



## KEY HOUSING STATISTICS



**8.4 million people** in the UK are living in unaffordable, insecure and unsuitable housing.

(Heriot-Watt University, Scotland on behalf of The National Housing Federation - 2019)



**Council House waiting lists stood at 1.15m** for England in 2018/2019.

Shelter - 2018



**Appropriate housing can keep older people healthy**, support them to live independently and reduce the need for social care (House of Commons, 2018a).

Age UK, Later in Life in the UK Report - 2019

## Almshouses – Did you know?

1. There are 30,000+ almshouse dwellings throughout the UK providing affordable homes for over 36,000 residents.
2. Almshouses are owned and managed by a network of more than 1600 independent almshouse charities across the UK.
3. Almshouses are the oldest form of social housing with a history of over a 1000 years. The oldest almshouse foundation still in existence dates from circa 990.
4. Almshouses are often laid out in a traditional three-sided square that promotes neighbourliness and a community spirit yet still allows independent living.
5. Almshouses are legally, historically and socially unique.
6. Over 500 almshouses in the UK are listed buildings and part of our national heritage.

**At a time when there is a severe shortage of affordable rental accommodation, the role of almshouses is now more vital than ever.**

Originally almshouses were called 'bede' houses or 'hospitals' in the sense of shelters and places of hospitality.

It was during the late 16th century that the medieval craft guilds founded many 'hospitals' to provide care for the elderly in their declining years. Today, links with these city livery companies remain strong, with many still retaining their own almshouses. Famous amongst these benefactors was the Mercer, Richard (Dick) Whittington.

Almshouses are managed by almshouse charities, whose trustees are recruited locally and who have local accountability.

Residents pay a weekly maintenance contribution. This is similar to rent but very different in law. The contribution is less than a commercial rent rate and should not cause hardship or distress to residents.

Nearly all market towns in the UK have an almshouse or almshouses.

Almshouses cannot be bought under a 'right to buy'. They remain as a permanent part of the community in perpetuity meaning generation after generation of local people in housing need can live in a secure place they call home.

Almshouse charities provide accommodation for those in local housing need. Needs are often based on the requirements of the local community at a specific time and are also guided by the wishes of the almshouse benefactor.

Some almshouses were specifically created for members of the public from trades such as local retired fishermen, miners and retail workers, in addition to the elderly, by the business owners of the time. Scandalous conditions of the workhouses in the Victorian era also inspired wealthy philanthropists to bequeath almshouses. It is estimated that approximately 30% of current almshouses were founded during this period.

Almshouses are a sanctuary, a supportive retreat and part of an integrated 'micro-community' that respects independent living.

Almshouse charities are regulated by the Charity Commission.

At The Almshouse Association, it is our vision for almshouses to be at the forefront of the community housing concept, providing an 'exemplar housing model'.

At a time when there is a severe shortage of affordable local rental accommodation, the role of an almshouse charity is now more vital than ever.

In some rural areas, almshouses are the only provider of affordable, community housing.

More almshouses are being built today than have been since the Victorian era; some have no age restrictions and are able to accommodate families, people with disabilities and key workers.

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**#SupportAlmshouses**

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