

Moving to Sheffield Uni during a Pandemic

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Moving away from home to University is usually considered a big deal, a scary but exciting turning point. This year that fear-factor felt doubled.

Regardless of the pandemic, I was already taking a big risk by moving to Sheffield as pre-September I had never even visited before, no open days or weekend trips to put me at ease. I had no idea what I was in for except that I was doing the degree I had dreamed of in a city known for its student life.

I had the train tickets and the appointment with the university department, Covid struck early and stripped that experience from me too. Foolishly, I had thought that would be Covid's only impact, little did I know that I would quickly be stopped from completing my exams and be thrust into halls with four other people I'd never met but was now limited to talking exclusively to. Thankfully my flatmates are lovely, but not everyone in my shoes has been as lucky and loneliness will definitely start to increase for many.

While not visiting Sheffield may have meant I was wandering blindly into something that will impact the next three years of my life, given the current pandemic situation we find ourselves in I actually think this has helped me. I never had that chance to build a preconception about life here so I don't know what I'm missing. If I can move here at a time when everything is closed and still love it then I can only imagine how great this city will be post-pandemic.

However, there is a big negative to this situation: it is so hard to meet people. I move here and am told I can go to events as long as I sit down, then a week later suddenly I have to be home by 10pm and a month after that there are just no events at all. Students understand that there is still a pandemic and that they have moved away from home not from the restrictions imposed nationwide but these inconsistent rules that everyone is struggling with do not help when I'm trying to make new friends.

During my first week in Sheffield, I managed to visit The Leadmill - a renowned hub of music and events. We danced (sat down at our table) until 3am and I had a chance to actually meet the faceless names I had seen on a screen for weeks in an environment that felt laid back and exactly what I was used to. Now, only a few short weeks later, and the only way to meet people outside of my flat is to go and sit in a park. While Sheffield is beautiful and renowned for its green space (my favourite fact being that there are four trees to every one person), it is very much November and our annual sunshine happened in the first two weeks of being here so shivering while wearing 20 jumpers isn't exactly the impression I want to give when meeting new people.

That being said, there are a lot of great cafes in Sheffield. Although this is no longer an opportunity to meet people, it makes bonding with my flatmates easier. Study brunch? Marmadukes. Study break? Tamper Coffee. Although I have noticed that none of the millions of bubble tea places are open before 1pm (even if they say they will be).

While moving here during a pandemic has been a much-anticipated roller coaster, I think I'm most disappointed that I've been here 6 weeks and still haven't bumped into Alex Turner.