



the almshouses Gazette

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A warm welcome to our new Ambassadors

The Almshouse Association was pleased and honoured to be able to welcome Patrick Vernon OBE, community activist and campaigner for the voluntary sector, as a new Ambassador for the Association in September 2020.

We now have the pleasure of welcoming and introducing two



more new Ambassadors who will be working alongside us to champion the timeless concept of local almshouses for local people in need and celebrate the great work of the trustees running almshouses. They will also use their extensive knowledge and networks to spread the word about the almshouse movement and help us to generate funds to further support our members, support our engagement at

government level and be at the forefront of our 75th Anniversary celebrations this year.

Baroness Joan Bakewell

Baroness Joan Bakewell, DBE, HonFBA, FRSA, is a journalist, television presenter and Labour Party peer, and has represented the Association at The

House of Lords, most recently asking the question regarding the need to review Section 106 planning guidance to extend its benefits to almshouse charities to allow them to increase their housing provision.

Baroness Bakewell said:

“Though many almshouses are housed in heritage buildings they are not a thing of the

past. Today they offer accommodation to the needy and a way of life that reduces loneliness.”

Dan Cruickshank

Dan Cruickshank is a British art historian and BBC television presenter with a special interest in the history of architecture. Dan has expressed an interest in making a documentary about the history of almshouses.

He said: “The 1,000-year history of the

almshouse movement is a story of compassion, companionship and community, and a demonstration that these admirable qualities can produce a much-loved architecture of enduring quality. Almshouses, the life they engender and the architectural form they take, remain relevant today. Their history is a topic of intense interest that deserves to be shared and celebrated, with its lessons learned and applied.”

In the next Gazette we will introduce three more Ambassadors; Kevin Crossley-Holland, renowned poet, translator from Anglo-Saxon and author for children; Justin Welby, The Archbishop of Canterbury; and Peter Wyman CBE DL, Chair of the Care Quality Commission. We are thankful for the amazing support from all our Ambassadors and look forward to working with them during our 75th year and beyond.



The Almshouse Association's 75th Anniversary celebrations are gathering pace and 200 celebration packs have already been requested by members. Turn to pages 6/7 to find out more.

Parliamentary Group discusses almshouse movement

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Almshouses (APPG) was officially launched on February 4, attended by a number of MPs and Lords.

The inaugural meeting was largely designed to elect officers to the group who will help to manage it for the next year.

Siobhain McDonagh, MP for Mitcham and Morden will be the Chair and Sally-Ann Hart, MP for Hastings and Rye the Vice Chair.

Barry Gardiner, MP for Brent North and Baroness

Judith Jolly will be Officers. The Almshouse Association will act as Secretariat to the group.

The APPG gives the Association and its members the opportunity to better

engage with those in Parliament and Government. We hope to use this link as a means of ensuring members of parliament are aware of issues affecting almshouses,

whilst also promoting new research and developments. At the meeting, Almshouse Association CEO Nick Phillips had the opportunity to discuss the almshouse movement today and its ambitions for the future. We would like to thank all those who attended and look forward to working with the group and our other supporters in the future.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S COMMENT

Gardens, old buildings and coping with change!

Drafting this report I had three phrases in mind: 'gardens', 'the challenge of managing old buildings' and 'Inshallah!' An Arabic friend of mine ends every plan with the term - Inshallah! God Willing! Even ... "Let's catch up next week ... Inshallah!"

It made me think if ever there was a year for adding "God Willing" to the end of every plan, it's this year! We have made so many plans, changed them, reviewed them, changed them again but we still move forward ... God Willing! The days are getting longer, birds are singing and the vaccine is well and truly rolling out (Inshallah!) and one of the strengths of almshouse design that has been recognised in the recent RICS report on almshouses, is the value of a

growing space. A garden or courtyard, ideally, but if not there is widespread recognition that a patch of ground or window box can add a great deal to our wellbeing. Almshouse residents enjoy great benefit from gardening and spring is the time our gardens begin to reward us for all our hard work. We have been building a portfolio of garden pictures so please do take the opportunity to capture residents enjoying almshouse gardens, by taking a selfie or socially distanced photo. We love seeing them. This year we have entered early discussions with The National Garden Scheme to see how or where we could work together. They are really interested in the variety of almshouse gardens so I will let you know how this goes. We all know the extent to which almshouses have played a vital role in our communities over the centuries, with tens of thousands of people in need finding sanctuary and companionship in the almshouse community. But what about the buildings? How important are they?

To many people, almshouses are the living embodiment of the founder, with a sense of pride and connection to the history of philanthropy that established them. To others, however, they are becoming a growing burden and drain on the charity's narrow resources. The question of maintaining the historic buildings of the movement will become ever more pressing as costs, the green agenda and the needs of elderly residents challenge the constraints of listed buildings. Our fundraising strategy includes a new tranche of support, specifically for those charities most in need, to maintain their listed buildings. We are currently working with Historic England to develop a guide for local conservation officers and to set some parameters that members can refer conservation officers to when



considering small changes in historic almshouse buildings. This will take time but I hope it will save some of our listed buildings from being sold and lost to the movement.

During this work we have found that a historian and a television company are interested in the stories around almshouses and we would love to promote their great history. The real benefit of highlighting the stories behind historic almshouses is a rise in interest that can turn into new trustees, more funding for the charity and general awareness of the movement.

This being said, how does a charity move forward if costs of maintaining the listed buildings are rising? Are the listed buildings to remain part of the charity forever? If not, are they to be

sold into the private sector and lost to the almshouse movement forever? Very tough choices.

There are examples where charities have leased or repurposed their listed buildings to derive a greater income whilst rebuilding equivalent modern almshouses for residents, thereby keeping the listed buildings as part of the charity. Thomas Parsons Charity in Ely, whose almshouse cottages were a landmark in the town, struggled with this very issue. The charity reviewed all options and are in the process of building modern purpose-built almshouses in an area with good access to the shops and public transport, while retaining their original buildings and deriving a commercial income from them. (More on this project in a future Gazette.) Many of you must be facing difficult decisions running almshouses every day and interpreting the benefactor's wishes is hard.

We believe that wonderful historic almshouse buildings represent centuries of compassion, philanthropy and architectural history and today give residents and trustees a sense of pride. We also know that retrofitting IT, energy saving additions, wider stairs and lifts, new windows, etc., all come with cost and conservation control. We will try and support your plans whichever way you decide to go. Enjoy spring, stay safe and we look forward to seeing you at either our September 75th Anniversary event, our online seminars or other networking events in the future ... Inshallah!

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive

Tell us your news, quirks and history

If your charity has a story of interest, has a quirky rule or conditions that you would be happy to share with us to help raise the profile of almshouses, please let me know. Ipsos, the market research company, identified certain elements that the population are becoming increasingly interested in. Nostalgia and history are at the top. The history of your charity is probably really interesting to the public so if you are happy to do so, let's share it. Not, as my old neighbour used to say witheringly: "nostalgia is not what it once was and history is just so passé!"

Contact us with your stories at Karenmcadam@almshouses.org or Nickphillips@almshouses.org

Important role for Almshouse Association branding

The Almshouse Association launched its new branding in spring 2020. Our new logo and typeface were designed to evoke a sense of 'rootedness' together with a modernity that looks to the future. The three-sided square incorporated in the logo embraces the tradition of so many almshouse buildings and the community values of the almshouse movement.

The logo was first seen on our spring 2020 Gazette and 2019 Annual Report and was then rolled out to our website, social media accounts, email newslet-

ters, electronic and hard copy stationery and marketing publications. Bespoke 'Member' and 'Panel Consultant' versions were also created for members to use on their own websites and

stationery to reflect their Almshouse Association membership.

(If you have not done so already, please contact the Association for an electronic file.)

Our hope is that, a year on, our members now all recognise our new logo and our mission, in this our 75th year, is to spread the branding recognition further afield to the general public, to central and local government, charities, organisations and businesses alike.

What is branding?

Branding is a marketing practice in which a name, symbol or design is created that is easily identifiable as belonging to a particular company or organisation. This helps to identify a particular service or product and distinguish it from other products and services.

Why is branding important?

Branding is important because it not only makes a memorable impression on consumers but allows customers and supporters to know what to expect from an organisation. It is a way of distinguishing yourself and clarifying what it is you offer and how you wish to be perceived. Branding is absolutely critical because of the overall impact it makes on a company or organisation. Branding can change how people perceive a product or service, help attract new business and increase awareness of an organisation, product or service.



Branding encourages recognition
The most important aspect of branding is its value in attracting recognition for an organisation and enabling it to become more widely known. A distinctive and easily recognisable logo is the most important element of achieving wider recognition, as it is essentially the face of the organisation. A logo design should be powerful and easily memorable, making an impression on a person at first glance. Printed promotional products are a way of getting this across.

Branding generates new contacts

Strong branding generally results in a positive impression of an organisation, attracting individuals and other organisations to want to work with you



because of the familiarity and assumed dependability of using a name they can trust. Once a brand has been well-established, word of mouth will be the organisation's best and most effective marketing technique.

Improving employee/volunteer pride and satisfaction

When an employee works for a strongly branded company and truly stands behind the brand, they will be more satisfied with their job and have a higher degree of pride in the work that they do.

Creating trust

A professional appearance and well-strategised branding will help the organisation build trust with consumers, potential partners and businesses. People are more likely to work with an organisation that has a polished and professional portrayal.

Fire safety policy for overnight visitors

LETTER TO THE EDITOR regarding 'overnight visitors' article in the Gazette, winter 2020/21, issue 261. Association Panel Consultant on Fire Safety, Harry Paviour, expressed concern that although the author of the article was right in suggesting that a Visitor Policy should be in place, it should ideally be included within the Fire Safety Policy for each almshouse that is large enough to have visitor accommodation. The policy must include a Visitors Book which is easily accessible and maintained with arrival and departure details of ALL visitors. This could then be handed to the emergency services, together with the names of all the residents, so that a roll call can be taken. Harry has advised that he is very happy for members to contact him for help and advice on harry.paviour@btinternet.com or tel No. 02392 502337.

Avoid condensation by using lime plaster

In response to Panel Consultant Andrew Robinson's article on condensation in the Gazette, winter 2020/21, issue 261, J R Hudson got in touch with his experience of lime plaster and writes:

"Lime plaster was used widely until the 1920s when it was replaced by Portland cement which is not porous. I used to live in a house built in the 1920s which had serious problems of condensation. I now live in a house built in the 1890s which has largely not been modernised and so still has its lime plaster in place. I have no condensation.

For any almshouse building built before 1920, lime plaster will almost certainly have been used. If that has not been replaced with Portland cement, then using lime plaster for any present day work will prevent condensation. You can obtain more information on this subject from <http://schoolofnaturalbuilding.co.uk/>"

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The products/services and claims made in the Almshouses 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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Is your charity struggling? We're here to help ...

A Each year we identify members who have not submitted their annual return to the Charity Commission within 10 months of the end of their financial year. We know that this means some may need our help. In 2020 we undertook a project to contact these charities to ascertain the reason for the delay in submission and to offer our support in helping them to comply with this requirement under S169 of the Charities Act 2011.

For many, the delay in submission was simply an administrative error, which was quickly rectified. For some, however, there were more fundamental issues, which can be broadly categorised as: Governance, Finance and Information Technology.

Governance

A common reason cited for the delay in submitting an annual return was that the trustee responsible for this had been unwell for several months, had resigned, or had sadly passed away. Whilst such circumstances are understandably challenging, it highlights the need for members to have processes in place to cope with long-term trustee absences and for adequate succession planning.

We're aware that trustee recruitment is an issue for many of our members and we have offered guidance on this

subject in previous Gazette articles and also held some trustee recruitment masterclasses last year. If you would like us to run these again or would like some more bespoke support in finding new trustees, get in touch with the team and we will do our best to help.

Finance

When contacting members about their annual return, it became clear that some charities were struggling with their finances. During 2020, some members experienced a decline in their investment income and had voids, which has impacted their bottom line. This has highlighted other issues in the way the charity is funded, particularly where weekly maintenance contributions (WMC) are not set at a level that covers the cost of running the almshouses or allows for reserves to be built.

The Association offers guidance on setting WMCs in Standards of Almshouse Management and covered this topic in the Gazette, autumn 2020. If your charity needs support in increasing its WMC, please get in touch and we can support you through this process.

Information Technology

Your annual return must be submitted through the Charity Commission's digital service. This has proved problematic for some trustees who lack



internet access or adequate confidence in their IT skills to do this. Such skills are vital in today's world, particularly for communicating with fellow trustees and residents (especially during a pandemic where it is not possible to meet in person); for accessing information and services in a timely manner; and for complying with your obligations as a charity trustee.

There are many organisations offering IT training to people across the UK, including Age UK, many high street banks, other private providers, as well as family and friends.

We will also look at developing our own services to see what support we can provide to members to improve your digital skills.

As always, we are here to support our members and if any of the issues above are affecting your charity, please do let us know - we are here to help.

New clerk's experience of turning a charity around

“Our charity was founded in the 17th century as four almshouses for poor widows and initially there was also an apprenticeship grant, although this no longer exists. The current almshouses were built in the 1960s and have since been updated with central heating, double glazing and an extra fire exit. In latter years the Board has comprised 4-6 trustees and a clerk. In 2018 the charity lost trustees due to retirement and death and one of four almshouses became empty. Two new trustees were appointed but the clerk to the trustees was looking to retire and the remaining trustees were aware that governance needed to change - but where to start? Having recently given up work and been invited to consider becoming clerk, I accepted the role in February 2019. The role was 'not too onerous' I was briefed (attendance at one

This article, sent in by our 'candid clerk', was so well written and full of valuable advice that we did not want to precis. To read it in full, please visit our website at www.almshouses.org and search for: "New clerk talks candidly about her experiences in turning a charity around".

meeting a year, write the minutes, collect the weekly maintenance contribution, sort out the occasional repair or maintenance, liaise with residents and hold the keys for the empty unit). Fortunately, I was encouraged, along with the new chairperson, to attend The Almshouse Association's 'Induction for Trustees and Clerks' course. It was a great forum in which to ask questions and to inform ourselves by talking to members as well as listening to the presenters. It must also be said that it became obvious, from conversations that we had during the day,

that many other almshouse charities were making similar mistakes and omissions to those that we were. The most valuable resources, The Standards of Almshouse Management and the Support and Care manual, were also available and are easily accessed online. These are very enlightening documents and are encyclopedias of best practice for running the charity, performing the roles of clerk and trustee and ensuring good governance. We were also encouraged to use the support of The Almshouse Association. On attending the next trustee meeting and feeding back some of the information in relation to where the charity stood and where it should be, one of the trustees felt that they no longer had the personal or IT skills to continue, given the pace and nature of change required and that was when my journey into charity clerk-ing began in earnest.”

New Twickenham homes

Twickenham MP Munira Wilson has welcomed the creation of a new estate of almshouse accommodation in Twickenham. Wright's Almshouses on Heath Road have been developed by The Richmond Charities and provide new homes for nine older residents of the borough. Munira Wilson said: "It is very exciting to have a new estate of almshouses in Twickenham. It is hugely positive for the borough and its housing provision that The Richmond Charities continues to expand in order to house more of the borough's elderly and in-need residents."

The Richmond Charities now looks after 140 almshouses and is a key part of the borough's housing for older people.

Chief Executive, Juliet Ames-Lewis said: "The charity is seeking to expand further in the coming years as we have so many elderly residents of the borough in need of better accommodation and who wish to join our thriving and supportive community".

The new residents moved into Wright's Almshouses in September and October last year. Resident, Norman May said: "My future seemed bleak but I was so happy when



I heard that I was being offered an almshouse. The accommodation is fabulous, beyond my wildest expectations and in the perfect location for me. All the staff are so lovely, really helpful, friendly, empathic and perceptive. Now I'm looking forward to the future again, making new friends and enjoying life."

*Juliet Ames-Lewis, Chief Executive
The Richmond Charities*

The role in fostering resilience in relational care

Resilience is generally thought of as the ability to withstand or survive adverse events and therefore as a desirable quality, whether for inanimate objects or living creatures. But what does it really mean for people and in particular older people? Is it something that can be built up over time and therefore

with age, or is it lost with increasing physical or mental frailty? Human resilience has been described as 'how we cope with life's ups and downs' (1) and it is 'correlated with improved mental health and lower mortality rates' (2). It is directly linked with positive emotions: the challenge of staying strong in the face of loss or anxiety can be met in part by taking conscious pleasure in good company, laughter and the 'small' pleasures of life such as enjoyable food, nature and sunshine. Author Atul Gawande, with whom some people will be familiar through his Reith Lectures on the BBC, believes that in older age we shift more towards 'appreciating everyday pleasures' (3).

by Jenny Kartupelis

My studies strongly suggest that interpersonal relationships play a critical role in nurturing this type of positivity: 'relational care' has advantages in comparison even to 'person-centred care', a concept which was critical in improving the care ethos. For older people, relationships may include those with each other, with younger generations of family and friends and with carers (formal or informal).

In general, longer term relationships are the most valuable, as the trust and acceptance that are built are instrumental in sharing stories and finding shape and meaning in the past and present. However, sometimes a much briefer relationship can be just as important when people find a passing and yet intense companionship.

Mutuality is the key

The key to relational care is mutuality, where there is not a one-way street of giving and receiving but, instead, older people are enabled to retain autonomy and agency such that they can contribute to and know themselves to have a place in their community.

Adversity can also be counteracted by finding meaning and purpose in life, which for some people may be associated with spirituality or even a formal religion.

Reflecting a rich diversity

Society tends to have such incongruent views about 'the elderly': on the one hand, they are the stalwart survivors of harder times (though increasingly fewer now saw the war), on the other they are fragile, decrepit and in need of shielding from the wider world. Sadly, the good intentions of protecting the older generation encouraged by advertising during the pandemic, may have exacerbated this latter view. There is no need for such a radical dichotomy of perceptions, older people are people who have grown older and therefore reflect all the rich diversity of humanity. Every human can benefit from being resilient to the never-ending challenges of life and in my next article I will consider how an almshouse environment that favours relational care can play a key role in this respect.

- (1) *Making Relational Care Work for Older People* (Kartupelis, J, 2021, Routledge, London and New York) p19
- (2) *Person-Centered Communication with Older Adults* (Storlie, T A, 2015, Academic Press, San Diego and London) p113
- (3) *Being Mortal* (Gawande, A, 2015, Profile Books, London)



75th celebrations begin to blossom

Spring has sprung and gardens and hedgerows are bursting with life – such a welcome sight to lift our spirits. Thank you to everyone who has requested our special celebration pack. More than 200 and counting! Please give us a call if yours has not arrived yet.



Over the coming months, there will be more support materials available on our website to help with any promotional activities you may have planned, so make sure you keep an eye on our website for the latest news. We are overwhelmed with the passion and enthusiasm of our members for joining us in celebration of this special year. After such a challenging time, your involvement really cements the dedication and fervour you have always shown about your almshouses and the almshouse

movement. We can't wait to start sharing your stories and celebrations over the coming months!

Press relations

Throughout 2021, you will also hear more about our press connections with increased interest from journalists to help us raise the profile of almshouses throughout the UK. We are working behind the scenes to really strengthen our relationship with the media. This will support us to gain more local, regional and national press coverage. The celebration pack includes flyers on how to engage with your local press but you can also contact us for help with developing these relationships.

Parliament



The All Party Parliamentary Group for Almshouses (APPG) is now up and running and we are delighted with the response from local and central Government. Association CEO, Nick



Phillips and Jack Baldan, our MP Engagement Officer have been busy building relationships and raising awareness of the almshouse movement and the positive response will take us beyond our 75th anniversary.

75th anniversary celebration

At the time of writing this article, we anticipate organising a garden party event for early September. This will be an event to celebrate our 75th anniversary and will offer an opportunity for you to join us for networking and keynote presentations, during a relaxed and enjoyable day. (The potential date for the event will be the 9th September, TBC.) More information will be available on our website shortly. Please visit: www.almshouses.org



We have already had some wonderful messages from you about many of the anniversaries and milestones you are also celebrating this year and we wanted to share some with you ...

Methodist Homestead Almshouses Charity, Northampton



Methodist Homestead Almshouses Charity are delighted to announce the celebration of 35 years of service for Warden, Jenny Heginbotham (together with her husband Geoff, who has been handyman/gardener at the almshouses for 20 years). Jenny and Geoff are retiring from the charity this year. Alistair Cochran, Secretary and Clerk said: "Jenny and Geoff have given wonderful service over 35 years and overseen so many changes in our homes. They have served countless cups of tea and coffee and more recently provided a monthly Sunday lunch for residents. During the pandemic, they have encouraged out-

door socially distanced activities including a VE Day party and a Macmillan coffee morning. Geoff's contribution to keeping lawns mowed, hedges trimmed and doing many small maintenance jobs around the site (not least shovelling snow and putting salt down to keep the pathways safe) has been invaluable. Our current Chairman commented that they leave big shoes to fill and we will all miss them but wish them well for the next chapter in their lives." Thank you, Alistair, for sharing this with us and many congratulations to Jenny and Geoff on their well-deserved retirement!

Goodly Dale Cottage Homes, Windermere, Cumbria

Goodly Dale Cottage Homes are celebrating 90 years since their very first trustee meeting on the 6 February 1931. Having spoken to Bob Pow, Trustee, he mentioned he has read through every single 'minutes of the meeting' reports from the past 90 years, twice! Well done Bob! The original homes were constructed by well-known local builders, Pattinson's, to provide homes for those meeting strict qualifications in relation to their age, character, local origin or longevity of local residency. Today, the almshouses provide 20 homes comprising of the original cottages and six more modern bungalows built in the 1970s with very similar



occupancy qualifications to those established in 1931. They are occupied by a mix of single people and married couples with a resident warden support.

St Mary Magdalen Hospital Almshouse Charity, Colchester, Essex

St Mary Magdalen Hospital was due to celebrate its 900th anniversary in 2020 but had to postpone due to the pandemic. Trustees are hoping to be able to reconvene festivities this year and are planning a wonderful celebratory day at Castle Park in Colchester later in the summer. Michael Siggs, Clerk of St Mary Magdalen, is involved with 25 other almshouse charities so, all being well, it will be an incredibly special day for the almshouse movement. Michael comments: "We are all



ready to start enjoying the longer evenings and the welcome of spring. Now that everyone has had their vaccinations we are looking forward to a return to some 'normality' and the excuse for a party is welcomed! Here in Colchester we have had our fill of plagues and civil wars! 2020 was to have been a celebration of '900 Years of Mercy' but we had to cancel. Our jabs may give us hope that on July 17/18 we can combine our celebrations with the beginning of the end of Covid 19

as well as the 75th anniversary of The Almshouse Association. We also lost friends and neighbours in 2020, not necessarily to Covid 19, but were not able to remember them at funerals. Perhaps we will also be able to raise a toast to their memories in the formal part of the celebrations."

... Thank you for telling us your stories. We will be sharing more of them over the coming months, so please do keep sending them in. They will be posted on our website, on social media and in future Gazettes. If you would still like a celebration pack but haven't ordered one yet, please visit our website for the order form, or call the office and we'll get one out to you in the post. We are also making the pack available to download from the website www.almshouses.org



Welcome to new members

A warm welcome to new members of The Almshouse Association:
Manuden Almshouse Trust, Essex
The United Charities, Blewbury, Oxfordshire

Building grants fact sheet



The "Build, Build, Build" article in our winter Gazette, Issue 261, (page

4), highlighted the availability of government grants for certain almshouse projects and has generated a lot of interest.

The Almshouse Consortium Ltd (ACL) held a virtual meeting in February with 43 almshouse charities from across the country which had approached them with new projects that needed grant funding.

A number of different types of developments are being brought forward, from a single new bungalow to much larger extra care schemes; the remodelling of almshouses dating back to 1700s; and other homes that were built in the '60s but do not meet the standards required today. All are eligible schemes that can be funded with the £12bn grant announced in September 2020.

The ACL has a pack of information available which advises on joining the Consortium and how the grant is allocated for the 2021-26

programme. It includes questions raised at meetings held since the new funding programme was launched in a FAQs fact sheet. Please contact the ACL Administrator, Sue Holden if you would like to receive these details, or speak to one of the programme managers if you have any questions regarding your ideas to build, buy or refurbish using the new grant funding that is available.

Sue Holden, ACL Administrator, acitabitha@gmail.com
Kathy Green, ACL Programme Manager, kathy.green.projects@gmail.com
Sean Stafford, ACL Programme Manager, sean@saffercooper.com
Sue Missin, ACL Programme Manager, sue@saffercooper.com

Building projects case studies wanted

Have you recently expanded your almshouses with the help of your local council? We are particularly looking for almshouse stories where local councils have accepted 'unregulated' almshouses as 'affordable housing' without the need for registering with the Regulator of Social Housing in order to be the recipient of Section 106 Agreement opportunities. If you have been able to work successfully and positively with your local council then please contact Jack Baldan at jackbaldan@almshouses.org

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE INSIGHT

Blue text denotes a web link to the full article. Please visit The Almshouse Association website where the links can be found in our monthly Policy and Governance updates in 'Latest News'.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Regulator of Social Housing's Sector Risk Profile 2020

The Regulator of Social Housing has produced its Sector Risk Profile for 2020, which sets out the main risks facing the social housing sector. The risks outlined are not confined to those registered with the regulator but provide warning and consideration for all almshouse charities.

Visit: www.gov.uk/government/publications/sector-risk-profile-2020/sector-risk-profile-2020

Members may be interested in the focus on "Quality of Stock" which many will be familiar with. We know all our members strive to ensure that beneficiaries live in high-quality housing which meets or exceeds the Decent Homes Standard and many members have already improved the quality of their accommodation. Improvements include converting bedsits into one-bedroom homes, new wet rooms and kitchens and green initiatives to improve comfort and energy efficiency. With this in mind, please let us know what support we can offer when considering improvements for the 21st Century.

Building Safety Charter

Following on from the Dame Judith Hackett review there has been the creation of a Building Safety Charter. This has been discussed widely in the

housing sector recently and our members may wish to view the Charter at www.buildingasaferfuture.org.uk/

Spending Review/LHA Freeze

The Chancellor made a number of announcements during the annual Spending Review. This year the review only provides funding to government departments for one year, rather than the usual three years. The most significant announcement for almshouses is that Local Housing Allowance rates will be frozen from April 2021. This decision will result in a cut in housing benefit when taking inflation into account.

Immigration and Social Security Co-Ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020

The Government has passed its reforms to immigration following the end of the Brexit transition period. The new rules:

- end freedom of movement
- make EU, EEA and Swiss citizens subject to UK immigration controls
- make a provision to protect Irish citizens' immigration rights
- provide a power to amend retained EU legislation in relation to social security co-ordination

Any members who employ EU nationals should look into how the change in law may affect them.

Universal Credit direct rent payments to social landlords

A change has been made through the Universal Credit Landlord Portal so that social landlords receive direct rent payments on the same cycle as their tenants receive benefits. Members may wish to make themselves familiar with this system if they feel it would help them more easily collect the Weekly Maintenance Contribution. It should be noted that applications to enrol on the system are currently closed (at the time of going to print).

Renters could be evicted for arrears built up during pandemic under legislation tweak

The Government has tweaked regulations to remove protection for tenants falling behind on rent as a result of the crisis for the first time. Previous legislation carried a provision that eviction notices could be served only for arrears where the amount owed to the landlord totalled equivalent to nine months' rent and that any unpaid rent arrears accrued after 23 March 2020 must be disregarded. The new regulations (already in effect) lowers the arrears threshold to six months' rent and removes any reference to disregarding debt built up during the pandemic. Visit: www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/si/2021/15/regulation/2/made#f00003

Coronavirus

Coronavirus Vaccine

The Government has also published guides on what to expect from the Coronavirus vaccine; one for social care staff and one for older people. They include details on possible side effects and how it protects you.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-social-care-staff/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-social-care-staff

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-guide-for-older-adults/covid-19-vaccination-guide-for-older-adults

The Almshouse Association is continuing to talk to the Government regarding access to the vaccine for almshouse staff and residents. We are seeking to ensure that almshouses are treated equally to other social care settings and we will continue to keep members up to date with any developments.

Top level energy efficiency for Cheltenham homes

The Almshouse Association is committed to seeing almshouses making a greater contribution to improving our environment and welcomes the Government's Green Homes Grant which offers £5,000 in support of green enhancements.

As well as saving money and energy, green enhancements offer improved comfort for residents through the prevention of draughts and reliable heating - but don't just take our word for it.

Cheltenham Almshouses & Aid recently completed construction of four new almshouses which exhibit a fantastic green commitment by the charity.

Richard Basnett BSc (Hons) FRICS of Basnett Associates, Panel surveyor and a trustee of the almshouses, sent us their story:

Cheltenham Almshouses & Aid has completed the construction of four new almshouses at its Jesse Mary Chambers Almshouse site in Cheltenham, situated in a conservation area. A 1960s warden's bungalow was

demolished and part of the rear garden utilised for the four new one-bedroom almshouses, which are arranged in two pairs, two of which are wheelchair-accessible.

At the outset, the trustees were determined that the homes would be highly energy efficient and insulation levels well above current Building Regulation Standards were adopted.

Cavity walls have 140mm of insulation, floors have 100mm of insulation and in the roofs there is 300mm of mineral fibre insulation.

In addition, ventilation to bathrooms is by heat recovery fans, with kitchens vented directly to external air. Underfloor heating is provided to the almshouses, together with an unvented hot water system, with one 9kW gas-fired boiler provided to each pair of almshouses.

The Trust also wanted to utilise photovoltaic panels (providing it was viable). With the demise of the feed-in tariff, photovoltaic panel viability is difficult unless all of the electricity generated can be utilised or the energy generated is stored in batteries until required. Battery stor-

age at present is an expensive technology and, therefore, this idea was dismissed. The site, however, has a single 3-phase electricity supply to the existing 10 almshouses and if the power generated from the photovoltaic panels could be taken into the existing almshouses and the land-



lord's supply, it was estimated approximately 90% of the electricity generated at peak times would be utilised, thus making the use of PV panels viable. For this application, 49 photovoltaic panels were installed on three roof slopes. It is estimated that pay-back will occur in year eight and that over a 25-year period the scheme will generate approximately £88,000 for the Trust. Since technology is improving all the time, the opportunity was taken during construction to include improved efficiency panels from those on which the estimates were based. Total output and each panel performance can be monitored in real time through the Solaredge inverter app.

The works were designed and managed by Basnett Associates (email: info@basnettassociates.com or tel: 01242 673888) and carried out by C Tyler Building Ltd. of Cheltenham.

Almshouses feature in housing webinar

The live Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) webinar on almshouses on January 28, which included Nick Phillips, Almshouse Association CEO as a guest speaker, attracted over a 100 participants including funders, local authorities, housing providers and consultants, reflecting the wide level of interest in developing almshouses.

A recording of the event video can be found at www.almshouses.org/news/happi-hour-almshouses/

400 year history of Odiham charities

To celebrate 400 years from the building of the first almshouse by Odiham Consolidated Charities, a wonderful clerical record has been compiled by Derek Spruce, a former trustee.

He tells the story of the 14 charities dating back to 1608 that were consolidated into one almshouse charity in the small Hampshire town in 1886 and the young local solicitor, James L Brooks who was appointed as Clerk.

He resigned in 1951, 65 years later, and his initial salary of £65 was not increased in all that time!

To order a copy, please send a cheque for £9 (£7 plus £2 p&p) payable to 'Odiham Consolidated Charities', to Odiham Consolidated Charities, c/o LFM, The Stables, 23b Lenten Street, Alton, GU34 1HG.



Remembering Nigel Pearson



Nigel Pearson (1946 - 2020) was instrumental in the handover of High Ercall Hospital Trust Almshouses, Shropshire from the Leonard Hackett Foundation into the hands of local trustees in 2018. At the time of his death as Chairman of the newly-founded Board of Trustees, he was actively involved in all the repairs being undertaken to the building. He also deciphered the Latin inscription on the plaque on the front wall, which will be recut and returned to its original state.

A man of great integrity, he was involved with many local charities and organisations where his skills from his background as a Group Captain in the RAF were much appreciated. Nigel leaves behind his wife Susan, his two children and five grandchildren. Our condolences go out to them. His expertise and commitment will be much missed.

VAT domestic reverse charge on construction services

Almshouse trustees and staff may have noticed that the Government introduced a new VAT domestic reverse charge on construction services on 1st March 2021.

The reverse charge is aimed at combating fraud in the construction sector labour supply chains, removing the opportunity for suppliers of construction and building services to charge and receive VAT and then disappear before paying VAT to HMRC. HMRC has indicated the fraud is most common among subcontractors who provide groups of workers to the construction sector and charge VAT on the supply of construction services.

What is the reverse charge?

Under the reverse charge rules, the recipient of the supply – the customer – is required to account for VAT as output VAT on its VAT returns rather than pay the VAT to the supplier of the services. The customer can still reclaim the VAT as input VAT, providing it is using the supply for taxable purposes.

As the customer both pays VAT as output VAT and reclaims the VAT as input VAT, the net cash position is zero.

Good news for almshouses

The reverse charge will not apply if the customer is not VAT and CIS registered. The reverse charge will also not apply if the customer is an end user, that is to say the services it receives from the supplier are not in turn used to make onward supplies of those services to customers.

When supplies of reverse charge services are procured by landlords and recharged to tenants (or similar licence arrangements such as almshouse maintenance contributions), they are excluded from the reverse charge. In this scenario, the intended effect is to treat the landlords and tenants collectively as a single end user, therefore the reverse charge will not apply.

The reverse charge will not apply to VAT zero-rate transactions such as the construction of new almshouse

dwelling. It will not apply to almshouses where repair work is carried out and VAT charged to the charity as the almshouse will be an end user in these circumstances. The reverse charge will apply if the organisation is a UK VAT registered business (which is covered by the CIS rules) receiving reverse charge services and the business involves the onward supply of specified services. In conclusion, as the intending VAT legislation has been drafted, it is unlikely to impact on most almshouse charities, unless they are involved in supplying onward reverse charge transactions which attract the standard rate of VAT to non-tenants. Should any almshouse charity find it is likely to be affected by the new domestic reverse charge, it is strongly recommended professional advice is considered.

Article supplied by panel consultant Glenn Havenhand, Charities VAT Services, email: glenn.havenhand3@btopenworld.com

Christmas vouchers given by philanthropic benefactor

Linda Clayton, Clerk to the Trustees at Philipot's Almshouse in Eltham, sent in this wonderful photo of their residents receiving Almshouse Association Christmas vouchers. The gifts come from a fund established in 1958 by a benefactor who wished to remain anonymous and is used annually to

provide £15 shopping vouchers to almshouse residents over 90 years old. Eight residents at Philipot's received vouchers (over 20% of the total) and they also made it into the local 'London News online' too! Linda Clayton said: "They have clocked up many years of

living here between them which is a testament to residents living longer in the strong communities which are so often found in almshouses. I wonder what the benefactor would have thought of so many almshouse residents living into their nineties today!"

What residents said about their gifts:

I will treat myself in M&S. It's wonderful. Thank you very much

– Joyce Doughty

I'd like to buy a keepsake and pass it on to my grandchildren about the story and where it came from

– Elsie Corby

How wonderful that this gift has been given anonymously for so many years. What a treat!

Thank you very much

– Doris Stannard

It's a wonderful thing.

I was only thinking the other day how many 90 year olds we have - it's amazing! Thank you very much to the person who gave the money all those years ago.

How very kind

– Eva Allen



Trustees of Winnocks and Kendalls Charity

in Colchester (left) were also pleased to present a Christmas gift to one of their residents, Mrs Mavis Sadler. Photo (from left): Anna Daniel, trustee; Mavis Sadler, resident; John Enfield, Chairman of Trustees; and Tim Bushell, trustee.



Christmas vouchers presented at Philipot's (from left): Elsie Corby, Viv Grindall, Linda Clayton (Clerk), Eva Allen, Dora Rogers, Joyce Doughty, Sharon Staples (Warden), Eve Baker and Doris Stannard.

Research to provide more homes

"Affordable housing and housing for older people have attracted much publicity in the popular press and through academic research, however, the critical and unique role that almshouses play has been largely overlooked" – Professor Sarah Sayce, Chair, RICS Research Trust.

The RICS report features eight new almshouse developments across England, providing over 200 high quality almshouses. Case studies and examples range from six bungalows in a Yorkshire village and nine flats and bungalows in Essex, to large new developments with up to 50-60 flats and on-site staff. Two Dutch case studies reflect the influence of the courtyard model and recent links between Almshouse Associations in both countries. Funded by the RICS Research Trust, the report explains how trustees, staff and their advisers overcame barriers to provide



above: Birks Court bungalows (John Eastwood Homes, Calder Valley Community Land Trust).

right: Haberfield House courtyard, Bristol Charities.

high quality new housing with limited or no public funding including:

- why trustees decided to build new almshouses;
- their approaches and the risks and barriers they faced;
- how barriers were overcome;
- lessons for almshouse charities and other stakeholders.

Key lessons concern governance and the role of trustees, partnerships, community links and funding.

Good governance, a clear strategy and willingness to address challenges was crucial. Outdated bedsits were hard to let and expensive to maintain: doing nothing was a greater risk than new build, despite potential issues for existing residents.

Winnocks and Kendalls Almshouse Charity replaced outdated bedsit bungalows next to Grade I listed almshouses; Thorngate Churcher Trust converted bedsits before embarking on new build enhanced sheltered housing.

Both charities also changed their structure (one to a CIO, one to a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee).

by Jenny Pannell and Alison Pooley, who have carried out extensive research on the future of almshouses, most recently for the RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) and The Almshouse Association.

Alison is trustee of two almshouse charities in East Anglia, a qualified architect and Principal Lecturer at the Centre for Alternative Technology.

Jenny is a qualified housing manager with professional and academic housing and research experience, and a lifetime Associate Member of The Almshouse Association.

They are both happy to discuss local or national research opportunities: alison.pooley@cat.org.uk jennypannell@virginmedia.com

St Clement Danes and Holborn Estates Charity replaced outdated 1960s sheltered housing to provide modern almshouse flats on a valuable site in South London. Bristol Charities merged with a smaller almshouse charity and sold outdated Victorian almshouses, helping to fund a new extra care scheme. Over four cen-



tures, both charities had moved their almshouses to new sites to reflect changed circumstances. Community links and partnerships also supported provision of new almshouses. Local links enabled a partnership between two small charities (John Eastwood Homes, Calder Valley Community Land Trust) to build new bungalows – the CLT unlocked access to a council site and Homes England funding. Local press was often helpful to build support locally. Positive relationships with local authorities could facilitate access to sites and grants, liaison over resident selection and solutions to planning issues. Creative funding routes include three developments with no public grant. Further sources were needed even if grant was available – solutions included using reserves (towards preliminary or full costs), sales, (re)developing existing sites and recycling previous social housing grant.

The RICS report can be found at: www.almshouses.org/news/new-report-almshouses-a-model-of-community-housing-for-an-ageing-population

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Lockdown celebrations for centenarians

Due to coronavirus restrictions, the 100th birthday party planned for Bournemouth's Eventide Homes resident May Gilbert (right) could not take place. Instead, the charity organised for a Malus Floribunda tree to be planted in her honour. They also put together a wonderful newsletter with photos and a short history of how she came to live at Edgecombe Gardens, which can be seen at www.almshouses.org/news/almshouse-resident-may-celebrates-her-100th-birthday/

Unfortunately, May contracted coronavirus just before her birthday and had a stint in hospital but, the amazing lady that she is, she made it out of hospital in time to



celebrate her birthday at home and was able to peek through the window to proudly show everyone her card from HM The Queen!
Joe Waters, Eventide Homes



Winnocks and Kendalls Almshouse Charity, Colchester had the happy occasion of a 100th birthday celebration on 9 January 2021 when resident Mrs Edith Lee (left) reached that wonderful milestone. She has been a resident since July 2009 and is a very active member of the community, always to be found in the kitchen at parties, making tea or washing up. Edith, who is looking decades younger than 100, is pictured being serenaded with a chorus of "Happy Birthday" - socially distanced, of course! The trustees will be marking the occasion by offering an afternoon tea for four at a local hotel once the pandemic allows.
Clare Heyes, Assistant Clerk

Legacy donation starts campaign in Anniversary year

As we celebrate our 75th Anniversary year of supporting so many wonderful charities, born out of the philanthropic nature of their original benefactors, we are delighted to share news of a legacy promised to us by a trustee of one of our members. Mithra Tonking has already given years of service to the almshouse movement and now intends to leave a gift to the Association in her will. Legacy donations enable us to support members to sustain and grow their charities and we are excited to launch our new legacy campaign in our anniversary year. Mithra has been a trustee of the almshouses at Abbots Bromley Hospital, Staffordshire for many years and is fully committed to delivering

safe, comfortable homes for the residents. We are grateful for her commitment to the charity and to us at The Almshouse Association. She writes: "Almshouses are a vital but largely unrecognised form of social housing. Drawing on long historic traditions of hospitality and support and managed by local trustees, they are uniquely positioned to support their own communities with affordable homes. Many are housed in the middle



of towns or villages in heritage buildings, which brings its own challenges. Remodelling and improving these to achieve comfortable and energy efficient homes for modern living is expensive and many almshouses are not well endowed. The Almshouse Association's readily available support, specialist advice and interest free loans are invaluable.

"Abbots Bromley Hospital has benefited hugely from all of these during two major remodelling projects. I believe strongly that almshouses are special places and I fully support the Association's determination to raise the profile nationally of this valuable form of housing, helping to ensure more are built and those we have are the best they can be. I have therefore made provision for a gift of funds to the Association in my will - I only wish it could be more!"

If you are considering making a gift to The Almshouse Association in your will, please contact Sue van Leest at susanvanleest@almshouses.org

2021 training and events

Training: Due to coronavirus restrictions, there will not be any in-person training events taking place this year. In their place, The Almshouse Association will be running regular webinars on a variety of topics. Topics and registration details will be posted in advance on our website at www.almshouses.org/events/
A library of online training courses and previous webinar recordings can also be found on our website at www.almshouses.org/training-seminars/
Events: 75th Anniversary Members Day - 9 September 2021 - location TBA.
AGM - Details of this year's Annual General Meeting - TBA.
For the latest information on both events, please see The Almshouse Association website at www.almshouses.org