

Survey of Member Charities 2018



Report on a survey of member charities conducted during October 2018

Prepared by: Brevity Marketing Limited

“Whenever I have needed you, you are there!”

“Your service has remained consistently high over the last 40 years.”

“You are there at the end of a telephone when I need answers to questions.”

“Very useful templates for policies.”

“The support and advice we have received has been outstanding.”





Data Source and Collection

This report has been compiled from a survey sent to The Almshouse Association member charities during October 2018. The survey was issued via email to all main member contacts with email addresses.

420 completed surveys were submitted on or before 19th October 2018.

- **First email issued 2nd October 2018** - Survey emailed out to all main contacts with email addresses
 - Successfully delivered to 1,314 email addresses, of which
 - 729 opened the email
 - 372 then clicked into the email
- **Second email issued 11th October** - Survey was re-emailed out to the same group thanking and asking those that had not completed to do so if possible and giving a **closing date of 19th October 2018**
 - Successfully delivered to 1,318 email addresses, of which
 - 657 opened the email
 - 156 then clicked into the email

Data key

The needs, requirements and opinions of almshouse charities can differ due to the number of properties managed. For this reason, and where appropriate, data is also split by size of almshouse as well as providing an overall result. For the purposes of this report, The Almshouse Association has categorised the size of almshouse charities as follows:

- **Small:** managing 1 – 20 almshouse properties (highlighted pink in charts)
- **Medium:** managing 21 – 50 almshouse properties (highlighted green in charts)
- **Large:** managing 50+ almshouse properties (highlighted red in charts)

The chart below indicates the percentage split of almshouse charities that took the survey in terms of their size.

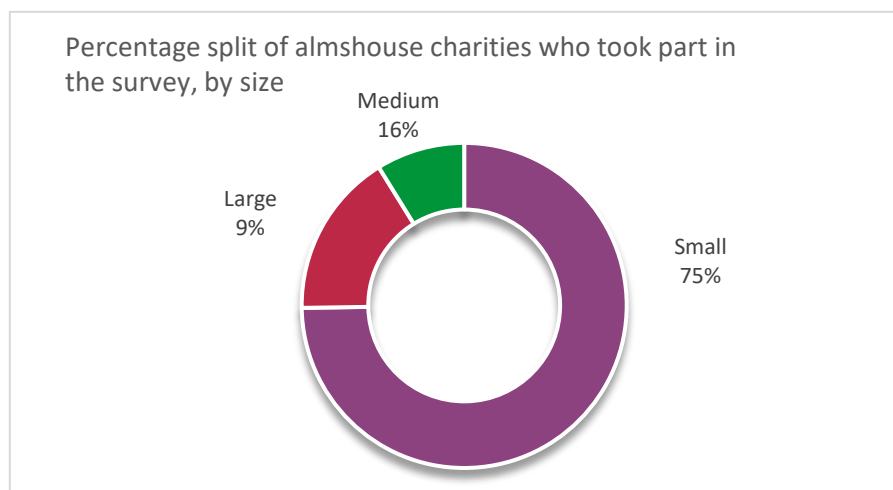




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Executive Summary

The Almshouse Association was established:

- To promote the establishment, continuation, efficiency and effectiveness of almshouse foundations.
- To promote the provision, improvement, upkeep and maintenance of almshouses, and associated services and facilities.

The Association promotes the welfare of aged, disabled and needy people through the provision and maintenance of almshouses by its members. Our aim is to offer a range of support services that are both efficient and provide value for money, and to represent our members to Government and other organisations.

Our goal is that almshouses will be recognised as the exemplary community housing model – to achieve this ambition we must be clear on our strategy to 2033.

This survey is intended to draw out the key opportunities and challenges facing our membership over the coming years in order that we can respond to the needs and be alert to threats, such that we can support our members in dealing with the issues and in some cases influence the decisions of Government and other bodies to reduce or mitigate the challenges.

We had a 33% response rate to our email survey, which is exceptional against the benchmark response rate in our sector. This does, however, mean that the opinions of 67% of our membership have not been received.

Looking at the responses from all sizes of charity it is clear that the greatest opportunities that members have in their sights are refurbishment of property, developing new and developing wider community engagement. Members' feedback is greatly encouraging as it is clear that many trustees are ambitious and proactive and there is a sense that with the right support and encouragement from all quarters, there could be a renaissance in new almshouses. We will work to encourage Government to support members' ambitions and give recognition to the value that almshouses add to the community, and encourage planners to support almshouses as a beneficiary of section 106 obligations.

The greatest concerns relate to the condition of the properties and frailty of residents. It is clear that we must respond positively and employ greater resources to help members to upgrade properties, whether that be grants, loans or helping with project management. Further results show that we need to support members in dealing with frail residents. Amongst the medium sized charities this was the greatest concern and responses suggested that the local services are now slower to step in and support when they are needed. This is likely to be an even greater issue for the future and we must play our part in seeking solutions.

It is encouraging to see that 89% of members (who responded) feel positive/ very positive about the almshouse movement. It is also affirming to find that 90% of members (who completed the survey)



are very satisfied/satisfied with the service we provide finding the personal support from our experts and guidance manuals to be of greatest value.

Overall the survey results are very positive. It shows a vibrant and vital community asset, driven by localism in its truest sense and in most cases, standing resilient and robust for many years to come. Many members are ambitious for the future and they feel confident about the movement. This said, the very real challenges of aging and frail residents, maintaining buildings that are often old and costly, growing awareness of mental health, potential issues of a rising pensionable age reducing the number of suitable trustees, ensuring the government recognise almshouses as 'affordable housing' and keeping trustees informed and enthused must be recognised and met head on.

This survey is invaluable in helping us focus our energies and resources to where they are most needed. It demonstrates a strong position that can be built on; we will drive to see these positive figures increase as we work with members to raise the profile of almshouses, gain influence at local and national levels and deliver a service second to none to our members.

Nick Phillips

CEO – The Almshouse Association



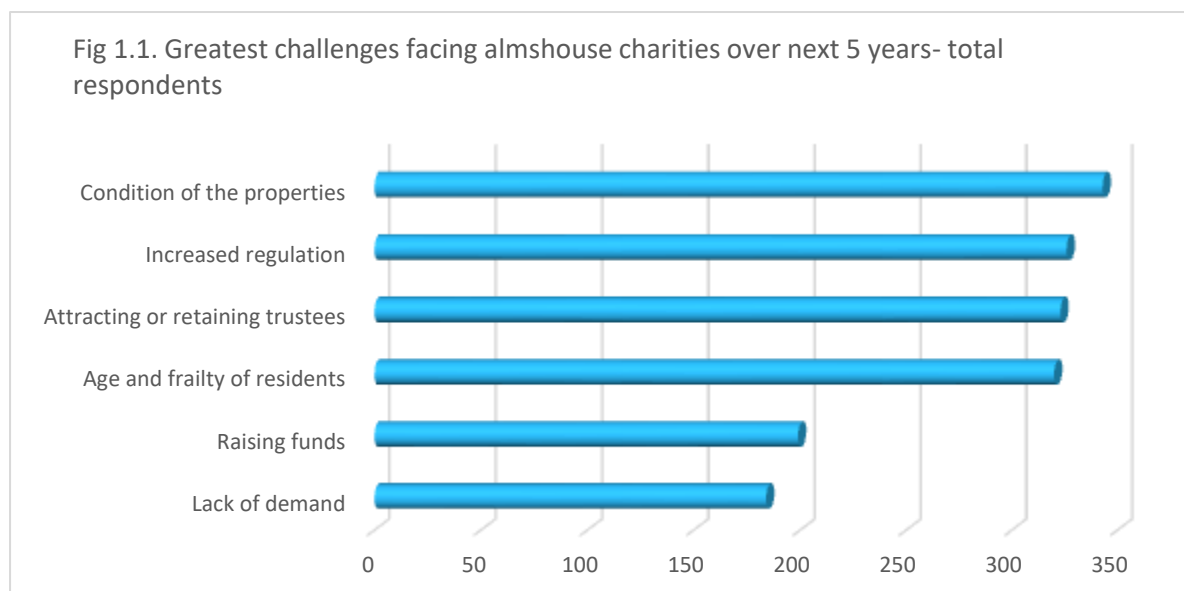
1. Greatest challenges for almshouse charities over the next five years

Respondents were provided six options and asked to categorise in order of importance – 1 being the greatest challenge, 2 being the second greatest challenge and so on. Members were advised to select their top 5 only.

- Conditions of the properties
- increase regulation
- attracting or retaining trustees
- age and frailty of residents
- raising funds
- lack of demand
- Other (asked to specify)

Overall results (see Fig 1.1) highlight that the key priority for almshouse charities is maintaining conditions of properties whilst lack of demand for almshouse properties is viewed as the least challenging.

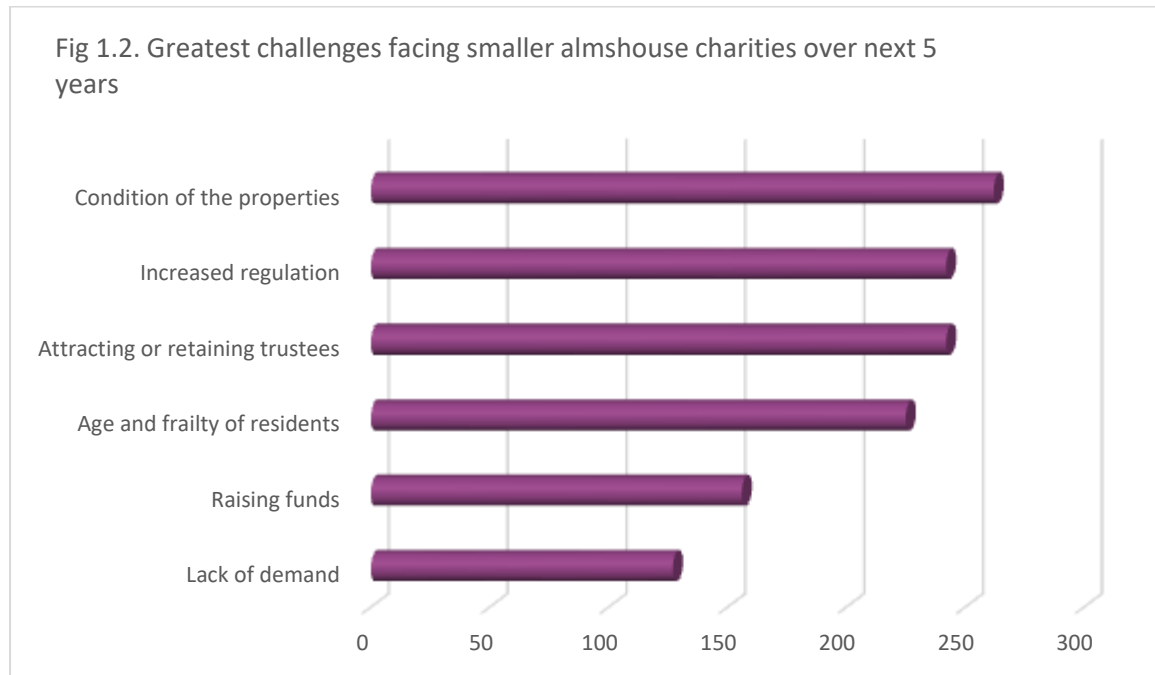
Other challenges highlighted in the open comments area included recruitment of staff, residents not meeting criteria and mental health. **All comments are available in report appendix.**





1.2 Greatest challenges facing smaller almshouse charities over the next five years

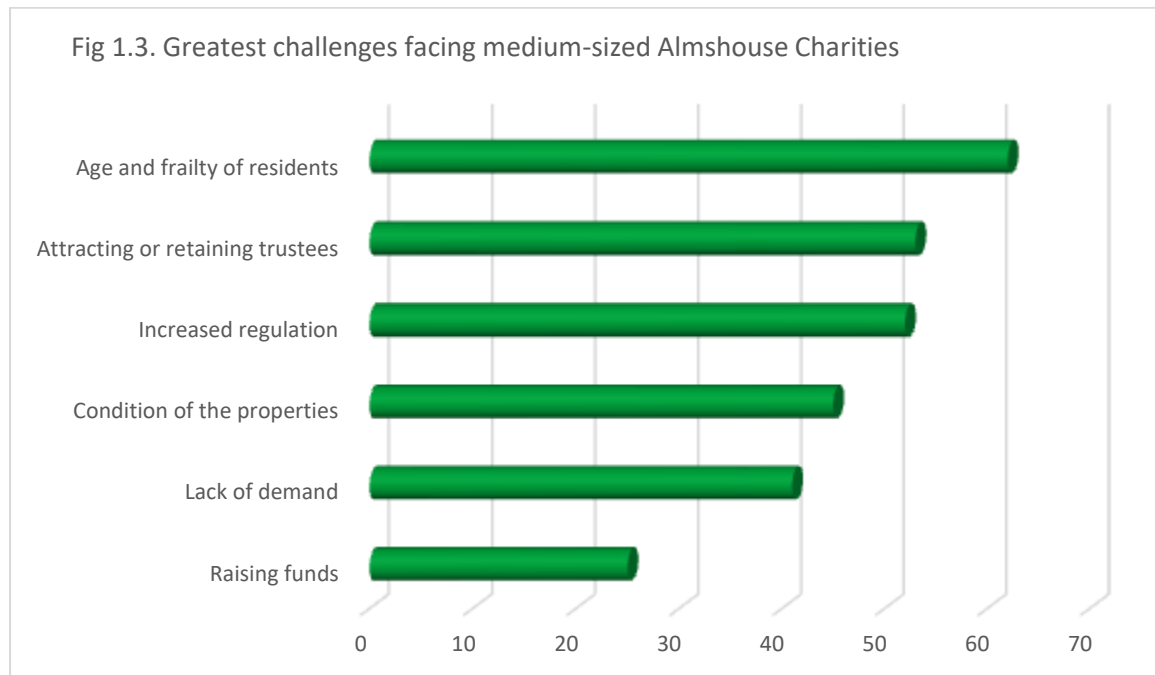
314 (75%) of the total respondents were classified as smaller almshouse charities. When managing 1-20 properties, the key challenge was also 'maintaining the condition of the properties'. The order of importance reflects the total result as shown in Fig 1.2.





1.3 Greatest challenges facing medium-sized almshouse charities over the next five years

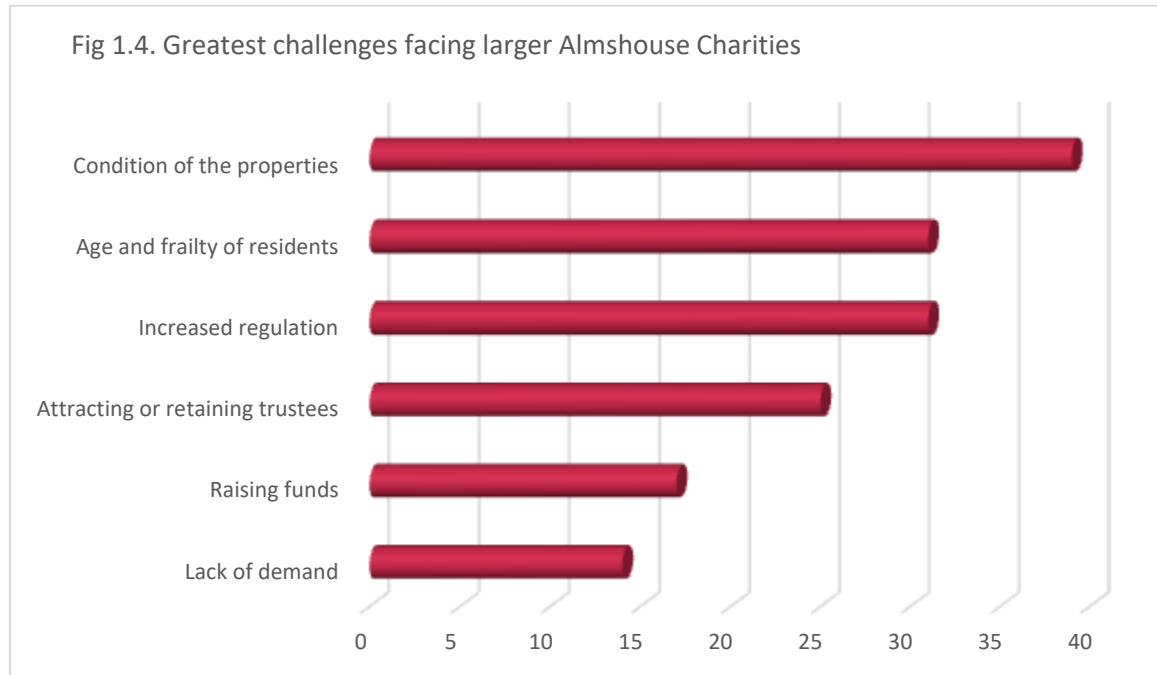
69 (16%) of the total respondents were classified as medium-sized almshouse charities. Managing 21-50 properties, the key challenge for this category is 'age and frailty of residents' with 'increased regulation' dropping to third position in Fig 1.3.





1.4 Greatest challenges facing large almshouse charities over the next five years

37 (9%) of the total respondents were classified as larger almshouse charities. Managing 50+ properties, the key challenge for this category is ‘maintaining condition of the properties’ with ‘increased regulation’ dropping to third position in Fig 1.4.





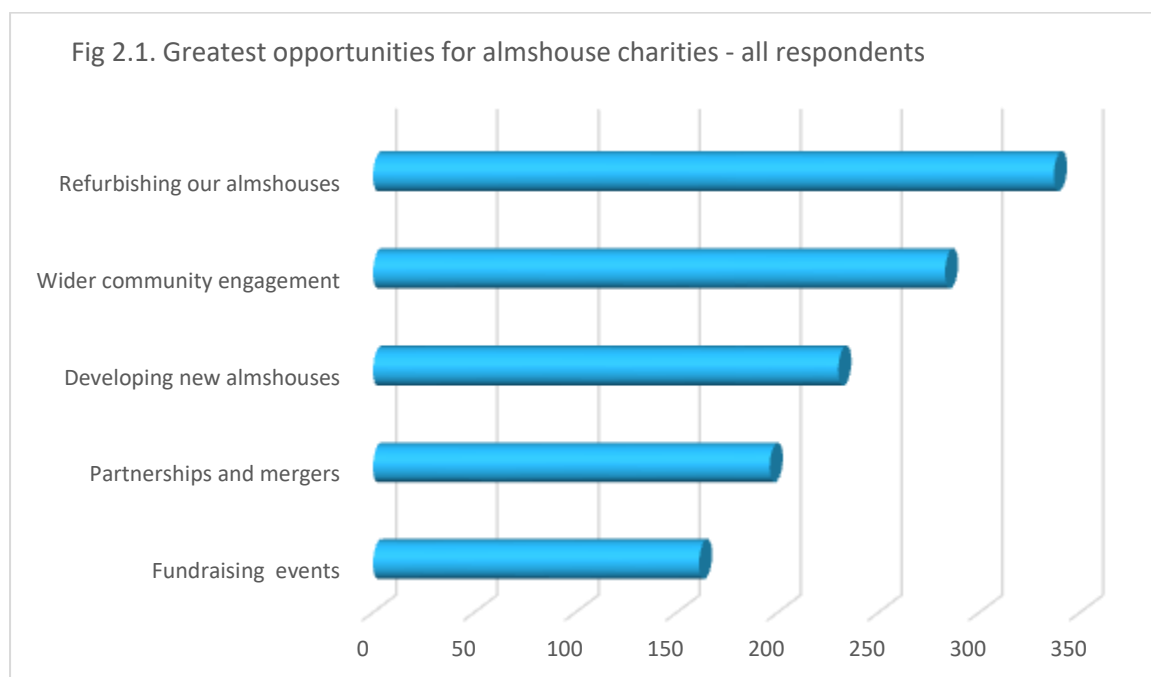
2. Greatest opportunities that almshouse charities would like to explore /pursue over the next five years

Respondents were provided five options to categorise in order of importance:

- Refurbishing our almshouses
- Wider community engagement
- Developing new almshouses
- Partnerships and mergers
- Fundraising events

Overall results (see Fig 2.1) highlight almshouse charities see the refurbishing of almshouse properties as the greatest opportunity.

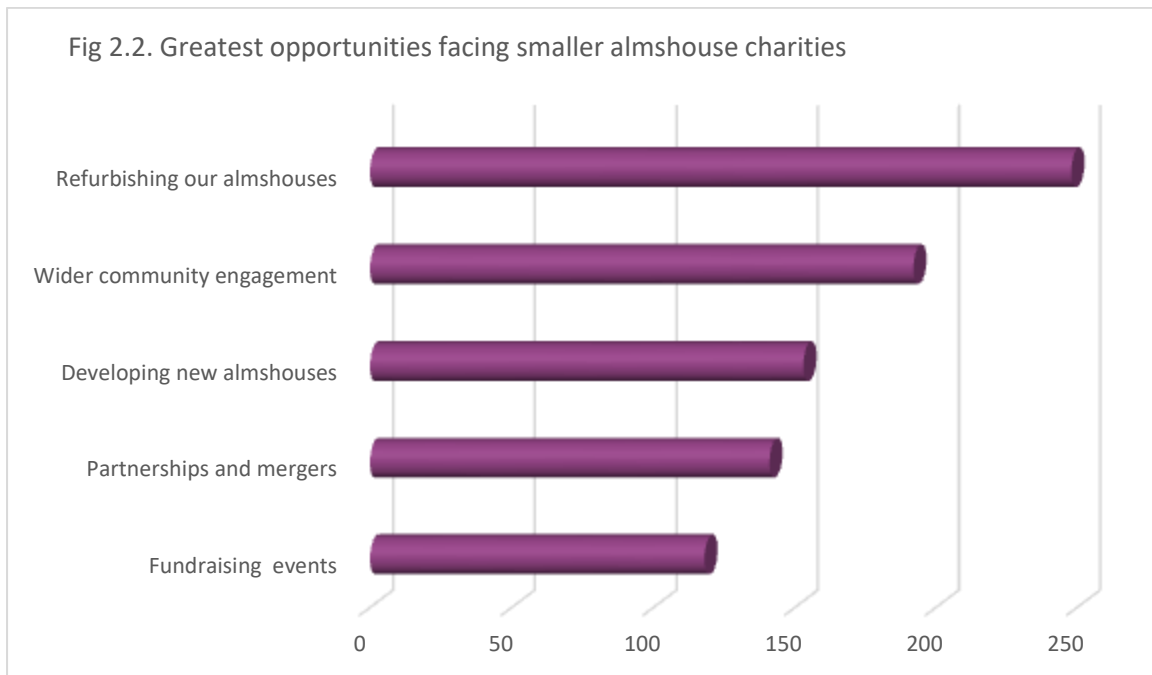
Other opportunities highlighted in the open comments area include increased communal activities for residents, better engagement with social services and greater networking/collaboration with other almshouse charities. **All comments are available in report appendix.**





2.2 Greatest opportunities smaller almshouse charities would like to explore/pursue over the next five years

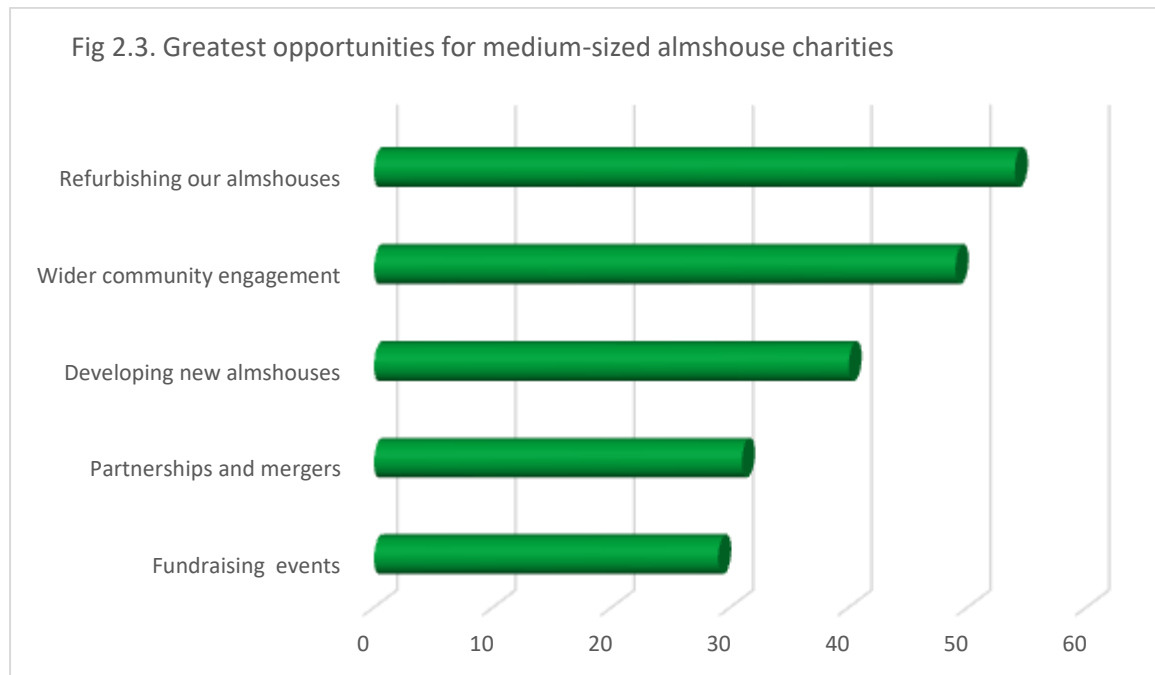
For smaller almshouse charities, refurbishing of almshouses is seen as the great opportunity – see Fig 2.2.





2.3 Greatest opportunities medium-sized Almshouse Charities would like to explore/pursue over the next five years

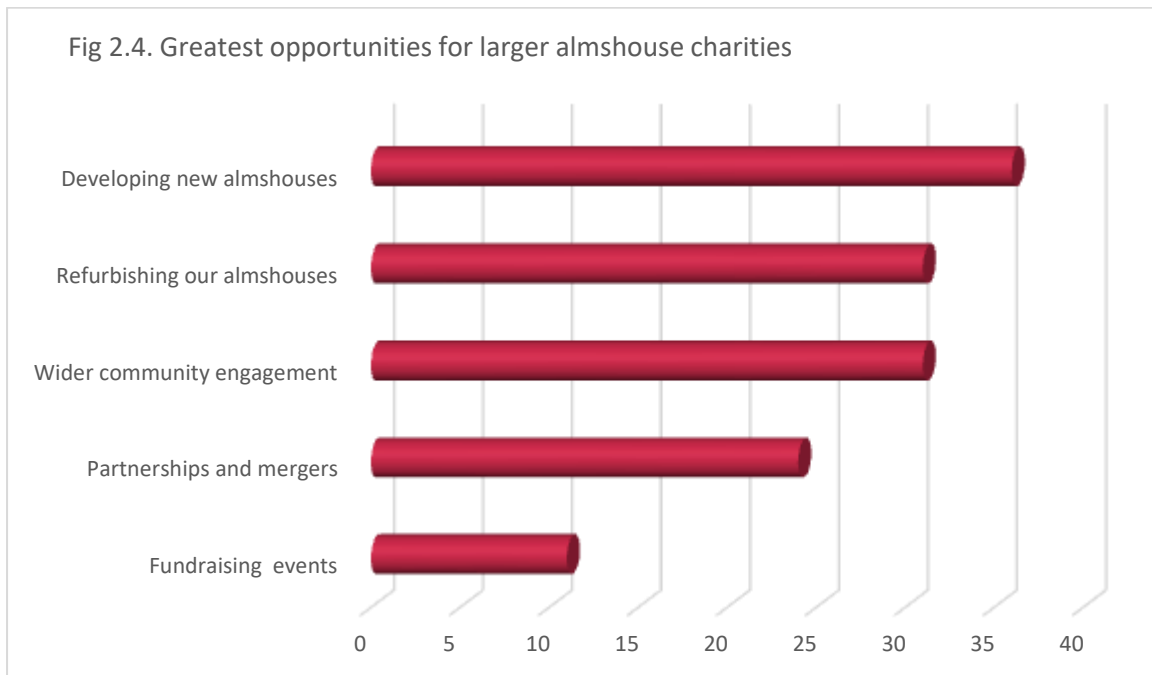
The opportunities for medium-sized almshouse charities reflects those of smaller charities too, with refurbishing of almshouses seen as the great opportunity – see Fig 2.2.





2.4 Greatest opportunities larger almshouse charities would like to explore/pursue over the next five years

The order of priority shifts slightly for larger almshouse charities where developing new almshouses is seen as the greatest opportunity. Refurbishing almshouse shares second position with wider community engagement. – see Fig 2.4





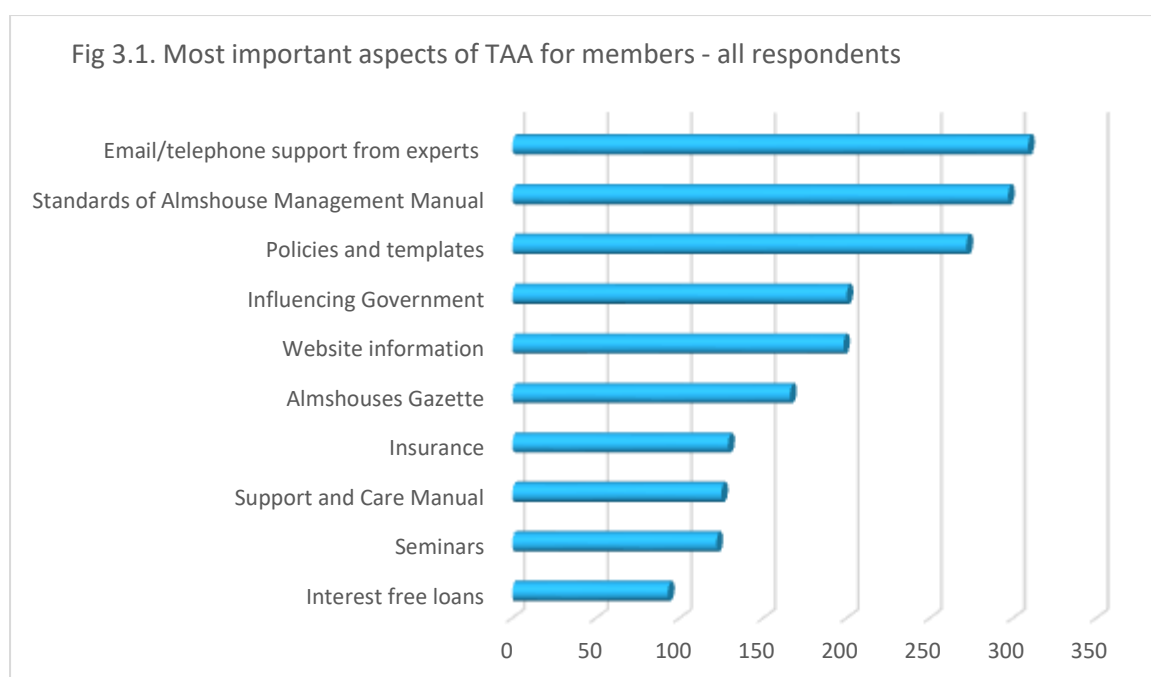
3. Most important aspects of The Almshouse Association service for members

Respondents were provided five options to categorise in order of importance

- Email and telephone support from experts when I need it
- Standards of Almshouse Management Manual
- Policies and templates
- Influencing Government
- Website information
- Almshouse Gazette
- Insurance
- Support and Care Manual
- Seminars
- Interest free loans

Overall results (see Fig 3.1) shows that the email and telephone support provided by The Almshouse Association is the most important aspect of the service with the Standards of Almshouse Management manual following in second position.

Other important aspects of The Almshouse Association service for members highlighted in the open comments area include the members forum and networking/peer group contact. **All comments are available in report appendix.**

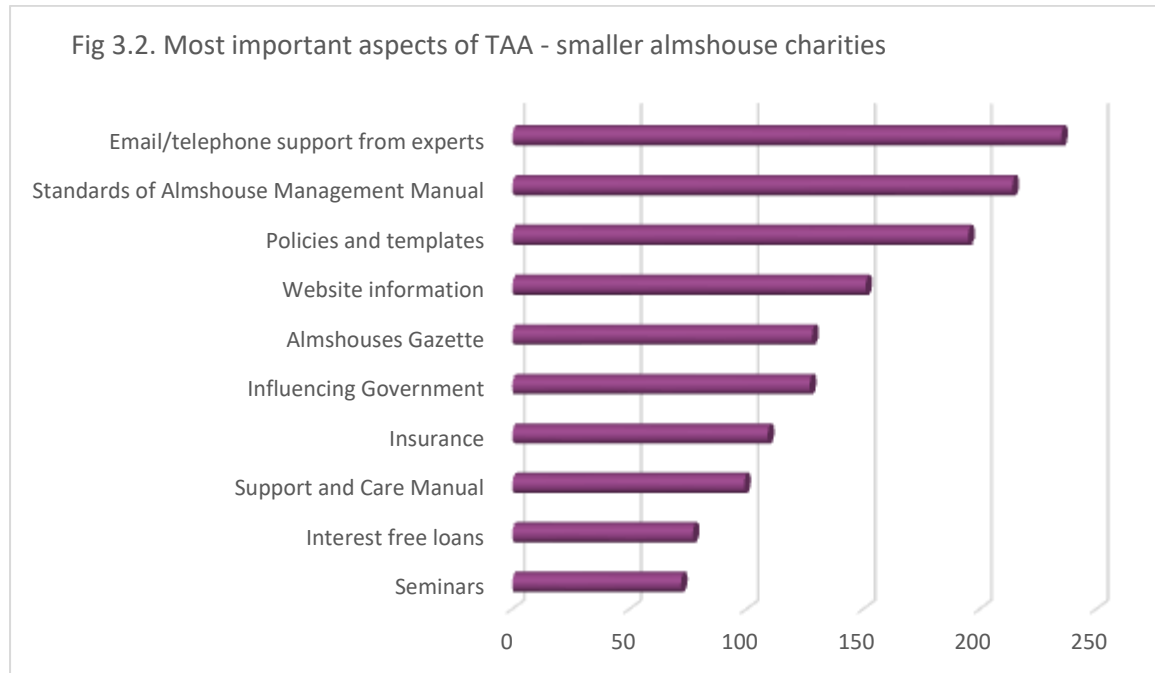




3.2 Most important aspects of The Almshouse Association service for small almshouse charities

Smaller almshouse charities chose email and telephone support as the most important service offered by The Almshouse Association. – see Fig 3.2.

Fig 3.2. Most important aspects of TAA - smaller almshouse charities

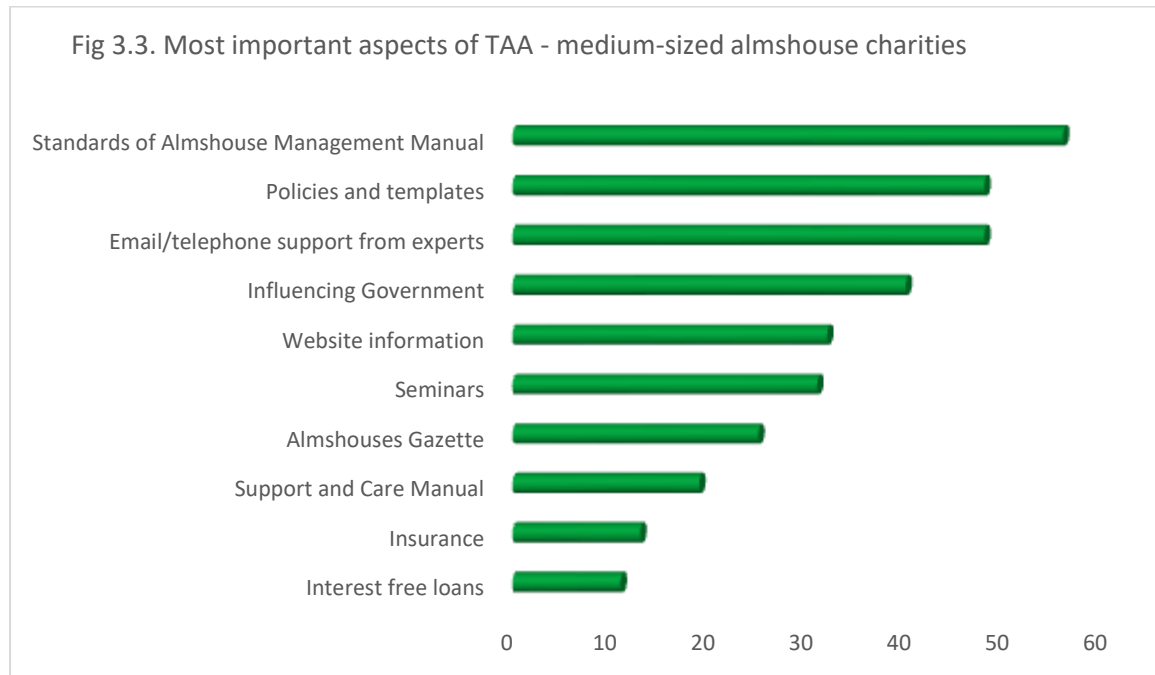




3.3 Most important aspects of The Almshouse Association service for medium-sized almshouse charities

For medium-sized almshouse charities, The Standards of Almshouse Management manual was considered the most important aspect of the Almshouse Association service. Email and telephone support was still rated highly, sharing second position with policies and templates. – See Fig 3.3

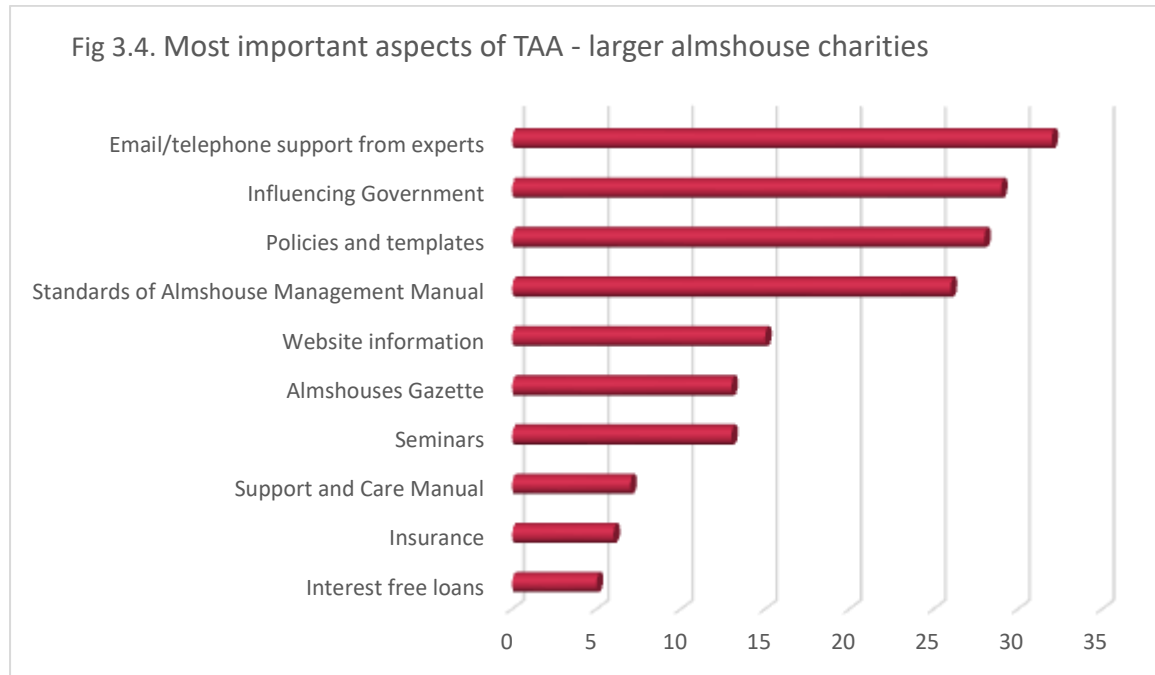
Fig 3.3. Most important aspects of TAA - medium-sized almshouse charities





3.4 Most important aspects of The Almshouse Association service for larger sized almshouse charities

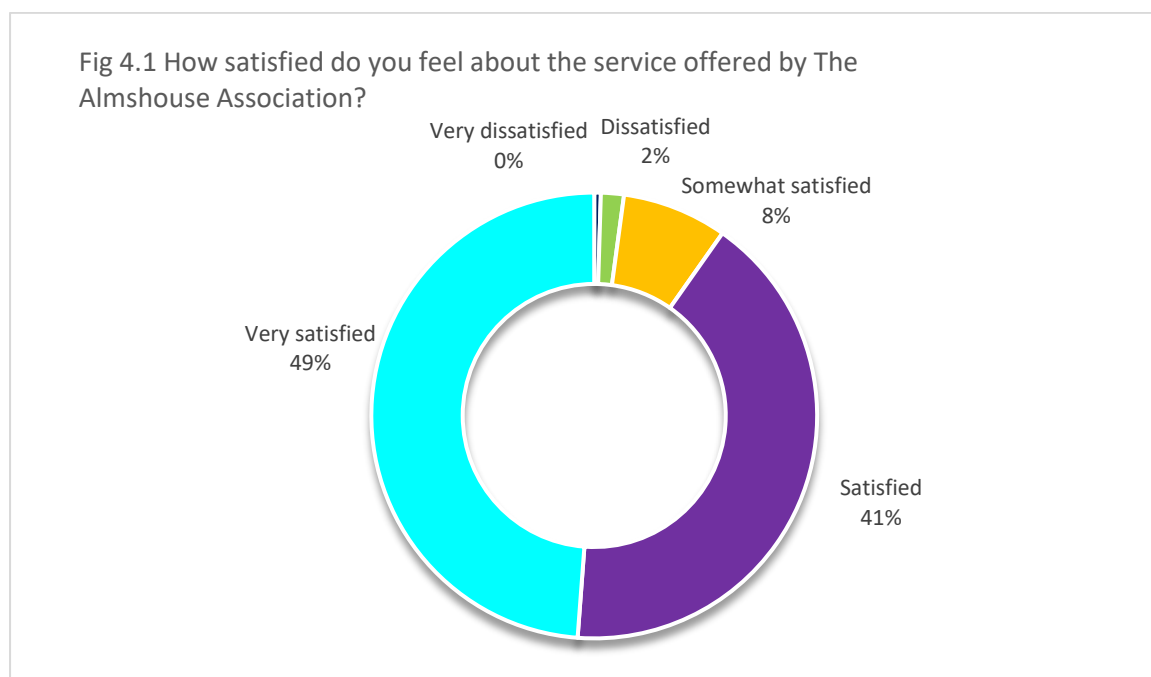
Large almshouse charities cited email and telephone support as the most important aspect of the Almshouse Association service. Influencing Government took second position.





4. How satisfied do you feel about the service offered by The Almshouse Association?

90% of almshouse charities are either Very satisfied or satisfied about the service offered by The Almshouse Association.



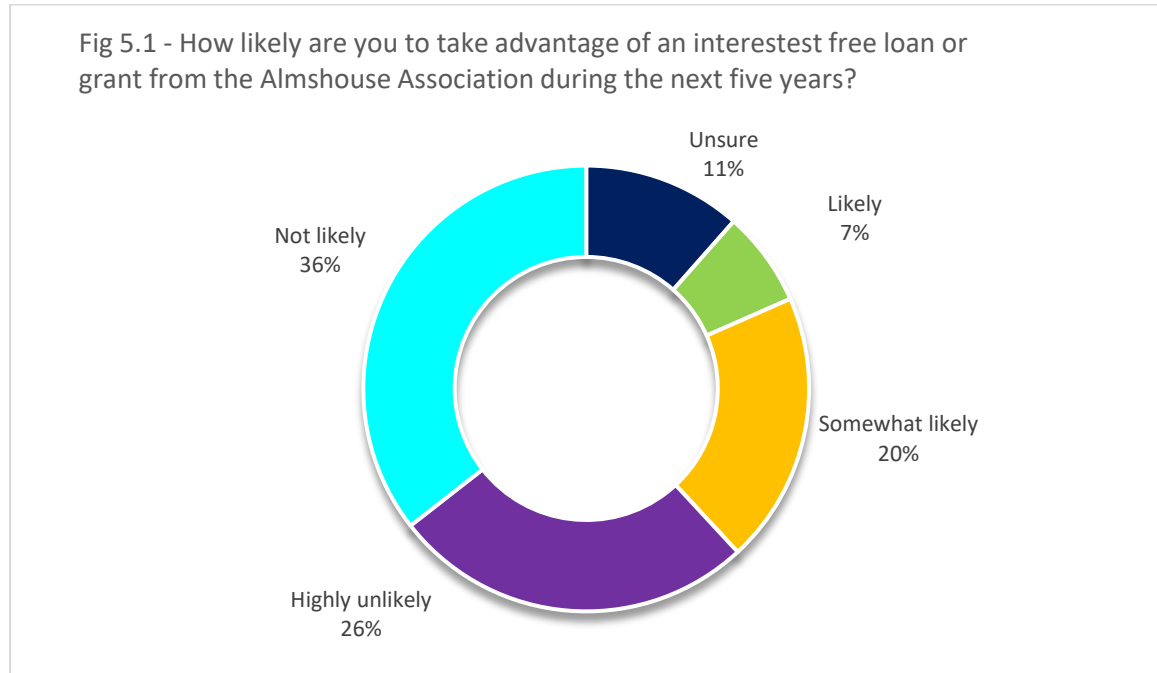
Comments received about The Almshouse Association service include:

- “Your service has remained consistently high over the last 40 years.”
- “Your office was an enormous help when I took on the job of being ‘clerk to the trustees’.”
- “I would appreciate a raised level of awareness of the Almshouse movement”
- “You are always on hand to offer advice and guidance no matter how random the topic!”
- “I think the NAA does a good job, although in my opinion it has not been assertive enough with Government in support of what we are and what we do”
- “Whenever I have needed you, you are there!”
- “We have had fantastic help and support about all things great and small.”
- “I think it is improving, but there has been a shortfall in information being provided to members, especially around complex issues such as GDPR. The website is greatly improved and newsletters are positive.”
- “We have recently obtained a loan to part fund the refurbishment of our two cottages and we found the process to be both straightforward and quick.”



5. How likely are you to take advantage of an interest free loan or grant from The Almshouse Association during the next 5 years?

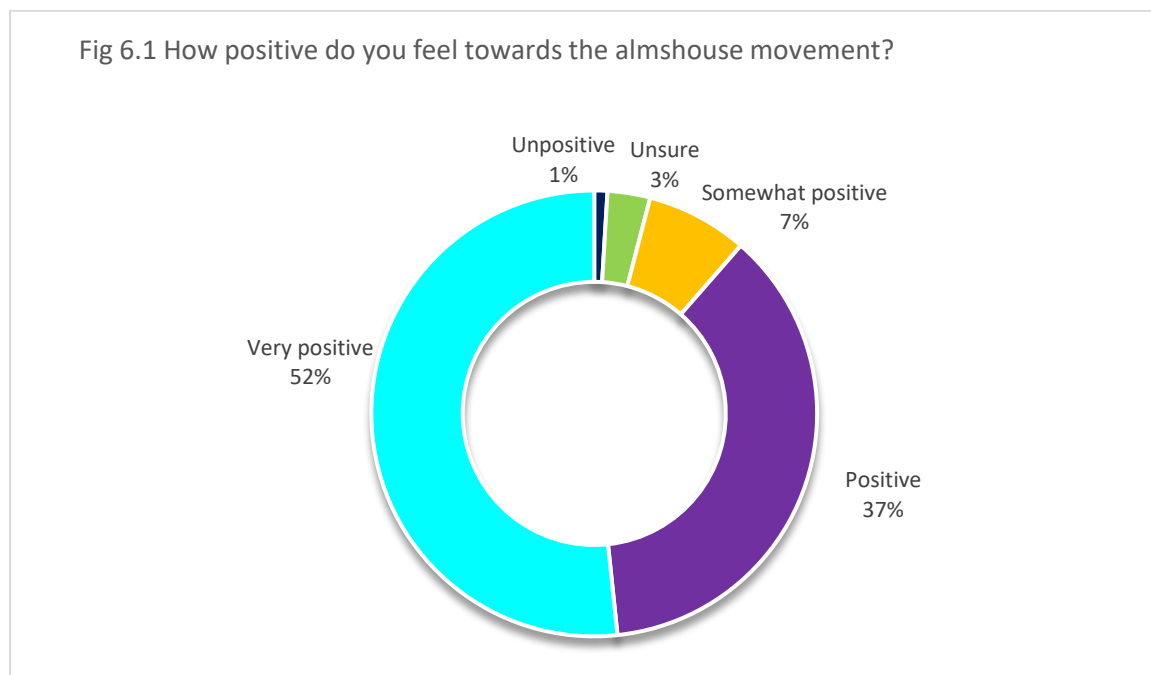
According to the members questioned, taking advantage of an interest free loan or grant from TAA is not a priority for the majority of almshouse charities, with only 27% stating they were likely or somewhat likely to take a loan or grant.





6. How positive do you feel towards the almshouse movement?

89% of almshouse charities are either very positive or positive about the almshouse movement.



Comments received about the almshouse movement include:

“Very positive but tiny charities like ours need much support to amalgamate into larger more effective bodies. The local bit is much harder to sustain now for our community.”

“Until a year ago I had little knowledge of the almshouse movement and have been quite surprised how extensive it is and impressed with the good it does throughout our communities.”

“The movement does an enormous amount of good with limited public recognition. However, this is for individual almshouse charities to use their efforts to raise their local profile.”

“The almshouse movement provides a valuable service to the local people and community, with good support within the movement, both from the Association and from other charities.”

“The almshouse model could offer the key to the housing shortage in London.”

“Almshouses provide a facility which is not necessarily available elsewhere. The facility is appreciated by those who need it. As a movement it is supportive to those who use it”

“Feedback from our residents/relatives demonstrates to us that no other social housing provides the level of independence/community/security/comfort offered in the sector of 'Affordable Homes'.”

“History needs to be balanced with an updated approach- and image - the new website is a good example of that”



“I feel its emphasis on the Christian faith and housing older people somewhat outdated and not very PC.”

“I would like to be positive but from where we are it seems to be an outdated concept that has failed to adjust with changing circumstances. The Gazette seems to promote a feeling that the wealthy and privileged are looking after the poor and then congratulate each other for doing so.”

“Like all similar movements there is a slight tension between the traditional historic groups (generally smaller) and the bigger groups who are keen to take almshouses into new areas of development.”

“My only experience is with this very small charity and the almshouses in the village where I live and act as Steward. It’s not easy living in such a small community and being the first contact for the residents - it can blur/disrupt personal friendships etc.”

“We need to drag Conditions of Occupancy/almshouse management and the Law into the 21st Century.”

“I am passionate about the movement and our offering and see a very positive future if managed correctly.”



7. What could we do to improve TAA service comments?

Out of 400+ members that made a comment about what The Almshouse Association could do to improve their service, over half responded that 'it's as good as it gets'.

Areas that it was suggested could be improved include:

- a) More visits to almshouses
- b) More seminars
- c) More targeted advice - small almshouse charities/large almshouse charities
- d) Email version of the Gazette
- e) More help with dealing with residents as they become less independent
- f) More information on the services we provide
- g) More legislation advice
- h) Local Networking
- i) Raise Public/Government awareness/profile/image/better understanding of almshouses
- j) More policies, checklists
- k) More help for smaller charities, i.e. policies, admin

JUST KEEP GOING AS YOU ARE

Nothing - we're happy with it as it is.

I think you are doing very well.

The service is first class

No criticism!! You are doing just what we need.

Happy with the service

Just continue as you are. Thank you

Satisfied with what we're getting!

I think you are doing a good job already!

Continue to give support when needed

The service you provide is excellent

Entirely happy at present time

I feel we are well served

Continue with the service you already provide

Just keep doing what you are doing

YOU PROVIDE A FIRST CLASS SERVICE ALREADY

Cracking service

COMPLETELY HAPPY WITH YOUR SERVICE

More of the same