



How to deal with problems with other tenants and how we can help you



Cleaning

In a flat or house, some of your co-tenants may have different views about the level of cleanliness the property should be kept in and who does what. Some tenants are cleaner and tidier than others.

Unipol has a clear view on levels of cleanliness required in a property. When we carry out our inspection, we will tell you if your property is not up to standard. In a shared house or flat each tenant should do an equal share of cleaning and other household chores. There is a room for specialisation though, so if you can negotiate exemption from washing up in favour perhaps of cleaning the bathroom - good luck.

Between inspections, it is up to the tenants to agree between them what level of general cleanliness a property will be kept in - after all it is your home.

We do however have a minimum of standards to ensure the health and safety of the occupants, staff and contractors working in the property.

If you are unhappy with the level of cleanliness within your house or flat, you should talk to the other tenants and see if you can all agree to improve the situation. A rota may be a useful tool to ensure that each tenant is clear about how much they should contribute to the overall running of the house.

If you try this and it doesn't work, Unipol can arrange a meeting between everyone in the house to try and agree a rota and ask all tenants to sign to agree to this arrangement.

Options

- Arrange a 'house meeting' to discuss the situation with your co-tenants
- Devise a rota of tasks and who will do what - get everyone to sign it before it begins.
- Contact Unipol to discuss your options.

Noise

Many problems in shared houses and flats concern noise.

It is best to try and speak to the person causing the problem first. This may seem a little daunting but often people who are making excessive noise are not aware of how much disruption they are causing and how it is affecting the other people around them. When made aware of the problem, they will often change their behaviour. To achieve this it is best to deal with the problem calmly and point out the problem the noise is causing. It is important to remain polite but firm and ensure that you do not aggravate the situation by shouting or getting too upset.

If you or the person making the noise have been drinking, or the noise is a 'one off', it may be better to speak to the person the next day and calmly and politely explain the problem you experienced.

If talking to the person causing the problem does not help resolve the situation, you should arrange a meeting at Unipol to discuss the problems and go through the options available to you.

If you think you may experience further problems, we will ask you to keep a log of the noise problems including the dates and times of the incidents.

Options that may be available to you will include:

- Mediation
- Meeting with Unipol and perpetrators
- Reporting the problem to the council noise complaints department
- Possibility of moving to other Unipol properties
- Making a formal complaint through your college or university

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is a general term which refers to behaviour which adversely effects the health, safety or well being of other tenants. In the context of student housing, this can include vandalism, setting off fire alarms, abusive behaviour, excessive noise, dumping rubbish or tampering with health and safety equipment in a house, flat or development. Anti-social behaviour may be perpetrated by a friend of a tenant, but tenants remain responsible for anyone they bring into a property.

As this is a wide ranging term, the options available and method for dealing with the problem will vary depending on the nature or the extent of the behaviour. It is often found that someone who is responsible for one of these activities may be demonstrating other aspects of anti-social behaviour to other tenants.

Unipol, college and university authorities take damage to health and safety or fire equipment extremely seriously and this behaviour can result in students being suspended or permanently excluded from their courses.

It is important when dealing with anti-social behaviour that all tenants work together to deal with the problem. Behaviour which may appear amusing at first can soon be seen as anti-social when it occurs in the middle of exam time, or when work deadlines loom.

In order for Unipol to take action, it is necessary for us to gather the evidence against the perpetrators of this behaviour. This can be through CCTV and through staff witnessing behaviour, but our biggest source of evidence is other tenants. It is important to give us first hand information of:

- What you have seen occur
- Who was involved
- When it happened
- Any witnesses

We quite often get second hand information about who is responsible for certain anti-social behaviour, and although useful to us to help identify perpetrators, will not allow us to take firm action.

Unipol will involve the police where vandalism has occurred and may also involve the fire authorities over damage to fire systems and equipment. A criminal record is not something anyone would want on their CV.

Options available to you:

- Make a written complaint to Unipol.
- Make a formal complaint to college or university.
- Report criminal activity to the police (including vandalism)
- Encourage other tenants to provide evidence, particularly witness statements
- Help us to promote zero tolerance on damage to fire and other safety equipment.
- We can sometimes move a tenant who is suffering from anti-social behaviour and has written to Unipol - we do however prefer to deal with the anti-social tenant who may be affecting lots of people.

If you feel the behaviour is due in whole or part to your sex, race, or sexuality - it may fall under different procedures within your college or university. As different colleges have different procedures, talk to Unipol for advice at your earliest opportunity.

Conclusion

When dealing with most problems, we have three options of how to proceed. These will depend on the seriousness of the case and also the wishes of those involved.

Informal

One of the best ways to resolve any problem, complaint or conflict is by talking about the problem. You can do this directly with the person involved or talk to friends for advice or support.

It is important at this stage to bear in mind that if you wish to resolve an issue, you have to make sure that you do not make the situation worse. It is worth taking some time to think about what you want to say and the best time to discuss the situation.

You can talk to your Housing Management Officer about what is happening, but we will generally not take any action at this stage and will agree any action with you.

Key tips when talking about the problem

Stay calm and do not raise your voice
Wait until later the next day, when things are calmer
Think about the other person's views and feelings
Try to reduce conflict

More formal

You may have spoken to the person concerned and the problem is still happening. It may be that there is a difference of opinion about the seriousness of the situation. In these cases, you should talk to Unipol and discuss the problem.

If you are making an allegation about another person, we may ask you to put this in writing - and if you do not feel able to do this, we may not be able to take further action.

We will discuss a way forward with you and will maintain confidentiality if that is what we agree with you.

We may suggest meeting with all the parties involved to see if the situation can be resolved without help.

We will ask you to keep a diary or log of any incidents to help us see when the problems are occurring and in case you wish to take more formal action at a further date.

If the problem involves a co-tenant, we may be able to move you to another Unipol property where we have vacancies.

Key tips

Keep records of dates, times, incidents and witnesses - Unipol will probably ask you to do this if you want us to take action.

Focus on the facts, but if we try to arrange a meeting, how you feel is important too.

Seek help and advice from Unipol and we can point you at other agencies as well if more support is needed.

Formal

There are complaints procedures operated by the universities and colleges where you can only make complaints against staff or students from the institution. The procedures are often complicated although may have an informal track to them to resolve less serious issues.

Your college or university will also have a harassment procedure for students being harassed by other students or staff.

Unipol can put you in touch with the appropriate person at your institution and provide information and support.

If the matter involves criminal activity, you must report it to the police. Again, Unipol can help with contacts and provide information where appropriate. We can also help you find support during any legal process.

To commence formal proceedings you will usually need to have evidence. This may include statements from witnesses so it is important that you keep detailed logs and notes.

We may suggest you move to another Unipol property during any formal action. This can usually be arranged at short notice where necessary.

Key tips

Obtain copies of the complaints procedures for your university or college

Talk to Unipol for help and advice

Keep detailed logs and notes including dates, times, witnesses and facts

You may need help and support through any formal process

Useful contacts

Counselling services:

Leeds Metropolitan University	0113 283 5974
Leeds University	0113 343 4107
Bradford University and College	01274 235 750

Drugs - Talk To Frank

0800 77 66 00
www.talktofrank.com

Mediation:

Leeds Community Mediation Service 0113 242 4110
www.lcms.org.uk

Bradford Community Mediation Service 01274 254 272/3
www.bradford.gov.uk/council/housing/mediation.html

Noise/Anti-social behaviour complaints:

Leeds 0113 240 7361
www.leeds.gov.uk

Bradford 01274 753 961
www.bradford.gov.uk

Police: 0845 60 60 60 6
Emergency 999

Victim Support 0845 30 30 900



www.unipolhousing.org.uk
Telephone Leeds 0113 243 0169 or Bradford 01274 235 899
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