




# Creating confidence

Making sure that  
your time studying  
in the UK is safe  
and enjoyable

2014

[www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)



‘It’s important to integrate into the local community. I’ve made lots of friends locally and it’s helped me understand local behaviours.’

‘It is nice to know you are interested in our safety.’

‘101 is the new police non emergency number but in an emergency it’s still 999.’

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## Welcome to the UK

For many of you this may be your first time living away from home in an unfamiliar country. This guide is designed to help you prepare for your stay here and give you practical advice about living and studying in the UK.

It highlights some of the safety and security issues you may need to be aware of, offers sensible advice, and lists organisations to contact if you need help.

You may feel you are being bombarded with information throughout your induction programme. You may be under time pressures with your studies and fail to attend any safety briefings offered. Safety and security issues are very important, not just when you first arrive but throughout your stay, so please refer back to the advice given here, even when you're more familiar with life in the UK.

By international standards, the UK is a safe country, with low levels of violence and street crime. In a recent survey (Creating confidence – International student safety survey 2014) by the British Council, only a very small proportion of students had ever experienced a crime and the overwhelming majority felt that the UK is a very safe place to be.

In a recent British Council Student Insight Survey (2012) the UK was recognised as having a very multicultural society, with this factor being seen as contributing the most to the country's overall safety. Following this was the awareness



that, for most part, people in the UK do not carry guns and that the country has good medical care, closely following this were the low crime rate and shared language, and finally a high police presence.

Despite this, it is important to be aware of measures you can take to keep yourself safe. The suggestions in this guide can help you adopt sensible strategies intended to minimise the possibility of you becoming a victim. This booklet will help you to anticipate and recognise risks and to take action to remove or avoid them.

A lot of the advice we offer may seem common sense, but it can make a real difference in keeping you, your family if they are here with you, your accommodation and your belongings safe and secure.

We want you to feel comfortable and at home, and everyone involved – the British Council, the National Union of Students, and the police – are working together to exchange knowledge, keep up to date with crime trends, legislation and other safety issues to help protect you and other students against crime.

Staff at your institution take their duty of care very seriously and are there to help you take care of yourself and settle happily into your local community, and usually they, community police officers or campus security staff will give you practical advice about personal safety.

International students have recently indicated how important their integration into the domestic student community is to enhance the overall perception of the UK. They say it has helped them to learn local behaviours and how to be more vigilant about their surroundings and ensured a real sense of self awareness.

By taking note of the suggestions offered in any safety talk provided by your institution when you first arrive, and by reading and re-reading this guide during your entire stay (and insuring your belongings when you first arrive), we hope that you will keep safe and secure, and free to enjoy your time in the UK.

**Helen Clews**  
British Council



## Arriving in the UK

In the excitement of arriving in any new country, it can be easy to get distracted and misplace things, especially as you get on and off planes, trains and coaches. Here are some practical reminders to help you when you first arrive in the UK.

- Take special care of your passport, travel documents and tickets and keep them with you in a safe place. Before you travel, take a photocopy of all the pages of your passport (including the front and back covers) showing your details (name, photograph, passport number and its date and place of issue) and all the pages that have any entry clearances or immigration stamps on them, and pack this separately from your passport. If you do lose your passport contact the police and your Embassy immediately and give them your passport details.
- Bring enough cash to cover your immediate needs (about £250). Bring a credit card, if you have one, to pay for things such as rail tickets and hotel bills. If possible, your cash should include some coins so that you can use public telephones and ticket machines, and some small denomination bank notes (£5 and £10).
- Cash, credit cards and travellers' cheques should be carried in a safe place, such as an inside pocket, a money belt or a zipped bag. Make a note of the serial numbers of your travellers' cheques and pack this separately from the cheques themselves. Keep your travellers' cheques separate from your passport. If you lose your travellers' cheques or credit card, report the loss to the police and the issuing organisation immediately.
- Keep the telephone number of your school, college or university handy, in case you need to call for advice or tell them about a change in your plans.
- Label your luggage clearly so that it can be forwarded to you if it gets separated from you during the journey. If you do lose your luggage, report the loss immediately to officials of the airline or shipping line. At airports or seaports, check the lost property office to see if it has been handed in.
- If you lose your passport or if it is stolen contact the police and apply to your Embassy immediately for a new passport and give them all your details. In most cases you will need to apply for a replacement. The procedures

vary depending whether you have an entry clearance sticker inside your passport or you have a biometric residence permit (BRP). You must also report loss or theft of your BRP by emailing [BRPLost@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:BRPLost@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

- If you need to leave your luggage somewhere while you change money or make telephone calls, use an official left luggage office (available at airports and major rail and coach stations). Then, for a small fee, you will be able to leave your luggage in a safe and supervised area. The attendant will give you a receipt so that you can collect your items later.
- If you are using a taxi, always make sure that you use a licensed one. Before you get in, you can check whether the taxi is licensed by looking at the back of it to ensure an official licence plate is attached. You should never agree to travel in an unlicensed taxi with an unlicensed driver.
- From airports, you can travel safely in one of the UK's famous 'black cabs'. Never agree to travel with someone who approaches you inside the terminal building, unless you have made a specific arrangement to be met by a 'minicab' company.



## Meet the police

The police in the UK are friendly and helpful. They have a duty to protect everyone and can always be safely approached. A police officer from Greater Manchester Police Force answers some questions in an interview available at this link [www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-immigration.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-immigration.htm) The police are committed to promoting crime prevention and work in partnership with educational institutions, their student bodies, and their staff and students to promote and reinforce student safety messages.

Crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales fell by three per cent in the year ending September 2013 according to the latest crime statistics [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)

### Registering your stay

Some international students will need to register their stay with the police within seven days of arrival in the UK. For further details regarding waiting times and what you need to take go to [www.gov.uk/register-with-the-police](http://www.gov.uk/register-with-the-police). The stamp in your passport will tell you whether or not you should register. Many universities and institutions help by organising registration sessions on campus.

In a recent International student safety survey (*Creating confidence 2014*), international students said that registering their stay with the police enhanced their feelings of safety while studying in the UK. They commented that it added extra protection, and was a good example of central record keeping in the event of an emergency.

If your institution doesn't provide any help and you need to register, you should take a letter from your institution confirming that you are studying there, what course you are studying, proof of your address, your passport, two photographs and a £34 registration fee (if possible take the exact money although you may be able to use a debit or credit card) to a local police station [www.gov.uk/register-with-the-police](http://www.gov.uk/register-with-the-police) or, if you are studying in London, to the Overseas Visitors' Records Office (telephone +44 (0)20 7230 1208). 180 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LH

In the unlikely event that you do have anything stolen, or are assaulted, followed or threatened, you can contact the police, who will always encourage you to report the incident. You should always report a crime even if you feel there is nothing the police can do. If you have lost money or property you will be given a crime reference number, which you will need to make any insurance claim. Do not worry about language difficulties, as the police will find someone, free of charge, who speaks your language.

Alternatively, you can ask your tutor, welfare officer, host family, security on campus, or someone you can trust to contact the police on your behalf, or you can even do it anonymously.

Your local police station will provide helpful advice about crime prevention and a home security assessment, if required. They will also provide a certificate if you need to make an insurance claim for a theft.



### How to report a crime

To report a non-emergency minor crime, just call 101 or your local police station – you can find their number in the telephone directory – or, as we mentioned before, you can ask someone you know and trust to make the call for you.

If you witness a crime, or are the victim of one yourself, it's very important that you report it. By reporting a crime you'll be making sure that you get the necessary support, and it will also help the police make your area safer.

### In an emergency

In an emergency, where there is a danger to life or a crime is in progress, you can contact the police, fire brigade or ambulance service by dialling 999 from any telephone. This call is free of charge, but should be used only in an emergency.

### Crimestoppers

The charity Crimestoppers operates a service which allows people to anonymously pass on information about crimes or criminals. You can call them on +44 (0)800 555 111. Just tell them what you know, not who you are. You can report online via an anonymous form at: [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

For details on how to contact your local police station, information about the area you are living in, and how to report incidents go to [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)

## Protecting your identity

Your identity and personal information are valuable. If criminals find out your personal details, they can use them to open bank accounts and obtain credit cards, loans and documents, such as passports, in your name.

The website [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) can help you to protect yourself against this happening. It advises you what to do if this does happen and suggests where to get further help.

Action Fraud also provides anti-fraud guidance and is the first point of contact for individuals reporting fraud. Call +44 (0)300 123 2040.

Students are also risking being burgled by giving away their whereabouts on social networking sites. These sites and the easy availability of addresses on the internet can be used to create a list of targets.

Millions of us are now checking bank balances and transferring funds on smart phones and tablets every day. Some banking applications (apps) have no extra security for customers who make payments using their mobile – meaning a phone is a potential cash point for a clever thief. Check if your mobile banking provider asks for a pin number before you transfer money. If not, this may not be a safe way to check balances or transfer funds.



## Taking out insurance

We strongly advise you to insure your belongings when you arrive in case of theft or accidental damage. We also recommend that you take advantage of the insurance policies designed especially for international students which cover medical costs and your possessions. Before driving in the UK you must insure your car. Information relating to this can be found on most college and university campuses, or you can consult your students' union or bank.

For general advice on insurance and a full list of insurance brokers, contact the Association of British Insurers at [www.abi.org.uk](http://www.abi.org.uk)

## Taking care of your passport

If you lose your passport you will need to transfer your visa to your new passport. For further information please see: [www.ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/Immigration-/Other-immigration-matters/Transferring-your-visa-to-a-new-passport/](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/Immigration-/Other-immigration-matters/Transferring-your-visa-to-a-new-passport/)

## Taking care of your money – gambling

It was once the case that gambling only took place behind closed doors – you had to be brave enough to go into a bookmakers or a casino if you wanted to place a bet. Now, however, it is possible to gamble online from the comfort of your own home – you can even gamble using your mobile phone or tablet. As international students you are often responsible for large sums of money – money that is supposed to cover tuition fees and living expenses during your stay in the UK, and it is worth being aware of the dangers that gambling can pose. Some students have got carried away with the excitement and adrenaline rush of an early win, and have gone on to lose large sums – or even all their funds – gambling, either online or in casinos. This can lead to debts and other associated problems, including not being able to complete your course or your stay in the UK.

If you do decide to gamble, always remember to set a spending limit before you begin, and never gamble more money than you can afford to lose. If you think your gambling is out of control there are organisations which can help you: [www.gambleaware.co.uk](http://www.gambleaware.co.uk)



## Looking after your belongings

When moving into new accommodation, don't leave luggage or belongings outside or in the open trunk/boot of a car or taxi.

- Using an ultraviolet pen to mark your valuables with your name, your student ID number, and the name of your school, college or university will enable the police to return any items to you if they are stolen and recovered (see your students' union office for details).
- Your college or university may provide safe storage, or you could consider purchasing a small personal safe to keep your passport, travellers' cheques and other valuables secure.
- Keeping your windows and curtains or blinds closed at night and making sure your laptop, television, DVD player and other valuables aren't visible through a window will lessen the risk of your home being targeted. Also, you should never leave cash or credit cards lying around.
- Making use of inexpensive light timers will give the impression of occupancy.
- Consider making a list of your possessions (including model and serial numbers) for reference, and ideally, keep photographic records of your valuables.
- If you go away on holiday, remember to cancel any newspaper or milk subscriptions, and try to leave your

valuables in storage (many educational institutions have a secure storage room) or with a trusted friend.

- If you have a bicycle, make sure you always lock it up when you're not using it, by connecting its frame and wheel to a fixed object with a good-quality 'D' lock (available from [www.soldsecure.com](http://www.soldsecure.com)). Mark it with your postcode, so the police can return it if it is stolen and recovered.
- Try not to use a computer case when carrying a laptop. Use a less obvious bag to carry it in and think carefully before you use your laptop in crowded places. Always back up your work and keep it separate from your laptop.
- Also avoid displaying other expensive items, such as watches, jewellery, iPod earphones or mobile phones in busy public places.
- It's a good idea to register your most valued possessions, such as mobile phones, bicycles and laptops, free of charge, with Immobilise Phone Crime ([www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)). If an item is stolen, call +44 (0)8701 123 123. You will need to have your IMEI number (15-digit serial number) when reporting a stolen mobile phone – this can be found by dialling \*#06# on most mobiles or by looking behind the phone battery. You should keep a note of your IMEI number in a safe place in case it is required. Never leave your mobile phone unattended.

## Finding private accommodation

It's important that you have safe and suitable accommodation while you are studying in the UK. Start making these arrangements as soon as you have been accepted on your course. This is especially important if you are planning to bring your family with you.

Make sure that you arrange some form of accommodation before you arrive in the UK, even if it is only temporary. If you contact the student officer at your Embassy or High Commission before you leave for the UK they may be able to give you advice and information.

You can get information about accommodation owned by private landlords at [www.saferstudents.co.uk](http://www.saferstudents.co.uk) and from the accommodation office at your institution. Contact them as soon as you are accepted on your course to find out what is available. Institutions, as well as some private landlords, have invested significantly in security measures. These include security surveillance, presence of security staff, police patrols, use of identity cards and safety talks offered at institutions.

Here are some tips to help you find safe private accommodation:

- You can ask the accommodation office, the welfare office or the students' union at your institution for help and advice. They may have lists of local accommodation to rent and might also have inspected it to check it is suitable. They may also be able to help if you have any problems.
- You should check whether the accommodation you are going to see is in a safe area before you go. Write to or email, your local police and ask them if there have been any police visits, disturbances or anti-social behaviour orders issued in the area you are looking at. You can also ask if the property you are viewing has ever been burgled.





- You can find out about crime statistics in the area in which you are planning to live or visit at [www.crime-statistics.co.uk](http://www.crime-statistics.co.uk) You can use this website if you are planning to visit other areas during your stay or if you are planning on staying in temporary accommodation, such as a hotel in a new area. See also [www.zoopla.co.uk](http://www.zoopla.co.uk) and [www.homecheck.com](http://www.homecheck.com)
- The world's first nationwide street-by-street crime maps went online in February 2010. These maps show what crimes have been committed each month on every street in England and Wales. Research published by the National Policing Improvement Agency shows that web-based crime maps do not fuel the fear of crime. The maps, which are accessible by typing a postcode into the [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk) website, also provide contact details for neighbourhood policing teams, CCTV footage of local incidents, and in some cases even a Twitter feed from beat officers.
- If possible, take someone with you when viewing accommodation. If you are alone, leave the address you are going to and your expected time of return with a friend or colleague. Consider how far you will have to walk to and from public transport or your own private transport. View the neighbourhood both by day and by night.
- Find out exactly who might have access to the accommodation apart from yourself, and check if the windows and doors have good locks and bolts and an alarm system.
- Be businesslike in your dealings with prospective landlords or landladies. You have different rights depending on what kind of tenancy agreement you have. It is worth asking the landlady or landlord about any disputes and what the neighbours are like. Check the tenancy agreement with staff at your institution before signing. The website [www.primelocation.com](http://www.primelocation.com) has buying, selling and rating guides.
- If you feel uncomfortable with anyone who is showing you accommodation, mention that friends know where you are and are expecting your return at a certain time.

You can get more useful advice about finding student accommodation in the UK at [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)



## Safety at home

Approximately 26 per cent of burglars don't have to force entry. Most burglaries are committed during the day and access is usually gained through an open door or window. Burglary rates rise approximately 23 per cent during the winter months. Deterring would-be criminals is one of the most effective forms of crime prevention.

- You can speak to the crime prevention officer at your local police station. He or she will come to your home and advise you on how to make it more secure.
- If you move into a new home you should change the front and back door locks immediately. If you lose your keys, or if they were stolen, replace the locks as a safety precaution.
- Hardware and DIY shops sell inexpensive key-operated locks to fit most kinds of windows. Remember to lock all outside windows and doors even when you are at home. Consider using or purchasing a safety chain, spy hole or intercom system for your front door.
- If leaving windows open at night you should fit a window limiter to prevent it being opened further.
- If you are female and live in a flat with a door-entry system do not put 'Miss', 'Mrs', or 'Ms' in front of your name; just use your family name. If in doubt about a visitor, do not let him or her in.

- Check the identity of any unknown caller by calling the company they say they are from. If you are not sure who is at your door don't open it.
- If you live in a flat or a house with an outside light and/or a burglar alarm, make sure you use them. If the alarm can be set to cover zoned areas, set the alarm downstairs when you go to bed.
- Every home should have at least one smoke alarm (preferably two), which should be tested regularly. They can be bought from hardware shops and other high street retailers, and are inexpensive.
- If you have a telephone-answering machine, don't record a message saying: 'I am not available', as this reveals to the caller that you are a single occupant. It is better to say: 'No one is available to take your call.'
- If you ever receive obscene or threatening telephone calls or notes, tell a member of staff at your institution or the police.
- If you live in a shared house, don't assume there is someone else in who will make it secure when you go out. Discuss security rules and make sure you all agree to leave the house secure at all times.
- Try to make access around the back of the house difficult for unwanted visitors. Keep bins and ladders out of sight as these can be used to gain access to your property. Try to keep the front of the house clear and visible, so unwanted visitors don't have somewhere to hide.
- If you are going away, tell someone you trust where you are going and when you will be back.
- Don't leave spare keys outside or in a garage or shed for burglars to find. Garages and sheds are often targets for burglars looking for tools, so make sure they are locked. Make sure there is no access to tools or ladders that could be used to force entry into your home. Keep house and car keys separate and out of sight in the house.
- Leave keys in a safe place where you can find them easily in case you need to leave in a hurry, but don't keep them in sight near doors or windows.
- If you are leaving the house empty, ask a friend or neighbour to open and close your curtains or blinds in the mornings and evenings. Using a time-switch for your lights and radios makes it seem that the house is occupied. These can be bought from hardware shops and other high street retailers.



- Keep keys in a pocket rather than in a bag, then if the bag is stolen you can still get into your house. Try to avoid having your keys and your address in your bag at the same time.
- Ideally, if you have lost a key or just moved into a new property, change the locks. Check your insurance policy as new locks may be covered. Highlight the fact that your possessions are security marked and registered to immobilise using window stickers.
- Good security will reduce the chance of your home being burgled. But just in case it happens, think about how you would deal with the situation. Many people now have a telephone in their bedroom, but even if you do, take your mobile to bed with you. In the unlikely event that someone breaks in, you can use it to dial 999 even if your normal phone is too far away or has been disconnected by the intruder.
- If you arrive home and do see signs of a break-in – smashed windows or open doors – don't go in. Go to a friend or neighbour's house and call the police. Do not touch anything when you do go back in, as you could destroy valuable evidence.

#### **Electric and gas fires, heaters and cookers**

- If you have gas cookers, fires and/or heaters in your accommodation, you should get an audible carbon monoxide alarm which complies with BS EN 50291. These can be bought in hardware shops or DIY stores.

Make sure gas appliances are checked every year by an engineer who is registered with the Gas Safe Register (formerly CORGI). More advice can be found at [www.hse.gov.uk/gas/gas-safe-register-campaign.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/gas-safe-register-campaign.htm)

- If you live in rented accommodation, ask your landlord or landlady to have cookers, fires and heaters checked. They are required by law to show you the most recent safety certificate.
- Whenever you go out, turn off gas and electrical appliances, such as the cooker, television and iron (but not the refrigerator).

#### **Fire safety in the home**

The Fire and Rescue Service is not there to just respond when the worst happens. They are also there to offer support and advice to help prevent fires from happening in the first place. If you would like more advice visit or call your local fire station.

- Plan your easiest escape route. Make sure everyone is familiar with that route and always have a back-up route just in case that one is blocked.
- Fit a smoke alarm and test it regularly, on a weekly basis. Smoke alarms save lives. They alert you to the danger of fire, giving you precious time to escape. They are cheap, easy to find and to fit. You should have at least one on each floor, particularly in the kitchen, and perhaps above electrical appliances.



- Check all electrical appliances frequently. Fires in the home are often caused by household appliances, so it's important to check for any signs that they have become a potential hazard. The use of correct fuses prevents overheating, which can also be caused by overloading adaptors. Keep appliances clean and replace any worn or old cables. Unplugging appliances while you are sleeping at night or when you leave the house can reduce the risk of fire. Make sure all your furniture carries the fire-resistant label.
- Close all internal doors, especially at night or when you are out.
- Take extra care around your home. Most fires are preventable. The most common causes of fire in the home include: not cooking safely; smoking and cigarette accidents; appliances setting alight; careless use of candles, portable heaters and electric blankets. Tips on how to avoid these causes of fire in the home are available at [www.fireservice.co.uk/safety](http://www.fireservice.co.uk/safety)

In the event of fire:

- Close all doors to prevent the fire spreading. A closed door can stop a fire spreading and give you extra time to get out.
- If you can, leave the house and call 999 at the first sign of fire. Stay out of the house. Remember to keep calm, act quickly and follow your escape route. If your home is filled with smoke, remember to stay low where the air

is clearer. Before you open any doors, check to see if they feel warm. If any door feels warm, do not enter as the fire could be burning behind it. Leave it closed and exit another way.

- If you cannot get out, move into a room with a window and close the door. Try to take your phone with you and call 999. Use anything in the room to block the smoke from coming under the door. Open the window and shout 'Help, fire!' Fire crews will then be able to rescue you.
- If your clothes catch on fire, remember – stop, drop and roll. Do not run about – just keep still, lie down and roll to put the flames out.

Remember, you can call your local fire station and ask them to visit your home and give you a free Home Safety Assessment. The Fire and Rescue Service is committed to helping people to be more aware of the steps they can take to avoid the danger of fire.

### How to report a gas leak

If you smell gas anywhere, either in the house or in the street, call the freephone National Gas Service Emergency Line on +44 (0)800 111 999. If it is in your own house and it is safe to do so, turn off the gas supply and open the windows and doors.



## Safety on the streets

Recent research suggests it is generally safe to walk on the streets in the UK, although you should always be aware of your surroundings and use your common sense wherever you are. The suggestions that follow are not intended to alarm, but to remind you to always be alert on the streets of the UK as you would in your own country.

Pay attention to your surroundings (especially if you travel to new areas on trips or vacations) and plan your stay before you travel. Hotels can order taxis for you and can advise you about the local areas. It is always advisable to avoid high-risk situations such as walking late at night in an unfamiliar area.

- Many international students are surprised the UK does not have street lighting everywhere. When you first move into your accommodation, find suitable and safe routes to petrol stations, shops and public telephones. Try to find and use routes that are well lit and busy.
- Walk confidently on the pavement, facing oncoming traffic. When crossing the road, remember that vehicles drive on the left in the UK, so they will be coming towards you from the right.
- If you are travelling late at night, walk in a group or, preferably, use public transport or a taxi. Avoid putting yourself at risk: don't take shortcuts near waterways (canals or rivers) or through dark alleyways or parks, for example.
- Don't carry large sums of cash with you when you are out.
- Always keep your bag and coat or jacket with you, and don't leave them on a chair or out of sight.
- Make sure you carry a mobile phone with you or take enough change or a telephone card so you can make a phone call or call a taxi, should you need one.
- A new text service that turns your mobile phone into a personal safety alarm is available from as little as £1.99 a month. Users can also choose a pay-as-you-go option. The system allows users to alert friends or family if they get into trouble. Text alarms can be set in advance – for example, if a person fails to get home at a particular time. Users can also speed dial the number to trigger an alarm if they get into trouble. Once the alarm is triggered, Text You Home obtains the location of the user from network triangulation to pinpoint the mobile. The location is then texted to emergency contacts, such as family or friends, along with any journey details sent by the user beforehand. More details are available at [www.textyouhome.com](http://www.textyouhome.com)
- The Aircover mobile phone app also offers security, including finding your phone if it is lost, backing up your contacts and photographs, locating family or friends and notifying them in urgent situations and can also remove viruses and protect your mobile from threats to security.

- Be alert and be brief when using a mobile phone. Be discreet and try to conceal it. Don't wander along with your earphones on or follow a smartphone's satellite navigation system as this could indicate to others that you have expensive personal possessions with you or that you are not alert. If you can use public transport late at night, use it.
- Facing outwards when using a public telephone means you can see what is going on around you.
- If you feel that you are being followed, cross the street (more than once if necessary), and if you are still unhappy, move as quickly as possible to a public area, such as a restaurant or bar, and telephone for help. It is not necessarily the best idea to use the first telephone that you see if it is in an isolated spot.
- You should never accept drinks from strangers or leave your drink unattended in public places, as 'spiking' drinks with drugs or alcohol is on the increase. Read an interview with a door supervisor to find tips on how international students and visitors can stay safe in clubs, bars or other venues [www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-immigration.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-immigration.htm)
- Being under the influence of alcohol can put you at risk of assault or accidents. In some areas of the UK police officers have powers to stop a person drinking alcohol in public and can confiscate it. It is advisable NOT to drink

alcohol in public places as you risk becoming a target for criminals.

[www.drinkaware.co.uk/check-the-facts/effects-on-your-safety](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/check-the-facts/effects-on-your-safety)

- Think about buying a personal attack alarm and carrying it in your hand when walking at night.
- Avoid confrontation – it's better and safer to walk away if you are being provoked or hassled.
- Be aware of others around you at cash point machines and try not to use cash machines at night or in poorly lit areas. If you must use one, go with a friend and leave as soon as you have your money.
- Always memorise your PIN (personal identification number) to access your money from a cash machine. Never write down your PIN or give it to anyone else.
- Have your keys ready well before you reach the door of your car or house.
- Carry your bag close to you with the clasp facing inwards or strap it over your shoulder. If someone grabs your bag, let it go. Your safety is more important.
- If you live in halls of residence, make sure no strangers follow you when you walk through the main entrance. This is important for your safety as well as others living there.



## Using public transport

Public transport in the UK is reliable, relatively inexpensive and convenient to use.

Here are some tips on using it safely:

- If travelling by bus, try not to wait at bus stops alone. When you are on the bus, sit downstairs if you are on a double-decker, where the driver and other passengers can see you. Arrange for someone to meet you at the bus stop if you are travelling late and have a long way to walk.
- If you can, take a taxi rather than walk the streets with a smartphone's satellite navigation system or a road map and/or your luggage.
- If you travel by train or the Underground (the 'Tube'), try not to sit in an empty carriage. Try to sit near groups of people in a well-lit area.
- When you are on the train, store your luggage as close to your seat as possible or where you can easily see it. If you use a luggage rack, check your belongings regularly, especially when a train stops at a station.
- If you are travelling a long way by train, make sure someone knows which train you are travelling on and when you are due to arrive.
- Check the time of the last train, bus, tube or tram home to avoid being stranded at night. Think about texting a message about your travel arrangements to a friend.
- Always have cash on you and a back-up plan if you are separated from the people you are travelling with.
- If you are lost or in need of assistance when travelling by train, find a member of staff or telephone the British Transport Police on freephone +44 (0)800 40 50 40.
- Do not open the doors until your transport home has completely stopped.
- Try to avoid walking alone after getting off a train, bus, tube or tram. If you can, walk close to a group of people or arrange for someone to meet you.
- Never walk across or touch railway lines – it is very dangerous and you could be badly injured or even killed.
- To remain safe and alert, don't use your headphones, smartphone satellite navigation systems or have long conversations on mobile phones while you are walking, especially late at night.



## Using taxis

There will probably be times when you need to take a taxi during your stay in the UK – for instance, before or after a night out. If you don't feel safe walking, especially late at night, use a taxi. Even if there is a group of friends it makes more sense to use a taxi and share the cost.

However, you do need to be aware of some basic safety guidelines about using them. Here are some helpful tips:

- If you need to use a taxi, ask your educational institution, the hotel you are staying in, or your friends to recommend a taxi company. Keep the telephone number handy, and remember, never use an unlicensed company.
- Check the back of the taxi to ensure there is an official licence plate displayed before you get in. If you are still not sure, ask to see the driver's identification.
- Be aware that some 'minicabs' that stop in the street may be cheaper, but are not licensed and are therefore not as safe as taxis or minicabs that you arrange by telephone. You must pre-book private hire taxis otherwise you are not insured to be in the vehicle.
- If the taxi does not have a meter, agree the fare with the driver before you get into the taxi in order to avoid misunderstandings when you get to your destination.
- Sit in the back of a taxi and directly behind the driver, whenever possible.



- It is quite acceptable to chat with the driver, but do not give away any personal information.
- Have your cash ready and leave the cab before you pay the driver. Some educational institutions have agreements with taxi firms, so if you don't have any cash, you can give your student card details to the driver and pay later. Ask your students' union for details.
- If you want, you can ask your taxi driver to wait until you have entered your house safely, before he or she drives away.



## Driving in the UK

As an international student, you must make sure you fulfil the legal requirements and be aware of the correct procedures before you drive in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

You must have a valid licence that allows you to drive in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). There are different arrangements in Northern Ireland.

If you wish to drive you must find out if you can use your existing licence, which will depend on where it was issued. Information can be found at [www.gov.uk/non-gb-driving-licence](http://www.gov.uk/non-gb-driving-licence)

For international students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA): during the first year of your stay in the UK you can drive with a valid driving licence from your own country or an International Driving Permit, but after one year you must take out a provisional UK licence and put 'L' plates on your car. You must then arrange to sit a full UK driving test. Until you pass your test, a person who holds a full UK driving licence must sit at your side whenever you are driving and you cannot drive on a motorway.



The car must also be covered by insurance, registered and taxed and if over three years old, it must have an MOT Certificate. GB licences are issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). If you have a driving licence that was issued in your home country, you must find out if you can use it to drive in Great Britain and how long it is valid for. A guidance note – *Driving in England, Scotland and Wales: a guide for international students* – can be found at: [www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info\\_sheets/driving.php](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/driving.php)

*The Highway Code* is a government publication that provides a summary of UK traffic law and has pictures of all the road signs in use in the UK (many of which are also used throughout the European Union). You can buy this at most bookshops or read it online at [www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code](http://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code)

While driving in the UK there are legal requirements that you must adhere to:

- If you are caught driving without insurance, road tax, or a valid licence you will face prosecution and be fined.
- You must drive on the left-hand side of the road and overtake on the right.
- If you are riding a motorbike or moped you must wear a crash helmet.
- The driver and front seat passengers must wear seat belts; rear seat passengers must wear seat belts where they are fitted.
- You must not drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- You must observe all speed limits (30 miles per hour is usually the maximum speed limit in built up areas).
- If you are caught speeding by a police officer or speed camera you will be fined and have points put on your licence.
- You will be barred from driving if you accumulate 12 points.
- You must observe the minimum age limits; the minimum age for driving a car or riding a motorcycle is 17.
- It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone or send or read text messages while driving.
- Remember, pedestrians have the right of way on pedestrian crossings.
- More detailed information on these requirements can be found in *The Highway Code*.



Here are a few more tips to help you drive safely in the UK:

- If you are going on a long journey, plan your route using main roads, and telephone ahead to let someone know roughly when to expect you.
- Before you set off, check your tyres and fuel and oil levels. Tyre weld/automatic latex puncture aerosol is useful in case of a flat tyre in a remote area, as it will mend a punctured tyre for long enough for you to reach a garage.
- Always keep a blanket, warm clothes, a pair of boots and a good torch in the car, and check the batteries regularly.
- Handbags or briefcases are safer if placed on the floor or behind seats rather than on the passenger seat.
- Don't leave valuables on display in the car – if you have to leave them in the car, lock them in the boot or trunk so they are out of sight. Try to park your vehicle away from secluded areas, in a well-lit place if possible. Lock your car while parked in a petrol station.
- If you are travelling in a car alone, lock all the doors and keep the windows closed while you are driving.
- Make sure you are a member of a breakdown organisation. All breakdown organisations give priority to lone females.

## Cycling in the UK

The following advice is intended to help international students with the transition between cycling in your home country and the UK.

Once you have purchased a bicycle, find out if there are any local cycle shops where they will service your bike and show you how to give it regular safety checks.

Note: It is vital that you purchase a cycle helmet that meets the British Standard. Use lights if possible at all times and wear fluorescent and reflective jackets. Never listen to music or use a mobile phone while you are on your bike as it will distract you and make sure you fit a bell.

In many cities there will be cycle lanes so ask your institution if they provide cycle maps. Some cycle lanes can be shared with buses or pedestrians and these need to be used with extra care. Look before moving off or stopping and indicate when turning. Be aware of car doors opening, pedestrians stepping out and emergency vehicles. Buses have limited visibility so cyclists should stay behind a bus and in full view of the mirrors, where the bus driver can see you clearly. Manoeuvres around a bus make a cyclist very vulnerable as a bus driver can only see behind by using mirrors.

All traffic signs and traffic lights should be obeyed and are available to view at [www.direct.gov.uk/highwaycode](http://www.direct.gov.uk/highwaycode)

Complicated junctions need great experience and confidence in road cycling. Practical training or cycling with an experienced friend will help this build confidence during the transition period. Alternatively, it may be advisable to consider using Google Maps to find an alternative route or use a local map in conjunction with a cycle map to plan a safer route. This is a useful activity for new students to help find your way around your new locality.







## Laws in the UK

The laws in the UK may be different from those in your home country. This especially applies to the use of tobacco, alcohol and self-defence sprays.

- You must not carry illegal drugs or substances with you of any kind (unless prescribed by a doctor), or use or supply any illegal drugs, including cannabis, ecstasy, LSD and amphetamines.
- It is illegal to carry any sort of weapon including knives, self-defence CS gas sprays, guns and stun guns.
- You must be 18 and over to buy tobacco and smoking is prohibited in workplaces and substantially enclosed public places.
- It is an illegal offence for anyone under the age of 18 to purchase alcohol or to have alcohol purchased for them.

- Only people over 18 can drink in public, except in areas of towns where Designated Public Place Orders (DPPOs) are in place. Even outside these areas, the police can take away alcohol. In the Strathclyde region of Scotland the consumption of alcohol in public places is illegal.

- Never buy property that you think might be stolen, no matter how tempting a bargain it might seem. You can check the background history of any used electrical items at [www.checkmend.com](http://www.checkmend.com) either by creating a single report or by SMS.

You can find an essential guide to the law in the UK at [www.gov.uk/browse/justice](http://www.gov.uk/browse/justice)

## Powers of arrest

The police help to protect people in the community but are also there to ensure laws are followed. Police officers in the UK have the power to arrest people who are suspected of having committed an offence. Arrests can also be made if you fail to pay a fine, fail to appear in court when asked to do so, or if you refuse to give your name and address to a police officer when asked.

Where offences are considered minor, you will be issued with a summons to appear in a magistrates' court. If you do not respond to this a police officer may arrest you.

If you are stopped in the street by a police officer, you have the right to ask why you have been stopped. However, remember that the police may search you if they believe you are in possession of a controlled drug, offensive or sharp object, or carrying stolen goods.

If you are arrested you will be officially cautioned. You do not have to say anything to the police. But if you are later charged with a crime and you have not mentioned, when questioned, something that you later rely on in court, then this may be taken into account when deciding if you are guilty or not. Anything you do say can later be used against you.

If you are arrested and taken to a police station, you are under no obligation to say anything until you have spoken to a solicitor. It is your right to see a solicitor when you

ask and this service is free of charge. However, if you have been arrested following any alcohol-related offence and the police wish to breathalyse you, this can be done before you speak to a solicitor. Your solicitor may be present when you are questioned.

The police can only keep you at a police station for a certain amount of time, normally 24 hours, unless, depending on the offence, they ask a magistrate for an extension.

If you are arrested, contact your institution or your sponsor.

If you need legal assistance, there are a number of organisations that can help you:

- Community Legal Service Direct offers access to free legal information and advice. Find out more at [www.gov.uk/legal-aid](http://www.gov.uk/legal-aid) or telephone +44 (0)845 345 4345.
- You can also contact the Citizens Advice Bureau at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) – they provide free, confidential and independent advice in their offices, colleges and other institutions across the UK. Advice is available face-to-face and by telephone on issues such as debt problems, legal difficulties, discrimination and housing.



## Discrimination and harassment

The population of the UK is increasingly diverse and a great many religions and ethnic groups are represented here. Britain is a tolerant society that believes in respecting the rights of minority groups. This belief is supported by law: the Equality Act works towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality between people. It lists nine protected areas: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

If you are subjected to any form of unfair treatment, discrimination or harassment linked to any of these areas report it to your institution. They will have a formal procedure to assist individuals who feel they have been discriminated against. You can also seek support from the Equality Advisory Support Service who will provide information and advice to anyone who thinks he or she has suffered discrimination or harassment.

You can contact the Equality Advisory Support Service on +44 (0)808 800 0082 or through their website [www.equalityadvisoryservice.com](http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com)



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# Hate crime

Hate crime is defined as any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or perceived disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender.

The police also record hate incidents, which are defined as any non-crime incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or perceived disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender.

Hate crime can take many forms, including:

- physical attacks
- damage to property, including offensive graffiti and arson
- abusive telephone calls, leaflets/posters, letters, e-mails or postings on social media
- verbal abuse, including abusive gestures

Hate crime or hate incidents can occur at home or close to home, in public – such as on the street, in public facilities or public transport – or even while at school, college or university.

## Why should you report hate crime?

Hate crimes and incidents hurt; they can be confusing and frightening. Hate incidents can feel like crimes to those who suffer them and can escalate to crimes.

By reporting a hate crime, the police will be able to fully investigate what happened. In relation to hate incidents, the police also encourage reporting, as whilst the police can only prosecute when the law is broken, they can still work with partners to try and prevent any escalation in seriousness.

By reporting you will also get the service you deserve and the support you need and you may be able to prevent these incidents from happening to someone else. You will also help the police understand the extent of hate crime and incidents in your local area so they can better respond to it.

The police will deal with your report promptly and sensitively, respect your views and treat them professionally and will keep you informed of any progress or outcome.

**Reporting makes a difference – to you, your friends and your life.**

[www.report-it.org.uk](http://www.report-it.org.uk)



## Useful helplines and websites

The following helplines and websites offer impartial information and support by telephone and on the internet. Information and advice in most cases is free and confidential. Remember, these organisations are there to help you, so do not hesitate to contact them if you need assistance.

### **Association of British Insurers**

[www.abi.org.uk](http://www.abi.org.uk)

### **British Insurance Brokers' Association**

Information about insurance and insurance providers in the UK.

[www.biba.org.uk](http://www.biba.org.uk)

### **British Transport Police**

Provides a policing service on the railways throughout Great Britain, the London Underground, the Docklands Light Railway, the Midland Metro tram system and the Croydon Tramlink.

[www.btp.police.uk](http://www.btp.police.uk)



### **Childalert.co.uk**

Comprehensive advice and personal safety guidance for children.

[www.childalert.co.uk](http://www.childalert.co.uk)

### **Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)**

The CAB service helps people resolve their financial, legal and other problems by providing information and advice.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### **Advice guide (CAB)**

[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

### **Community Legal Service Direct**

Access to free legal information and advice.

[www.gov.uk/legal-aid](http://www.gov.uk/legal-aid)

T +44 (0)845 345 4345

### **Crime statistics**

You can find out about crime statistics in the area in which you are planning to live or visit by going to [www.crime-statistics.co.uk](http://www.crime-statistics.co.uk)

The world's first nationwide street-by-street crime maps are now available in England and Wales.

[www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)

### **Crimestoppers**

The charity Crimestoppers runs the 0800 555 111 number, which allows people to telephone anonymously with information about criminals or crimes. The information is then passed on to the police. Just tell them what you know, not who you are.

[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

T +44 (0)800 555 111

### **Directgov**

Lots of useful safety advice and tips regarding crime prevention and self-defence.

[www.gov.uk/browse/justice](http://www.gov.uk/browse/justice)

### **Drinkaware.co.uk**

For the facts about alcohol

[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

### **Drinkline**

Advice on sensible drinking and alcohol misuse.

[www.patient.co.uk/support/Drinkline.htm](http://www.patient.co.uk/support/Drinkline.htm)

T +44 (0)800 917 8282

### **Equality and Human Rights Commission**

Offers support and advice in cases of racial discrimination or harassment.

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

T +44 (0)20 7939 0000



### **Gamble Aware**

Promotes responsible gambling only and supports initiatives that help prevent gambling from becoming a problem and minimise gambling-related harm. Gamble Aware is administered by the Responsible Gambling Trust.

[www.gambleaware.co.uk](http://www.gambleaware.co.uk)

### **Get Safe Online**

Advice on how to keep yourself safe online.

[www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org)

### **Highway Code**

Advice on traffic law in the UK.

[www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code](http://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code)

### **Home Office**

The Home Office has a website giving practical advice on protecting yourself against identity theft.

[www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

### **Home Office Crime Reduction**

Useful information and resources relating to crime prevention.

[www.gov.uk/government/policies/reducing-and-preventing-crime--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reducing-and-preventing-crime--2)

### **Immobilise Crime**

To register your mobile phone, bicycle or laptop, and for advice on what to do if they are stolen. Immobilise also sell property marking kits, electronic tags for bikes, luggage tags and tracker key tags and recovery services, security tags and stickers, window stickers, hologram security stickers and laptop insurance.

[www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)

**T** +44 (0)8701 123 123

### **National Domestic Violence Helpline**

Free 24-hour telephone support for women experiencing domestic violence.

**T** +44 (0)808 2000 247

For men experiencing domestic violence.

[www.mensadvice.org.uk/mens\\_advice.php](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk/mens_advice.php)

### **National Drugs Helpline**

A 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, free, confidential service offering advice and information to individuals concerned about drugs.

[www.urban75.com/drugs/helpline.html](http://www.urban75.com/drugs/helpline.html)

**T** +44 (0)800 77 66 00

### **National Lesbian and Gay Switchboard**

Information, support and referral service for homosexual men and women.

**T** +44 (0)20 7837 7324

### **National Union of Students**

The website for the National Union of Students (NUS).  
[www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

### **NHS Direct**

NHS Direct offers confidential health advice and information, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.  
[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)  
**T** +44 (0)845 4647

### **Rape Crisis Federation for Wales and England**

Help for women who have suffered rape, sexual abuse, attack or harassment.  
[www.rapecrisis.co.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.co.uk)

### **Refuge**

For women and children facing domestic abuse.  
[www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)  
Free 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline  
**T** +44 (0)808 2000 247

### **Report it**

A website giving information about hate crime or incidents and how to report it.  
[www.report.it.org.uk](http://www.report.it.org.uk)

### **Samaritans (24 hours)**

The Samaritans provide confidential support to individuals in emotional distress.  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)  
**T** +44 (0)845 790 9090

### **Stonewall**

A political lobbying group working for the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.  
[www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)  
**T** +44 (0)20 7881 9440

### **Student Accommodation**

A directory of student accommodation and associated links.  
[www.studentaccommodation.org](http://www.studentaccommodation.org)

### **Suzu Lamplugh Trust**

A national charity offering advice on how to stay safe.  
[www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)  
**T** +44 (0)20 8876 0305

### **Terrence Higgins Trust**

The Terrence Higgins Trust delivers health promotion campaigns, national and local services to people with, or affected by, AIDS.  
[www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)  
**T** +44 (0)845 1221 200

### **Text You Home**

Text service that transforms your mobile phone into a personal safety alarm.  
[www.textyouhome.com](http://www.textyouhome.com)

### **UKCISA – The UK Council for International Student Affairs**

Offers advice and comprehensive guidance notes on aspects of studying in the UK for international students.  
[www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)

**ukstudentlife.com**

Information about keeping yourself and your belongings safe.

[www.ukstudentlife.com/personal/safety.htm](http://www.ukstudentlife.com/personal/safety.htm)

**Victim Support**

An independent charity that helps people cope with the effects of crime. They provide free and confidential support and information to help individuals deal with their experiences.

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

**Supportline** 0845 30 30 900

**Women's Aid**

Offers support and a place of safety for abused women and children.

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

**T** 0808 2000 247





The UK means the United Kingdom and consists of England, Scotland, Wales (Great Britain) and Northern Ireland.

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