



ESTABLISHED 1855

## Giving alms

SIR - I read Dame Esther Rantzen's article (Comment, January 1) about old age and loneliness with recognition and despair. She rightly brings to our attention the misery, distress and sadness of older people who find themselves isolated.

One wonderful way of meeting the needs of older people is an almshouse. Almshouses represent not only an example of personal philanthropy (in some cases continuing for centuries), but also collegiate, communal yet independent living that supports, enhances and enriches their residents.

The almshouse of which I am chairwoman of trustees is about 65 years old. We have more than 40 ladies in residence who have their own flats, but also a beautiful communal lounge, where coffee mornings, keep-fit sessions, bingo, bowling, quiz evenings, Christmas, New Year and birthday parties can be enjoyed.

Local choirs and clubs frequently come along to entertain our residents. Our warden (nowadays a "homes manager") organises outings and holidays for those who want to join in, but there is no pressure to participate.

For those people described by Dame Esther, living in an almshouse would banish loneliness and provide the companionship they lack.

If anyone has the means, I would urge them to inquire about establishing an almshouse, as so many generous people have done in the past.

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