



unipol
the home of student housing



Tenant's Handbook 2011-2012

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Welcome to Unipol

We really hope you enjoy living here. At Unipol we like you to think of our accommodation as your home, so we'll leave you to enjoy your property. But your safety and comfort are always our primary concern, so we will need to visit a few times a year to carry out inspections, maintenance and safety checks and see how you're looking after it. If you have any problems with the building or your fellow tenants, or think we can help in any way, then please get in touch. If we can't help you directly, we're sure to know someone who can.

Unipol is a non profit making organisation run by full time professional staff who report to a Board of Directors. As we're a charity, all the money we take from your rent is used to provide property and services that meet our charitable objectives. Unlike private companies or owners, we don't take a profit and any surplus we make is invested back into the organisation.



Who are Unipol?

- aims to provide both choice of property types and rent levels
- manages good quality properties for owners and lets them to students
- has a stock of its own housing to assist students with special housing needs, particularly those with dependants who pay a subsidised rent.

Here are some of the staff you are likely to come into contact with:

Housing Management Officer

This is the member of staff with overall responsibility for your accommodation. You will be informed who they are when you collect your keys, and in larger developments, you will see their picture and details displayed as part of the Code of Standards for Larger Developments. If there are aspects of your property you are not happy with or something has gone wrong in your property, please contact your Housing Management Officer.

Student Wardens

Some of the large developments have resident student wardens who are available for you to report repairs and discuss any other tenancy related matters.

The Tenancy Support Officer

They are available for advice, mediation and to offer support to Unipol tenants who are experiencing problems with flat-mates or with neighbours.

Always try to speak to each other about any difficulties that you are having first. This may sound a little daunting but, quite often, once someone is made aware how they are affecting others, they will change their behaviour. You can ask the Tenancy Support Officer for a copy of the 'Keep The Peace' booklet, which may help you to deal with the problem you are experiencing.

If you follow this and the situation is still not resolved, we will request some further details in writing. This enables the Tenancy Support Officer to identify the specific problems that you are experiencing and suggest options to resolve the dispute.

Finance Staff

If you need to discuss rent charges, payment of rent or energy charges or any other invoice that you have received you should talk to the finance team. The finance team are also there to discuss your options if you are having problems paying your rent.

ICT Staff

Some of our larger developments are wired with internet connections and tenants pay a fee for unlimited access during the tenancy. If any problems occur during the year, then please contact our ICT staff who will help to fix any problems you may be experiencing. Unipol also offer IT support to our smaller houses and you can collect further information about this service from Unipol. Some of our larger developments are wired with internet connections provided by Ask4, the leading provider of internet connections in student accommodation. If your property is connected by Ask4, you should contact them directly with any queries about your internet connection.

Please read your Tenants Handbook carefully. Not only does it explain how Unipol manages its properties, how you can enjoy your accommodation and its amenities to their full potential and how to deal with any problems that may occur, it could also save you time, money and trouble.

This handbook does not form part of your contract with Unipol, but it explains in detail some of the more important terms in your tenancy agreement and, where appropriate, sets out Unipol's policies in relation to enforcement of these terms.

Moving in

Collecting keys

You will be provided with one set of keys, but only when:

- you have signed the tenancy agreement and all related documentation
- the tenancy agreement has begun (we will not hand out keys before the agreement has started)
- you have paid your deposit for the property

You can collect your key from the Unipol office during normal opening hours. At the beginning and end of the academic year the office is open for longer periods during the week and at weekends (visit www.unipol.leeds.ac.uk for opening hours). When you come in to collect your key, you must show some form of personal identification to prove you are the person on the tenancy agreement. If someone is collecting the key on your behalf, then that person must have a letter of authorisation from you. In the letter of authorisation you must name the collector, who must be able to demonstrate clearly that they are who they say they are.

Burglar alarm

Check the burglar alarm instructions before you go into the house for the first time so you have the number to hand.

Condition of the property when you move in

If you are not happy with the property, let us know straight away.

It is your responsibility to check the property and bring any problems to our attention straight away. If there is damage to the property or the property is not clean, please contact your Housing Management Officer who will visit and arrange to put things right.

It is important that you do this at the start of your tenancy, as disputes about damage at the end of the contract are much harder to solve. We are less likely to accept that the damage was there when you moved in if it wasn't reported to us at the time, and you could be charged for putting things right.





Register your details with gas and electric companies

Remember to read the meters the day you move into your property. See the section on energy for more information and advice regarding gas/electric bills.

Inform others of your change of address

Including your University/college, the bank, friends and relatives.

Your tenancy agreement

In signing a contract with Unipol you are committing yourself legally to paying us an agreed rent over a fixed period, at the end of which you are expected to leave.

We will send you a Notice Requiring Possession *at least* two months before your tenancy is due to end (this may be at the start of your tenancy, or any time during your tenancy).

Please ensure you know whether you have a Joint or Individual Assured Shorthold Tenancy. If you sign a paper contract with Unipol, you will be given a copy of this agreement. If you accept a tenancy agreement on-line, it is your responsibility to download/print a copy of your contract if you wish to.

As a condition of your Tenancy Agreement you must:

- pay your rent to Unipol
- report all repairs to Unipol
- report any queries or problems with the property to Unipol.

Living in the property

Reporting repairs to Unipol

Whilst we try to ensure that your property has nothing wrong with it, disrepair can happen at any time during your tenancy. You should always report repairs directly to Unipol and not to a third party. Unipol aim to undertake repairs within the following targets, in accordance with the recommendations made by the National Housing Federation in its Standards for Housing Management.

Priority 1 Emergency Repairs

Required to avoid a danger to health, a risk to the safety of residents or serious damage to buildings.

Example – gas leak, fire, flood, only toilet not working

Target 24 hours from becoming aware of the defect

Priority 3 Non Urgent day to day repairs

These are repairs which can wait a short time before they are dealt with.

Example – broken cupboard doors, vacuum cleaner not working, painting,

Target twenty eight days from becoming aware of defect

Priority 2 Urgent Repairs

Repairs which materially affect the comfort or convenience of the tenant/s.

Example – no hot water, no heating

Target 5 working days from becoming aware of the defect.

Priority 4 Planned programmes of works

Non urgent jobs in related trades are packaged together

Target 3 months from becoming aware of the programme of work being necessary and one year for large programmes of works.

Who is responsible?

You are responsible for:

- replacing normal light bulbs (Unipol replace fluorescent tubes or sealed light fittings).
- unblocking sinks and drains (Try a domestic drain un-blocker, commonly available from supermarkets, before reporting the problem to Unipol)
- the cost of replacing broken windows (unless caused by vandalism that has been reported to the police)
- resetting "trip" switches
- re-lighting pilot lights on boilers
- bleeding radiators
- ensuring external drains are clear of debris



If a repair is needed, you must report it to Unipol as soon as possible, using the following methods:-

By phone

Call (0113) 243 0169 during opening hours. You can leave a message about non-urgent repairs at other times.

In Person at the Unipol Office

Call into the Unipol office during normal office hours and fill in a Repair Request Form. You will be given a copy of the repair report.

By e-mail

Send an e-mail message to repairs@unipol.leeds.ac.uk giving your name, address, phone number (if you have one) and an accurate description and location of the problem. Please let us know if we can give out keys or how to contact you to arrange the repair. This method of communication should not be used for emergency repairs.

On-Line

At www.unipol.org.uk, by clicking on 'Unipol Housing', followed by 'Report a repair to Unipol'. This method should not be used for emergency repairs.

Whichever method you choose to contact us, always describe the damage or problem as fully as you can to help us make the repair as effectively as possible.

For example: "The central heating is broken" would not be as helpful as:

"The boiler in the kitchen is not warming the radiators, although the hot water still works. The pilot light is lit and we have checked the time switch and the thermostat." If you report the problem in detail, the necessary repair can be done much more quickly.

Please describe the location of a problem according to this scheme: Cellar/basement; ground floor; first floor; second floor; attic floor.

Always describe the location as if you are standing in the street outside the front of the property. For example, first floor front left bedroom.

If you report a problem inaccurately or inadequately, or if a repair is unnecessary, then you may be charged a call-out fee.



Emergency repairs

"Emergency repairs" are repairs required to avoid a danger to health, a risk to safety or serious damage to buildings and which need immediate attention.

In the event of an emergency at any time contact Unipol immediately in person or by telephone on: (0113) 243 0169

Outside of office hours, call 0113 244 3799, and you will be directed to our out-of-hours service.

If you report an emergency repair to a contractor outside office hours, you must report it again to us the following working day using one of the above methods.

Where the emergency service is used improperly or without our knowledge, we may charge you for the cost of this. In the case of burglary or vandalism this must be reported to the police and a burglary report form filled in, otherwise you will be charged for the work needed.

Always keep your copy of the repair report. We will not respond to any third-party representation when a repair has not been correctly reported, other than to reiterate this procedure. If you arrange to do the repairs yourself Unipol will not cover the cost. If the repair is not done to Unipol specifications and has to be redone, you will be charged for this as well.

Access to the property

It will be necessary to visit your property a number of times during the year and we will give as much notice as possible for these visits.

Repairs

When reporting a problem that needs a repair, you will be asked for your consent for a contractor to enter your property to do the necessary works (they usually collect a key from our office for your property). If you would like for someone to call you to arrange a mutually convenient time during normal opening hours, then please specify this when reporting the repair. You will be billed for missed visits if you arrange an appointment and you are then not in.

Health and safety

At certain times of the year, contractors may call to carry out servicing and safety checks on appliances. It is not always possible to let you know exactly when they will be making their visit but you will be informed when the servicing will start.

Emergencies

In emergencies we may have to access your accommodation without notice.

Viewings

During the letting period we will ask permission to do viewings on your property for future tenants.



Trouble shooting

Instruction manual

Your property should have an instruction manual that tells you how to work all the equipment in your property. Please familiarise yourself with the contents. If you do not have an instruction manual, please contact your Housing Management Officer.

Replacement keys

Unipol will charge £30.00 for a replacement key and £15.00 for a replacement fob. This is to cover the cost of replacing suited and security keys and also for ordering more stock. If we need to replace the actual lock, the cost can be considerable higher. If you temporarily misplace your key/fob, you may borrow one from Unipol for up to one week. If they are not returned to Unipol within this time, the full replacement charge will be made. No refunds can be given if original key/fob are found after one week.

If your key is stolen, you must report it to the police and let us have the Crime Reference Number.

Trip switches

Most Unipol properties are fitted with trip switches that will automatically turn off the electricity if there is a fault, a faulty appliance is used or sockets are overloaded.

These devices are very safe and sensitive so when a light bulb "blows" it can "trip" the circuit and all the lights go out. If the lights are out and the sockets are working (or vice versa) you will need to find the consumer unit and reset the trip.

Generally the consumer unit or "fuse box" is located either in the cellar in terraced houses or in the corridor or kitchen in flats. Before trying to put the tripped circuit breaker back in the "on" position, turn off the main switch for the whole supply.

Once done, you should switch the tripped circuit breaker back on (you may have to push it down to the off position first before pushing it back to "on"). Finally, turn on the main switch. If this doesn't work, or the supply keeps going off, please contact Unipol.

Condensation

Condensation is caused when excess moisture in the air meets a cold surface (i.e. a window) or a surface that gets little air (i.e. behind a wardrobe). Tiny droplets of water form, which can cause damage to walls and window frames, with the common indication of a problem being black mould patches.

You can help to reduce the build-up of condensation and mould by following these simple steps:

- Cover pans when boiling
- Close the kitchen door when cooking and always use the extractor fan
- Dry your washing outside or in a tumble dryer. Try not to dry clothes using the radiators in your bedroom
- Regularly ventilate the house, by opening the windows or the trickle vents slightly when you are in
- Use the extractor fan in the bathroom every time you use the bath/shower, and open the window (if there is one) for a while after you have finished. Closing the bathroom door will also stop the excess moisture spreading throughout the property
- Move furniture, especially larger items such as wardrobes and beds, slightly away from the walls, to allow air to flow behind them
- Try to keep the central heating on a low temperature and only turn it up as you need to. This will prevent any 'cold areas' where condensation is more likely to form
- Do not block any air vents that have been fitted in your house, or switch off any extractor fans. They are there for good reason.

If you think you may have damp or mould in your property that is not caused by condensation, then contact your Housing Management Officer who can advise you further.

Smoke detectors, fire alarms & fire doors

Your property is fitted with a mains operated fire alarm system, and it is your responsibility to inform us of any problems or faults.

Please do not remove batteries or disable smoke detection in any way - fire systems are installed to protect you if there is a fire. If you would like further information about how the fire safety precautions in the property operate, please contact your Housing Management Officer.

Tampering with fire alarm systems is a criminal offence and the fire authorities may decide to prosecute you. Any abuse of the fire equipment will be taken seriously both by Unipol and your educational institution.



Fire doors are installed to protect your route of escape or prevent a fire from entering a room for a certain period of time. The doors have self-closers and fit the door frame flush so that the smoke seals around the door work in the event of a fire. Do not leave fire doors propped open, as this is the means of protection in the event of a fire.

Blocked drains

The most common causes of blocked drains are food being washed down the kitchen sink rather than cleared off plates into the bin, or hair and soap residue collecting in baths/sinks waste pipes. If you notice your drains are blocked, or the sinks are taking a long time to empty, this could be the reason. We would expect you to try a domestic drain-unblocker (widely available in supermarkets) before reporting it to us as a repair. If we call out a plumber to unblock a drain and the cause is traced back to food waste, we may pass the costs on to you.

Burglary

If you are burgled, you should take the following action:

If you are burgled outside our office hours:

Phone the emergency number (0113) 244 3799 and a builder will come out to secure your property. Report the incident to us as soon as possible.

- 1 Report the matter to the police - it is vital that you get a crime reference number and pass it on to us as soon as you can. Without one it will be impossible to get insurance companies to pay out on any damage, for which you may then be liable
- 2 Phone us and report the burglary
- 3 Fill in an incident form

Gas Leaks (smell of gas or suspect Carbon Monoxide leak)

Report immediately to Unipol during office hours on 0113 243 0169 or Out-Of-Hours to 0113 244 3799. You are advised to:

- Open doors and windows
- Turn the gas off at the meter/main stop tap
- Avoid using any naked flames or electrical switches

The National Gas Emergency Service (National Grid) can be called to attend on 0800 111 999 to turn off the gas. National Grid aim to attend within two hours. Their engineers will always 'make safe' when called to a suspected gas leak. However, the emergency service provided by National Grid doesn't cover repairs to appliances or installation pipework so you still need to report the incident to Unipol so we can deploy a Gas Safe registered engineer.

Your responsibilities

As a tenant you are required and expected to look after your home properly.

Cleaning

A property must be cleaned regularly. This includes:

Vacuuming

You must empty the vacuum cleaner from time to time to prevent damage to it. If the vacuum is not picking up, please empty the dust bucket and check all the pipes for blockages before reporting it to us as faulty. Bottle tops and coins stuck in the pipes commonly cause loss of suction in vacuum cleaners.

The cooker

You must clean the cooker regularly. Negligence in this area constitutes the biggest single cause for us billing ex-tenants. A heavy build-up of grease and burnt-on food can cause fires as well as being difficult to clean.

The fridge or fridge freezer

You must leave the fridge door open if you switch it off for any reason; otherwise the inside will rapidly go mouldy. Be warned, when this happens it is very difficult and unpleasant to clean off. You should defrost the freezer or ice compartment frequently to prevent damage to the compartment doors or baskets.

Bathroom and kitchen work surfaces

You must make sure that bathroom and kitchen work surfaces are kept clean. WC's should be regularly cleaned using bleach or toilet cleaner.

Carpets, upholstery and curtains

You must remove any stains before the end of your tenancy, preferably when accidents happen as they are much easier to clean up. If a carpet is so badly stained that it won't come clean, it may need to be replaced. This is a very expensive option.

Paintwork

You must wipe all paintwork down, if not during your tenancy then certainly at the end of it.

Cellars

If you have a cellar in your property you do not pay rent to use it unless it is specially converted. The cellars of most houses are damp if they have not been specially converted. You must not use the cellar area as a store.



Bathrooms and showers

The most common cause of structural damage to our properties is water damage from an overflowing bath or shower. If a bath or shower is allowed to overflow, or if there is a leak, water will build up in the floorboards and soak down into the ceiling of the room below. This goes mouldy and the ceiling begins to cave in. It costs at least £500 to put this sort of damage right. You can avoid the trouble, and cost, by following a couple of simple precautions:

- 1 Never use a shower apparatus which fits directly onto bath taps - these spray water onto the floor or nearby untiled walls
- 2 Never use a shower without a shower curtain, and make sure that when you do use a curtain you tuck it into the shower base or bath. If the shower is fitted with a shower door, keep it closed when in the shower
- 3 If a shower starts leaking to a floor below, or you have any problems with tiling, stop using the shower and report the matter to us.



Heating systems

Most of Unipol's properties have central heating systems and/or "Multipoint" water heaters. These give instant hot water when you turn the tap on and are very economical. Wherever possible, we will provide instructions on how to use these appliances. Follow these instructions carefully, particularly when starting up the pilot light and turning the system on. You should not report appliances as "broken" just because none of you knows how to start the system up. If you need a demonstration of how the system works, just let us know. If you have a condenser boiler, it is normal for it to emit vapour but this steam is not hot and does not present any danger to you.

Internal locks

You are not permitted to fit locks or padlocks on internal doors. Some properties have room locks fitted and, if relevant, Unipol will have given you a key for the room. You must not change any lock or use a lock (even if fitted) on internal doors unless Unipol has given you a key.

Properties where Unipol have fitted internal door locks have all been checked for fire safety to ensure that they do not impair your (or any other tenant's) ability to leave in the event of a fire. By using an unsuitable door lock you will be placing the lives of other occupants in danger. Note also that any lock fitted inexpertly will weaken or damage a door: this normally means that the door will have to be replaced - at your expense.

Fitting and using a lock to your room is a requirement of very few student insurance policies.

Furniture

You are allowed to move furniture about within the property and use any of your own, but you must never remove our furniture from the property or store it in the cellar. You must not bring any furniture into the property that does not conform to the standards set out in the 1988 Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) regulations. If you need clarification on which items of furniture these regulations apply to then please contact your Housing Management Officer.

Fitting shelves or other fixtures

You must not fit shelves or make other alterations to the property.

Posters

You may put posters on walls with Blu-tack or some similar adhesive. However, you must remove all posters and traces of Blu-tack at the end of the letting. If any grease marks are left, you must make sure that these are removed by cleaning. It is very expensive for us to have Blu-tac removed and this cost could be taken from your deposit.



Painting and decorating

You are not allowed to redecorate.

Communal responsibilities

As some areas in properties are held communally, you are all responsible for caring for communal areas, both inside and outside of the property.

Fire equipment

Fire fighting equipment is fitted in your property for your safety. The fire equipment in your property will be serviced annually, and will be checked by your Housing Management Officer several times a year. Extinguishers that have been discharged or tampered with will be replaced or repaired and any cost incurred will be passed onto the tenants immediately.

If you have a fire in your property, and need to use the fire equipment, please tell your Housing Management Officer within 24 hours of the incident. Tampering with a fire alarm system is a criminal offence and the Fire Authorities may decide to prosecute you. Any abuse of the fire equipment will be taken seriously both by Unipol and the educational institutions.

CCTV

If your property has a CCTV feed on your aerial system (usually only in our larger developments), then you can use this to look at the areas covered for your own personal security use (ie to let people in through the entry system). You should not record this or use it for any other purpose.

Leaving the property over the vacations

If all tenants are away from the property for a while:

- Make sure all doors and windows are securely shut and, where locks are fitted, locked.
- Leave a light on (in a room, not in the hallway or landing) to deter burglars. Lights on time switches give the impression that a property is occupied.
- Use your burglar alarm if you have one.
- Take valuables home with you or at least make sure they cannot easily be seen through windows.
- Empty the fridge and clean it out – if you do this, do not close the door as the fridge will go mouldy while you are away.

If cold weather is expected:

Leave on the heating but turn the thermostat down to around 10° C.

Property inspections

Unipol will inspect your property about three times a year, but if there are problems it may be inspected much more frequently. You will be contacted when we plan to carry out an inspection and we will arrange a date with you - please be there if you can.

In larger developments we may also carry out additional kitchen and communal area inspections.

The inspection covers a range of checks and you will be notified of these in writing when informed of the inspection itself. On the day of the inspection we will leave a form as a record of the inspection, giving you any necessary feedback and highlighting any faults or problems.

If the state of the property is found to be unsatisfactory it will be re-inspected. An administrative charge of £20 per tenant will be made for this. The condition of the property for the inspection can also have a bearing on whether or not Unipol will allow you to remain in the property for a further tenancy.

What you need to know

Smoking in Unipol Properties

It is illegal to smoke or allow smoking in enclosed public areas of properties. Unipol has an obligation to take action to implement the ban to protect employees, tenants, customers and visitors from exposure to second hand smoke and to comply with the Health Act 2006. It is a criminal offence to ignore or break the law. All public areas and Unipol's offices will be smoke free. Guests and visitors to your property must comply with the relevant policy.

In Unipol developments

- Smoking is not permitted in any allocated development (i.e. where your room is allocated to you by your university/college), except in a specially dedicated 'smoking flat'. Smoking is still only permitted within tenant's own bedrooms with the door closed, even in these 'smoking flats'. Smoking is not permitted in any communal area, lounge, kitchen, lobbies, corridors, shared toilets or bath/shower rooms etc.
- In any other individually let development, smoking is only permitted in bedrooms by tenants and their guests with the door closed. Smoking is not permitted in any communal area, lounge, kitchen, lobbies, corridors, shared toilets or bath/shower rooms etc.

In smaller properties

- If you have a joint tenancy, the law does not apply in your case and smoking is permitted – if you have any issues you need to discuss in confidence contact the Tenancy Support Officer.
- If you rent your property on an individual basis smoking is only permitted in your bedroom with the door closed. Smoking is not permitted in any communal area, lounge, kitchen, lobbies, corridors, shared toilets or bath/shower rooms etc.

In all properties

- Staff and tenants who wish to smoke outside of buildings should not smoke in areas where they will cause others to walk through their smoke or cause smoke to enter the building through windows.
- Smokers transgressing the policy should be dealt with using Unipol's Anti-Social Behaviour procedures and in the last resort, this may result in eviction
- If you know that Unipol staff or contractors are to visit your property we politely ask that you stop smoking at least an hour before they come and for the entirety of their visit so they are not exposed to secondary smoke.

Money matters

Deposit Payments

Unipol will protect your deposit payment in a Government Approved scheme, known as Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS). This means that your deposit payment is secure, and will be returned promptly at the end of your tenancy (less any necessary deductions). TDS will assist if there are any disputes between Unipol and yourself in relation to deductions from your deposit. You will receive full details about the scheme and how Unipol use it to protect your deposit when you sign your tenancy agreement.



Rent payments

Your contract states the dates that you must pay your rent, together with the amounts due on those days. Unipol expects its tenants to pay their rent on time. Always check your bank account to ensure a rent payment has been made correctly.

If you pay by direct debit

Please ensure that you have sufficient funds available on the due dates. If a payment needs cancelling for any reason, then you need to contact Unipol no less than five working days before the payment date. If there is not enough money in your account on the payment date, then your bank may decide not to forward the payment to Unipol. If this happens, you will have to contact Unipol to ask us to process the payment again, or pay the amount due by an alternative method.

If you pay by standing order

Please check with your bank that they have set up your standing order correctly and that you have the money in your bank account to make the payments on the due dates. Please be aware that your bank will only take instructions from you regarding a standing order mandate. If there is not enough money in your account on the payment day, then your bank may decide not to forward the payment to Unipol. If this happens you will have to ask your bank to process the payment again or pay the amount due by an alternative method to Unipol.

If a standing order needs cancelling for any reason then you need to contact your bank and instruct them to cancel it before the payment date.

If you pay by debit card via Worldpay

Please ensure that you have set up the payment correctly and that you have the money in your account. If a payment needs cancelling for any reason then you need to instruct Worldpay not to make the payment before the payment date.

If you pay by credit card via Worldpay

Please ensure that you have set up the payment correctly and that you have sufficient available funds available. If a payment needs cancelling for any reason then you need to instruct Worldpay not to make the payment before the payment date.

If you are aware that your bank has not made a payment then you need to check with your bank and find out why. You then need to contact the finance team at Unipol to arrange payment by an alternative method. If a payment is made in error to Unipol, due to banking time delays, a refund will take 7 to 10 working days to action. If your payment is late, for any reason, then, in accordance with your tenancy agreement, you will be charged a late payment fee.

- A charge of £30.00 will be made if your rent is not paid on the due date.
- Unipol will charge £15.00 for each letter we write to you chasing any arrears on your account.
- Unipol will charge £10.00 for each payment that is rejected by your bank (i.e. bounced cheques).
- If you remain in arrears, Unipol will send a solicitor's letter and a further charge to cover the cost of this will be passed onto you.
- Ultimately Unipol will obtain a County Court Judgement against you. This can affect your credit rating and cause you difficulties in the future when you want to obtain credit cards, bank loans and mortgages.

Your tenancy is in danger if you do not pay your rent on time and Unipol reserves the right to evict anyone owing a significant amount of rent to us. Eviction from our property may affect your ability to rent property in the future. If you have difficulty paying because of financial hardship, or you wish to discuss any special arrangements because of financial problems, please contact the Finance staff who will do their very best to help you

If you are experiencing financial hardship then detailed below are the relevant organisations that you need to talk to as a matter of urgency:

University of Leeds

financialaid@leeds.ac.uk or ring 0113 343 2007

Leeds Metropolitan University

su.studentadvice@leedsmet.ac.uk or ring 0113 812 8408

Leeds College of Art & Design

info@leeds-art.ac.uk or ring 0113 202 8111

Leeds College of Music

h.holehan@lcm.ac.uk or ring Heather Holehan,
Student Fees & Funding Manager on 0113 222 3419

Park Lane College

welfare@parklane.ac.uk

Trinity & All Saints

studentfinance@leedstrinity.ac.uk or ring 0113 283 7173



Allocated Tenancies

Tenants who are allocated their accommodation by their university/college will normally pay rent in three instalments. Your allocation procedure will outline how much you have to pay and how this money is collected. In most cases, payment is requested on-line.

Returning Students

Non-allocated students are required to pay the rent in four quarterly instalments. You will be told the payment dates and amounts due, and the methods available for you to make these payments, before you are asked to sign the tenancy agreement.

Leaving your property before the end of your contract period

Your contract with Unipol is for a fixed period. You have signed a legally binding, Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement, and made a commitment to pay rent to Unipol for that fixed period. Unipol is under no obligation to release you from your tenancy agreement.

If you decide you want to leave your tenancy before the end of your contract period, you will need to find someone willing to take over the remainder of your contract. Your liability for the rent on the property ends on the date the new tenant signs their contract.

Unipol can advertise your property on the Unipol website – just ask your Housing Management Officer. Placing posters on student union boards can generate some interest. Unipol's website also contains a Student to Student Notice Board where you can place messages and respond to others looking for rooms. It is advisable to let your co-tenants know that you want to move out, since they may know someone who wants to rent.

Once you have found a replacement tenant, you will need to contact your Housing Management Officer to make an appointment for the new tenant to sign a contract. If you signed a joint tenancy agreement your co-tenants will also need to sign documentation. Please be aware that you are liable for the rent on your property until this process has been completed, and Unipol will charge a £50 administration fee for dealing with the extra paperwork involved.

If you have made the decision to drop off your course at University, and are leaving Leeds, Unipol are under no obligation to release you from your contract. Your tenancy agreement remains in place, and the information about finding a replacement tenant still applies.

You may however be severely affected by a life event that means that you have to leave University and your accommodation in Leeds. In a situation of this nature you may ask that you be released from your Tenancy Agreement and this will be considered by a Tenancy Release Group who will make a decision about whether Unipol will release you from the agreement and future rent payments. You should remember that neither Unipol nor the Group are obliged to release you from your tenancy agreement regardless of your circumstances and for that reason the decision of the Tenancy Release Group is final. There is no appeal beyond this Group.

The Request for release must be in writing, to the Financial Controller at Unipol, and must state clearly:

- your name
- the full address at which you are the tenant
- a correspondence address if different from the tenancy address
- a contact telephone number
- your university and year of study
- your reasons for wanting to be released from your tenancy
- any supporting evidence from doctors, the University or other professional parties to verify your circumstances

The Tenancy Release Group consists of representatives nominated by Unipol's Board, including members from Leeds University and Leeds Met, and their respective Students' Unions.

The Tenancy Release Group meets every month during term time, and any decision taken by the Group will be conveyed to all concerned parties, in writing, within 5 working days of the meeting taking place. More details about the Tenancy Release Group can be found on the Unipol website.

Release will not normally be granted on a joint tenancy.

No application for release will be considered during the last 4 months of a tenancy under any circumstances.

If you are not happy with your accommodation, you may think that moving out is the only option. We would like to help where we can, and would encourage you to discuss your situation with the Tenancy Support Officer, who may be able to offer alternatives such as relocation to another Unipol property or help with resolving the issue that is making you unhappy. You cannot simply walk away from your contract with Unipol. A delay in contacting Unipol to discuss your situation will result in you having to pay more rent.

Insurance

The structure of any property is insured either by Unipol or by the owner of the property. Insurance of personal possessions within the property is the responsibility of the tenants.

Unipol has arranged insurance cover for some properties. If your rent includes any insurance for your possessions you will be given separate information about this. Remember, you may be able to claim on your insurance policy for any accidental damage such as burns on carpets. Tell us about it so we can get it repaired and you can put in a claim to the insurance company. You must check that the insurance provided by Unipol is adequate for your personal belongings, especially if you have something of particular value. You have the option of upgrading the level of cover, to ensure your possessions are insured. If you have a laptop computer, you must pre-register it with the insurance provider (details can be found in the insurance leaflet provided when you signed your tenancy).

Energy (gas and electricity)

When you move into the property, you must contact the electricity and gas supply companies to put the bills into your name and to provide up-to-date meter readings.

Read the meters at the start of your tenancy. Unless stated on your contract, you are responsible for utility bills including gas and electricity. If you see a bill addressed to 'The Occupier', open it and follow the instructions below. If the bill is addressed to previous occupants, you still need to do the following:

- 1 Ring the company directly – the number will be on the bill
- 2 Tell them that you are the new occupier/s
- 3 Register the bill into your name/s
- 4 Give the meter reading you have taken for that day. (You will be billed from this reading onwards)
- 5 Keep a record of the first meter reading

If you do not register with the gas/electric companies, they may call and disconnect your supply, particularly if the previous tenants have not paid their bills. This may happen with little warning. Reconnection can be difficult to organise and the companies can insist on large deposits being paid first. You could be without heating or a power supply for a long time.

If you cannot access your meters (for example if they are in a locked cupboard) please contact Unipol to arrange a meter reading.

Top Tip

Do not put the bills in one person's name as only this tenant will be liable for the full cost. Bills should always be split equally amongst the number of tenants in the property.

Meters

If you are unsure where your meters are located, contact your Housing Management Officer. The meter reading usually consists of a 5 digit number. Each property will have separate meters for gas and electricity, so you need to take 2 readings. You may be receiving both gas and electricity from one company or have a separate supplier for each. If your meters are located outside your property you may need to buy a meter key (from hardware stores) to gain access.

You can find out your gas or electricity supplier by calling:

Gas supplier – contact National Grid UK Meter Helpline on 0870 608 1524

Electricity supplier – contact the MPAS Consumer Helpline on 0845 601 3268

At some larger developments, Unipol charges tenants directly for gas and electricity via an energy supplement. Where this applies, it will be indicated on the tenancy agreement. We will carry out meter readings at the beginning and end of the tenancy, and at the end of each term, and calculate the cost of the energy you have used.

If your energy use is higher than your payments, we will write offering practical advice on how you can reduce your consumption. If, at the end of the tenancy, you have used more energy than you have paid for, the outstanding amount will be deducted from your deposit. Similarly, if you use less energy than you have paid for, you will receive a refund at the end of the tenancy.



Energy conservation

You can save a substantial amount of money in fuel cost savings by a few small changes to your behaviour:-

Is your heating on too high? The most important thing is to keep warm in winter, but turning your thermostat down by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10%.

Closing your curtains at dusk will reduce heat escaping through windows.

Leaving hot water running straight down the drain really is throwing money away.

Turn the lights off when you leave a room and adjust your curtains or blinds to let in as much light as possible during the day.

To cut down on wasted energy, avoid leaving appliances on standby and remember not to leave them on charge unnecessarily. But please check the user manual first.

Only fill the kettle with the amount of water you need. You'll get your drink quicker and you'll save energy too!

For washing machines, tumble driers and dishwashers always aim for a full load if you can't use a half-load or economy program. Use the low temperature program bearing in mind that modern washing powders will be just as effective at lower temperatures. Wring out or spin-dry really wet clothes before putting them into a tumble dryer will save you money, and they dry faster.

The cost of heating your property

Bear in mind that gas and electricity charges are rapidly increasing, and you should take this into account when budgeting for energy costs. Remember, in cold weather it is usually best to leave some heating on all the time you are in a property as it costs more to heat up a property from cold than to keep a warm property warm. Shop around with energy suppliers to find yourself a good deal.

Water charges

Some tenants are required to pay water charges direct to the supplier; others are not. Your obligation to pay water charges is clearly stated in your tenancy agreement. If you are in any doubt about this, ask your Housing Management Officer.

Your water is supplied by Yorkshire Water and they have a standard charge for your property. You do not have to read a meter for this supply.



- 1 Ring the company directly – the number will be on the bill.
- 2 Tell them that you are the new occupier/s
- 3 Register the bill into your name/s

A small number of properties are fitted with water meters. Your Housing management Officer will advise you if you need to take meter readings.

Telephone

If you want to reconnect a phone or have one put in, you should get in touch with BT. You will need Unipol's permission to install wiring for the first time.

If you have a telephone, then it is much easier for Unipol to let you know when builders or decorators are calling, or to get in contact with you about any administrative matters. Please let us know your telephone number if you have one.

Council Tax

Council Tax is the charge the local authority makes for the services it provides. Full-time students are disregarded for Council Tax purposes. If there are only students in your property, you should not have to pay Council Tax. If you receive a bill, contact the council tax office to claim exemption.

If a property has a mixture of students and non-students then the non-student will be liable to pay the Council Tax.

Being a good neighbour

You have an opportunity to support, enhance and benefit the neighbourhood into which you have moved. Not everyone around you will be a student. Your neighbours may have young children, may be elderly or work night shifts and it is sometimes easy to forget that your lifestyle may impact upon their quality of life.

There are many ways that you can help to become a part of your new community.



Say hello!

Get to know your neighbours, even if it's just saying 'hello' over the fence. If they know you, they are likely to be helpful in time of need. And nothing increases security more than neighbours looking out for each other. An area only becomes a community when the people living there share the neighbourhood.

Keep the peace

Noise causes more distress than any other issue – whether it's in the home, the garden or the street. Whilst everyone understands that students like to celebrate and enjoy themselves it is important to remember the impact this may have on your neighbours. Tell neighbours if you are having a party and agree a time to turn the music down. Know how to use your burglar alarm correctly and don't set it off by mistake!

Clean up

A neglected environment and excessive rubbish can make an area look extremely run down. For household rubbish, find out how the local refuse collection system works, and use it well. In particular, make good use of the local recycling system. If you have a garden, or even just a yard, keep it tidy and clear of litter. And do your bit to keep the street clean.

Getting involved

There are many ways you can become active in your local community. If you notice fly-tipping or vandalism, for instance, report it – ring the Neighbourhood Helpline. To find out more about local services, activities and events and to become an active part of your local area in which you live, contact:

University of Leeds (Access and Community Engagement):

Web: www.leeds.ac.uk/ace

Email: ace@leeds.ac.uk

Tel: 0113 343 3378.

Leeds University Union (Action):

Web: www.leedsaction.co.uk

Email: secretary@leedsaction.co.uk

Phone: 0113 380 1325.

Leeds Metropolitan University (Community Partnerships and Volunteering):

Web: www.leedsmet.ac.uk/cpv

Email: volunteering@leedsmet.ac.uk

Phone: 0113 812 1728.

Leeds Met Students Union (Community Action at Leeds Met):

Web:

www.leedsmetsu.co.uk/volunteering

Email: calm@leedsmetsu.co.uk

Tel: 0113 812 8415

The end of your tenancy

In the last few weeks of your tenancy we will write to you setting out the arrangements for leaving the property and returning the keys.

Handing back keys at the end of your tenancy

You can return keys in person or by post, but we must receive them on or before the last day of your tenancy. If we receive the key late, a charge will be made. This is because the lock may have to be changed and the key replaced for the new tenants, who are entitled to move in as soon as their tenancy begins.

Your property will be inspected once you have left the property. Unipol staff will keep notes of the inspection and it may be necessary to take photographs if the property has not been left in a fit state.

Deposits

When you signed your tenancy agreement, you paid a deposit to cover any damage to the property and/or any other breaches of the contract. As part of the implementation of the Housing Act, deposits levied on Assured Shorthold Tenancies must be protected.

This means your deposit will be protected by an insurance scheme (where Unipol keep your money until the end of your tenancy but if it is not returned you can claim it back from an insurance company)

The deadline by which your deposit must be returned or we must tell you why we are withholding it, is 14 days after the end of your tenancy. You will be charged if the amount owed to Unipol is more than the deposit we are holding.

Where a joint tenancy has been signed, no tenants will receive their deposits back if any money is due on the property. Deposits will be returned only when such debts have been fully cleared.

If you are not happy with the deduction made you can write to Unipol (further details will be provided at the end of your tenancy about this). Please note that we can respond to queries about your deposit from third parties only if you provide written permission.



Deposit deductions

Deductions will be made from your deposit if:

- you fail to return all keys, or fail to return them on time at the end of your tenancy
- you or your guests are responsible for damage to the property
- the property is not clean
- you have left rubbish
- there is any amount still owing on energy charges (in some developments)
- you owe any money to Unipol (including administration charges made if you have paid your rent late or charges that have been made for damage during the tenancy)

If any deduction is made from your deposit, Unipol will levy an administration fee of £10.

Damage

Sometimes we have to charge large amounts to make good any damage that has been caused. This is because we use professional contractors using superior quality materials than domestic to withstand heavy wear and tear. For example, if you damage your carpet you will be charged for the full cost of replacing it as it is not possible to 'patch carpets'. The carpet will be replaced with quality carpet that has to withstand more than domestic wear and tear and will therefore be more expensive than domestic versions.

Communal areas

As some areas in properties are held communally, vandalism or damage may occur where it is not clear which individual is responsible. Wherever possible, we will always try and find out who has caused the damage so they can be billed directly. Sometimes, we may need help from other residents to discover who has caused damage.

In some circumstances it may not be possible to identify who has caused the damage and in these cases we will have to re-charge the costs of repair or replacement to all the tenants who have access to the communal facilities. Where communal areas are left in an unsanitary or unhygienic condition, we will employ professional cleaners and re-charge the cost to the tenants in the same way.

When a dispute arises over responsibility for communal areas, Unipol can help, but don't leave it until the end of the tenancy before asking our advice. At that stage it will be too late for us to intervene and all tenants will be charged equally.

Cleaning

If the property was not clean when you moved in and you did not tell us so that we could put it right, you cannot leave it dirty. We will still expect you to leave it clean and will charge you if it is not.

If you are the last tenant in the property and everyone has left the cleaning to you, we can sympathise but we cannot become involved in this. Always try to sort out who will do what before everyone moves out. Remember, you may be able to claim on your insurance policy for any accidental damage.

If you feel that a deposit deduction has been made unfairly then you should write to the Deputy Chief Executive at Unipol within 14 days of receiving notification of the deduction. Unipol will only respond to formal representations regarding deposits that are made within 4 weeks of the end of the tenancy and will not consider any case after this time.

Meters

Don't forget to take final meter readings and contact your energy suppliers to close your accounts. You may need to give them a forwarding address so they can send you the final bill.

Waste disposal

If you have a lot of rubbish at the end of your tenancy the usual refuse collectors may refuse to take it. The nearest Household Waste Sorting Site to student accommodation is located on Meanwood Road, LS7 2LP, close to Sugarwell Halls. The site is open 7 days a week from 9am to 4pm. You can call them on 0113 262 1106.

Where possible, rubbish should be sorted into the usual categories for recycling - paper, cardboard, glass, plastics, wood or metal.

Useful information can also be found via the Leeds City Council website, 'www.leeds.gov.uk'. The section under 'living' has links to the 'bulky items collection form' and to a list of charity shops.

Sometimes your students' union will make special arrangements for skips around the time of the end of tenancy – keep an eye out for any information about this.

Post

Unipol takes no responsibility for forwarding or redirecting mail in any circumstances. The Royal Mail offers a service for redirecting mail (details are available from any Post Office). If you do choose to make use of this service we advise you to let the Royal Mail know your new address as early as possible. On no account will we allow ex-tenants to enter their old property to collect mail once their tenancy has expired.

Looking forward

If you are happy in your Unipol property, why not consider renewing your tenancy agreement for your second/third year? Unipol have a large range of properties, from rooms in large developments, through small self-contained flats, to larger shared houses. We will write to you before house-hunting starts to give you some advice about looking for your next house. If you have been happy in your current property, and want to remain with Unipol, we always give our tenants the opportunity to stay with us.

Complaints

Unipol is responsive to the needs of users of our service and welcomes comments and complaints as a means of improving services. We won't necessarily be able to change the things in the way that you would like or always meet your needs but we will always be able to give you an explanation of why we do what we do. Unipol will always be professional and courteous in dealing with complaints and we will try to be as quick as we can in responding to you.

First

If you have a complaint, in the first instance please discuss this with the member of staff who is working with you to try and resolve the matter. In this instance the complaint can either be verbal (but polite) or written.

Second

If you are unhappy about a response you receive, or the complaint is actually about the member of staff involved or if you feel that the complaint warrants further investigation then you must complain in writing to the member of staff who has managerial

responsibility for the area or service that you are complaining about. Hopefully they will be able to resolve the issue at that level.

Your letter should contain a clear statement of your concerns, including any supporting documentation and should explain how you think your complaint could be best resolved.

If you are unsure who you should write to you can send the complaint to:

The Development Manager, who will ensure that it is given to the correct member of staff for action.

Third

If you feel that the complaint has not been resolved by the above managers, or if your complaint is about them, then you can complain to Mr Martin J Blakey, Chief Executive. Your complaint must be in writing. There is no further complaints mechanism. If your complaint is specifically about the Chief Executive, then you can complain to, The Chair, Unipol Student Homes, and this should be sent c/o the Chief Executive who will ensure that it is passed to the Chair.

Timescales

Unipol aims to provide a response to your complaint within 14 days of receiving your letter although in complex cases this may take longer and we will endeavour to keep you notified of progress and reasons for delay.

Where a complaint is received a long while after an incident has taken place, Unipol will aim to resolve this in less time than it took you to complain. If you write to the Chair, there are no time limits for responses.

These staff are:

Accommodation Bureau Operations

Ms Nicola Brown, Accommodation Bureau Services Team Leader

Housing Management Operations (excepting deposits)

Mrs Geneve Smith, Assistant Chief Executive -Housing Services

Housing Management Operations: Deposits Only

Ms Liz Hodgen, Deputy Chief Executive

Unipol Code and the Large Student Development Codes

Mr Simon Kemp, Code of Standards Administrator

IT Services

Mr Andrew Livesey, Communications and IT Manager

Finance

Ms Fiona Barry, Financial Controller

Who can complain?

Those who are directly using the Unipol service:

- Current students
- Tenants and ex-tenants
- Registered landlords (within the last three years)
- Parents/Guardians of tenants if they have written permission from the tenant which must be supplied at the time of raising the complaint.
- Neighbours who live within 200 metres of a Unipol complex.

Writing to us

Write to the relevant member of staff at:
Unipol Student Homes
155/157 Woodhouse Lane
Leeds LS2 3ED

If the complaint is about a member of staff the envelope should be marked "Private and Confidential" to avoid the envelope being opened by the general mail operative.

E-Mail addresses of managerial staff:

N.Brown@unipol.org.uk
G.Smith@unipol.org.uk
L.Hodgen@unipol.org.uk
S.Kemp@unipol.org.uk
A.Livesey@unipol.org.uk
F.Barry@unipol.org.uk

E-Mail address of the Development Manager:

Scott.Blakeway@unipol.org.uk

E-Mail address of the Chief Executive

m.blakey@unipol.org.uk

What Happens Next?

In dealing with a complaint the following action can be taken:

- To uphold the complaint (and take action accordingly)
- To dismiss the complaint where it is judged there is no action that Unipol can take to resolve the matter or where there is deemed to be no case to answer or that the complaint is trivial, malicious or vexatious.

The complaints procedure cannot be used for:

- Matters where the courts have already become involved
- Matters where police action is pending or a criminal charge has been laid.

Diversity and Equality policy

Unipol is committed to providing equality of opportunity. Everyone has a right to such equality and to a good and harmonious environment and atmosphere in which everyone is encouraged to apply their diverse talents and in which no-one feels under threat or intimidated. This right is protected in many instances by legislation.

Unipol will maintain a culture where individual differences are valued and respected and which enables everyone to give of their best and helps Unipol to respond more effectively to its residents, other clients and partners. Unipol will promote equality of opportunity and fair participation within the framework of the law; and seek to be broadly representative of the society that we serve.

Unipol will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, age, disability, religion, religious or similar philosophical belief, marital status, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment or community background.

Registered in England and Wales No.3401440.
Registered Charity No.1063492



Useful Numbers

Unipol	0113 243 0169
Police (non emergency)	0845 606 0606
Leeds City Council Refuse Collection	0845 398 4760
Leeds City Council Dispute Service	0113 242 4110
Neighbourhood Dispute Service	0113 242 4110
British Telecom	0800 800 123
Yorkshire Water	0845 124 2424
National Grid UK Meter helpline	0870 608 1524
Energywatch	0845 906 0708
Council Tax	0113 398 4730
National Grid Emergency Service	0800 111 999





Unipol Student Homes

Unipol Student Homes, 155-157 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 3ED
t: 0113 243 0169 e: info@unipol.leeds.ac.uk



If you need house hunting help or advice, go to www.unipol.leeds.ac.uk
General Enquiries: 0113 243 0169 Daily Recorded Information Line: 0113 205 3434
Call the Daily Recorded Information Service for the latest opening hours (local call rate within the UK)

Published by Unipol Student Homes. Unipol Student Homes is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales No. 3401440. Registered Office 155/157 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 3ED. Registered Charity No.1063492 VAT registration No.698 8456 49.

