



Online courses for Association members

The Almshouse Association has teamed up with an online training company and is now able to offer members access to a selection of online training courses on a variety of subjects.

Each online course takes between 35-40 minutes to complete and ends with a multiple choice test to measure your knowledge of the material.

On completion, you can download a printable certificate which includes your name, title of course taken, pass percentage, date of completion



and accreditations by recognised authorities.

We are currently offering three courses: ● GDPR Essentials ● Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults ● Mental Health Awareness.

As part of your membership with the Association, your charity has been allocated six credits.

Two of the credits have been allocated exclusively for use against

the Mental Health Awareness course. The four remaining can be used against the other courses on offer.

As we assess new courses for relevance to our members, more will be made available.

Full details and access to each course offered by the Almshouse Association can be found in the members area of our website:

www.almshouses.org/seminars-and-events/training-seminars/

TV licence concessions for residents

The Almshouse Association has been in discussion with the BBC for almost a year regarding the interpretation of legislation with respect to almshouse accommodation that qualifies for a concessionary licence for residents under the ARC (Accommodation for Residential Licences) Scheme.

The Communications (Television Licensing) Regulations 2004 state that the following types of accommodation are able to apply for an ARC Licences:

A. A care home or care hospital (registered under the Care Standards Act 2000) or

B. An almshouse (established before 1st November 1949) or

C. Sheltered/support accommodation that is: housed in a building that has been erected or converted for the purposes of occupation by residents who are retired and over 60, or disabled and form part of a group of at least four dwellings within a common and exclusive boundary and with a person whose function is to care for the needs of the residents (eg. a warden) who either lives on site or works there for at least 30 hours a week, excluding on-call hours.

In addition, in order for the residents to qualify, they must be:

- Retired (60 years old or over. If in paid work, this must be for no more than 15 hours per week. They can only work for more than 15 hours per week if they have had an ARC Concessionary TV Licence since 31 March 2004.) or

- Disabled (they must have substantially impaired sight, hearing or speech, a mental disorder or be substantially physically disabled by illness, any impairment present from birth or otherwise).

Confusion had arisen from the wording 'Established before 1st November 1949'. The BBC's interpretation led to a number of almshouse charities founded before 1st November 1949, but whose almshouse buildings had not been erected before this date, or were now on land not part of the original endowment, being denied the concession.

New interpretation

The Almshouse Association made a substantive case that the wording should be interpreted to mean when an almshouse charity was created rather than when a particular building was built. As a consequence the BBC has written to the Association and advised that they have been ...

"persuaded that, on balance, yours is the better interpretation and we will be altering TVL's future practice in this regard (and amending our guidance)". *Pipa Doubtfire, Head of Revenue Management, BBC.*

This is brilliant news and if any members have been declined an ARC concessionary television licence because of this misinterpretation we would urge them to re-apply.

Residents honour airman's sacrifice



War-time flying ace Albert Ball was one of only 18 pilots to be awarded a Victoria Cross in the First World War and in his memory the Memorial Homes in Lenton, Nottingham were built for families of servicemen killed in action.

In a fitting tribute during the 100th anniversary year since the end of WWI, an afternoon tea was arranged by Nottingham Community Almshouse Charity to honour the foundation of the Albert Ball Memorial Homes and the men who fought and died all those years ago.

Among the residents marking the occasion was 82-year-old Ambrose Latham (photo above) who served with the Irish Guards (1955-1970) in

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chief executive's comment

An uncertain world seems to be a reliable theme in the media. As I mentioned in a previous comment, I am working with others to consider the short, the medium and the long-term challenges for almshouses - and in the almshouse world long-term is quite long!

With the objective of wanting to see almshouses recognised as the exemplar community housing model, I have engaged with three experts in the field of community housing, older people's housing and wellbeing. Dr Alison Pooley of Anglia Ruskin University, Jeremy Porteus, CEO of Housing LIN, and Roland Karthaus of Matter Architect. They are not just knowledgeable about almshouses but are people who have challenged existing models of community housing and relentlessly seek evidence and innovation in the field.

I set down some challenges for us to consider:

- Is it possible to project forward to any extent what the needs of our members will be in 30 – 50 or 100 years?
- What will trustees need in order to make their role easier in the future?
- What might the needs be of the elderly? Of the young/families?
- What changes could we see - socially, economically, environmentally, medically, technologically and communally?
- How could almshouses respond to those needs?
- Is someone looking at this already and if so who?
- How can we help our members invest in projects that are future-proof?

The motivation for bringing these experts together is to see if we can

better plan how we support members long-term, how we can share the great ideas and valuable evidence that's available - to enable trustees to make better informed long-term decisions.

As you can imagine the discussion was wide ranging but very valuable. We reflected on evidence gained in the sector, evidence of wellbeing in communities of all types and discussed upcoming research that would be of value. We plan to meet again to see how we can supply evidence, case studies and examples for members to use when making these long-term decisions for their charities. I will keep members updated.

Trustees

One area often overlooked in long-term planning is that of trustees. There are examples in this Gazette about the dedication of trustees today, but how can we plan on this essential but dwindling force?

Charities rely on trustees, the lifeblood of the charity, to set the strategy, steer the organisation and let's face it - shoulder the burden of responsibility! There are many reasons why trustees enjoy their role - giving back to society, taking on responsibility, making new friends, the wish to make a difference and support local residents in the community - the list is endless, but anecdotally, it's hard to attract good trustees.

We will be focusing on how we can support existing trustees and how we can help with succession planning. We will be focusing on how we can help make trustees' lives easier by developing SAM, adding simple checklists, supplying up-to-date information by email and offering more trustee training. We will look at trends and consider how trusteeship duties may need to fit in with modern demands. Asking if greater use of technology may help, or looking at evidence around practical solutions

such as more convenient times for meetings. We will look at how we can support members attract diversity on their boards.

Shorter term: On matters nearer to home we are making some headway with the Charity Commission over supporting our legal definition of almshouses. The Charity Commission is being very helpful and I will keep you advised as soon as we have a response from the Charity Commission Board.

As you will know from our activities, we are working hard to persuade Government that charging almshouse charities under Selective Licensing is not what the Selective Licensing process was set up for and we are making a robust case to have almshouses exempt. We have contributed to the Government review of Selective Licensing and are meeting regularly with MPs and Lords to build support for this challenge.

We are continuing to work hard at making our support more accessible and have launched the first of our online training courses (front page). We are constantly reviewing our online Standards of Almshouse Management and sending regular updates. If you think you are not getting our regular email updates please get in touch with us. We really would like to provide you with the best service and having your correct details is the quickest way of doing so.

In conclusion, as we look to the future of almshouses, I see demand for almshouses rising. I can imagine many more almshouses being built and philanthropy playing an ever-increasing role in new charities, but I am mindful that more trustees will be needed to lead and wonder how we can encourage the next generation to take on the great responsibility that has such an impact on so many lives. Exciting times and plenty to think about.

Have a good summer!

Nick Phillips

Students design exhibition to display almshouse heritage

The Eventide Homes has been collaborating with BA(Hons) History students from Bournemouth University to become Public Historians.

The students were asked to display and present the homes' heritage material in an exhibition space that would be creative and engaging, celebrating the philanthropy of the founder of the almshouses, Alderman J R Edgecombe.

The display evolved with a 'nod' to period features from the 1930s when he had first envisaged developing a community where people in need could find security in the latter part of their lives. The space also features a potted history of the almshouses as well as local history. The Mayor of Bournemouth, Cllr. Derek Borthwick, joined with students to open the display and enjoyed an afternoon with residents and trustees.



Restoration of one of England's oldest turret clocks

Restoration of what is believed to be one of the oldest turret clocks in England, which dates back to at least 1698 when the almshouses were reconstructed, has been completed at St. Bartholomew's Almshouses in Newbury.

There is evidence to suggest the blacksmith-made clock could be even older, possibly between 1550 and 1600, indicating it may have been in place since the almshouses were built in 1618.

It is inevitable a turret clock of this age will have undergone many alterations and repairs over the years and it is remarkable the clock had been keeping good time for 45 years since a major overhaul in 1972.

Since then, the clock has required little attention, other than the occasional minor repair and the twice-yearly hour adjustment, until last year, when Richard Papworth, Chairman of Newbury Almshouse Trust, arranged for retired engineer and clock enthusiast David Pratley, to undertake vital restoration work on the clock's mechanism.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to ascertain the name of the clock maker, however, it would have started life with a verge and foliot escapement movement before being converted to a pendulum at a later date.

David Pratley's research led him to the Dover Castle clock, now in the British Museum, which was also made around 1600 and is a totally original verge and foliot clock that contains similar features.

There are also examples of similar clocks in Cotehele House near Saltash in Cornwall and the one in the nave of Salisbury Cathedral, believed to be the oldest working example in the UK.

Many challenges were encountered along the way, including problems caused by the clock

David Pratley (left), who undertook the restoration work, pictured under the clock with Richard Papworth, Chairman of Trustees.



frame not being square and the mechanism having to be worked on in situ and not in very comfortable surroundings! David said he was honoured to have been asked to restore the clock, which he found to be a very interesting project, although stressful at times!

Signwriter Paul Hetherton spruced up the clock face and after a month's intensive work the clock can now mark time for the 12 residents and wider community for many more years to come.

European almshouse workshop

Liz Fathi, Chair of the Association, has been in communication with the 'Almshouse Association equivalent' in Holland for some years and with a team, including our research partners, has visited Holland to see first hand what works well for almshouses in Holland.

The similarities are striking in the spirit of the movement, architecture and management. The pride of residents in "their" almshouses was significant and inspiring.

We will be hosting the Dutch Association members this October and hope to find ways we can share good practice and learn from each other - the first European workshop! We will report more as plans develop.



Updates

1 - The Almshouse Association Privacy Policies have been updated and can be found on our website www.almshouses.org

2 - Standards of Almshouse Management – Chapter 9 - Homes England, the Greater London Authority and the Regulator for Social Housing - has been updated on our website www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouses/

Disclaimer

The products/services and claims made in the Almshouse Gazette have not been evaluated by The Almshouse Association. Articles that recommend products/services are for information purposes only and are not endorsed by the Association.

At the time of publication, the content of this newsletter is correct to the best knowledge of the Almshouse Association's officers. Information is provided for the general guidance of trustees and clerks, who should take their own professional advice where necessary.

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Residents honour airman's sacrifice over 100 years ago

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Egypt, Cyprus, Germany and Aden, where he was injured when an anti-tank gun exploded. He has lived in the almshouses for 17 years and is pictured with Housing Officer, Heather Hart.

Captain Albert Ball was born on 14 August 1896 in Lenton, Nottingham and became one of the most celebrated pilots of his generation. He joined the Sherwood Foresters at the outbreak of the First World War and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in October 1914, transferring to the Royal Flying Corps the following year.

On the evening of 7 May 1917, Albert lost control of his plane in a storm cloud and crashed. He died of his injuries and was awarded the Victoria Cross after his death.

Albert's parents were said to have never recovered from their loss and his father, Alderman Ball, commissioned the almshouses for the families of local

servicemen killed in action. They were opened in September 1922.

The building has some unusual design elements. The eight homes were built to suggest an aircraft, with the homes as wings and the central porch as a cockpit. The two middle homes have curving doors, windows and walls that also fit the theme. Windows on the row are suggestive of propellers.

Courage

The Homes are Grade II* Listed and are described by Historic England as an "architecturally imposing and well-executed example of work by Brewill and Bailey, architects of considerable repute. The form evokes a bi-plane and is a fitting architectural reference to the accomplishments of Albert Ball."

At a time when morale was low, when the war and its casualties



seemed never ending, Albert Ball became a symbol of hope. His individuality and insistence on fighting alone set him apart from other fighter pilots. His courage and determination made him a legend not only in Britain but also amongst his enemies.

It is recorded that Manfred von Richthofen, the so-called "Red Baron", referred to Albert as "by far the best English flying man".

Celebrating 400 years in London

Over 400 years ago in 1618, Dr. Thomas Edwards gave £20 for the benefit of the poor of Fulham and left £100 to buy land for their long-term benefit. Today Hammersmith United Charities serves a diverse population of 95,000 people in the two London districts.

We have two main purposes: the provision of supportive housing for older people and a programme of grants which relieve "need" in all its many forms.

In 2018, the charity celebrated its 400th anniversary through a series of events to bring people together, enhance connections as neighbours and colleagues and to build a sense of belonging.

The activities involved residents and the local community, young and old, rich and poor, diverse communities, people with and without disabilities. They included "Enigma Lunches", each highlighting a different community within the district to celebrate the diversity of our area and its rich cultural heritage which makes it so distinctive and

so vibrant. We also relaunched a publication from the 1980s recounting the memories of migrants to Hammersmith, bringing people from different communities together, encouraging them to share their passions and stories.

An intergenerational project with another charity, Design Education CIC, saw our residents at Sycamore House and John Betts House produce mosaic artworks with the help of pupils from Old Oak and St. Stephen's CE primary schools.

In July, a Grand Party with residents, trustees, grantees and colleagues from other local charities and organisations, officially marked the charity's 400th anniversary. During this event, a new piece of dance we had commissioned from DanceWest was performed by the older



peoples' dance company "Bolder Not Older" and we awarded some of our most involved residents with a certificate to recognise their contribution to our charity.

To mark our 400 years, together with our sister charity, the Dr. Edwards and Bishop King's Fulham Charity, we have launched a new local giving scheme called "UNITED in Hammersmith and Fulham" to help continue our benefactor's original spirit of philanthropy into the 21st century.

Gaia Bini Administrator, Projects and Events

Policy and Governance - latest developments

Housing

1. Housing Ombudsman report on complaints handling for landlords

The Housing Ombudsman has published the first in a series of reports aimed at helping landlords improve their services and complaints handling. The report, entitled 'Room for improvement: Spotlight on repairs', focuses on complaints about repairs and includes a section on good practice for landlords. The Ombudsman notes that responsive repairs were the largest category of complaint it received in 2017-18 making up 37% of the total. The series is likely to provide a useful source of information going forward as it is based on the experience of the Ombudsman and the complaints it receives.

Dated: 28-03-19

NOTE: Whilst trustees of almshouses are not officially classified as landlords, the report detailed above can be helpful regarding best practice processes and procedures in the maintenance of almshouses and how to deal with complaints.

2. Regulator Of Social Housing (RSH)

(applicable only to almshouses that are Registered Providers)

Regulating updates: RSH has produced a new document entitled 'Regulating the Standards' which sets out the approach it takes to regulation, what providers can expect from it, and how it ensures that standards are being met.

The three main changes are:

- From April 2019, RSH will carry out In Depth Assessments (IDAs) for the largest and/or most complex providers on a biennial basis instead of the current period of once every three to four years. It will also programme a structured update meeting with these providers in the intervening non-IDA year.
- RSH has reinforced its expectation that Boards take ownership of their organisation's stress testing and ensure they understand the impact of economic cycles as well as one-off shocks on their businesses.

- RSH has listed the different scenarios where it may issue an interim Regulatory Judgement where a provider undergoes what it considers to be a significant constitutional change or group restructure, including a change in ownership or other change of control.

Dated: 28-03-19

3. Community-led London Housing Panel

The Mayor of London and Trust for London have announced plans to form a new housing panel to shape the capital's housing policy. The new London Housing Panel will give up to 15 voluntary and community sector organisations a formal way to engage regularly with the Mayor, GLA, and other decision-makers on housing issues affecting Londoners.

The Panel will be made up of groups representing a wide range of perspectives including social housing tenants, home-less households, leaseholders, students, and private renters. The Panel will set its own agenda, which could include estate regeneration, the private rented sector, or students' experience of housing in the capital.

Dated: 11-04-19

Charities and Charity Law

Charity Commission

- Email addresses for the Charity Commission no longer contain '.gsi' as of 1st April. Emails sent to addresses containing '.gsi' will not be received.

For example, change:

inboxname@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

to

inboxname@charitycommission.gov.uk

- The 2019 Charity Annual Return Service is now available. The Commission has also updated the document that lists all questions in the 2018 and 2019 Annual Return Service.

Dated 18-04-19

For web links and full details, visit: <https://www.almshouses.org/news/policy-and-governance-latest-developments/>

Adult Social Care

Universal Credit and rented housing

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has published updated guidance for landlords on Universal Credit and rented housing and guidance about 2019 changes for social landlords. The document provides private and social sector landlords with information about Universal Credit to help them understand what they can do to help their tenants prepare for:

- their move to the single Universal Credit benefit payment.
- making payments of their housing costs (rent) direct to their landlord themselves.

DWP has also invested £39 million into a new 'Help to Claim' service provided by Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland for Universal Credit claimants.

Dated: 04-04-19

Employment (applies to almshouses that employ staff)

1. Increases to national living wage and national minimum wage

1st April 2019 saw increases to the national living wage (which applies to workers aged 25 and over) as well as the national minimum wage. The changes be summarised as follows:

- Age 25 or over: from £7.83 to £8.21 per hour
- Age 21 to 24: from £7.38 to £7.70 per hour
- Age 18 to 20: from £5.90 to £6.15 per hour
- Age 16 to 17: from £4.20 to £4.35 per hour
- Apprentice rate: from £3.70 to £3.90 per hour

Apprentices are entitled to the minimum wage for their age if they are aged 19 or over and have completed the first year of their apprenticeship.

In addition to this, as of 6 April 2019 employers must now (a) provide payslips to all workers, and (b) show hours on payslips where the pay varies by the amount of time worked.

2. Increases to statutory payments and limits including sick pay and maternity leave

As of 6 April 2019, the following payments and limits increased:

- Statutory maternity/paternity/adoption/shared parental pay has increased to £148.68 per week.
- Statutory sick pay increase from £92.05 to £94.25 per week.
- 'A week's pay' increase from £508 to £525 (for the purposes of calculating a basic award or a statutory redundancy payment).
- Maximum compensatory award for unfair dismissal (provided this is lower than the separate cap on the compensatory award of 52 weeks' pay) increases to £86,444.

3. Automatic enrolment: minimum contribution increases and pay

The minimum contributions required of both employers and employees into automatic enrolment workplace pension schemes increased on 6 April 2019. The Pensions Regulator has produced an overview which explains who this applies to, what the increases are, and what to do if you are using a pensions scheme which requires different minimum contributions. There is also additional guidance on what employers need to do to set up these increases.

4. Employment Rights (miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019

These regulations contain three key changes:

- They extend the right to a written statement of particulars of employment, and therefore the associated enforcement provisions, to all workers (it currently only applies to employees).
- They lower the percentage required for a valid employee request for the employer to negotiate an agreement on informing and consulting its employees from 10% of the total numbers of employees to 2%.
- They see an increase to the maximum level of penalty available for aggravated breach of a worker's employment rights from £5,000 to £20,000.

The increase in fines came into force 6 April 2019 whilst the remaining parts of the regulations will come into force 6 April 2020.

New building projects - latest developments

Building begins on community led bungalow scheme

An innovative community led housing initiative which will see the construction of six new independent-living bungalows in Walsden, West Yorkshire is getting under way.

The bungalows, which will be let on affordable rents to local older people, are the result of a successful partnership between the Calder Valley Community Land Trust, the Todmorden based almshouse charity, John Eastwood Homes and Calderdale Council.

The Walsden project is the first development for Calder Valley Community Land Trust and as such represents a real landmark for the organisation. The CLT was set up in 2014 as a charitable community benefit society to bring affordable housing to the upper Calder Valley, under direct community led control. The CLT now has over 100 local people who support its work and have become members.

Under the scheme, four of the bungalows will be owned and run by the Community Land Trust, while the remaining two will be owned by John Eastwood Homes. The Almshouse Trust, set up under the terms of Todmorden resident John Eastwood in his Will, already operates twelve similar bungalows in Walsden.

Land gifted

The land for the bungalows has been gifted to the CLT by Calderdale Council, which has worked closely with the organisation since its incorporation.

Andrew Bibby, Secretary of Calder Valley Community Land Trust, said: "We're delighted to have arrived at the point where we can demonstrate that community led housing actually delivers results. The new bungalows will be energy efficient, cheap to heat and designed to meet the needs of older local people. They will be homes which we know will be much loved by their residents."

Chris Barker, trustee of John Eastwood Homes, said: "We know already how much demand there is for bungalows like this in



Walsden and Todmorden. We are thrilled that very soon another six bungalows will be taking their first new residents."

Partnership

Cllr. Dan Sutherland, Calderdale Council's Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing and Environment, said: "We are really pleased to support this scheme as part of our commitment to providing much-needed, quality, affordable homes in communities across Calderdale. This has been a real partnership approach and a great example of community led development, showing the steps that local people can take to tackle housing needs together."

The development, which will cost about £800,000, is being funded in part from the reserves built up through prudent financial administration by John Eastwood Homes, in part through government grants made available through the Homes England agency, and other grants and loans.

The Quaker Housing Trust is contributing £45,000 in loan and grant finance,

and around £60,000 is being lent by local people investing in the CLT through a community share issue. Calderdale Council is also making a grant, in exchange for nomination rights.

The help and support of Homes England during the planning of the project has been another crucial aspect of the success of the venture. The Walsden development represents one of the first investments by Homes England in a community led housing development in this part of Yorkshire.

Affordable homes

Richard Panter, from Homes England, said: "We've worked with the Land Trust from its inception and are pleased to have been able to fund these new homes for older people in the Calder Valley. The Walsden development is a great example of Homes England's commitment to increasing the supply of affordable homes which will help residents to continue living independently."

Make the most of grants to improve residents' quality of life

The Almshouse Association is delighted to launch its new Grants Application Pack, now available on our website (www.almshouses.org/loans-and-funding/).

In May this year we were able to offer three grants of £46,170 in total, with our members raising £27,500 in matched funding. These grants significantly improved the quality of lives for almshouse residents, with applications ranging from windows to wet rooms, each project aiming to create sustainable homes for the future.

Grants are available up to £25,000. For funding in excess of £25,000, the Association offers interest free loans.

Sue van Leest, Head of Fundraising and Charity Support, is supporting members wishing to apply for grants with signposting and advice to other grant-making opportunities. We encourage and support our members to seek match funding where possible.

Our new assessment criteria will make it easier for us to track the trends in grants requested so that we can fine tune our new fundraising strategy to ensure the best service to members.

For further enquiries regarding grants, contact Sue van Leest on susanvanleest@almshouses.org

Welcoming new homes provided in 22 Exeter apartments

As an amalgamation of several charities with almshouses, possibly dating back to 1500s, the Exeter based St. Petrock and Heavitree Parish Lands Charity now provides 70 almshouses offering homes to local residents in need.

Aware of the need for further almshouse accommodation in the city, the trustees decided in 2015 to buy a plot of

and staff welcomed Lady Arran, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Devon, together with The Lord Mayor of Exeter, Cllr. Rob Hannaford, the Lady Mayoress and Bob Snowden, husband of Elizabeth, to the opening.

Designed by Andrew Saunders and built by local builders, Setter & Saunders, each apartment offers natural light, with large opening windows, double bedrooms,

kitchens with convenient fixtures and fittings and bathrooms providing level access showers.

Solar panels on the roofs demonstrate the consideration given to the use and cost of energy and further soft landscaping is planned for the summer months to provide a garden area with seating for all residents. The Elizabeth Gardens flats enjoy easy



residential land in the Whipton area of Exeter to provide a new almshouse development of 22 apartments.

The almshouses, named Elizabeth Gardens in recognition of the dedication of a long-standing trustee, the late Elizabeth Snowden, were officially opened in May. Residents, trustees



Above: Bob Snowden (centre) surrounded by his family following the unveiling of a plaque dedicated to his late wife, Elizabeth. On the far left are Lady Arran, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Devon and Mike Henderson, Chair of Feoffes, while on the far right is Cllr. Rob Hannaford, Lord Mayor of Exeter. Left: Rose Stewart in her new home. photo by Astley Media.

access to a local shop as well as a large supermarket and are well-placed for local bus routes in and around Exeter.

Following the Lord Mayor's official opening of the almshouses, Bob Snowden gave a moving speech, reminding everyone of the importance of "a welcoming home", before unveiling a plaque dedicated to his late wife.

Mike Henderson, Chair of St. Petrock and Heavitree Lands Charity, said: "This project has been unique in many ways as the completion date of Elizabeth Gardens dovetailed with the immediate need of Exeter Homes Trust almshouse charity to find alternate accommodation for some of their residents, while remodelling work was undertaken on their almshouses."

"We were delighted that our new scheme was able to offer 19 brand new, high quality apartments to these residents and we're confident that the remaining apartments will shortly be fully occupied."

Association website

There is a wealth of information on the Association's website to help answer many of the day-to-day questions trustees and administrators may have about running their charity.

Registered users also have the facility to post on our members' forum and advertise their vacancies. Go to: www.almshouses.org

As a regular reader of the Gazette you will no doubt be aware of the work of the Almshouse Consortium Ltd (ACL), a non-profit making company for almshouses seeking grant funding from Homes England and the Greater London Authority.

ACL is an accepted Lead Provider to both organisations and has achieved significant grant allocations for the construction or improvement of almshouses over a series of grant funding programmes.

ACL's programme managers, Saffer Cooper Ltd (Sean Stafford) and Kathy Green, have vast experience in dealing with Homes England and the Greater London Authority on grant

Grants help support almshouse schemes

funding issues and will be pleased to give advice if your organisation has ideas regarding remodelling or new build projects. Many of the successful schemes have been featured over the year in the Gazette.

During the last financial year ACL has supported its members to achieve:

- A grant receipt of £4,662,750
- 173 Homes started on site
- 125 Homes completed.

These are outstanding results and having visited completed schemes and spoken to many residents I have

learnt first hand what a positive difference these new or improved homes have made to their quality of life.

ACL is currently supporting 14 almshouse charities with active schemes and a number of other charities to work up their schemes and grant applications.

The programme managers welcome the support of the Almshouse Association in promoting the work of ACL and represent ACL at Association events throughout the year, most recently in Manchester at the Trustees' and Clerks' Seminar.

Sean's recent presentation was very well received both for style and content which is of great interest to organisations with development or remodelling plans and Sean and Kathy are on hand to have a conversation with you should you wish to consider accessing grant funding.

Funding is still available under this current 16/21 Programme.

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact Sean@saffercooper.com (telephone: 0161 804 2222) or Kathy.green.projects@gmail.com (telephone: 01225 865573).

Sean Stafford BSc(Hons) MRICS
Director, Almshouse Consortium Ltd

Residents benefit from retaining and developing employees

In order for an organisation to develop and maintain a competitive edge, attention should focus not only on the significant costs of recruitment and employment but also on the quality of the practices.

The cost to an organisation when an employee leaves is at least twice their annual salary. We need to ensure that best practice in recruitment and establishing positive culture in the workforce will bring the greatest level of benefit to an organisation.

Few people would question the need for surveys and maintenance schedules for buildings, so why do we not always take the same proactive approach for evaluating and managing employees?

Employees who have a positive experience with their recruitment have been found to be happier than those that did not and are significantly less likely to leave.

There are strategies which support levels of job satisfaction and performance. These include clear job descriptions, contracts, terms and conditions and a good induction programme which are all proven to help reduce leavers' numbers. These

may be equally useful for new residents in helping provide clarity on arrangements which help them to settle in quickly.

An organised start sets a positive tone for new employees and can underpin culture and bring-to-life organisational values such as care, respect and professionalism for everyone.

Stability

Getting all of these matters right from the outset for employees has some bonus impacts; it reduces disputes and misunderstandings, maintains stability and meets the required employment and regulatory compliance requirements.

These strategies do not have to be high cost and can do a great deal to further relationships with residents.

Sharing the latest news and achievements through regular updates and staff and residents' forums helps to keep everyone feeling involved.

Employee and resident surveys which gather feedback are powerful methods of soliciting ideas that can be used to develop an organisation and working practices.

Recognition awards are a useful and important mechanism to make employees feel valued

and for sharing good news with what is being accomplished.

Employee development increases both engagement and retention levels. Having documented work goals and a review process makes for a clear understanding of how personal contributions link to overall success. Regular communication and one to one meetings increase levels of confidence about work skills and knowledge and are associated with increases in commitment levels.

Offering employees time and resources to develop professionally is another very effective retention tool and can be tied to a training agreement.

The Almshouse Association already has some very good measures in place to help. The Standards of Almshouse Management has useful tools and templates for matters such as contracts and has launched a suite of online training courses which can be used to support employee development.

Adrian Nisbet

Managing Director Argonaut-HR

Argonaut-HR is a member of the Association's Panel of Consultants and can be contacted for HR advice on 01730 810970 or Adrian.nisbet@argonaut-hr.com

Awards for 'best homes' providers

Two sheltered housing schemes in Gosport have been voted among the best in the country in the National Elderly Accommodation Counsel Awards 2019. Melrose Gardens was awarded gold in its category and Elizabeth Court picked up silver.

Thorngate Churcher Trust is a charitable registered social landlord with 123 sheltered flats for independent assisted living, all with 24-hour warden support, and a 44-bed care home providing residential care for older people including those living with dementia.

The EAC Awards, now in their eighth year, celebrate the best specialist housing for older people, and aim to help shape the future of housing in later life through engaging some 19,000 residents, staff, visitors and volunteers who were all able to vote for their favourite scheme out of the 1,220 nominated. Thorngate Chief Executive, Anne Taylor said: "To win

secure living here. Being one of the top three schemes in our category in the south west

confirms that we are successful in achieving this."

She added: "This award has come at the end of two years of major investment. We have recently replaced the roofs of two large 1920s buildings and significantly upgraded the grounds and gardens on both sites. It is therefore the icing on the cake to have recognition nationwide for the work that we do."

Mrs Rosemary Searle, who has been a resident since 1997, said: "It is wonderful that we have won. I have been here happily for over 20 years. The residents know it's a great place to live and win-

Photo left: Trustees, residents and staff of Pearn Almshouses Trust celebrate their award. Opposite page: Also celebrating are Thorngate Chief Executive Anne Taylor (left) and Chair of Trustees, Doreen Dodd.

ning an award really does show that this is one of the best places there is!"

The charity was founded by Edwin Alonzo Pearn (1822-1893) who was born and educated in Plymouth before being apprenticed to a local wholesale draper. He later became a partner in a company of drapers and woollen warehousemen in Exeter before finally retiring in 1873.

Pearn Almshouses Trust is part of the legacy by which he bequeathed his accumulated wealth to assist in the general health and social wellbeing of the citizens of Plymouth.

Memorial garden seat for award-winning almshouses

The dedication of a garden seat in memory of trustee Peter Howell provided the opportunity for a gathering of residents and trustees of Malpas Almshouses in Cheshire recently.

Peter, who sadly died last year, had been a trustee for many years and was a driving force in the modernisation of the almshouses.

The Rev. Canon Ian Davenport, Rector of Malpas, gave the blessing and Cate, Peter's widow, made a short speech. The seat has been installed in the garden of Wigfield Terrace, one of the two almshouse buildings in the village. It will further improve residents' enjoyment of the lovely garden attached to their houses.

Wigfield Terrace is in the centre of the Malpas and was built in 1851 by the Reverend Henry Wigfield, from the adjoining village of Bickerton, who used a large inheritance to construct six flats and a communal garden.

Cholmondeley Terrace, opposite Malpas parish church, was built in 1721 by Lord Cholmondeley to replace earlier buildings dating back to 1636, when Sir Thomas Brereton built and

endowed a dwelling "for the poor of the parish".

The 1721 building originally consisted of six homes, described in earlier literature as tenements, with individual gardens. These six homes were remodelled into four in the 1950s.

In 2000 the two separate charities were amalgamated to form Malpas Almshouses in order to simplify the administration and improve services to the residents.

The trustees of the newly-formed charity put in place a programme of improvement and modernisation to upgrade the properties to ensure that the accommodation is consistent with 21st century standards.

So far, eight of the original ten units have been enlarged by knocking adjoin-



ing flats into single dwellings. All the refurbished units are centrally heated, insulated and double glazed and have a modern kitchen, shower room with floor level shower and spacious living space.

Soon after the dedication of Peter Howell's seat, the trustees were delighted to hear the news that Wigfield Terrace had been awarded a "Little Gem" award in the Cheshire Pride Competition 2018.

Protecting your charity's interests

Charities are being reminded to ensure that the close relationships some enjoy with non-charitable organisations are made clear to people outside their charity and that they are never used to advance non-charitable agendas and interests.

Amid concerns that some relationships between charities and non-charities have damaged public confidence in charity, the Charity Commission has published new guidance which can be found on its website (see below).

Commercial interests

The Commission says its casework has identified examples where charities have not managed their links to non-charitable organisations with care, in some cases allowing charities to be misused to further non-charitable interests, including commercial or private interests.

The Regulator recognises that many charities work successfully in close partnership with a wide variety of non-charitable organisations, such as trading subsidiaries. These relationships can be crucial in helping a charity deliver on its mission for the public benefit.

The new guidance aims to help charities reap the benefits of such relationships while managing the risks carefully. The Commission says the guidance will also allow it, and the public, to better hold chari-

ties to account against existing rules. The guidance does not set out new rules or regulations, but draws together relevant law and practice in setting out six principles to help trustees ensure their arrangements for working with a linked body secure the charity's interests and independence.

As regulator, the Commission wants charities to thrive and inspire trust and it realises that relationships with non-charitable organisations can help a charity deliver on its purposes. Operating alongside other organisations should always be well considered and trustees must manage the risks that can arise carefully, and with probity.

High expectations

Charities hold special status in society and the public rightly has high expectations of them, including that they are driven only by their charitable mission and purpose and that they work to defend and promote their independence from non-charitable organisations at all times.

No charity should ever use, or be used, by non-charitable organisations to pursue uncharitable interests.

The guidance is available on gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-charities-with-a-connection-to-a-non-charity> and includes an infographic and checklist to help trustees check and review their approach.

Care for residents



Joyce Mays has retired as a trustee to the Lady D'Arcy with Fynches and Berryfield Cottages Trust, Colchester.

She was closely involved in the merger of the three charities in 2004, having been a trustee of the Fynches charity for some 25 years.

Joyce has always taken a keen interest in the welfare of residents, carrying out regular visits to those living in Fynches Charity homes as well as to the 30 residents of the merged charity. She was also active on the Beneficial Appointments Committee, attending interviews for new residents.

She was presented with a David Austin rose by the Chairman, Peter Irvén, on behalf of the trustees, with their grateful thanks for her long service over the decades.

20 years as an almshouse clerk

“There are a number of principles that have guided me throughout which I would like to share, as these formed the backbone of my tenure as an almshouse clerk.

All of us, that is trustees, management and employees are, with their charity, to try their very best to make life as comfortable and stress free as possible for all beneficiaries (our residents),

We are all mere custodians of the charity and it is our duty to endeavour to pass it on in better shape, community and ambience than when we joined.

Never be frightened to consult your peer group - the Almshouse Association itself, local almshouse groups or other clerks - as many will have faced, and solved, similar issues in the past. As the saying goes “a problem shared is a problem halved”.



The Charity Commission seems to have changed its attitude to almshouses and are now much more helpful. The Charity of Elizabeth Jane Jones changed its status and incorporated in 2015, with the full support of the Charity Commission, so is now governed by a trustee company with limited liability, still controlled by all the former trustees who are now directors of the trustee company. More importantly, nothing else apart from the Constitution has changed, same charity number, same bank accounts, no need to re-register the property, etc.

Analyse opportunities

Unless a charity has massive reserves, Collective investment funds, specifically designed for charities are far easier to monitor than individual stocks and shares. In particular, Elizabeth Jane Jones established a policy to build up its M&G managed NAACIF funds until their combined value was in excess of £1million, whereupon another investment manager might be used for the next cycle of investments, until these also reach £1million, and then another, and so on.

Have the courage of your convictions, as a charity that stands still is actually losing ground. Never be frightened to investigate and analyse any and every opportunity to expand/and or to provide better homes for the beneficiaries. If your almshouses are in

A year after his retirement as clerk to both The Charity of Elizabeth Jane Jones and Heston Parochial Charities, urged and encouraged by those who had worked alongside him, Christopher Round has put pen to paper and sent to the Almshouse Association a wonderful account of 20 years as an almshouse clerk.

The full article is on our website for everyone to enjoy (see link below). Here is a small excerpt that highlights Christopher's invaluable knowledge, experience and commitment to the almshouse movement.

Christopher Round (far right) with HRH The Duke of Gloucester (centre) and former Almshouse Association Director, Anthony Leask, at the 2015 Patron's Awards.



an expensive area but difficult and costly to maintain, consider re-providing perhaps more almshouses in a less expensive part of your area of benefit, and then letting the original almshouses on a commercial basis for long-term investment. With careful planning, it can be done!

I have tried in my article to chronicle my almshouse career and to highlight the various hurdles faced, and then to conclude with those principles that have steered me

The full article can be found at: <https://www.almshouses.org/news/the-chronicles-of-christopher-round-retired-almshouse-clerk/>

through some turbulent times. I hope that others may benefit from my experiences.

Now I have retired, I am delighted to have handed over the reins to Nigel Lucas, whose almshouse experience is similar to my own, so I am sure the improvements highlighted in the Leask Report will be followed through and Elizabeth Jane Jones and Fairholme, my real haven for 18 years, will be in very safe and competent hands.

What is an almshouse?

For some time, the almshouse movement has been calling for a comprehensive definition of what constitutes an almshouse. This will not only be of assistance to almshouse charities but also to residents, government, our sector partners and the general public.

As a result, the Almshouse Association established and tasked a legal working group to produce both a legal definition of an almshouse charity and an accompanying general description. A Definition and Description was consulted on with our member charities and approved by the Almshouse Association's Board of Trustees. It has subsequently been submitted to the Charity Commission.

This is now the Almshouse Association's approved definition of what constitutes an almshouse and we are beginning to publicise it in order to assist members as the need arises.



Almshouse Association Definition of an Almshouse

An almshouse is a unit of residential accommodation (usually a house or flat) which belongs to a charity and is provided exclusively to meet the charity's purpose such as but not limited to the relief of financial need or infirmity and is occupied or is available for occupation under a licence by a qualified beneficiary who may be required to contribute a weekly sum towards its maintenance. An almshouse charity is a charity which is established to provide one or more almshouses.

We have also created a General Description to work alongside this definition:

1. An almshouse charity is a charity for the relief of financial hardship by the provision of housing and associated services or benefits which:
 - (a) is subject to the jurisdiction of the Charity Commission; and
 - (b) must (or is authorised to) provide its primary benefit by the grant of a licence to occupy the accommodation that it owns to its beneficiaries.
2. In addition, an almshouse charity is likely to have one or more of the following features:
 - (a) the origin of the charity is a private gift for the relief of poverty;
 - (b) the beneficiaries are required to pay a weekly maintenance contribution that must not be set at a level that would cause hardship;
 - (c) the nature of the accommodation is such that beneficiaries must show particular consideration for the needs of other residents;
 - (d) a significant proportion of the accommodation is permanent endowment;
 - (e) the beneficial class or the geographical area from which it can be drawn is restricted.

pound, which could cause higher inflation, while at the same time, a weaker economy might need more policy support.

With the base rate currently at 0.75% and inflation expected to rise above 2%, the interest rate is still negative in real terms. Ten-year UK government bonds, which yield 1.2%, are also offering negative real returns at current levels.

There are two ways that government bonds can deliver a positive real return. One is that yields fall further - a situation that has occurred in Germany where 10-year yields are now just below zero. The other is that inflation falls - but this would mean that the Bank of England has not achieved its mandate to set interest rates at a level that ensures inflation returns sustainably to 2%.

Overall it is hard to escape the conclusion that cash and bonds are not very attractive in the UK. Laurence Peter's words are pertinent here too. We cannot know what the outcome will be, especially in the short-term. But starting from a low yield implies a greater chance of a disappointing outcome.

We are unable to give financial advice. If you are unsure about the suitability of your investment, speak to your financial adviser. The views expressed in this document should not be taken as a recommendation, advice or forecast.

14 May 2019

Jenny Rodgers
Investment Manager

Investment outcomes continue to be difficult to predict

The folly of forecasting

"An economist is an expert who will know tomorrow why the things he predicted yesterday didn't happen today."
Laurence J Peter, Canadian educationalist (1919-1990).

There are many jokes about economists. They are easy targets since their forecasts are nearly always wrong. A popular joke is that economists exist to make weather forecasters look good. Another reason for the easy humour is that there are many situations where economists disagree with each other. And since a lot of economic data tends to be

NAACIF single year total return (income plus growth of capital) performance %

from to	01.05.18 30.04.19	01.05.17 30.04.18	01.05.16 30.04.17	01.05.15 30.04.16	01.05.14 30.04.15
NAACIF	4.9	6.3	17.5	-1.2	8.4
FTSE All-Share Index	2.6	8.2	20.1	-5.7	7.5

revised after publication, the criticism can run for a long period of time. At the time of the Brexit vote in 2016 there was a lot of discussion and scepticism in the media about the views of 'experts'. And sure enough the collective view of the UK's economic prospects turned out to be far too pessimistic in late 2016. All in all, it has not been a great time to be an economist in recent years.

In May 2019 the Bank of England published its regular Inflation Report. At the press conference, Governor Mark Carney stated that

to historical norms, rates of return on capital are robust, the labour market remains tight and survey measures suggest that firms are operating with limited spare capacity".

The report's conclusion is that business investment has been weak in recent years due to Brexit-related uncertainty.

The main message from the inflation report is that the Bank of England expects to raise interest rates further to keep inflation on target. All of this is conditional on a 'smooth' Brexit. A messier Brexit could lead to a weaker



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Wessex Wardens Group meeting

Two years ago Monica Winnett, Warden of St. Mary's Hospital in Chichester, instigated the idea of establishing the Wessex Wardens Group for wardens and scheme managers to get together to share common issues and pool ideas.

The inaugural meeting took place on 27 April 2017 and due to its success the group held its second meeting in November 2018 at the Hospital of St. Cross in Winchester. We also knocked to receive the Wayfarer's Dole!

The group discussed and debated a number of common issues relevant to the almshouse charities, which included wardens being on call overnight, the arrangement of social activities for residents, Housing Benefit and weekly maintenance contributions, fire policy and residents' absences from their almshouses.

The group would be delighted if more wardens and scheme managers were to join and those interested should email to Monica Winnett, Warden at St Mary's Hospital, Chichester at warden@stmarysalmshouses.org.uk



East Kent Consortium group grows for spring meeting

The organisers were delighted to welcome the Almshouse Association Chief Executive, Nick Phillips to this year's East Kent Almshouse Consortium spring meeting held in the Pavilion at Kent County Cricket Ground in Canterbury.

Mutual benefit

It was an early start for Nick to arrive in time for a 10.00am meeting and fortunately it was a warm sunny morning and the county cricket players were already out on the ground getting ready for the season's challenges.

For centuries the almshouses in Canterbury existed a short distance from each other with no real contact but there was a realisation that, large or small, ancient or modern, there would be a mutual benefit in meeting up to discuss their similar concerns and topics of general interest.

The first meeting of representatives from five Canterbury almshouses took place in October 2012 in the presence of the City's Lord Mayor.

In successive six-monthly meetings, further local and neighbouring almshouse charities joined this informal group and by 2018 the Consortium had grown to fifteen members to include almshouse charities from Chatham, Faversham and the East Kent coastal towns.

Advance notice of the important visitor encouraged a further five to join this group at this spring meeting.

During the morning, Nick's presentation to the 40 or so representatives covered the work of the Association and important areas of support available to members, followed by a question and answer session.

The day was not finished. There was a buffet lunch at the ancient Eastbridge Hospital of St. Thomas the Martyr in central Canterbury and Nick then joined almshouse trustees and residents at the annual afternoon Lovejoy Sermon service at St. Paul's Church next to the old City wall.

This annual service has continued since 1694 and the preacher directs that the congregation "lead worthy lives, be content with their humble lot, be no

trouble to the rich and accept their charity with uncomplaining gratitude"! Spiritually lifted, tea and cakes were served to the group, making a fitting end to an action-packed day.

Roger Power
The Sir Roger Manwood Trust

2019 Gardens & People Award



The Gardens and People Award was introduced in 2018 for charities that can show how they have enhanced the lives of their residents by providing gardening and/or outdoor activities. Please remember to take photographs of your beautiful gardens and active residents throughout the year. Further information about the Awards will be on the Almshouse Association website - closing date for photographic entries to be received will be mid-January 2020.

new members

Sir Stephen Soame's Almshouse
Suffolk
George Townsend Charity for Widows and Spinners
Leicester

2019 dates for seminars

SEPTEMBER		
Wed 25	Scheme Managers	Devizes Almshouse Charity
OCTOBER		
Tues 8	Trustees and Clerks	Thorner's Homes, Southampton