

Accommodation Fraud

ADVICE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKING FOR ACCOMMODATION:



- Only use recognised letting agencies or deal with people who are bona fide and trusted. Don't enter into off site communications for a lower cash price.
- Ensure the website is real and not cloned – check the URL, look for the trust seals – check the privacy policy, refunds policy section, contact sections, even for spelling errors.
- Know the website's policy on refunds and know your consumer rights. They are protected if a legitimate site is used.
- Be very wary of social media advertisements or where person letting the location will only communicate via messenger or WhatsApp - Push for direct answers and if responses are vague disengage immediately.
- Be wary of unsolicited contacts or where the contact appears to be based in other jurisdictions or where there is a sense of urgency or its a one time offer. Ask yourself, why me? why am I getting such an offer?
- Always pay in a way that is traceable and/or refundable and ensure that any online payment systems are reputable and secure (Check for HTTPS. Look for the 'lock' symbol beside the website URL). In general, do not pay via a method you are not familiar with.
- Ideally the property would be registered with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). This can be checked on their website.
- If unexpectedly referred to a (seemingly legitimate) Airbnb link to pay for a property then this is a huge warning sign. Also, Airbnb take a sizable portion of rent as payment and is designed for once-off short term lets. No longer term accommodation should be using Airbnb. Airbnb is very prominent in Accommodation Fraud narratives on PULSE.
- Fully research the area to find out what the average asking prices are and compare to the advertisement/offer.
- Ask for the exact address and verify the existence of the property. Check Google maps to see that the property is the same as that advertised. Reverse image search any posted images to see if they appear elsewhere on the internet. Ideally the property would be registered with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). This can be checked on their website.
- Ideally, meet with the landlord for a tour of the accommodation. If this is not possible for some reason (this reason should be on your part, the landlord has no excuse), ask as many verifiable questions as possible such as: What bus routes are nearby? What local facilities are there (supermarkets etc)?
- Get a tenancy agreement and satisfy yourself that is appropriately written (get someone to look at it if you are unfamiliar with tenancy agreements). Question anything that doesn't seem to relate to the property.
- If the property was advertised on social media (especially Facebook), check the profile(s) of the advertiser. What other pages have they liked or are associated with. Do these fit their supposed nationality? (i.e. if their name sounds Irish/English but they have liked a lot of pages in a different language then this is a warning sign). Check any other listings that the advertiser has created.
- Verify that keys you are given work before handing over any money if possible.
- Do not advertise yourself as looking for accommodation. This is an invitation for fraudsters.
- Never give personal, financial or security information to persons who are unknown to you.
- Always report it to gardai and your bank and ask your bank to do a recall.
- The Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) rent index provides students with important benchmark information and is an authoritative guide as to the actual rents being charged by landlords adjacent to all Universities, ITs and other Third Level colleges. www.rtb.ie.

