



the almshouses Gazette

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Let the celebrations begin!

Opening the garden gates to the timeless charm and vitality of almshouses in 2021

Happy New Year!

We are going to make 2021 a year full of hope, happiness and joyous celebration of almshouses!

We are so excited to be sharing our 75th Anniversary year with you; we want to make sure we raise the profile of almshouses and shine a light on their important role in society.

We also want to tell everyone about you, our wonderful member charities, your commitment and the support you provide with a passion on a daily basis, and your hard work and dedication that often goes unnoticed by the broader audience. You are an inspiration and you really make a difference.

Thank you to everyone who has already sent in some lovely stories about their almshouses and resi-

dents. We are enjoying reading through them and looking at the photos. If you haven't had an opportunity to send us anything yet, don't worry, there is still time. We are going to create a beautiful collage of your photos for display at The Almshouse Association event later in the year, which will also be on our website and social media channels.

Our public relations activity has already started to bear fruit and the Regional Champions have been organising some amazing video footage of their almshouses to help raise the profile and awareness of the almshouse movement.

Thank you for all kind requests for Celebration Packs. These will be winging their way to you very soon and are full of useful hints and tips about how to make any celebration

event you're planning a little easier to organise. They also include details on how to connect with your local press, a risk assessment form, recipes, and a poster template that you can use to help promote your own event or if you are planning to attend a local community event to showcase your charity.

If you haven't done so already, please send for a pack. We will still be taking requests for these over the next few months so don't hesitate to get in touch.

Send your details to us by completing the Celebration Pack online form on our website, or by email, or call us at the office.

We look forward to celebrating our important milestone with you all!



Survey shows public support for almshouses

Almshouses are viewed as an important form of housing by 76% of the general public, according to research carried out by YouGov* on behalf of The Almshouse Association. The survey found that 76% of respondents believe almshouses are an important form of housing but 84% of people were not aware of any almshouses in their local area. The research forms part of The Almshouse Association's plans to establish a better understanding of almshouses amongst the general public and in Government.

The Association is proud to see respondents recognise that almshouses are a vital part of the housing sector. However, the research also highlighted challenges ahead for the almshouse movement. It is clear that many people (84%) are not aware of a local almshouse and, whilst more than half of over 55s had heard of almshouses, 65% of those who undertook the survey were not very clear on what an almshouse actually is. Members will no doubt be familiar with this challenge which we will

embrace as we approach our 75th anniversary in 2021. We will use this occasion and your community events to push for wider recognition of your work and greater understanding of the vital service that almshouses provide across the country.

*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2001 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18-19 November 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S COMMENT

Happy New Year!

I hope, as we see off the last year and welcome the new, there will be brighter times. This is the 75th anniversary year of The Almshouse Association and, like all charities on such significant occasions, we look back at our founding benefactor/s and ask what they would do and how they would celebrate! I think Leonard Hackett would be very proud of how ambitious and effective the almshouse charities are today. As I look through our Governing Documents, I am struck by his immense passion for the movement, for local charitable activism and how he always put the residents and their homes at the centre of his thinking.

Origins of the Association

Reading papers written about the origins of the Association, in a meeting led by Leonard Hackett on 14 February 1946 in The Chapter House, Southwark, the minutes record: "They realised that the state could not do everything, ... voluntary organisations could break new ground, research problems, pioneer new projects, initiate new communities and services! Almshouses remain as memorials to our compassionate forebears." Those who met then, recognised the value of the their medieval history and in that same meeting they said: "Build

Training and Seminars update

A Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Association has taken the difficult decision to not organise any in-person seminars in 2021. The ongoing and constantly changing restrictions have made it extremely difficult for us to plan ahead and, at this stage, we feel that holding our usual seminars would be a risk to both members and staff. As the situation evolves and we get a clearer idea of whether in-person events can be held, we will look into the possibility of organising some events towards the end of the year. We will send out details as and when they become available. We will, of course, continue to deliver online training and webinars and we strongly encourage you to check our website to see what we have coming up. Don't forget, you can also sign up for our monthly email newsletter to receive notifications about forthcoming webinars, as well as other useful news and information.

new almshouses, yes, but make use of the old preserve the buildings of historic interest and beauty and maintain the best of traditions." When challenged on the name and misconceptions of 'almshouses', they said that we should keep the name and be proud of the best of their past; the Association would encourage and support "the best of the old and the best of the new!" I would find it impossible to better the spirit, compassion and ambition of the founder and I hope that in our time, as a team, we can drive his mission a little further along the path he set. The celebrations this year are not just about the Association, they are about Leonard Hackett's recognition of the great value that almshouses, through their trustees, deliver every day; our members; the residents; and the activism of each benefactor that made the charity possible. Fast forwarding to today's challenges. I, and all the team here, have enormous admiration for the trustees, wardens

Useful websites

- reachvolunteering.org.uk/guide/recruiting-and-retaining-trustees
- knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/governance/improving-your-governance-practice/trustee-recruitment-and-induction
- www.civilsociety.co.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/3010c816-9b5f-473c-ba86f77ec9a8c50c.pdf
- www.gettingonboard.org/post/how-to-recruit-trustees-for-your-charity-a-practical-guide-launches-today

and clerks who are unflinching in their response - retaining such a delicate, diplomatic balance of managing residents' safety and wellbeing during the trying period of 2020. I will try not to dwell on the subject but it is so prevalent in all planning and thinking. Indeed it is hard to think about life after COVID but with the promise of a successful vaccine (at the time of writing) it is clear that the world is daring to consider life after COVID. It is a really exciting prospect - seeing friends, travelling round the country and being able to see our members again. It sounds fantastic. There are, however, still other challenges to face - and the greatest of these seems to be Governance. The legacy of every charity is tied up in the people who run it and it is getting harder to retain committed, dedicated and competent trustees like yourselves. You know this better than anyone. This period is the toughest many trustees have been through in their role - in years or even decades - and I am aware of many trustees who have said that they are considering retirement when the dust settles. This leaves us all with

a great challenge. How can we help you find replacements? How can you build that critical succession planning now with so much else going on? We have hints on our website and a great webinar to look at. Good publicity about your charity is an opportunity to ask for volunteer trustees to develop your Boards. We are striving to seek national press coverage of the almshouse movement with a really strong encouragement for members of the public to find their local almshouse and ask what they can do to help. You only need to look at the number of tweets, likes and website hits to know that the public loves almshouses. As Leonard Hackett recognised, these buildings represent our heritage. People may not know much about the movement but they love the almshouse buildings; they encourage curiosity and wonder and this interest in history, architecture and a desire for nostalgia

is fantastic for the movement. Our historic buildings are the backdrop to a great story of caring, community and local philanthropic activism - but how sustainable are they? I am increasingly aware and have mentioned in my notes before, that we are losing many of our historic buildings due to the cost of management and the challenges of conservation. During our raising awareness campaign for the Association's 75th anniversary, we will draw attention to the great characteristics of these historic treasures and seeking support both in funding and the realities of managing the needs of residents and conservation. Your enthusiasm to embrace the 'garden party' campaign and other events will play a key part in raising local awareness and help us underpin the message for flexibility around historic homes to make them practical, warm and safe for their original purpose. As we begin a new year we take great inspiration from those founding benefactors to lift us to a great start. We wish you all a very peaceful and happy 2021!

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive

Vital role for Almshouse Association Ambassadors

A Across the country many of our members are looking to build, refurbish and improve their almshouses. The almshouse movement is becoming an increasingly significant part of the response to the affordable housing crisis across the country, however, due to limited funds some of our members are struggling to maintain the high level of housing that they and we expect. Alongside our initiative to raise the profile of almshouses to represent the almshouse movement in areas of influence, we are delighted to have recruited 45 new Ambassadors who will work with us to support our

members. Our Ambassadors will bring different skills and relationships.

Knowledge and networks

They will be working with us to:

- Increase media presence and interest in the movement
- Champion the timeless concept of local almshouses for local people in need
- Celebrate the great work of the trustees running almshouses and the work that our team do in supporting members
- Use their extensive knowledge and networks to spread the word about the almshouse movement

- Support our engagement at Government level to lobby on behalf of the almshouse movement
- Work with us to generate funds to further support our members with loans and grants and fund new projects
- Be at the forefront of our 75th Anniversary celebrations. We will introduce our Ambassadors over the coming months and are excited that they will be working alongside us to take The Almshouse Association into the next exciting phase of its development.

The function of trustees in investment matters

We have all experienced a period of great uncertainty over the past year and some charities have come under significant financial pressure and scrutiny. Trustees will be aware that the value of their charity's investments may have been through a period of volatility; consequently, some may be reviewing their investments.

It is worth remembering that a charity's trustees have overall responsibility for investment decisions and that trustees must take and consider advice from someone experienced in investment matters before making investments and when reviewing them, unless they have good reasons for not doing so.

For example, they may decide not to take advice if they conclude that it is unnecessary, or inappropriate in the circumstances, or if they have sufficient experience within the charity. Trustees may wish to read the Charity Commission investment guidance notes 'Charities and investment matters: a guide for trustees (CC14)' which include notes on:

- What is the trustees' role when making financial investment decisions?
- What risks should a charity consider when making investments?
- Deciding what a charity can invest in.
- Who can manage and make decisions about investments?
- What advice must trustees take?
- Monitoring investments and performance.
- What should trustees consider when investing in savings and cash deposits?

Useful links to investment tools for almshouse charities

Charity Commission publication (2016) Charities and Investment Matters: A guide for Trustees. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-investment-matters-a-guide-for-trustees-cc14/charities-and-investment-matters-a-guide-for-trustees>

A free website that provides independent financial information and performance data for Charity Funds in the UK.

Register free at: <https://www.charityintelligence.co.uk/>

For an update on your M&G investments, please contact Richard Macey, Director of Charities, UK Distribution, M&G Investments, 10 Fenchurch Avenue, London, EC3M 5AG. tel: +44 20 3977 3623 or +44 20 8162 3623, mob: +44 7769 924324, email: charities@mandg.co.uk

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Build, Build, Build - grants update

Despite the current economic challenges faced by the country, Homes England, the Government agency which deals with housing matters, has released details of the future fund of £12.2 billion to deliver up to 180,000 new homes over the next five years. This is seen by many in the housing sector as a tremendous result.

In announcing the new grant funding, Homes England has made specific reference to almshouses, seeking to ensure almshouse charities will continue to apply for the new funding to upgrade existing properties or build new schemes.

New-build and modernisation

For almshouses, money is available for the provision of new and existing homes, where there is remodelling taking place. There is no hard and fast rule as to what constitutes remodelling but generally the work proposed needs to be significant, involving alteration of the internal layout, provision of enhanced bathing facilities, environmental matters, etc., and potentially being capable of being used for a different client group (for example couples

rather than for single occupancy). When obtaining grants there is a level of bureaucracy involved, as you would imagine with public funds but this is not as significant as you may have heard and many almshouses have already taken advantage of such funding. If you would like to talk to trustees who have been through the process, do let the team know at The Almshouse Association.

For remodelling projects you do not need to be a Registered Provider with Homes England. There is a particular desire through this programme for new-build projects to be very carefully designed, especially around the needs of older people and the nationally accepted HAPPI principles (*Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation*). The Government is particularly keen to see bids for grants for projects in rural locations and from anyone who may be interested in using Modern Methods of Construction' (MMC), especially on larger schemes.

As stated previously in the Gazette, The Almshouse Association works closely with the Almshouse Consortium Ltd which is a separate partnership body

Key points:

- £12.2 billion of grants
- Grants available to bid for from December 2020
- Funding is for new schemes that start on site from spring 2021
- Grants available up to March 2026. All projects to start by March 2025
- Particularly targetting schemes in rural locations
- Looking for projects aimed at housing for older people
- Almshouses specially excluded from many new obligations

established 12 years ago to help almshouse projects attract grants. Since that time they have dealt with 139 schemes helping to obtain £48 million of grant aid to either build new or remodel 1,400 properties. Whilst the amount of money made available is significant, it will be distributed on a first come first served basis as usual.

If you are interested in exploring a project though the ACL, please email Sue Holden, Administrator for the Almshouse Consortium Limited, at acitabitha@gmail.com

Advice on making changes to your Trustee Body

A Governing documents usually specify how many trustees an almshouse charity should have, how they should be appointed and who the trustees should be. These requirements are often based on the wishes of the original benefactor and do not always serve the charity's best interests in the 21st century.

So what can trustees do?

We are often contacted by members who are struggling to fill the trustee roles as set out in their governing document, or who would like to bring more expertise on board but their governing document does not allow for this. They want to know whether they can make changes and, if so, how to go about this.

Making changes to the trustee body is considered an administrative change and the starting point when considering making any amendments is to consult your existing governing document to see whether you have the relevant powers to do so. For incorporated charities (Charitable Incorporated Organisations or Charitable Companies Limited by

Guarantee), there is usually a provision for amendments stated in the governing document.

Unincorporated charities, however, can either rely on a power in their governing document or on section 280 of the Charities Act 2011. Where a charity's governing document is an Act of Parliament or a Royal Charter and there is no express power to make amendments to the governing document, any changes will need to be approved either by Parliament or the Privy Council.

Removing ex Officio or Nominative Trustees

If the charity would like to remove the requirement to have an ex officio (eg. the local vicar) or nominative trustee (someone nominated by the local council), the charity must seek written permission from the appointing body to remove this right. For example, if the charity wishes to remove the obligation to have the local vicar as an ex officio trustee, they will need confirmation from the diocese that they are happy to relinquish this right. Once this confirmation has been received, the

trustees can take a resolution at a quorate meeting and send a copy of this, along with the minutes of the meeting, to the Charity Commission to update your governing document. Charitable companies should also advise Companies House of the changes.

Adding new trustees

Where a charity wants to bring more trustees on board, they can consider allowing for more co-optative trustees. In this instance they should agree at a quorate meeting the number of co-optative trustees they would like to have and pass this as a resolution. They should then advise the Charity Commission and, if needed, Companies House, accordingly. If you have any questions about making changes to your governing document, identifying whether you have the power to make such changes or are unsure what changes would be best for your charity, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Association at admin@almshouses.org or tel: 01344 452922.

Tell us about your almshouses ... virtually!

You have amazing stories to tell and we want everyone to hear them!

During our 75th Anniversary in 2021, we want to tell everyone about you and your amazing almshouses by sharing some great stories with the press and presenting them on our website and through our social media channels.

about your fabulous almshouse/s and learn more about their history, your residents and your charity's achievements. Whatever is important to you. It's a really simple process. We would organise



We know your stories will include some fascinating historical facts about your charity, the benefactor, anniversaries and any historic gifts to residents. Sometimes the best stories are those the residents tell about their own lives. With this in mind, we would love to spend a few minutes with you, virtually, to chat to you

everything for you and it would be a great opportunity to showcase your achievements.

Please join us in helping to raise the awareness of your great work and the almshouse movement. Please contact us to find out more:

gerryharmon@almshouses.org

Representation continues through the pandemic

A Coronavirus has continued to change the ways we interact with each other. In terms of our engagement, this has meant shifting away from in-person meetings to a reliance on Zoom or Teams. This does create some difficulties with a lack of personal touch, so forming strong, effective relationships can be tricky.

Secondly, we saw almshouses discussed widely in the House of Lords in October. The discussion was led by Lord Kennedy of Southwark, himself an almshouse trustee, with a number of contributions from across the House. Discussions such as these are central to our objectives and we must seek to make them a more regular occurrence.

meetings with David Rutley MP, and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Our interactions have led to clarification on policy for our members, such as access to the Green Homes Grant, and also visits by MPs, such as Damian Green MP, to almshouse charities. But we must not rest on our laurels. We will continue to



Nonetheless, this has not stopped us from making some significant progress in the last few months.

Firstly, we have reaped the rewards of our work with The Charity Commission and received recognition of the official almshouse definition. This is a great success and provides The Almshouse Association with a strong foundation to push for future changes which can support our members.

What was clear was that almshouses have quiet but far reaching support, with MPs hugely positive about the unique benefits of almshouses. This is credit to the work of our members. In recent months we have also seen articles published in a number of publications. These include pieces from The Church of England, Labour Housing Group and Local Government Association. We have also had personal

push, ensuring we keep being heard in Parliament and beyond. You can help by writing to your MP, asking them to visit your charity and join the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Almshouses. It is only through continued interaction with politicians, both local and national, that we will be able to push for the real change we are all seeking to achieve.

The Association's first Regional Champions are appointed

A Last summer, The Almshouse Association announced a new and exciting project to help with member engagement across the country: regional representatives who would provide a good listening ear for local charities and give focused signposting to the Association's services available to members. The regional representatives will direct members to the right person at the Association who can provide additional support and guidance if needed.

Pilot project

The Regional Champions project has now been launched and we are delighted to announce that the first seven volunteers have been selected.

The new Regional Champions are:

- **Lincolnshire** - Richard Knipe, The Spalding Almshouse Charity
- **Yorkshire** - Anya Mathewson, Mulberry Property Management
- **County Durham, Tyne & Wear, Northumberland and Scotland** - Paul Mullis, Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association
- **Birmingham, West Midlands and Warwickshire** - David Healey, Sir Josiah Mason Trust
- **Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight** - Joe Waters, Eventide Homes
- **Devon and Cornwall** - Karen Percival, Okehampton United Charity
- **Wiltshire** - Susie Coen, Salisbury City Almshouse & Welfare Charities

All representatives currently work for or are trustees of almshouse charities in

their respective regions and bring with them a wealth of experience in the almshouse sector. They will be in touch with charities in their localities in the coming months to organise regional gatherings, coronavirus restrictions allowing. In time, we hope to have 20 Regional Champions covering the whole of the United Kingdom. Further details will be announced when available. The role of the Regional Champion is to support the Association in engaging with members, providing local expertise and identifying those charities which might need a little extra support from the team at Billingbear Lodge. They will also provide support with our fundraising activities.

Building new local relationships with Age UK

There are partners out there who can help us. Age UK has been working with many almshouse charities over the years and we want to look at ways to strengthen the relationship.

"All older people should have a place they regard as home. We are really pleased that the almshouse movement continues to go from strength to strength and believe that they can be great places for people to live as they grow older, especially where good quality services are available." (Age UK)



agencies on consultative bodies (e.g. Adult Safeguarding Boards).

Advantages of links and collaboration with local Age UKs

A study commissioned and funded by Age UK with support from The Almshouse Association found many potential advantages for almshouse residents, their local communities and the charities, including:

- successful referrals by local Age UKs of people in housing need to almshouse vacancies
- almshouse residents accessing paid-for or free Age UK services (e.g. foot care, cleaning, shopping and handyperson services) helping to maintain independence
- Age UKs supporting almshouse residents with money management and bills (including utilities) and providing benefits advice
- Age UKs offering support/mediation/advocacy to almshouse residents and information and advice which can help to resolve housing issues
- Age UKs accessing almshouse charity grants for individuals or for specific projects

"Today as the world seems full of uncertainty, a home is the secure 'rock' that most of us hold on to. If our member charities and residents can access support such as that offered by many Age UK partner charities, it may ease some of the uncertainty and difficulties associated with older life." (Nick Phillips, The Almshouse Association)

- almshouse charities accessing local and national funding via Age UKs (e.g. from the Big Lottery) and/or learning about new projects in their area (e.g. Joining Forces: Age UK and SSAFA)
- meetings between Age UKs and almshouse charities (trustees, CEOs, front-line staff)
- Age UK speakers at almshouse charity forums and events.

What helps?

Links often grow from a willingness to make connections and plan things together when opportunities arise. Past examples include a 'Housing in Later Life' event organised by a local Age UK with almshouse charities and other local housing providers; exploring opportunities for the almshouse to be a hub for Age UK/joint outreach and activities for residents and the local community; and grants for local Age UK services or individual clients.

An insight into the problems of condensation

'buildings don't breathe, people do'

It is said that humans emit just under a litre of water vapour a day. This, coupled with all the processes of modern life that involve water being used in the home, means that as the dark nights and cooler temperatures arrive, condensation in buildings, particularly older ones, can become an increasing problem.

The issues arise when warm, moist air hits a cold surface, perhaps a cold window or cold wall. Kitchens, bathrooms and north facing walls are

new counterparts and don't have cavities or, for that matter, insulation, and the battle against condensation is often hard fought and not always won.

Without getting too technical, the steeper the temperature gradient through a wall the harder it will be to win against condensation.

Ultimately the answer is a combination of better ventilation and insulation but there are a few quick wins that are worth a try.



Raising the temperature of the surface of the inside face of the walls may help, so simply leave the heating on longer. Cracking open a window when washing up or showering can work wonders too but remember to close the window

often at risk. Well insulated buildings such as 'new-build' properties suffer less with condensation as the warm air inside is kept well away from the colder external wall of the building by a well-insulated cavity.

Many buildings in the almshouse world are much older, sometimes hundreds of years older than their

again when you are finished to keep the heat in.

Extractor fans should be used in line with why they are installed. So often we will find them switched off "to save electricity". Make sure your tumble dryers are well vented to the outside and that drip tanks on condensing dryers are emptied regularly.

Almshouse Association Panel member, Andrew Robinson, BSc (Hons) FRICS MARLA ICIOB, Chartered Surveyor, RICS



Registered Valuer and Director at Andrew Granger & Co., offers advice for the winter months on how to help to combat condensation in older properties

Wet washing left to dry indoors is a complete 'no, no, no', I'm afraid!

I have seen some surprising successes with devices that raise air pressure slightly within buildings to encourage moist air to leave the building via gaps and cracks rather than enter the building but these can be an expensive solution. Dehumidifiers are worth a try for a temporary or urgent problem but here you are tackling symptoms rather than causes.

Almshouse trustees should be wary of anyone selling a remedy that professes to allow buildings to breathe. In 30 years, I have never yet seen a building breathe! What they mean is evaporate.

If a building has moisture evaporating out of its fabric, then that moisture must be going somewhere and that needs dealing with properly. Keeping a building warm and dry is still the best remedy in preventing condensation.

Help and advice on public relations

One of the objectives of the Association's Five-Year Strategy is to raise the profile of almshouses. A large part of this involves speaking to the press and broadcast media, being interviewed and publishing news and stories about almshouses and the almshouse movement. As the Association works on this campaign, more people will learn about our purpose and work and about almshouses in general. This increased profile may mean you will receive approaches from your local media. The Association is here to help you and we are happy for you to refer any journalists to us or to offer any other support as required. There is a full article about public relations on the Association's website at www.almshouses.org/current-issues/

Creating a policy for overnight visitors

The Association has received a number of enquiries from members concerning managing residents' expectations with regard to overnight visitors and dealing with overnight visitors who have overstayed their welcome.

We asked an experienced solicitor for their comments on the subject:

“The issue of overnight visitors staying in almshouse accommodation can become a real issue for almshouse trustees. Of overriding importance is knowing who is on site overnight in case of emergency.

Imagine two scenarios: a fire alarm is triggered, evacuation of permanent residents is complete and a head count tallies with known occupants. A resident then becomes alarmed as "Mr and or Mrs Smith" had their son to stay and no one has seen him.

Alternatively, a fire alarm is triggered and all the expected residents appear but there are a further eight people in the head count.

In both scenarios the real issue is that unless managers know who is on site there is uncertainty as to whether everyone is safe. This reason alone is justification for trustees to have (and adhere to) a policy on overnight visitors. The next consideration is what that policy should contain. This can vary widely depending on the nature of the accommodation and the varying profiles of residents, making it more or less likely that overnight visitors are frequent.”

The full article by Alison MacLennan, of Third Sector Law, is available on the Association's website at www.almshouses.org/current-issues/

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE INSIGHT

Blue text denotes a web link to the full article.

Please visit [The Almshouse Association website](http://www.almshouses.org/news/policy-and-governance-latest-developments) for all links at:

www.almshouses.org/news/policy-and-governance-latest-developments

Property and Planning

The Affordable Homes Programme

The Government announced £12 billion in funding for the Affordable Housing Programme for 2021-2026. The aim of this fund is to provide 180,000 homes around the country. The Almshouse Association welcomes this funding, which has previously been used to support almshouse charities to grow and develop. We hope to see many more examples of this fund being used to support our members. Further guidance on the specifics of the fund will be published shortly. After discussions over recent months, The Almshouse Association is particularly pleased to see almshouses specifically mentioned in the Government's announcement, reiterating the exemption from Right to Buy which almshouses benefit from. The full Government announcement can be found on our [website](#).

Flood Grant Extension

The Government has announced an extension of the £5,000 grant scheme available to homes and businesses affected by flooding in the last year. The Property Flood Resilience (PFR) scheme will be extended by nine months to take into account delays to repair work and the additional pressures placed on local authorities by coronavirus. The new deadline for applications from communities flooded in November 2019 is now 31 December 2021, while those flooded in February 2020 have until 1 July 2022.

Charitable Housing Court Case

The Supreme Court has [dismissed an appeal](#) against the refusal of an Orthodox Jewish Housing Association to house a non-Jewish family. The judgment provides reassurance to charities which limit their activities, in line with their governing document, to particular groups of people but charities must ensure they can show that those people suffer a particular disadvantage, or that the policy is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

New Chair of Homes England

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has [confirmed](#) Peter Freeman as the new Chair of Homes England.

Housing Ombudsman Report

The Housing Ombudsman has issued a [report on cases of severe maladministration](#) in 2019/20 as a further step towards increasing its transparency. These cases should provide a cautionary tale for trustees with regard to the importance of good governance and submitting annual returns on time.

Charities and Charity Law

Almshouse Definition

The Charity Commission publicly recognised our [official definition of an almshouse](#) and has added the definition to their Operation Guidance. We consider this a major milestone as we look to grow and develop the almshouse movement. The definition now gives us greater authority to show the unique nature of almshouses, whilst being able to reference official recognition from a Government body.

5-minute guides

The Charity Commission has released a number of "5-minute guides" to help trustees to carry out their roles in line with the law. The new guides cover five key aspects of charity management – a 'core syllabus' covering the basics that the regulator expects all trustees to be aware of.

They explain the basics of:

- financial oversight
- achieving a charity's purposes
- good decision making
- addressing conflicts of interest
- what to file with the Commission and what support is available.

Further information can be found on [The Charity Commission website](#).

Support and Guidance

The Charity Commission has also published a useful reminder of what charities need to send them and details of the support and guidance they provide. This includes informing the Commission of changes to the charity's details (e.g. changes of trustees or contact details), submitting your charity's annual return, and reporting serious incidents. Similarly, trustees may find the publication 'Charities and Investment Matters – A guide for Trustees' helpful. [Links to both publications are available on our website.](#)

Loan for home improvements

At the Almshouse Association, we are proud to be able to offer support to our members with loans and grants so that they can improve and increase the number of almshouses across the country.



Earlier this year, Bromley and Sheppard's Colleges in Kent received a loan from the Association to refurbish two of the charity's flats and residents Roy and Dorothy Nicholson are delighted. They said:

“We moved into flat 17 in October. It had been completely stripped and required rewiring, new heating and plumbing, redecorating, and bath-



room and kitchen refitting. Because of the heritage a Grade I listed building and the COVID-19 pandemic, the work took many months and involved much problem solving. For us the wait has been beneficial as the holiday we'd planned to celebrate Dorothy's 80th birthday could not happen and we used the extra income to buy new curtains for the bedroom and living room. We are delighted with our new accommodation; the standard of workmanship is outstanding and the flat feels more spacious and airy. Roy is particularly enjoying the kitchen (he is the cook) and his new desk area, both of which have wonderful view of the North Lawn. We are very happy to be here in this beautiful flat and are most grateful to The Almshouse Association for its generous support of Bromley College.”

Highlights of reopening celebrations shared online

Exeter Homes Trust held a low-key celebration, with only a few people attending due to the pandemic, to mark the completion of remodelling work at Atwill Palmer Almshouses, in New North Road, Exeter.

The official unveiling was performed by the Lord Mayor of Exeter, Cllr Peter Holland, with the trust's 150 residents able to join in the occasion through a Facebook page which showcased the new apartments and highlights of the opening event. Alan Williamson, Chairman of the Charity's Directors board, said: "With many of our residents still having to shield, we feel it is important to keep them connected. In addition to the Facebook page, we have also been in regular contact to offer support at this difficult time."

The programme of sympathetic refurbishment work, part funded by a Homes England grant, has provided updated and energy efficient apartments more suited to modern day living. The apartments benefit from new

top: The Lord Mayor of Exeter, Cllr Peter Holland with Alan Williamson, Chairman of Exeter Homes Trust Directors board.

above (from left): Alan Williamson; Cllr Peter Holland; Steven Sitch, General Manager of Exeter Homes Trust; Russ Palmer, architect; Dave Hitt, Managing Director of Fifields Building Services.



Welcome to our new members

The warmest of welcomes to two new Almshouse Association member charities:

The Nalder Trust, Brockenhurst, Hampshire
South Newton Peace Memorial Bungalows Charity, Wiltshire

kitchens, wet rooms and utility rooms, with underfloor heating, double-glazing and improved insulation.

Extensions at the rear have made the properties larger and more functional in design.

The outside areas have also had a new lease of life, with enhanced landscaping providing new terraces and flowerbeds and there is a community room for residents.

Alan Williamson added: "We are delighted that we have been able to

retain the distinctive character of the buildings, while upgrading the apartments to make them more modern and energy efficient.

"We are committed to providing accommodation of the very best standard for our residents. We are, therefore, continually re-evaluating our buildings and budgets in order to identify any improvements that could be made to future-proof the accommodation, making it as sustainable and comfortable as possible."

Almshouse resident architect designs homes extension

What was once a kitchen is now a cosy bedroom, thanks to a home-grown modernisation scheme at one of the James Butler Almshouses in Bagshot.

Of the ten original bedsit almshouses, four have been the subject of "two into one" conversions and now comprise two homes suitable for a couple, with one being enlarged to the rear to provide a separate bedroom.

Creating extra space

The latest scheme involved extending what was the kitchen into a recessed area at the front of the almshouse to create a separate bedroom. An attractive kitchenette has been provided in the former bed-sitting room, which is now a



lounge/diner, with extra space created by the removal of an unused chimney breast. The plans were drawn up by retired architect John Higgins, who is a resident of the almshouses and was happy to offer his expertise in finding a way of providing a separate bedroom for the bedsits. It is hoped to convert the remaining bedsit almshouses in the same way when funds allow. The cost of £40,000 was part-funded by a bequest from a former resident, together with grants from Windlesham Parish Council, Surrey Heath Borough Council, Surrey County Council and Waitrose. The work was carried out by PJM Construction of Lightwater.

Fundraising for charity

Over the past 11 years, over £60,000 has been raised for local, national and international charities through coffee mornings organised at Archbishop Holgate Hospital in Hemsworth, West Yorkshire, by Father David Wheatley, who has been Master at the Hospital since 2009.

Initially these were held in his home but now take place in the beautiful setting of Ebor Hall, a new purpose built on-site community facility. The weekly events are attended by residents and their families, friends and local people, where everyone enjoys a chat, a laugh and a general get-together (pre-COVID). In addition, a number of evening events are also well attended.



Charity fundraising (left to right): Robert Hyde, trustee; Roland Hawcroft, Chairman; Ethel Turner, resident; Gail Whitham, volunteer; Kath Hall and Anita Bridge, residents; Ann Ulyott, Clerk; Father David Wheatley, Master.

Tribute to Founder's granddaughter

It was with very great regret and sadness to hear that Eventide Homes' President and long-serving trustee, Janet Edgecombe, passed away peacefully in November. Janet had been a

charity during his mayoral term and served as Chair from 1936 to 1960, and her father, Kenneth, was a trustee from 1947 and Chair from 1961 to 1986. Janet always maintained a close and

An appreciation by Ken Mantock, Chairman, The Eventide Homes, Bournemouth

ting from her kind and professional approach when I joined the charity over 25 years ago as a new young trustee. It was later I learnt just how very caring she was and what a lovely sense of humour she also had. Her dedication to our charity, its causes, traditions and values are an inspiration.

A remarkable lady

It is testament to Janet's service and that of her father and grandfather, that the charity is flourishing today and has made such a difference to so many people's lives over the years. She was also a well-respected school-teacher, stalwart of the Scouts, a pianist for Bournemouth Gang Show and a pillar of her local church. She was also a friend to so many people. On behalf of The Eventide Homes residents, staff and trustees, I pay tribute to Janet, a remarkable lady who contributed so much to Eventide. I know we all hold her and her family in our prayers and thoughts.



Janet (in her wheelchair) with trustees and residents in 2017, outside the homes which were refurbished in her honour.

trustee of the charity since 1970 and was Chair from 1996, a post she held until poor health resulted in her retirement in 2017. Janet's grandfather, Alderman Edgecombe, founded the

interested eye on the management of the charity, the welfare of residents and the running of the estate, even though in recent years she was less able to visit the almshouses as regularly as she would have liked. She was incredibly supportive of her fellow trustees and staff and I recall benefit-

Chairman retires

Alan Westall has retired after 25 years as a trustee of The Pearn Almshouses Trust in Plymouth, serving as chairman for 20 years. During his tenure there have been some significant developments, including increasing the number of homes from 12 to 21.

There was major expansion in 2002 when the Trust acquired land on which to build three 'cottage' units of three apartments in each, which at the time were considered state-of-the-art and were featured on the cover of The Almshouse Association annual report.

Soon after assuming the chairmanship, Alan realised there was no



percentage to cover the maintenance and management costs met by the Trust. This has proved most successful and only once in 25 years has there been a problem - when the water meter was wrongly calibrated resulting in a substantial refund! The trustees have maintained and

precise formula for setting the annual maintenance charge, so the Rent Officer was asked to assess a fair rent, to which was added an additional

enhanced the properties as and when needed thanks to realistic budgeting and mindful of their responsibilities under the Objects of the Trust. Alan said: "It has been a privilege to serve the Trust and I leave the management in the capable hands of Chair, Maggie Clinton, three supporting trustees and a Trust manager." Paying tribute, Maggie Clinton said: "I have known Alan for 14 of his 25 years as a trustee and took over from him as Chairman three years ago. He has always been very popular with the trustees and residents and we send him our best wishes in his retirement. His work standards are high and we all hope to emulate them. He will be greatly missed."

Whiteley Homes Founder's Day

Each year, on September 29, The Whiteley Homes Trust in Surrey honours the birthday of their founder and benefactor, William Whiteley. As part of the celebrations, each resident receives a small gift from the Trust as specified in William's will and they also hold a Founder's Day service in the Village church, St Mark's. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions around church services, residents were unable to hold the traditional service. So, with a huge effort from staff and residents, they put together a virtual event. Part of the annual service also includes the Founder's Day Awards, organised to show thanks to those who contribute most to the community and to recognise their kindness and commitment to fellow residents.

Nominations are made by other villagers and staff. Three cups were awarded:

The Trustees Cup (top): Presented by Chairman, Rod Bennion to the resident who has made an outstanding contribution to the social elements of the Village.

2020 Winner - Barry Peters. Barry has been instrumental in setting up a monthly supper club and during lockdown has continued to use his skills to help other residents by cooking takeaway meals.



Celebrating 100 years



Mrs Margaret Heslop, a resident at the Trowbridge Almshouses Trust, recently celebrated her 100th birthday. She was presented with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the Trust by Zoe Pace, Clerk to the trustees, accompanied by the suitably "socially distanced" Mayor of Trowbridge, Peter Fuller,

and the Chairman of the Trust, Cllr Glyn Bridges. Neighbouring residents joined in with good wishes, along with Mrs Heslop's daughter, niece and family. Zoe said: "We all wished her a happy birthday and cut the cake! It was really lovely to be part of Mrs Heslop's celebrations - none of us had met someone who has reached 100 years. We also saw the card she received from the Queen. It was a wonderful experience and also the Mayor's first official appointment!"



The Community Cup (centre):

Presented by Chief Executive Officer, Rachel Hill to the resident who has made an outstanding contribution to Village life

2020 Winner - Gill Lindley. Gill has worked hard in the charity shop to make improvements and provide much needed income for the welfare fund. During lockdown she has helped her neighbours with their gardening and has planned and prepared for the safe reopening of the charity shop.

The Care Cup (bottom): Presented by Trustee, Dr Beverly Castleton to the resident who has made an outstanding contribution to residents living within Ingram House, the Eliza Palmer Hub or Huntley House

2020 Winner - Beryl Slingo. Beryl takes library books to those residents in our care areas who aren't able to go to the Village library themselves. She has continued to do this through lockdown, delivering the books whatever the weather and carefully making the choices as she has got to know the readers so well.

Many congratulations to all the worthy winners! Full details: <https://whiteleyvillage.org.uk/happy-founders-day/>

Claire Atkins, The Whiteley Homes

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The Almshouses Gazette
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The Almshouse Association
Billingbear Lodge
Maidenhead Road
Wokingham
Berks RG40 5RU

Tel: 01344 452922

Fax: 01344 862062

email: AlmshouseSupport@almshouses.org

web: www.almshouses.org

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The joy and community spirit of almshouses

Christmas may have been a bit different this year, but the joy of almshouses remains timeless. So we thought what better time to share a few of the photos that members have sent in of their almshouses at Christmas time.



Hickey's Almshouses, The Richmond Charities
(photo by Chantal Richards).



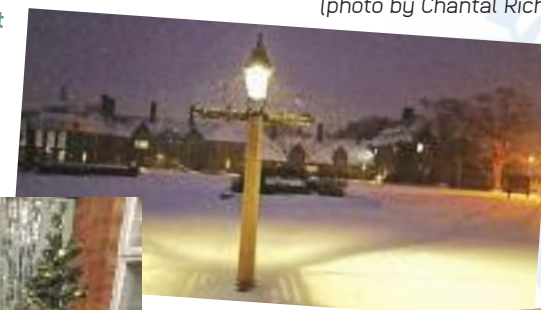
above: Residents at Hutchens Trust, Penzance.



Michel's Almshouses, The Richmond Charities
(photo by Chantal Richards).



left and right: Foord Almshouses, Rochester.



above, left and right: Royal Albert and St Swithun's Homes, Worcester. Light up your porch competition 2019.



below: St Mary's Hospital, Chichester
bottom: Glover's Trust almshouses, Sutton Coldfield.



above: Liversage Trust, Derby. below: Ufford Almshouse, Suffolk, residents Christmas lunch 2019.

