



Share it!

Preparing young people to share
housing successfully

This Kit is based on processes and resources from over 30 years of experience working with the clients and staff at St. George Accommodation for Youth Ltd, to ensure secure housing for young people by

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Pro Bono Publico: *Uncommon design for the common good*

Funded by
Family & Community Services, New South Wales



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Why this kit?

Most young people, even with family support and a job, find it hard to find affordable housing. This means that, like it or not, sharing accommodation is often the only option, especially for those leaving transitional/crisis/supported accommodation.

Finding affordable accommodation is difficult enough. Sharing with others can be the really tricky part. This is especially true for many Specialist Housing Services (SHS) clients, who are usually the most at-risk, vulnerable and disadvantaged young people in a competitive and limited rental market.

Rent It, Keep It developed by Department of Housing NSW, focuses on the practicalities of finding accommodation, the rights and responsibilities of being a tenant, managing a budget, and the legalities of being a tenant.

As workers, though, you know all too well that successfully sharing accommodation requires good interpersonal skills as well as that practical knowledge.

The aim of *Share It* is to give workers supporting young people in transitional accommodation a process and some resources to help the young people you support to learn and practise the interpersonal skills they need to maintain sustainable, successful co-tenancies, whether in an SHS service, community housing, public housing or private rental.

How to use the kit

The kit consists of processes, tips and resources to support young people to:

- recognise the likely issues in sharing;
- participate effectively in house meetings;
- develop co-tenants' agreements; and
- more effectively raise, discuss and negotiate issues and concerns with their co-tenants.

You can use it with young people who are at any stage of the sharing continuum – before they become tenants, when sharing accommodation in SHS Services, or when sharing with co-tenants in other accommodation.

We recommend that you build the kit into your Case Management practice, as part of the relationship developed between you and your clients. You can also use it as an individual learning tool for early intervention, outreach or aftercare for clients who do not directly accommodate but who need to learn successful shared tenancy skills.

Use the Kit as a complementary resource and/or extension of the Housing NSW **Rent It Keep It – preparing people to sustain tenancies**.

The *Share it* Kit uses **strengths-based, trauma-informed care** principles.

Trauma-informed Care

Many of the young people you support in SHS or other community organisations have suffered abuse and neglect, or have mental health issues (which may be a consequence of that abuse or neglect).

Trauma survivors often experience services as unsafe, disempowering and/or invalidating. If they feel any threat or coercion, they often withdraw from seeking assistance. The long-term impacts of trauma can include the way people approach potentially helpful relationships – that is, people who have suffered abuse and neglect may seem ‘difficult’ and non-compliant, because they have learned not to trust. If you don’t ensure that your service is providing trauma informed care, it can exacerbate mental and physical health issues and escalate the risk of suicide. (Fallot et al., 2009)

Survivors of trauma can be re-traumatised unless the services are respectful, patient and sensitive.

Trauma-informed care means working with the young person in a way that aims to understand the trauma and the impact on the young person’s life, ensures a sense of choice and personal power, and creates compassionate settings.

For information and resources on Trauma Informed Care, see Mental Health Co-ordinating Council: www.mhcc.org.au

Physical and Emotional Safety	Looks like: (Hodas, 2004, NETI, 2005)
	● a safe welcoming environment
	● consistent, predictable
	● non-shaming, non-blaming, non-violent
	● private and confidential
	● clear explanations about what is happening and why
Collaboration	Looks like: (Hodas, 2004, NETI, 2005)
	● respect, information, connection, hope
	● a respectful relationship
	● no ‘power over’ experience
	● ensuring that explicit rights are understood
	● doing ‘with’ rather than ‘to’ or ‘for’
	● providing choice
	● consumer is the ultimate expert in their own life
Trustworthiness	Looks like: (Hodas, 2004, NETI, 2005)
	● trust is earned and demonstrated over time
	● practice is consistent
	● professional boundaries are clear
	● processes are transparent
	● roles and responsibilities are clear
	● service users make informed consent

Strengths-based work

- Value the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in individuals and communities.
- Work in collaboration – help the young people to decide what they want to do, and support them to do things for themselves. In this way, they can become co-producers of support, not passive consumers of support.
- Ensure a trusting, respectful and equal relationship.

Focusing on strengths does not mean ignoring challenges, or ‘spinning’ struggles into strengths.

What these approaches mean for facilitating

1. Be patient. Take your time and give the clients time.
2. Listen.
3. Explain and ask them to explain their understanding.
4. Re-iterate that it is **their** tenancy, **their** meeting, **their** agreement. You are there to help and support, but won't tell them what they must do (except where it's required by the law or the lease.)
5. Be careful of issues such as low literacy – be prepared to read and explain the documentation and to help complete questionnaires and agreements.
6. Recognise that things that seem non-threatening or ‘normal’ to you may be perceived as threatening and difficult to your clients.
7. Set up processes so that each co-tenant feels that they have equal and fair say in any agreements, and do not feel pressured by their co-tenant to agree to things that they are not comfortable with.

Suggested process and time-frame

The process is designed to develop and build on the experience of sharing and to respond to the changes in the sharing relationship. You may need to re-visit agreements and help them re-negotiate, depending on how things are going.

Activity	Timing	Resources/handouts
Discussion with each co-tenant separately about sharing and setting ground-rules	Before moving in if possible	First Co-tenants Meeting questions Sharing Bills How to Avoid the 3 Biggest Risks to Your Tenancy
First Co-tenants Meeting: Setting the ground-rules	Before moving in if possible	First Sharing Agreement form The Clean Sheet Hand House Cleaning Hints Whiteboard or flipchart
First Sharing Agreement follow-up meeting	Two weeks after moving in	Second Co-tenants' Meeting questions
Second Co-tenants Meeting: Resolving issues	Between two and four weeks after the beginning of the tenancy	Problem-solving "I" Statements How to deal with non-violent conflict Second Sharing Agreement Form Whiteboard or flipchart
Second Sharing Agreement follow-up meeting	Two to four weeks after the Second Co-tenants Meeting	Third Co-tenants' Meeting questions
Third Co-tenants' Meeting: Personal safety and security 1	Between four and six weeks after the second Co-tenants' meeting	Third Sharing Agreement Form Whiteboard or flipchart
Third Sharing Agreement follow-up meeting	A month or so after the Third Co-tenants' Meeting	Fourth Co-tenants meetings questions
Fourth Co-tenants' Meeting: Personal safety and security 2	A month or so after the Third Co-tenants' Meeting	Fourth Sharing Agreement Form Whiteboard or flipchart
Follow-up meeting if required		

Other resources

It is important that you are familiar with and have copies of:

- **Rent It, Keep It Manual**, Housing
- **Share Housing Survival Guide**, Redfern Legal Centre, Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service, www.sharehousing.org
- **Fact Sheets** from the Tenants Union of NSW, www.tenants.org.au

For more information regarding SHS programs, best practice, client rights, SHS roles and responsibilities and a range of other useful information about SHS services:

<http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/help-with-housing/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services>

Raising the issues

For many of the young people you work with, sharing with strangers may be a new experience.

Accepting SHS accommodation means that their choice and control about who they share with will often depend on the policies of the particular SHS service.

So for young people with complex needs, and who may have undergone trauma in their life or may have mental health issues, questions such as who they share with, how much control they will have in the tenancy, fear of strangers, and developing trust may be major challenges.

Their background is rarely one that has taught them effective communication skills, conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills, social skills or how to take responsibility.

They will often be uncomfortable with raising issues with fellow tenants.

They will not be used to having structured, focused conversations.

They are likely to have difficulty speaking up about problems they have with someone's behaviour.

They may have attachment issues, and have high expectations that their co-tenants will become their friends. The need to belong and please may override the need to get to know co-tenants first. There is the risk of rushing into friendships too quickly, and then being let down.

Be consistent with the principles of Trauma Informed Care, and carefully explore any issues or environmental factors which may act as a trigger for the young person.

Be respectful of cultural differences and diversity.

For useful resources and information:

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/working-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-cald-adolescents/reports-policy-papers>

Note: It is important that each co-tenant makes their agreements without feeling pressured by their co-tenant. Ensure that each co-tenant thinks about it and completes the pre-meeting questionnaires on their own before discussing it with their co-tenant/s.

Discuss the tenancy with each young person individually

1. **Explain** the purpose of the discussion.

2. **Ask:**

What are the best things that could happen with a housemate? What are you excited about?

What are the worst things that could happen with a housemate? What could go wrong?

Note down their answers. Discuss and reality check.

Key discussion points

- Friendship may develop as a by-product of sharing, but it's not likely to if you and your co-tenants have different ideas about how things should work and then get into arguments about it.
- What if you think you are friends, but they stop paying their share of the rent? (Always with an excuse).
- What if they eat the food you buy and don't replace it?
- What if they don't do their share of the cleaning?

Link to their expressed hopes, fears and concerns.

3. Explain

It will be lot harder to bring up issues if you haven't worked out some ground rules about how you're going to live together. If you do work out ground-rules, you might avoid disappointment and potential conflict. This will allow friendship to emerge gradually as you get to know and trust each other over time.

It's important to agree on some basic ground rules for sharing safely and respectfully. You have a rental agreement or contract for your tenancy. The Shared Housing Agreement is your contract with your co-tenants.

You will have a first meeting with your co-tenant/s to decide how things will work, who will be responsible for what, and what to do if there are any issues or disagreements.

You will decide what rules you choose to make for yourselves, within the framework of the non-negotiable legal rules that anyone undertaking a tenancy must comply with – i.e.

- *Your Residential Tenancy Agreement – RTA NSW*
- *The law – no illegal activity*
- *Rules of the Service/Housing Provider/Support Agency (for SHS clients)*

This will get your shared tenancy off to a good start.

Once you have been sharing for a while, we will have a follow-up meeting to talk about what's working and what's not working, and to make any changes you think need to happen.

4. Handout and discuss

Sharing Bills

How to Avoid the Three Biggest Risks to Your Tenancy

First Co-tenants' Meeting Questions

5. Ask each **co-tenant to complete the questions** on their own before the **First Co-tenants' Meeting**.
6. Set a date and time for the **First Co-Tenants' Meeting**.

Some clients may have difficulty with this. Some clients may have literacy problems. Others may find it demanding.

Don't make it pressured. Give them the choice to go through the questions on their own, or have you coach them through or have a practice run.

First Co-tenants' Meeting

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First Co-tenants' Meeting Questions

Date:

A copy to be completed by each co-tenant before the First Co-tenants' Meeting

Name:

Person completing the questions

Address:

Worker:

Worker contact:

Your agreement with the service and/or your lease means that you have accepted the rules about your tenancy.

The First Co-tenant's Meeting will give you a chance to work out your own agreement on your living arrangements with your co-tenant.

These questions are to help you think about how you will share the accommodation. Read the questions, then write down your thoughts about them in the space provided. If you're not sure about any of them, don't worry – just do your best!

At the First Meeting, you will discuss these issues and we will record the decisions you make together to create a **First Sharing Agreement**. Remember, you can change any decisions at any time.

We will review the agreement at the First Follow-up Meeting where we will also give you a few questions to think about for the Second Co-tenants' Meeting.

Bills

Electricity

You are both responsible for the electricity bill, so you must make sure that you add **both** your names to the account.

If you are an existing tenant, you must contact the electricity company, together with the new tenant, to organise this. Workers can assist you with this.

Gas, water and internet connection

Please read the Sharing Bills Handout and decide

Gas

Whose name will be on the account?

How will each person will pay their share (eg. direct debit or Centrepay)?

Who will pay the bill and how it will be paid?

Water

Whose name will be on the account?

How will each person will pay their share (eg. direct debit or Centrepay)?

Who will pay the bill and how it will be paid?

Internet connection

Whose name will be on the account?

How will each person will pay their share (eg. direct debit or Centrepay)?

Who will pay the bill and how it will be paid?

Cleaning

Please think about how you are going to organise cleaning your accommodation together.

You are each responsible for your own bedroom, but you must agree on who will clean the common areas – that is, kitchen, bathroom, laundry, living areas, hallways, any outdoor areas.

Kitchen: Dishes, benches, stove top, oven, fridge, microwave, cupboards, walls, tiling, floors, clean and empty rubbish bins. Who will clean and how often?

Laundry: Wipe down washing machine inside and out after use, clean up any spills, wipe down sink and all surfaces, walls and floor, tidy mops, buckets brooms etc. Keep soiled clothing tidy and in baskets/buckets. Who will clean and how often?

Bathroom: Scrub bath/shower/glass, mirrors, basin, toilet, walls and floor, empty bins, hang towels, replace toilet paper. Who will do these and how often?

Living area/Dining area/Hallways/Outside areas

Tidy and dust, wipe down tables, chairs and all surfaces, vacuum and/or mop floors, sweep and/or mop outside areas. Who will do this and how often.?

Garbage

The garbage bins are divided into re-cycling and non re-cycling. They get collected at regular times each week. What are the days for your garbage collection? Is there are roster in your building?

Bin night:

--

Who puts the bins out and brings them back in again?

--

--

Shopping and Cooking

How you are going to organise your shopping and cooking?
What if you don't like eating the same things?

--

--

Do you want to share the cost of all food and groceries?

--

Do you want to have a kitty to share just some things, such detergent, toilet paper etc?

--

Do you want to buy everything separately?

--

Will you cook together or separately?

--

We'll come back in approximately two weeks time for a follow up meeting to talk about how your agreements are going and any changes you may have decided on in the meantime. We'll also give you questions to think about for the Second Co-tenants meeting.

The most important issues for your tenancy

Pay the rent on time

1. **Have a regular system of paying your rent, whether it's through Centrepay, or automatic debit from your bank account.**
2. **Always check your bank balance on the day your income is due to arrive, i.e. every fortnight or weekly.**

Make sure the correct amount of money has been deposited. This way you will be sure that the money deposited is enough to cover your Centrepay deduction or direct debit from wages, for your rent.

If there is any difference, contact your employer or Centrelink right away to find out why, or if you need to, ask for help from a caseworker, friend or adult who you trust.

3. **If for any reason you can't pay your rent on time, contact your landlord/real estate agent right away.**

Explain what has happened and ask if you can negotiate re-payment of the rent. Again, ask for help with this if you need to.

Don't be afraid to contact them. You have the right to ask for a repayment plan. Avoiding contact will only make things worse and may result in a breach of your lease, which in turn may mean your tenancy is at risk.

4. **If you are having difficulty managing to pay your rent on time, contact your support worker or see the links below for assistance.**
5. **If you think there's a chance that one or more of your co-tenants may not be paying their share of the rent on time, check with the landlord/real estate agent straight away.**

Don't wait to let any arrears build up, as this is a breach of your lease.

Look after the property

If your shared flat or house is not kept clean, undamaged, and looked after to a good standard, you and your co-tenants are at risk of breaching your lease. This includes care of outdoor areas such as, balconies, driveways, gardens, laundries and bins. Keeping these areas free from rubbish, unwanted furniture, old packaging and shopping trolleys etc is just as important as keeping the inside clean, undamaged and up to a good standard.

This is why your Shared Housing Agreement is so important. Use it to work out how each person can do their fair share to look after the property.

Landlords/Estate Agents will carry out house inspections, with notice, up to four times per year, to ensure that your shared property is being cared for, undamaged and kept to a good standard.

Note: If the land lord/agent genuinely believes there is an emergency situation eg. risk to personal safety or the property, such as electrical faults/leaking pipes, they may enter the property without notice.

Be considerate about neighbours and visitors

Being considerate of your neighbours is another important way to make sure you have a successful tenancy. It is also part of your lease agreement. (See clause 51 of Residential Tenancy Act NSW 2010)

1. Introduce yourselves to your neighbours when you first move in.

This sets a good tone for your tenancy, whether they decide to be friendly or not.
If you are considerate, you and your neighbours will probably get along fine.

2. Let your neighbours know if you're having a party.

You can also register your party with the police, to help them respond more quickly if things get out of hand.

To keep control of the number of visitors at your party, consider how you invite them.
If you use social media to invite people, choose settings that are private, so the whole world doesn't show up.

3. Don't give your neighbours anything to complain about.

Make sure you don't have overflowing bins, shopping trolleys left outside, rubbish or junk in the yard or on the footpath, etc.

4. When you have friends around, make sure they treat your property and the neighbours with respect.

You will be held responsible for their behaviour by the landlord/estate agent.

If neighbours make complaints to your landlord/estate agent, especially repeated complaints, it may put your tenancy at risk.

5. In public housing, if your visitors stay more than three nights per week your housing provider may think they've moved in.

You may risk being charged extra rent, if you can't prove your visitors aren't living with you.

More information

www.sgshomelesshelp.org.au

St. George and Sutherland Homeless Help

www.tenants.org.au

Tenants Rights Factsheets are available in 10 languages

www.ewon.com.au

Information and resources to manage your energy and water bills

www.housing.nsw.gov.au

Help with Rentstart Bond Loan, Private Rental Brokerage

www.sharehousing.org.au

Lot of great tips for sharing

Domestic Violence DV Line **freecall 1800 656 463**

Sharing Bills

Electricity, gas and internet connections are essential services.

You have to pay a connection fee for these services when you open a new account.

Water connection fees are the responsibility of the owner/landlord, but tenants may be charged for water rates, depending on how much water they use.

Most providers of these services will allow only one person's name on the account. So, whoever sets the account up in their name is legally responsible for that bill.

This arrangement presents the very real risk that the person whose name is on the account may be stuck with the bill, if their co-tenant(s) don't honour their part of the agreement to share the costs. This may be particularly risky when co-tenants leave.

It is hoped that co-tenants are trustworthy and will take responsibility for their share of the bills; but experience tells us that sometimes this is not the case.

It is therefore critical that co-tenants agree how they will manage these shared expenses, to minimise the risk of one co-tenant getting stuck with the bill.

Co-tenants need to make clear agreements on:

- Whose name is on the account
- How each person will pay their share eg. direct debit/Centrepay
- Who will pay the bill and how it will be paid

Some providers allow another person's name to be added as an "authority" to the account. This doesn't give the other person the same responsibility for the account but it allows them to have the 'authority' to speak with the service provider.

This way, everyone can check for themselves with the provider what is owed and what has been paid on the bill, to ensure that any money they may have contributed to the bill has actually been paid to the provider.

In the case of co-tenants sharing electricity and internet costs, the problem of one person taking the financial risk can be shared around.

A simple solution may be for one person to be the account holder for the electricity account and another to be the account holder for the internet.

The First Co-tenants' Meeting

Ideally, prospective co-tenants should meet before moving in together, but the skills can still be taught to those clients who may already be accommodated or who are yet to share.

The purpose of the first Co-tenants' Meeting is to

- introduce Co-tenants to each other in a safe and friendly environment
- encourage Co-tenants to discuss their own values and needs
- canvass some of the issues that may arise when sharing together
- encourage Co-tenants to formulate some basic ground rules for sharing
- explain how those rules fit within the rules and conditions of your Service and/or their lease
- develop an initial agreement for sharing together

1. Open the meeting

Ensure that everyone is comfortable. Introduce everybody.

2. Explain

This is about you having the power to negotiate your own agreements about your living arrangements with each other (provided this doesn't breach the non-negotiable rules.)

You will be taking responsibility for the decisions you make.

This is just the first agreement – you don't know each other yet. Remember that if some parts of the agreements aren't working down the track, there will be other co-tenants' meetings.

Before we start, let's set some ground-rules for how we will behave during this meeting.

3. Using a whiteboard or flip chart, start by getting the co-tenants to agree to how they want the meeting to work.

Suggested agreement on how the meeting will work

We will

- Participate in the meeting in a positive way
- Allow each person their turn to speak and be listened to
- Address any concerns or fears
- Stick to the purpose of the meeting
- Be prepared to compromise
- Behave in a respectful way
- Keep the meeting private and confidential

It is important to discuss and define what terms such as 'participating in a positive way' and 'behave in a respectful way' mean in terms of behaviour at the meeting.

4. Ask each co-tenant to get out their copy of the **Co-tenant's questions**.

It is hoped that each Co-tenant will have completed the questions. If not, encourage each tenant to think about and write down their response to each question. Provide some examples of how questions may be answered, if necessary.

Ask the co-tenants to share their responses and talk about any differences.

As much as possible, leave clients to negotiate their own decisions together.

5. Once they have discussed the issues, **use the whiteboard/fipchart to write up what they agree**.
6. Ask co-tenants to complete the **First Sharing Agreement**.
7. Handout **The Clean Sheet: handy house cleaning hints**
8. Set a date for the **First follow-up Meeting** in two to four weeks' time.

First Sharing Agreement

Date:

Name:

AND

Name:

Address:

Worker:

Worker contact:

BILLS

Electricity

How will each person will pay their share (eg. direct debit or Centrepay)?

Who will pay the bill and how it will be paid? We agree

Gas

Whose name will be on the account?

How will each person will pay their share (eg. direct debit or Centrepay)?

Who will pay the bill and how it will be paid? We agree

Water

Whose name will be on the account?

How will each person will pay their share (eg. direct debit or Centrepay)?

Who will pay the bill and how it will be paid? We agree

Internet connection

Whose name will be on the account?

How will each person will pay their share (eg. direct debit or Centrepay)?

Who will pay the bill and how it will be paid? We agree

CLEANING

Kitchen: Dishes, benches, stove top, oven, fridge, microwave, cupboards, walls, tiling, floors, clean and empty rubbish bins. Who will clean and how often?

We agree

Laundry: Wipe down washing machine inside and out after use, clean up any spills, wipe down sink and all surfaces, walls and floor, tidy mops, buckets brooms etc. Keep soiled clothing tidy and in baskets/buckets. Who will clean and how often?

We agree

Bathroom: Scrub bath/shower/glass, mirrors, basin, toilet, walls and floor, empty bins, hang towels, replace toilet paper. Who will do these and how often?

We agree

Living/dining/hallways/outside areas: Tidy and dust, wipe down tables, chairs and all surfaces, vacuum and/or mop floors, sweep and/or mop outside areas. Who will do this and how often?

We agree

GARBAGE

Bin night:

Who puts the bins out and brings them back in again? We agree

SHOPPING AND COOKING

We agree

Signed

Name:

Name:

Date:

The Clean Sheet: handy house cleaning hints

This is probably over-the top for every day – but you really need to do all this for a house inspection!

The bold items are suggestions that:

- Are safer for the environment than chemical products
- Can be used in many different ways
- Best of all, they are cheaper than other expensive products

Make sure you have the equipment and products before you begin and always use rubber gloves.

Equipment

- Broom
- Mop and bucket
- Dustpan and broom
- Vacuum cleaner
- Rubber gloves
- Feather duster (or broom) – for the hard to reach places
- Cleaning cloths/sponges eg. Chux or **old t-shirt**
- Scourers – plastic or metal for tougher stains
- **Old newspapers** – scrunched up for drying and polishing glass
- Strong garbage bags
- Toilet brush
- Door mats

Products

- Dishwashing detergent
- Windex or **white vinegar/methylated spirits** to clean glass
- Ajax or **bicarb soda** for toilet, bath and sink
- Pine-o-clean or **eucalyptus oil** to disinfect
- Sugar soap – great all purpose cleaner for walls and floors

These products are all available at supermarkets

Always read the safety directions before you use these

General cleaning

Before you start cleaning, have a good look at the whole house. Decide what needs to be cleaned and who's going to do what.

Get your cleaning products and equipment ready.

Put on your favourite music and go...

Tidy up

- Clear away any personal belongings into bedrooms and tidy up each room.
- Make sure the floors are clear of objects – put dining chairs on tables
- This will make the job of cleaning faster and much more efficient.

Start from the top – don't mess up what you've just cleaned

- Dust any cobwebs from the ceiling before you vacuum
- Wipe the bench tops before you sweep or mop the floor
- Clean the shower screen from the top before you rinse
- Use a feather duster, broom or an old t shirt to dust high door frames, ceilings, woodwork and light shades
- Go on to the lower objects like bookcases, TV, heater and window ledges
- Then onto the lowest dusting, the skirting boards

Walls, woodwork and doors

- Use a damp, soapy sponge or cloth to wipe off smudges and dirty finger marks from walls and doors, light switches and power points
- If the stains are greasy or stubborn, use a dab of eucalyptus oil on a clean cloth, or sugar soap, diluted in a bucket of water – see directions

Vacuuming

- Check if the vacuum bag needs to be replaced – it won't work if it's full
- Remove all rubbish from the floor – the vacuum is for dust and grit only
- Don't attempt to vacuum up any objects – they will clog the machine
- Use the big vacuum foot for large floor areas
- Use the smaller vacuum tools for hard to get at spots
- Make sure you vacuum under the sofas etc. By moving the furniture first
- Replace the vacuum bag if it's full, by the time you've finished

Windows, glass, tiles and chrome

- Windex, vinegar, eucalyptus oil or methylated spirits are great cleaners
- Apply the windex or vinegar straight onto a clean cloth or sponge
- Apply methylated spirits onto scrunched up newspaper
- You will not need to rinse
- Use eucalyptus oil on a clean cloth for chrome

Kitchen, bathroom, laundry, rubbish bins, outdoor areas

Kitchen

- Put away any clean dishes before you start to wash dirty ones
- Wash dishes daily in hot soapy water and rinse – don't leave dishes overnight
- Clean down all surfaces – bench tops, cupboard doors, tiles, walls, fridge and stove, with soapy water using plastic/metal scourer and sponge, as needed
- Rinse off with clean water, rinse out sponge and leave in dish rack to dry
- Sweep kitchen floor daily
- Mop daily if necessary
- Empty kitchen tidy daily and wash out once a week
- Remove any stale or out-of-date food from the fridge
- Once a week, do full clean out of fridge with sponge and soapy water and rinse
- Once a week, clean oven, grill and stove with scourers, soapy water and rinse
- Once a week, give the floor a good mop with vinegar or sugar soap
- Once a week, wash out the kitchen tidy in soapy water or eucalyptus oil
- Use a dab of eucalyptus oil on a clean cloth to clean and disinfect benches
- Eucalyptus can be used for stubborn stains on all surfaces and smells great
- Wipe out cupboards with a damp cloth or eucalyptus oil, monthly

Bathroom

- Make sure the bathroom is cleaned weekly, for health reasons
- Vinegar, bicarb soda and eucalyptus are natural cleaners and disinfectants
- There are many different disinfectants and toilet cleaners in the supermarket
- Each week, thoroughly scrub the toilet, bath/shower, wash basin, tiles and floor
- Use vinegar, bicarb, ajax or windex to clean bath/shower screen and tiles with a plastic scourer and wipe dry with a clean cloth
- Use ajax or bicarb to scrub the toilet bowl with the toilet brush
- Use the ajax or bicarb to clean cistern and wash basin with a scourer and rinse
- Don't forget the toilet seat – clean the top and bottom and the lid, as above
- Rinse with clean water and dry off with a cloth
- Mop the floor using some vinegar or sugar soap diluted in a bucket of water

Laundry

- Make sure the lint filter in the washing machine is cleaned after each wash
- Don't leave damp or wet clothes in the machine, laundry sink or on the floor
- After washing, hang out clothes on the line as soon as possible
- Wipe streaks and spilt detergent off the machine, especially around the bowl
- Once a week, wipe out the laundry sink with soapy water, scourer and rinse
- Once a week sweep and mop the floor as with the bathroom
- Clean down walls and cupboards as needed

Rubbish bins

- Use the right bins for recycling paper, glass and metal and general rubbish
- Put bins out each week
- Don't overfill bins – the garbos won't take them
- Bring bins in the day they are emptied
- Hose out as needed

Outdoor balconies/patios/pathways/shared areas

- Sweep outdoor areas each week
- Put door mats at each entrance and shake out or sweep weekly
- Keep all outdoor areas free of rubbish, broken or unused furniture
- Remove clothes from shared clotheslines as soon as they are dry

First Sharing Agreement follow-up Meeting

Generally two to four weeks after the First Co-tenants' Meeting

1. Welcome tenants.
2. Discuss how the first agreement is working.
3. Work through any issues or concerns.
4. Write any changes that the Co-tenants feel are necessary onto the **First Sharing Agreement**.
5. Hand out the **Second Co-tenants' Meeting Questions**.
Discuss each question and why it is important to deal with.
Ask each Co-tenant to complete the questions on their own first, then talk about them with each other before the next meeting.
6. Set the date for the **Second Co-Tenants' Meeting**.

Second Co-tenants' Meeting

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Second Co-tenants' Meeting Questions

Date:

A copy to be completed by each co-tenant before the Second Co-tenants' Meeting

Name:

Person completing the questions

Address:

Worker:

Worker contact:

HAVE YOU PUT YOUR NAME ON THE ELECTRICITY BILL YET? IF NOT, YOU MUST DO SO NOW.

The Second Co-tenants meeting is about your Interpersonal Skills – that is, how you talk to each other, get on together and deal with any issues or concerns.

Like your First Co-tenants' meeting, it's about making your own agreements.

As with your first meeting, we will record your decisions and meet with you in a few weeks to see how you're going with your agreements. Remember that you are both free to change your decisions at any time.

Use these questions as a guide only, to help you think about what is important for you and how you'd like to be treated by your co-tenant. **Add any other issues that you think are important.**

1. RESPECT

It is important that each person is treated equally, without discrimination, no matter what their race, sexuality or gender may be.

Whether you become friends with your Co-tenant or not, in order to share successfully, you need to treat each other with respect.

What does the idea of respect mean to you? How do you want to be treated?

What agreements do you want to make with your co-tenant about treating each other with respect?

2. VISITORS

You are entitled to have visitors and, like you, they must treat you, your co-tenant and the property with respect. When they are on the property, you are responsible for their behavior.

One rule that is important to have is that **tenants must check with each other before inviting people to visit or stay.**

What other rules do you think there should be about visitors?

For example:

Can visitors to stay overnight? If yes, how many nights on a row?

Where can they sleep? Should they be allowed to sleep in the common areas?

Will visitors contribute to food and general household expenses?

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.....

What will you do if your visitors and co-tenants don't get along?

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.....

PRIVACY

We all need privacy, but it means different things to different people.

Is your room a private space? (That is, do people need to ask permission to go into it.)

.....

.....

Does privacy mean keeping your personal life and details to yourself?

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.....

.....

How would you give your co-tenant privacy when their friends visit?

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3. PROBLEM SOLVING

Sharing with other people can be difficult and everyone has problems sometimes.

Think about how you would deal with difficulties you may have with your co-tenant.

What are some things that you might get upset or angry about?

What sort of things do you do to cope with being upset or angry? How do you generally behave when you're upset or angry?

What agreements would you like to make with your co-tenant about sorting out problems as they arise and before they may get out of hand?

The Second Co-tenants' Meeting

Generally between two and four weeks after follow-up meeting

1. Open the meeting.

Explain:

Each of you will have completed or at least thought about the questions for this meeting.

By this time you have had a chance to experience sharing together.

This meeting is so that you can talk about issues such as privacy, mutual respect and personal habits, to help prevent misunderstandings and to encourage each person to express their opinions and needs.

We will finish by making a Second Sharing Agreement about how you will deal with getting on together.

2. **Using a flipchart/whiteboard**, put up each person's answers to the questions up to the questions about problem-solving. Encourage the co-tenants to discuss and work through any differences. Write up what they agree.
3. When the discussion comes to problem-solving, Hand out **Use problem-solving 'I' statements**. Work through using problem-solving "I" statements with the co-tenants, and get them to practise creating one about a real issue.

The purpose of a problem-solving 'I' statement is to say what you think and feel about what the other person has done in a way that makes it more likely that the other person will both listen and hear. Because you are only going to talk about facts and are not going to call the names or attack them, the person will be more likely to hear what you have to say and respond positively.

How to do confronting 'I' statements

Ensure that the **When** is followed by a neutral and objective description of the event or the other person's behavior, and does not use any emotive words – that is, words which imply judgement or evaluation or which may provoke a defensive response or possibility of denial by the other person. It must simply be a statement of fact.

The **I feel** part must use a word or a few words that describe exactly your feeling response. It can often take time to get this labelled correctly – just keep trying for feeling words until you find what sits right. Often we'll feel angry, or frustrated or overwhelmed or pressured or put down or hurt. Sometimes we need to describe how we feel by describing how we want to act: eg. "I feel like withdrawing". The important qualities are that you own the feeling, and that there is no blaming or shaming of the other person.

Because must be followed by a clear statement of why you feel that way – the actual effect on you. Say exactly what it costs you in time, effort, energy, costs, loss, etc. Sometimes, this is a good place to finish. Here, having no expectation is important. It is OK to state what you feel, but it is often not a good idea to impose your solution. If you leave it up to the other person, you allow them to become their best self – to use their initiative to assist you.

And what I'd prefer is usually necessary – it makes a clear statement about what the other person can do to resolve the issue with you. It is important, firstly, to ensure that it is stated as a behavior or action; secondly, that it is suggested as an option only, and it is clear that you are open to hear their alternative suggestions; and thirdly, that you add the so that part of the statement to let them know the benefit to them of choosing to change their behavior.

A clean “I” statement:

When you start talking before I finish speaking, I feel frustrated, because I can't present the full picture to you. I'd prefer it if you didn't speak before I have finished my sentences so that you can understand my position fully.

An unclear “I” statement:

When you keep interrupting me I feel annoyed at your rudeness and I want you to stop it so I can finish what I want to say.

The benefits of ‘I’ statements

- You model openness and honesty. People are likely to find it safe to be open and honest with you.
- The responsibility for behavior is left with the other person. ‘I’ statements allow the other person to be responsible for themselves and their actions because ‘I’ statements do not demand that the other person does what you tell them.
- You are more likely to get your needs met, and the other person’s self-esteem stays higher, and so the relationship is more likely to be maintained positively.
- The other person learns the effects of their behavior on others and has a chance to initiate new behavior.
- You get more closely in touch with your own feelings and needs, which helps you take care of yourself more effectively.
- You can manage your feelings by finding and clearly expressing them rather losing control of so that you say something you can't take back. This allows you to ‘vent’, but putting down or attacking the other person.

Four conditions needed to bring about change

What you do and say must:

- produce a willingness to change
- not lower the other’s self-esteem
- not harm the relationship, and
- allow the other person to use the knowledge, skills and initiative they have to bring about the change themselves.

Be hard on the issue and soft on the person, separating the person from the behavior.

4. **Go back to the flipchart/whiteboard** after practising talking about issues, and encourage them to come up with the agreement about how they will raise and resolve problems with each other.
5. The co-tenants fill out the **Second Sharing Agreement** and sign.
6. Set a date for the **Second Sharing Agreement Follow-up Meeting**.

When you want to raise a problem with someone, use problem-solving ‘I’ statements

When you have a problem with what somebody has done, it’s easy to lose your temper and say things that might even make it worse. Problem-solving ‘I’ statements help you say what you need to say in difficult discussions – they help you to think and get yourself under control first.

1. Think

What’s the real problem? Has anything I’ve done or said contributed to it? How do I feel about it? What do I want done or changed?

2. Describe the situation

... from your point of view. Talk about facts and what the other person has DONE – not your how you feel or what you think about the person.

3. Ask for change

Tell them what you want them to do – be specific about actions.

4. Listen to the response

There is a way to say this that will keep you on track.

The problem-solving ‘I’ Statement Formula

‘When you ...	Describe what the other person has done. (No name-calling). Eg. <i>“When you asked your friend over for dinner without letting me know beforehand”.</i>
I feel ...	Say your feelings/emotions, NOT what’s wrong with the other person Eg. <i>“I felt annoyed”.</i>
because ...	Explain why you feel the way you do. Eg. <i>“Because it was my turn to cook so I had to make extra with food meant for the next night.”</i>
I would prefer it if from now on ...	Tell the person exactly what you want them to do FROM NOW ON. Often, this part just says something like “I want to work out what we can do from now on so this doesn’t happen again.” Eg. <i>“I’d prefer it if from now on, you let me know if somebody’s coming for a meal”</i>
so that ... ’	Describe why it’s a good idea for the other person to agree to do things differently. <i>“So that we can make sure there is enough for everyone.”</i>

Think of the likely difference in response to these two statements.

‘You’ message

You are such a slob – and you’re a liar! You said you were going to do the washing up this week and you haven’t done it for 4 days. I’m having to do your job! I can’t believe how slack you are!

‘I’ message

When you agreed to do the washing up this week but haven’t done it for the past 4 days, I feel angry because the kitchen is dirty and I had to wash up so I could prepare a meal, which doesn’t seem fair. I feel disappointed because it seems I can’t trust you to do what you say. I would prefer it if from now on you do what you agree to so that the chores are shared fairly and we keep our relationship positive.

Think of a problem you want to discuss and develop a problem-solving ‘I’ message about it.

When you.....

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I feel.....

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because.....

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I would prefer it if.....

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so that.....

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Second Sharing Agreement

Date:

Mutual respect and problem-solving

Name:

AND

Name:

Address:

Worker:

Worker contact:

RESPECT

Treat each other with respect means that we agree to

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

VISITORS

We will check that it is OK with our co-tenant before having a visitor(s).

Overnight stays. We agree to

Where visitors can sleep. We agree

For food and expenses, we agree that visitors will

If our visitors don't get along with our co-tenant, we agree that we will

PRIVACY

We agree to respect each other's privacy by

PROBLEM SOLVING

We agree to raise any problems and difficulties with each other in the following ways.

Signed

Signed:

Signed:

Date:

Date:

Next Meeting Date:

Second Sharing Agreement Follow-up Meeting

Generally between two and four weeks after the **Second Co-tenants' Meeting**

1. Welcome the co-tenants.
2. Discuss how the agreement is working.
3. Work through any issues or concerns.
4. Make any changes the Co-tenants agree are necessary. Make a copy of any changes to the agreement.
5. Hand out the **Third Co-tenants' Meeting Questions**.
6. Discuss each question and why it is important to deal with.
7. Ask each Co-tenant to complete the questions on their own first before talking about them with each other before the next meeting.
8. Set a date for the **Third Co-tenants' Meeting**.

Third Co-tenants' Meeting

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Third Co-tenants' Meeting Questions

Date:

A copy to be completed by each co-tenant before the Third Co-tenants' Meeting

Name:

Person completing the questions

Address:

Worker:

Worker contact:

The Third Co-tenants meeting is about your personal safety and safety where you live.

Like your other Co-tenants' meetings, it's about you making your own agreements.

Remember that you are both free to negotiate to change your decisions at any time.

Before we have the next meeting and come up with an agreement about these issues, use these questions as a guide to help you think about what is important for you in terms of safety.

SAFETY

What does safety mean to you?

For example, some people feel safe when they're home alone, leave the windows open and are happy to answer the door to people who knock or ring. Others don't feel so relaxed and want to make sure that everything is locked. They won't open the door unless they're expecting visitors.

What about keeping your **finances** and your **identity** safe? Do you know how to protect these?

What about keeping your **tenancy** safe: how can you make sure it's not at risk?

Think about these scenarios.

ANSWERING YOUR DOOR

Scenario 1

You are home alone when someone knocks on your door/rings your security buzzer.

- They say they've been sent by the real estate agency to inspect the property/or fix the hot water system/or check the fire alarm.
- You haven't been told about any inspections or repairs and you tell them so.
- The person insists they need to get into your flat and get impatient with you.

What do you do? Would you answer the door? Would you let them in?

Scenario 2

A salesperson knocks or rings,

- They want to talk to you about your electricity or mobile plan.
- They ask to see your bills and claim that you're probably paying too much.
- They say their company can give you a better deal if you sign up with them.

Would you let them in to talk to you? How would you deal with this?

MONEY

Scenario 3

Your co-tenant asks if they can borrow some money from you. They've borrowed money before but haven't paid you back.

You tell them that you don't have any money on you.

They ask if they can borrow your ATM card.

How comfortable would you feel saying no? How could you deal with this?

What agreements do you want to make with your co-tenant about borrowing money?

Scenario 4

You have just lost your job and the electricity bill is due to be paid. You don't have enough money to cover your share of the bill.

What would you do?

How could this affect you and your co-tenant?

Handwriting practice area with four sets of horizontal dashed lines.

BREAKS

We all need a break or a holiday, whether we're working, studying or just trying to manage life.

You are still responsible for paying your rent and bills if you go away.

What do you need to do to keep your tenancy secure while you're away? What arrangements will you make to pay your share of rent?

Handwriting practice area with two sets of horizontal dashed lines.

What will you do about paying your share of any bills while you're away?

Handwriting practice area with two sets of horizontal dashed lines.

What will you do about your mail while you're away?

Handwriting practice area with two sets of horizontal dashed lines.

How will you look after your room and belongings while you're away?

Handwriting practice area with two sets of horizontal dashed lines.

What agreements do you need to make with your co-tenant about these arrangements?

LETTING PEOPLE KNOW WHEN YOU'RE AWAY

For your own safety, it's very important to let any family, friends, your co-tenant and caseworker know:

- Where you are going
- Who you're going with and/or who you're planning to visit
- How long you're planning to go for
- Who to contact in case of emergency
- Any changes you might make to these plans

How will you do this? Who will you tell?

Third Co-tenants' Meeting Questions

Possible issues/responses to some of the scenarios

ANSWERING YOUR DOOR

Scenario 1

You are home alone when someone knocks on your door/rings your security buzzer.

- They say they've been sent by the real estate agency to inspect the property/or fix the hot water system/or check the fire alarm.
- You haven't been told about any inspections or repairs and you tell them so.
- The person insists they need to get into your flat and get impatient with you.

What do you do? Would you answer the door? Would you let them in?

Even if the person says they are from the agent or landlord, if the you don't know about any arrangements it's important that you do not let anyone into the house without notice. You could agree that you will always call the agent if this situation occurs, and only let the person in if the agent/landlord confirms that the caller is legitimate.

Scenario 2

A salesperson knocks or rings,

- They want to talk to you about your electricity or mobile plan.
- They ask to see your bills and claim that you're probably paying too much.
- They say their company can give you a better deal if you sign up with them.

Would you let them in to talk to you? How would you deal with this?

It is probably best to agree that if it sounds like it might be a good deal, they can ask the person to make an appointment when the worker will be there.

It is a good opportunity to discuss salespeople and consumer awareness generally.

MONEY

Scenario 3

Your co-tenant asks if they can borrow some money from you. They've borrowed money before but haven't paid you back.

You tell them that you don't have any money on you.

They ask if they can borrow your ATM card.

How comfortable would you feel saying no? How could you deal with this?

What agreements do you want to make with your co-tenant about borrowing money?

Saying no is one of the hardest things for most people – so having an agreement about the sorts of things you don't want to say yes to makes life easier.

However, one way that most people cope when times are tough is to have friends and family they can occasionally borrow from – and who they will do the same for if the other needs it.

BUT – it's probably important to set limits on the amount, and most especially, to agree that you can't borrow again until you've paid the first one.

Scenario 4

You have just lost your job and the electricity bill is due to be paid. You don't have enough money to cover your share of the bill.

What would you do?

Let your co-tenant know immediately.

Contact your electricity supplier and see if you can arrange a re-payment schedule.

If you are unable to make arrangements with your supplier, contact a local community agency that distributes EAPA vouchers to make an appointment. EAPA is a NSW Government Scheme designed to help people who are having trouble paying their home electricity and/or gas bill because of a crisis or emergency situation. The Scheme is aimed at helping people in these situations to stay connected.

The \$50 EAPA vouchers are distributed to electricity and gas customers by a range of community welfare organisations. (See the Energy and Water Ombudsman (EWON) website www.ewon.com.au)

The Third Co-tenants' Meeting

Generally between two and four weeks after the Second Sharing Agreement Follow-up meeting

1. **Open the meeting.**

Explain:

Each of you will have completed or at least thought about the questions and scenarios for this meeting.

This meeting is so that you can talk about some of the more difficult issues about friends and acquaintances, money, and mutual responsibilities if things go wrong or people are away.

2. Ask each co-tenant to **go through their answers to the questions** to each question/scenario one at a time.

Encourage the co-tenants to discuss and work through any differences.

3. Once every issue has been discussed, **use the flipchart/whiteboard** and encourage them to come up with an agreement about how they will deal with each of the issues.

4. The co-tenants complete the **Third Sharing Agreement** and sign it.

5. Set the date for the **Follow-up Meeting**.

Third Sharing Agreement

Date:

Safety and Security

Name:

AND

Name:

Address:

Worker:

Worker contact:

SAFETY

Answering the door

If someone comes to the door saying they have a legitimate reason to come in but we don't know them, we agree that we will

If a door-to-door salesperson comes to the door, we agree that we will

Money

What agreements do you want to make with your co-tenant about borrowing?

What arrangements do you want to make if one of you can't pay their share of the bills?

Breaks

What arrangements do you agree to make to pay your share of rent if you are away?

What will each of you do about paying your share of any bills while you're away?

What will each of you do about your mail while you're away?

How will you look after a co-tenants' room and belongings while they are away?

If you are going on a break, how will each of you let your family, friends, your co-tenant and caseworker know:

- Where you are going
- Who you're going with and/or who you're planning to visit
- How long you're planning to go for
- Who to contact in case of emergency
- Any changes you might make to these plans

We agree that we will

Signed

Signed:

Signed:

Date:

Date:

Third Sharing Agreement Follow-up Meeting

Generally two to three months after the Third Co-tenants' Meeting

1. **Open the meeting.**
2. Discuss how the agreement is working.
3. Deal with any issues or concerns.
4. Make any changes the co-tenants agree are necessary. Write any changes the Co-tenants agree to on **Third Sharing Agreement**.
5. Hand out the **Fourth Co-tenants' Meeting questions**.

Explain:

Sometimes the hardest part about sharing isn't the person you're sharing with, but their friends and acquaintances. It's important that you agree on what's ok and what's not ok. Look at and think about each of these situations by yourself first before you talk about them with each other.

6. Set the date for the **Fourth Co-tenants' Meeting**.

Fourth Co-tenants' Meeting

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Fourth Co-tenants' Meeting Questions

Date:

To be completed separately by each co-tenant before the Third Co-tenants' Meeting

This meeting is about managing risks together about who you allow into your home and under what circumstances.

How will you ensure that you both take responsibility to keep your home safe, and that your friends and visitors treat both of you and your home with respect?

What agreements do you want to make about inviting strangers or people you don't know well, into your home?

Under what circumstances would you allow strangers to stay overnight, if at all? eg. is it ok if it's just one of you at home, or as long as there's your co-tenant, or someone else home?

What agreement do you want to make about locking your home/giving out keys to friends and family?

Do you want to make a safety plan for break-ins/emergencies?

How will you handle running a party?

Who do you both think would be ok to invite and what's the maximum number of people you can manage?

What safety plan do you have in place eg. register the party with the police; ask friends to be the designated ones to provide security/screening?

Think about these scenarios, what risks they bring up, how would you handle them and what agreements do you want to make.

Personal Safety

FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES

Scenario 1

You bring home some people you've just met. They seem really great. Your co-tenant isn't home. After a while, you notice that one of the people you've brought home has wandered into your co-tenants' room and is going through their belongings and paperwork.

You ask them to stop. Instead of stopping, they get angry and start abusing you.

You become frightened and ask them all to leave but they won't.

How would you handle this? What could you do? Who could you call?

Scenario 2

You wake up and go to the kitchen to make breakfast. You find a stranger asleep on your sofa.

You wake your co-tenant and ask them what's going on. They tell you it's a guy they met at the pub who needed somewhere to crash.

How would you feel about this? What would you say to your co-tenant?

What agreements do you want to make about this?

Scenario 3

You come home to find that no one is at home but some of the windows in the house have been left open and the front door isn't deadlocked. You are afraid that someone has broken in.

What would you do?

Scenario 4

Your co-tenant tells you they've given their best friend a spare key to let themselves into the house when they want to visit.

The friend is often at home when you arrive home from work/school.

They often eat at your home, use the shower and stay overnight.

Your neighbours are starting to complain about a lot of noise during the day.

The friend tells your co-tenant that they've accidentally broken the shower screen.

You discover that some money is missing from your room.

What could you say to your co-tenant?

How does this person's actions affect your lease?

What agreements do you want to make with your co-tenant about these kinds of issues?

Four horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Scenario 5

You and your co-tenant organise a party. You agree on how many people you both want to invite and who they are.

At the party, some people you don't know turn up. They start fights with your friends.

The party gets very loud, and out of your control.

The next day, your neighbours complain to the service or landlord that you have your lease with.

What could you do to prevent this happening?

Four horizontal dotted lines for writing.

How would you deal with this?

Four horizontal dotted lines for writing.

The Fourth Co-tenants' Meeting

Generally between two and four weeks after the Third Sharing Agreement Follow-up meeting

1. **Open the meeting.**

Explain:

Each of you will have completed or at least thought about the questions and scenarios for this meeting.

This meeting is so that you can talk about some of the more difficult issues about friends and acquaintances.

2. **Ask each co-tenant to go through their answers** to the questions to each question/scenario one at a time.

Encourage the co-tenants to discuss and work through any differences.

3. Once every issue has been discussed, **use the flipchart/whiteboard** and encourage them to come up with an agreement about how they will deal with each of the issues.

6. The co-tenants complete the **Fourth Sharing Agreement** and sign it.

7. Set the date for the **Follow-up Meeting**.

Signed

Signed:

Signed:

Date:

Date:

