a small issue escalating.

Ask yourself:

- Am I cleaning up after myself and contributing fairly to shared spaces?
- Am I being respectful of shared facilities and other people's belongings?
- Am I communicating clearly and politely with my flatmates?
- Have I tried to talk to others about concerns before they have escalated?

If you feel someone else is causing an issue, it can also help to consider:

- Have I given them a reasonable amount of time to clean up or resolve the issue?
- Is this a one-off incident, or is it part of an ongoing pattern?
- Are my expectations realistic in a flat where people may be living independently for the first time?

Being patient, reasonable, and willing to see things from another person's perspective can make a real difference.

Examples

Scenario	Suggested approach
Dishes left in the sink for a few hours	This can be frustrating, but if it has only been a short time and is not a regular issue, it is usually reasonable to give someone time to come back and clean up.
Ongoing mess in shared spaces	If kitchens or bathrooms are repeatedly being left unclean over several days, it is understandable to raise this as a concern.
Noise once or twice	Some level of noise is part of living in student accommodation, especially at weekends. Persistent late-night noise, however, is different and should be addressed.

Step Two: Speak to each other

Where it feels safe and appropriate to do so, we would always encourage you to speak directly with your flatmates first. A calm conversation at the right time can often prevent a much bigger disagreement later on.

When raising a concern:

- Choose a calm and appropriate time to talk
- Be polite and specific about the issue
- Explain how it is affecting you, rather than focusing on blame
- Listen to other people's views
- Focus on finding a solution together

Many flats find it helpful to agree some simple expectations together, such as:

- A cleaning rota for shared spaces (you'll have received one at the beginning of the year but if you need it again you can download it [here](#))
- Agreed quiet times, particularly if someone has an early start or during exam periods
- Clear arrangements for shared storage and fridge space (look at your Guide to Fridge Harmony)
- A group chat so concerns can be raised early and practically

Getting to a shared understanding early can make flat life much easier and reduce the need for further support later on.

Raising concerns constructively

How you raise an issue is often just as important as the issue itself. People are much more likely to respond positively if they feel they are being listened to, rather than blamed or spoken down to.

Try to be clear, calm, and open to finding a solution together.

Useful ways to start the conversation

- **"Can we have a quick chat about the kitchen? I am finding it a bit difficult to use at the moment."**
- **"This might just be me, but can we talk about how we are sharing things?"**
- **"I do not think anyone is doing this on purpose, but I wanted to mention something that has been bothering me."**
- **"Could we work something out that works a bit better for everyone?"**

These approaches:

- Keep the focus on the issue, not the person
- Show that you are open to different perspectives
- Make it feel like a shared problem to solve, rather than an argument or accusation

Things to avoid

- **"You never clean up."**
- **"It is just common sense, you should know this."**
- **"You are being really rude."**
- **Leaving passive-aggressive notes or messages in the flat**
- **Making passive – aggressive comments in a group chat**
- **Moving someone's dirty dishes or belongings to make a point**
- **Swearing, name-calling or making personal comments**

Even if you are frustrated, this kind of language or behaviour can feel accusatory and can make things escalate quickly.

A different way to say it

Instead of: "You are too loud."

Try: "The noise late at night has been making it hard for me to sleep. Can we agree on a time that it is reasonable to be quieter from?"

Instead of: "No one else ever cleans."

Try: "It feels like the cleaning is a bit uneven at the moment. Should we set up a rota?"

Instead of: "You have taken over the fridge."

Try: "I am struggling to find space in the fridge. Can we look at how we are sharing it?"

Keeping things informal, calm, and respectful gives everyone the best chance of sorting out the issue before it needs to go any further.

Step Three: Getting support from our team

If you have tried speaking with your flatmates and the issues continue, or if you do not feel comfortable addressing it directly, our staff are here to support you.

We can:

- Talk through the situation with you and offer advice on how to approach it
- Suggest practical solutions that fit your flat
- Speak to flatmates individually or as a group to reset shared expectations
- Investigate ongoing concerns where appropriate
- Arrange increased inspections if cleanliness is an ongoing issue
- Support the creation of flatmate agreements to set out clear expectations
- Work with our Student Behaviour team where anti-social behaviour needs to be addressed

Our role is to be fair, supportive, and consistent. We want to help everyone in the flat understand their responsibilities and find a way forward where possible.

Anonymous reports and speaking to your flatmates

We understand that raising issues with people you live with can feel uncomfortable. Some students ask to raise concerns anonymously, or ask that we do not speak to their flatmates. You can always contact us for advice and guidance in confidence.

However, it is important to understand what this can mean in practice:

- Most everyday flat issues, such as cleanliness, shared space or noise, cannot usually be resolved without us speaking to the people involved.
- If we cannot speak to your flatmates, our ability to investigate or resolve the issue may be limited.
- In many cases, a flat wide conversation and reset of expectations is more effective than focusing on one person individually.

Where possible, we will:

- Talk with you about what information can be shared and how it will be handled
- Take a general, flat wide approach rather than identifying individuals
- Avoid naming you as the reporting student unless it is necessary

Please note that if you are reporting an issue that our Student Behaviour team would normally address, we may not be able to investigate anonymous reports in line with our [Misconduct Guide](#).

There are some situations, such as safety concerns, harassment, intimidation or serious misconduct, where we can and will act based on the information provided, including where information is shared anonymously.

If you are unsure what the best next step is, please speak to us. We can help you think through your options and support you to address concerns in a way that feels safe, proportionate, and fair to everyone involved.

When to contact us straight away

If something is happening in your flat that feels serious, unsafe or beyond a normal disagreement, please contact us straight away rather than trying to deal with it yourself. This could include serious anti-social behaviour, aggressive or threatening behaviour, harassment, discrimination, hate-related incidents, feeling unsafe, or significant and repeated breaches of accommodation regulations. We will take these concerns seriously and help you decide what needs to happen next. Your safety and wellbeing are always our priority.

Room moves

We understand that when things feel difficult in a flat, moving rooms can feel like the simplest solution. In some situations, a room move may be appropriate, but it is not always the best first step. Moves can be disruptive for the student moving, may not resolve the wider flat issue, and are not always the most helpful outcome for everyone involved.

Where it is safe to do so, our first step will usually be to support everyone in the flat to address the concerns, agree clearer expectations and see whether the situation can be improved. A room move may be considered where other reasonable options have been explored, the issue is ongoing and significantly affecting wellbeing or studies, and a move is the most appropriate and practical solution available.

We are here to help

Learning to live with others is an important part of the university experience. Disagreements can feel stressful, but most flat issues can be improved through reflection, communication and early support.

If you need advice, mediation or support at any stage, please contact our ResLife team or your village reception. We are here to help make your accommodation a safe, respectful and positive place to live.

