



the almshouses Gazette

issue 269 winter 2022/23 price: £2.50

MEMBERS DAY 2023

'Compassion, community and companionship' special guest speaker - Terry Waite CBE

We are pleased to announce that The Almshouse Association Members Day 2023 will take place in London on Thursday 15 June 2023 and we are honoured to be able to welcome Terry Waite CBE as our special guest speaker.

In January 1987 Terry Waite was captured in Beirut whilst he was attempting to secure the release of

31st anniversary of his release.

It is difficult to think of anyone else whose integrity and humanity are so striking. When he speaks, Terry's quiet authority and personal conviction shine through.

After suffering so much at the hands of others, he now

shares what he has learned from

his experiences with humour and clarity.

Terry is invited to address audiences worldwide. His audiences include business professionals, schools, universities, young people and the wider public. His

honesty and straightforward manner endear him to all ages and people are often surprised by his warm sense of humour.

It's going to be a very special day in the almshouse movement calendar and a great chance for us all to get



together to share our knowledge, plans and visions.

A full day of special guest speakers, Q&A with our panel of experts, exhibitors and award presentations, as well as plenty of opportunities for networking.

We will also be introducing the new Chair of The Almshouse Association. A booking form has been included with this Gazette and is available on our website at:

www.almshouses.org/news/2023-members-day-and-agm/



hostages. He was kept in solitary confinement for four years and remained hostage in total for almost five years, 1,763 days in all.

His story was on the front pages and TV screens around the world and on 18 November 2022, Terry marked the

Report highlights positive contribution made by almshouses during pandemic



The Almshouse Association was pleased to release its most recent research report on how almshouse charities managed during the coronavirus pandemic. The Association commissioned The Smith Institute to carry out the report so that we could learn about the difference our members made and what lessons can be learnt for future emergencies.

The report, based on an extensive series of interviews, sought to understand the impact of the pandemic on almshouse charities and their residents, as well as examining the impact almshouse charities have made since the first lockdown.

It places the spotlight on the positive contribution the almshouse model made during the public health crisis and extended periods of social isolation, identifies the lessons that can be drawn from the past two years and highlights the challenges the sector faces in the future. The Smith Institute and The Almshouse Association hosted an online event on 11 October 2022 to mark the launch of the new report looking at the impact of the pandemic on almshouses. The report and a recording of the event can be found on the Association's website at: www.almshouses.org/news/new-almshouse-research-published

Due to inflation and subsequent increases in the cost of paper, fuel and postage, the price of additional copies of The Almshouse Gazette will increase from Spring 2023 by 25p to £2.75 per copy.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S COMMENT

Vive la difference!

Happy New Year to you all! I hope you all enjoyed a warm, safe and happy festive season and were able to spend quality time with your family and friends.

"What makes almshouses different?"

When I was asked that question it took me back. It made me think about the values we sometimes take for granted in our new charity world of policies, procedures, systems and guidance.

The question directed to me really meant: "with increased regulation will almshouses lose their sense of love and compassion?"

"Not at all", I said, "absolutely not". The policies and processes are there to make life safe and secure for



Nottingham Seminar: It is clear that our historic buildings have a place in our hearts as well as the charity's past. Simon Pott, Chair of The Almshouse Awards Panel (former Chair of The Almshouse Association and President of Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) reviewed historic building maintenance at a seminar in Nottingham. This was a fully booked event with some fantastic speakers and networking throughout the day.

Whilst on holiday in Anglesey, CEO Nick Phillips visited the derelict listed Penmynydd Almshouses with John Roberts, one of the trustees working hard to raise funds to refurbish these 17th century heritage dwellings. The plan is to turn them back into much-needed housing for young people in housing need in Anglesey.

trustees, staff and residents. Health and safety is about keeping people safe and feeling safe and secure. And I really believe that. But I knew what the questioner was driving at ... Is it possible in the world of policies, processes, procedures, counting

Development Day: Nick Phillips, CEO visited Taunton Heritage Trust to work with the board and staff on their exciting plans for the future.

The visit included a series of workshops and Nick presented the long-term strategy for The Almshouse Association and a national view of the almshouse movement.

returns and measuring impact on spreadsheets and balance sheets, to lose our way and forget the great vision of our almshouse founders? Volunteer trustees generously give their time and

dedication back to society; they want to make a difference and be a part of the quirky world of almshouses - the movement with a bizarre history that includes residents (or inmates!) in

cloaks and tall felt hats. A world that still holds terms like Master, Warden, Beadle, Brother and Almshouse. A world of shared garden benches, lots of tea and cake, small flower gardens, vegetable patches and medieval dining rooms; weekly prayers for the soul of the founder and a hundred other traditions that go towards making the almshouse movement different. And because many volunteer trustees continue their support because of these traditions and the spirit of almshouses, the measures and policies will not reduce the great uniqueness of almshouses.



We recently released the results of independent research carried out by The Smiths Institute and, at a review meeting, when asked if there is a difference between Housing Associations and almshouse charities, the chair of our All Party Parliamentary Group on Almshouses, Siobhain McDonagh said: "During the pandemic, almshouse trustees took a step further towards responsibility for the residents, proving almshouses are not just a roof over the head - this being in stark difference to many housing associations". And this was said from a position of understanding and working in both sectors.

Sense of community

Over the last few months, the team and I have been spending more time with our members at seminars, regional meetings, visiting new buildings and member workshops in Taunton, Cirencester, Nottingham, Exeter, Sheffield and Hampshire and a few places in between.

Apart from being made very welcome by all (thank you!), we have been struck by the great sense of community and collaboration in the network. Offers of help to each other, sharing best practice and even sharing of a trustee or two, I have to admit, made me feel as though I was in a great club, a family, of positive and friendly people. That sense of shared support is another great difference between the almshouse world and other housing models.

So with more time for reflection, I would have said to the questioner: "The almshouse world is moving to a more professional footing in some areas (policy, etc.) but not at the loss of tradition, spirit and companionship of the network."

Compassion and generosity

So, whilst I will keep championing those policies that keep everyone safe and compliant, I will also champion the vitality, compassion, love and generosity that is the spirit of almshouses. So let's look again at the Founders' wishes and the original governing documents and reacquaint ourselves with the heritage and difference that is the almshouse movement.

With those thoughts in mind we are delighted to confirm that the next Members Day, the big annual event for networking, will take place on 15 June 2023 in Westminster London and the keynote speaker, we are delighted to confirm, is Terry Waite CBE.

Further details enclosed in this Gazette.

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive

Guidance on Weekly Maintenance Contributions

The Association is aware that a number of members are trying to navigate setting their Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC) in light of ever-increasing costs and we wanted to provide additional general guidance for members to consider as they go through this process.

Firstly, members will need to consider two elements when setting their WMC:

- the financial viability of the charity,
- the avoidance of hardship on the residents.

A charity must maintain financial viability so that it can continue to provide support to its residents and the wider community; increases in WMC are, therefore, necessary to ensure this remains the case. Any increase, however, must take into account the well-being of the residents who must be able to afford the WMC without causing hardship. Striking a balance between these two demands will ensure that

the WMC is set at a suitable level. Overall, taking into account the current climate, the Association would recommend that most members increase their WMC in a way which is sympathetic to the needs of the charity and its residents.

We appreciate this will not be an option for all and that for members who are Registered Providers of Social Housing any increase is dictated by guidance from the Regulator of Social Housing - capped at 7% for 2023/24.

We also know that there will be members who are able to shoulder more of the burden for their residents, however, the Association believes that it is vital that charities seek to maintain stable foundations not just for the next few months but for the years ahead.

The website link for our specimen outline budget is:

www.almshouses.org/model-policies-and-templates

Association attends Party Conference

The Almshouse Association, represented by CEO Nick Phillips and Jack Baldan, attended this year's Conservative Party Conference to promote the almshouse movement to government ministers. Although disappointed that housing did not appear to play a significant role at the conference, with little time allotted to discuss housing policy as part of the main agenda, they were able to attend fringe events and speak to a number of stakeholders who are keen to work with us and support our members. Signs would seem to suggest that the previous administration may not have been as interested in genuinely affordable housing as it was in 'growth' but the visit gave us an opportunity to speak to some almshouse supporters.

However, the government has since changed hands and we hope that housing, and particularly genuinely affordable housing, will play a much more central role in their plans for the country. A recent report (Inside Housing) showed that the UK needs an additional 50,000 homes every year for older people in housing need.



Statement on Association investments

For the information of Association members and following procedures set in The Almshouse Association's approved Investment Policy

The Association has traditionally held two investment portfolios. In 2019, The Association appointed Waverton to manage the majority of the Charity's investments and retained M&G Investments to manage the smaller portion of the Charity's assets. The Almshouse Association Investment Sub-Committee and the Finance & General Purposes Committee recently reviewed the performance of the smaller M&G portfolio this year and has decided to move this portfolio from M&G to Waverton, thus focussing the Association's investments with one

investment manager, rather than two. The Investment Sub-Committee was advised by a charity investment consultant reviewing several organisations, seeking the best value for the Association. The review was carried out in a professional way ensuring good governance and transparency. Every member charity of the Association will have their own investment criteria within their finance policy and will come to their own conclusions about how best to manage their investments for the good of the charity.

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Getting up-to-date and staying up-to-date

The Almshouse Association team strives to make life as easy as possible for almshouse trustees. If you or your clerk and trustees are not accessing The Almshouse Association website on a regular basis, you could be missing out on important news and current issues.

There are two elements that need to be taken care of to keep up-to-date and one does not work without the other.

1. Keeping your details up-to-date with all the organisations, authorities and individuals that need to be able to contact you.
2. Keeping your knowledge current with the latest news, guidance and legislation to help you stay on top of your responsibilities, undertake your duties and remain compliant.

Keeping your details up-to-date

1 - With The Almshouse Association:

- a. To change your personal web registration contact details:
 - i. Log into the members area of our website: www.almshouses.org/members-login/
 - ii. Click on 'My Account' dropdown and select 'Update personal registration and email preferences'
 - iii. Make the applicable changes and 'SAVE'
- b. To change the details of your main charity contact or the address details of recipients of publications and invoices, please contact The Almshouse Association by emailing admin@almshouses.org

2 - With the Charity Commission:

- a. www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-update-your-charitys-details
- b. Set up a 'My Charity Commission Account'. This is a new way for trustees and charity contacts to access the Charity Commission's online services. It can also be used by other people you have authorised, such as your accountant or lawyer. The Commission has published guidance to help trustees get set up on the new system which can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/setting-up-my-charity-commission-account

3 - With the Registered Providers of Social Housing:

- a. Guidance to the data needed can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/information-required-from-registered-providers
- b. And submitted via: <https://nroshplus.regulatorofsocialhousing.org.uk/>

Keeping your knowledge current

1. Sign up to <https://members.almshouses.org/user-registration>

Login (see 1.a.i) to the members area of The Almshouse Association website and check out the latest news and current issues pages. And don't forget the members forum where you will find many of your counterparts in almshouse charities asking and helping answer the same queries your charity is dealing with.

2. Sign up for Charity Commission news updates and blogs

- a. www.gov.uk/government/collections/charity-commission-news
- b. <https://charitycommission.blog.gov.uk/>
- c. Follow on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ChtyCommission>
- d. Follow on LinkedIn: <https://uk.linkedin.com/company/charity-commission-for-england-and-wales>

3. Register with The Almshouse Association to receive ebulletins:

- a. Log into the members area of our website
- b. Click on 'My Account' dropdown and select 'Update personal registration and email preferences'
- c. Click on the 'Manage Consent Preferences' button and then 'SAVE'

4. Set up some google alerts so that you are alerted whenever your charity or almshouses in general appear on the web: www.google.com/alerts

5. Sign up to receive updates from news agencies: ie. www.civilsociety.co.uk, www.charitytimes.com

Every time contact details change within your organisation, think about who needs to know and take action!



"The Almshouse Association set a strategy to take us to 2030. Within this strategy and following feedback from members, we have recognised that structured training support is required for new trustees. We have therefore established a training and development offer to be rolled out across the country. I am delighted to say, leading that programme is Linda Anderson, an experienced trainer with a good understanding of almshouses. The training course will give new trustees a clear foundation of knowledge about almshouses, the history, legal status, trustees and governance responsibilities and many other aspects of being an almshouse trustee. The course will be CPD accredited and each attendee will receive a certificate." *Nick Phillips CEO*

Training and Development programme for trustees



The Almshouse Association is very pleased to welcome new team member, Linda Anderson, who joined as Training and Development Manager in September 2022.

We asked her to tell us about herself and what she has planned for our members.

"I have 18 years experience as a learning designer and trainer in processes, systems and governance. This included designing and rolling out large scale change programmes, creating bespoke learning materials, onboarding programmes, design and facilitation of workshops for a wide range of customers/users/delegates. I get a buzz out of making people's lives easier - I like to un-complicate the complicated, break things down, make them digestible. I will be considering different learning styles in my delivery; ultimately, I want my courses to be informative, interactive, enjoyable learning experiences.

Outside work I'm an outdoorsy person. I relish long woodland walks with my dog and enjoy adrenalin-fuelled dingy racing at weekends. My recharge time is spent gardening and tending my allotment where I learn lots of tips from my allotment neighbours. I volunteer as a co-ordinator for a charity in the natural sciences with a fantastic group of trustees incredibly passionate about their role. Plus two teenagers and a husband keep me busy! I am excited about the training offers I am creating and can't wait to meet many of you at the courses for members."

The Almshouse Way one-day training course starts March 2023

The Almshouse Way course

This is a one-day interactive learning opportunity suitable for both those new to the role as a CEO, clerk, or trustee and those looking to consoli-

date their knowledge. It is offered to small groups of 6-14 delegates with a light lunch and refreshments.

Course objectives

To provide almshouse charity CEOs, clerks and trustees with essential training to enable you to comply with law and best practice in fulfilling your duties and furthering the success of your charity.

Throughout the day we will engage in detailed discussions and collaborative missions, taking on real almshouse case studies to solve complex challenges, exploring diverse perspectives by engaging as a group. There will be ample opportunities to network.

Some of the topics covered in The Almshouse Way one-day course are:

- Almshouse history, The Almshouse Association
- The Regulators' roles - Charity Commission, Companies House, Regulator of Social Housing
- Role of a trustee, CEO & clerk
- The different charity structures
- Understand personal liability, how best to manage risk

- Your residents – queries, appointing new residents, safeguarding
- Where to go for support
- Course material handout pack

Venue, dates and how to book

Training and Development Manager, Linda Anderson plans to visit all regions, starting from March 2023. Dates, locations and how to book will be shared via The Almshouse Association website, ebulletins and Gazettes. The cost will be £95 per delegate, including a light lunch, refreshments and course materials. If any members have a function room they are willing to make available, please contact Linda (see below). All courses will be CPD (Continuing Professional Development) accredited. We also plan courses to be available in eLearning and webinar formats. Full details will be shared via our normal communication methods - website, ebulletins and Gazettes. Any questions? Please contact Linda Anderson at lindaanderson@almshouses.org or tel: 01344 953683.

A long association with Charity Bank

Could loan finance help your almshouse?

Charity Bank is a specialist lender to the social sector and has made over 200 loans to almshouses and other social housing providers over the past twenty years.

Loans can be used to:

- Renovate and modernise almshouses
- Buy or build a new property
- Support running costs whilst waiting for other funding (bridging finance)
- Fund day-to-day operations (working capital)

Charity Bank has recently helped The Andrew Windsor Almshouse Charity in Surrey. The charity has been

The Almshouse Association has a longstanding relationship with Charity Bank dating back to 1996 when a pilot fund was established for the first loan scheme, prior to the official launch of Charity Bank in 2002. They have supported many members with loans over the years and are the official sponsors of The Almshouse Association Patron's Award. We asked Charity Bank to provide an update on what they can offer members.



providing homes to local people over the age of 60 since 1620 but was unable to obtain grant funding for essential repairs to the roof of the 17th century properties. They needed to raise the necessary funds by means of a loan and that's when Charity Bank stepped in with a loan of £250,000. The building is now watertight and the accommodation is secured for many years ahead.

Michael McAleenan, Chair of the Andrew Windsor Almshouse Charity, said: "Charity Bank is ethically compatible with us. The ethos of the organisation sat well with us and the initial discussions progressed well. The rate of interest was as good as we'd get elsewhere. Our Loans Manager came to visit me at my house. I told him the charity's requirements and we went forward from there."

Agreeing a formal policy on charity reserves

It is important for charities to have in place a policy explaining their approach to reserves.

The Charity Commission has guidance notes on 'Charity reserves: building resilience (CC19)' which sets out what charity reserves are and how to develop and report on a charity's reserves policy.

Reserves are that part of a charity's 'unrestricted funds' that are freely available to spend on the charity's aims.

For example, reserves can be set aside to protect a charity against drops in income, future project expenditure or commitments that have not been provided for as a liability in the accounts. In addition, reserves can be established to allow

the charity to take advantage of new opportunities allowed for under its governing constitution; for example, the acquisition of fixed assets and investments to further a charity's aims.

Restrictive conditions

'Restricted reserves' fall outside the definition of reserves and are funds subject to restrictive conditions imposed by donors or by the nature of an appeal. The nature and amount of such funds may have an impact on a charity's reserves policy.

A reserves policy should be written down and explained to others why money is set aside, rather than spending it on the charity's aims. The policy should set out:

- How much the charity needs to hold in reserves and why
- How and when the charity's reserves can be spent
- How often the reserves policy will be reviewed

Key points to bear in mind are that trustees should keep their level of reserves under regular review during the year. Where the charity has not got the reserves trustees consider it should have, the matter should be addressed without delay in order to reduce exposure to risk.

Reference: www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-reserves-cc19

Reference: Reserves Policy template www.almshouses.org/model-policies-and-templates

Archiving to protect and preserve charity records

Whilst not all charities are steeped in history, many are and, importantly, many will be. This can bring with it a legacy of papers, documents and other sundry items, not all of which will fit into a filing cabinet.

"Where do we put everything" is a common question for charities? Document retention and the archiving of older documents can feel overwhelming and a little intimidating but it need not be.

Conduct a desktop study - Consider an informal mapping exercise; what you've got, how its stored, how often you need it, where it is and what you think might be missing. It might well be that you have different resources in different locations.

Check responsibilities - Check with your insurer, Companies House (if appropriate), HMRC and the Charity Commission about what documents they expect you to retain - don't forget your General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) responsibilities too.

Consider a document retention policy - Consider drafting a policy that incorporates dealing with your resources and lets everyone know what the procedures are and how you deal with resources, both in hard and digital copy. Check what needs to be retained: legal documentation, employment contracts etc., and decide how they will be kept.

Consider utilising the services of a professional archivist - For charities of a historic nature, an archivist not only presents an opportunity to formally archive documents but often also

We recently contacted our panel members requesting ideas for information articles for our members. Jennifer Millard of Millard Consultants kindly provided the following guidance on archiving.

provides an opportunity to review and write up the history of the charity. It's always best to have one person dealing with archiving, otherwise context and continuity can easily be lost. A brief for an archivist is often helpful and gives context to the project. Council archive departments, local museums, or local history groups can often help direct you to local archivists. Outcomes and history can contribute valuable resources to a trustee recruitment or induction process and be utilised for marketing and public relations.

Check with third parties - As part of the initial mapping exercise, it is time well spent considering who else might hold duplicate information on your behalf: solicitors, accountants, or agents perhaps.

Keep a log and get receipts - With home working becoming more common, it's often the case that paper files may end up in a home office. We've retrieved files from trustees' lofts years after they've been involved with the charity! Make sure you know what is stored where and any responsibilities which might be attached to them. Contact with former trustees, employees or volunteers might unearth some nice surprises.

Storage - Your local county authority will have a County Archives section and may well be willing to store documents for you or, depending on the history of your charity, a local museum might be interested in certain items. Storage



within offices is also an option but it will need to be properly managed and regularly checked for both condition and necessity.

Spring clean - Don't keep putting it off! Dealing with documentation can be overwhelming and very time consuming, so deal with it in phases in bite-size amounts. Start with a plan, relay any issues to trustees and provide an update periodically, perhaps even set targets if appropriate.

Surprises - If your charity has a long history be prepared for interesting things to emerge but try not to get bogged down. Whilst it can be lovely reading through boxes of 'thank you' letters, it's not always the best use of your time.

Keep a record - Once the exercise is complete, keep a record of where items are, why they are stored and when this can be reviewed.

Millard Consultants is an almshouse, land and property-owning charity specialist. More information at www.millardconsultants.com

Guidance on making payments to trustees

It is important charities are aware of the circumstances in which it is appropriate to make payments to their trustees.

They broadly fall into two different categories:

1: expenses, and 2: remuneration for work carried out on behalf of the charity.

Expenses are for out-of-pocket payments made by trustees in carrying out their charitable duties.

They may include such things as travel to and from trustee meetings, overnight accommodation, the cost of telephone calls and postage for charity work and the cost of childcare or care of dependents whilst attending meetings. The charity should have a written agreement stating what is classed as an expense and the procedure for claiming and approving any expenses that might arise.

Being a trustee is a voluntary service

When becoming a trustee, an individual provides his or her services on a voluntary basis and acknowledges that payment will not be received for work undertaken for the charity. Generally, charities are not able to pay trustees for simply being a trustee and can only do so if authorisation is provided within the governing document or given by the Charity Commission.

Situations do arise, however, where trustees are paid for certain services provided; examples being building work, providing specialist services such as consultancy of some kind, or the provision of premises or facilities for use from time to time such as a meeting room or where administrative work is undertaken. It is essential, however, that from a legal perspective, before paying a trustee, charities consult guidance from the Charity Commission which is available on their website at: www.gov.uk/guidance/payments-to-charity-trustees-what-the-rules-are

Detailed information will be found as to the procedures that should be adopted, including producing a written agreement between the charity and the trustee (or 'connected person' being paid) specifying:

- the exact or maximum amount to be paid
- ensuring the trustee does not participate in decisions made by the trustee board regarding any aspect of the agreement
- agreeing that the payment is in the best interests of the charity and the cost is reasonable
- not allowing payments or other benefits to half, or more than half, of the board
- ascertaining that the charity's governing document does not preclude payment being made to trustees for services rendered.

As always, trustees should follow their duty of care in any decisions made or action taken. Possible conflicts of interest should always be borne in mind and, very importantly, careful consideration should be given as to what action would be taken if the services or goods provided by a trustee are considered to be unsatisfactory. It is also vital that any payments made to trustees are disclosed in the charity's accounts.

If someone providing a service to the charity on a remunerated basis is a 'connected person' as far as a trustee is concerned, for example a spouse or partner, relative or business partner, they must not be involved in any part of the process. The permission of the Charity Commission is required to pay or employ someone who is connected to a trustee.

In the case of a long-serving trustee leaving or retiring, charity funds may be used to purchase a small gift. This does not need the Charity Commission's permission, provided that the value of the gift is minimal and the trustees agree that it is in the charity's best interest.



Managing a charity's financial difficulties

Trustees have a legal responsibility to look after their charity's money and other assets.

Financial information and records should be maintained in such a way that the charity's income and expenditure is reported on a timely basis so that any issues can be identified as early as possible.

To achieve this, trustees should have the right skills and experience to understand financial information and to identify and manage risks. Regular trustee meetings should be held in order to track income and expenditure against budget and prior period results.

In addition, internal financial controls should be put in place to ensure that the charity has the right controls over its money. Never leave all the responsibility to one individual. Joint signatures should

be required for any significant movement of money.

If your charity is an incorporated organisation, it could become insolvent and face administration or closure if it cannot pay its debts. If your charity is an unincorporated charity, the trustees could be liable for its debts.

This means that if your charity is not able to pay its debts, either from its income or from its assets, you need to act quickly.

Professional advice

Take professional advice as early as possible to help you work out what action to take. For example:

- speak to others and seek advice from The Almshouse Association, banks, accountants
- develop alternative sources of funding or launch an emergency appeal

- explore whether it is possible to merge or collaborate with other charities or members
- borrow money from banks, members or stakeholders
- reduce actual or planned spending
- stop doing some of your charity's activities

The future outlook for charities remains challenging; trustees must remain alert to the risks of financial distress and manage them effectively.

The Charity Commission has made available guidance on how charities can protect themselves against financial difficulties.

Always act as soon as possible. For further information see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-financial-difficulties-insolvency-in-charities-cc12

New almshouses for younger residents

The Almshouse Association was delighted to be invited to the opening ceremony of new almshouses built by The Poland Trust for younger people in housing need in Brockham, Surrey.

The charity was created by Sidney Michael Poland who lived in the village and supported many local organisations during his lifetime and arranged for the charity to be established after his death.

In the 1950s, the first trustees built six almshouses and a warden's flat for villagers in hardship, need or distress, on land left by Sidney Poland. In the following years, four more homes were built at Poland House but there was no further space at the ideally situated site just under Box Hill.

Fifteen years ago the trustees decided that older people in Brockham and the three surrounding villages of Betchworth, Buckland and Leigh were well served by available accommodation but that there was a need for affordable housing for a younger generation. It took twelve years to find a suitable site in an area of outstanding natural beauty in the greenbelt until a local landowner offered the trust a corner of one of his fields. It was then that the real work began. To find out more and view pictures of the finished build, visit: www.almshouses.org/news/almshouses-for-young-people-in-surrey/



Cllr Parminder Singh Birdi, the Mayor of Warwick, with Dr Heidi Meyer, Master at Lord Leycester Hospital. photo: Gill Fletcher.

£4.5m restoration project in Warwick

A £50,000 loan from The Almshouse Association was awarded to the Lord Leycester Hospital almshouses in Warwick in 2020 to help fund the charity's renovation of almshouses which had become unfit to live in.

It was part of a much bigger plan for a multi-million pound scheme to restore and improve one of the town's most historic buildings, which dates from the 15th century.

In August 2022, the trustees held a ceremony to mark the start of this 'once in a century' external and internal restoration project, having raised £4.5million over the past three years to make the buildings fit for 21st century living.

The Mayor of Warwick, Cllr Parminder Singh Birdi, accompanied by local dignitaries, carried out the ground breaking ceremony.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded almost £2 million for the four-year renovation and income generating project. The grant will be used to transform the historic landmark into a modern visitor attraction that tells both the story of the heritage buildings and also of the residents past and present. Plans include a new interpretation throughout the buildings, garden and online, that will enable visitors to explore the heritage through guided tours, trails and displays.

As part of the Heritage Fund project, a calendar of innovative community engagement activities and events are also planned, to once again make the Lord Leycester Hospital a community hub.

Dr Heidi Meyer, Master of Lord Leycester Hospital said: "It has been a long road to get to this point but we could not have done it without local community support and our major funders, we are deeply grateful to them." Lord De L'Isle Philip Sidney, Patron of the Lord Leycester, said: "The grant will enable us to restore the fabric of our beautiful medieval buildings and revitalise the interior to help tell the stories of the Masters and Brethren who have been at the heart of the Hospital for the past four centuries, as well as enabling us to continue to provide homes and community for ex-servicemen in the centuries to come." More details: www.lordleycester.com/



Family are thriving in their new almshouse home

As well as a mews of eight properties for singles and couples in Gloucester, the Charity of Ann Edwards has bought two more properties for beneficiaries - one in Cirencester for a couple, and one in Gloucester for a family.

The charity's original scheme was for women only but it has been revised over the years to be more inclusive, which has enabled the charity to support families. The charity was originally set up for the benefit of widows and unmarried daughters of deceased clergy in the Diocese of Gloucester. It is now for people with an active Christian faith and who are in need, including but not limited to, financial hardship, disability (physical or mental), personal circumstances or old age, with a preference for widows and

Mixed age housing scheme in Newcastle upon Tyne



Sir Leonard Fenwick, trustee of the St Mary Magdalene & Holy Jesus Trust, lays the naming plaque at Magdalene Court.

Work has started on an innovative sustainable housing scheme in Newcastle upon Tyne due to be completed next summer. The new homes being built by the St Mary Magdalene & Holy Jesus Trust meet national space standards, include measures to improve energy efficiency and are accessible for disabled people. The Magdalene Court development in Spital Tongues, Newcastle upon Tyne includes one block of 15 one-bedroom apartments and three, three-bedroom homes for families. It is the first time the trust has provided homes for families and the decision to do so was a direct response to local community housing need.

John Lee, chairman of the St Mary Magdalene & Holy Jesus Trust, said: "The Magdalene Court scheme is an exciting development for the trust. It builds on what we have done successfully in the past in providing accommodation for older people but also widens our scope to include accommodation for families. We consulted extensively with partners and stakeholders and by providing a mix of accommodation we will ensure that the trust is using its assets effectively and efficiently to deliver benefit in the local community."

Marking 400 years with new homes, history exhibition and information leaflet

The Almshouse Association was delighted to be invited to cut the ribbon at the official opening of the first two of three new homes being built by the Honeywood and Douglas charity in Kent.

The Honeywood Trust was created in 1622 to provide homes for local people in Lenham and was united with the Douglas Charity in 1996 to provide homes for residents from Boughton Malherbe.

The latest expansion project involved creating three new homes over the past year at 23 High Street,

which was bought in 2021 for conversion. This brings the number of the charities properties to 29. Each of the new homes has an open-plan kitchen/living room and a single bedroom and wet-room. They share a front garden. Following the official opening, residents and guests enjoyed a tea party at the Lenham Community Centre to celebrate their 400th anniversary. The occasion was marked by an historic exhibition curated by a group of dedicated historians and the publication of a '400 years' leaflet outlining the background and achievements of the charity and its hopes for the future. More about the day at: www.almshouses.org/news/honywood-and-douglas-charity-latest-expansion-project-nears-completion



Kathryn Warner, clerk to the trustees at the Charity of Ann Edwards, Gloucestershire, saw *The Gazette* article about almshouses that accommodate families with children and responded to our request to hear similar stories from other charities.

for children of deceased clergy who live in the diocese. One of our younger residents recently told us about what living in an almshouse meant to her: "When I found myself as a single mum with five young children, one disabled, I was terrified about how I would manage and where we would live. Would the needs of all my children be met? How would I provide for them? Living in an almshouse has provided us with the security we need, knowing we have support and a roof over our heads. The house is adapted for my child with disabilities and there are enough rooms so each of my children can have a bedroom each. I know without an almshouse this would not have been possible and it is important they all



Richard Graham MP for Gloucester visits Ann Edwards Mews.

have their own space. With the security of our home, we have been able to move forward together, put roots down and settle in a community. I have been able to care for my children whilst having a part-time job. I am so grateful for the provision of an almshouse, it has meant and continues to mean such a tremendous amount to my family. We are thriving not surviving."

Combatting the causes and effects of condensation

Condensation occurs where moisture in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and turns into water droplets. It is generally noticeable where it forms on non-absorbent surfaces such as windows and tiles but it can form on any surface, only being noticed when mould appears or the material rots.

Condensation tends to happen more in rooms where there is a considerable amount of moisture, such as in bathrooms and kitchens, or in rooms where there are a number of people.

Day-to-day activities

The moisture in the air comes from a number of sources within the house. Normal day-to-day activities produce relatively large quantities of moisture and it is estimated that a five-person household creates approximately ten litres of water vapour in the air every day. Cooking, washing and drying clothes, our breathing and personal washing all play a part. This estimation does not take into consideration the effects of any heating.

In kitchens and bathrooms where the warm air contains a considerable amount of moisture and when the air then circulates to cooler parts of the house, for example to a bedroom, it will condense on any colder surface. The fact that houses have become more effectively sealed has led to any moisture produced being retained and providing better conditions for condensation to occur.

Effective ventilation

Ventilation is only effective if consistent throughout the entire house. Poor air circulation causes the formation of stagnant air pockets in areas such as behind furniture and in cupboards and will tend to encourage condensation. The first evidence is usually the formation of mould growth. A further culprit is that of drying clothes in the home, especially over radiators.

Condensation can cause mould to form on walls, furniture and soft furnishings such as curtains and can even damage plasterwork and rot wooden window frames. In the case of anyone who has a breathing condition, such as asthma or bronchitis, it is most important that every effort is made to control conden-



sation because mould and house mites may make these conditions worse. In order to minimise and hopefully prevent condensation occurring, it is best to ventilate the room to the outside after having a bath or shower. Opening a window and closing the door will help. Clothes should be dried out of doors if possible, or in a cool area, which leads to less moisture being held in the air at any one time. Where clothes are dried inside the home, the room should be ventilated and wet coats should be hung outside the living area to dry. Tumble dryers

should be vented to the outside unless they are condensing dryers. A minimum amount of water should be used when cooking and lids kept on pans. Extractor fans should be used where available. When filling baths it is best to run the cold water first and then add the hot which will reduce the amount of steam considerably. Encouraging your residents to follow these simple measures will make a great difference and hopefully avoid condensation or, at the least, minimise its occurrence.

Legal obligations when using CCTV

Trustees wishing to install CCTV for the purpose of monitoring and deterring damage to property and to improve security for the charity's residents and staff, should be aware of various considerations in doing so.

- In the first instance the charity needs to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as operators of CCTV. This is a legal requirement. For more information, visit <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/sme-web-hub/>

- Images of people and any information captured about them, eg. vehicle registration numbers, are covered by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) www.gov.uk/data-protection and fall within the definition of personal data.

It is, therefore, important that the data protection principles set out in the DPA are complied with. All activity recorded and held by the charity should be in full accordance with the UK-General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- The charity should have a policy covering CCTV which should include the names of those responsible for its operation. A template policy is available on The Almshouse Association's website at www.almshouses.org/model-policies-and-templates/

- Access to the recorded information should be restricted and held securely to ensure the personal data is adequately protected. Footage should also be retained only for as long as required to achieve its purpose. This is usually two weeks. Once it has been established there is no reason to retain the information, it should be deleted.

- With the exception of law enforcement bodies, images must not be provided to third parties. All trustees and staff should be made aware of how to respond to any individual making a request for copies of their own image under the DPA or the Freedom of

Protecting almshouse buildings in winter

Practical advice and guidance to help to protect properties during colder seasons, provided by Higos Insurance Brokers.



1. Maintenance and general preparations

- Special attention should be given to areas such as roof insulation, pipe lagging, boiler maintenance and the external fabric of the building.
- Arrange regular maintenance contracts for clearing roof valleys, gutters, hoppers, downpipes and drains. This will limit the risk of blockages that can lead to water penetrating your building.
- Keep building plans that identify stopcock locations readily available if an emergency shut off is required.
- Check the roof for potential problems such as loose, cracked or missing tiles.
- Keep a careful eye on trees that could fall onto the property.

2. Water heating systems

- Always leave boilers and other water heating systems running during winter months, even when a property is temporarily unoccupied.

● Maintaining an

ambient temperature is essential to avoid many issues. We recommend 10°C throughout your properties.

- Check when a full service was last carried out. Regular inspection and maintenance is required.

3. Pipes and water tanks

- Inspect the whole system for potential defects or vulnerabilities. Pay particular attention to areas exposed to cold conditions.
- Ensure exposed pipes and water tanks are adequately lagged. This provides essential protection against freezing conditions.
- Insulate or fully drain outdoor taps between uses.

Insurance for Almshouse Charities

For information regarding the bespoke almshouse charity insurance offered by Higos Insurance Brokers Ltd, please contact: almshouses.portfolio@higos.co.uk
Bespoke almshouse insurance is also available from Grout Insurance Brokers Ltd – info@groutinsure.co.uk

Avoiding slips and trips in wet and icy weather

The Health & Safety Executive has reported that slip and trip accidents increase during the autumn and

winter seasons for a number of reasons. There is less daylight, leaves fall onto paths which can become wet and slippery and, of course, ice and snow underfoot can prove to be treacherous, especially for older people.

Action should be taken to minimise the risk of someone slipping and falling and it is particularly important to ensure that all walkways are tackled promptly. Key issues to consider are lighting, wet and decaying leaves, moss, rain water, ice and frost.

Adequate lighting

Checks should be made that there is enough lighting around the almshouses for all concerned to be able to see clearly and avoid hazards that might be on the ground. Both internal and external routes should be scrutinised and the effect of light changes throughout the day should be borne in mind.

In the event that existing lighting is found to be insufficient, improvements need to be made, which might just be a simple matter of changing the type of bulb.

Fallen leaves that are wet or have started to decay can create the risk of slips in hiding possible hazards that may be on the path or creating a slip risk in themselves.

Clearing leaves

A procedure for clearing leaves regularly should be put in place and consideration given to removing certain bushes or trees altogether if they are considered to pose a risk.

When laying external paved areas, the material used should be slip resistant when wet and people should be discouraged from taking short cuts over grass or dirt which are likely to become slippery. Consideration should be given to converting existing shortcuts into proper paths. It has been found that many slip accidents occur at the entrances to buildings due to people walking in rainwater. If possible, fitting canopies over building entrances can help prevent this. Alternatively, the installation of large, absorbent mats could be considered.



Information Act and reference should be made to the charity's Data Protection Policy. Any request should be passed directly to the responsible individual.

- All those affected by the CCTV system ie. residents, staff, contractors and other visitors to the site, must be informed that they can make a subject access data request. They may also be provided with details of the ICO website and how to make a complaint, on request.

- It is not customary for CCTV systems to be monitored 24 hours a day and access to data is usually restricted to the named individuals.

- It is recommended that a review of the effectiveness of the CCTV system is undertaken regularly.



Regional meetings return

In June 2022, The Almshouse Association was pleased to be able to resume our regional meetings and we are delighted to say we have had an overwhelming response.

We planned and organised 11 meetings with over 125 of our member charities attending. Getting together with over 209 trustees, clerks and scheme managers has been incredible. We want to thank all of you who worked with us to organise these meetings and offered their almshouses as perfect venues. Feedback has been tremendous and we are delighted that the meetings are providing a great platform for an open discussion on challenges and also providing members with an update on the almshouse movement, decarbonisation strategies, energy updates and general guidelines.

Details of forthcoming regional meetings are posted on our website at www.almshouses.org/training-seminars/meetings/ If you are organising a meeting you would like us to advertise on our website, please email gerryharmon@almshouses.org



Enthusiastic members attending the Sheffield Regional Meeting in November

At a well-attended regional meeting in Cirencester (photo below right) in October, the main themes were decarbonisation and benefits. Speakers from Historic England joined a local team of historic building advisors to discuss decarbonisation and Mary Cobbett gave an informative presentation on the availability of grants and benefits. Her research revealed that fewer than half of almshouse residents claim their full allowance.

Almshouse Association CEO, Nick Phillips commented: "Members seemed really interested in our key topics. The presentations were informative and the networking terrific."

After attending the North London meeting in September (photo right), Julian Marczak and Jack Baldan of The Almshouse Association commented:

"The event was an excellent networking opportunity for members, while also learning about what The Almshouse Association has been doing to support and protect the membership. It was great to have so many conversations with passionate trustees who are keen to do their best for their residents and their charities. Discussions concentrated on issues around the current energy crisis, cost of living and the proposed cap of increases to WMCs for Registered Providers."



NATIONAL NEWS INSIGHT

The Almshouse Association meets with DLUHC

The Association met with representatives of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

We raised concerns voiced by our members regarding the proposed amendments to Social Housing Regulations as well as the ongoing consultation on a rent cap, both of which would impact almshouse charities who are also Registered Providers of Social Housing.

The department has assured us that there are no direct threats to almshouses within the new regulations and that the charitable status of almshouses will be protected. The Association will continue to monitor the progress of the regulations.

Government support for non-domestic energy bills

The Government has published details on the Energy Bill Relief Scheme to help those on non-domestic (business) tariffs this winter. It includes charities which provide energy to residents. The support runs from 1 October 2022 until 31 March 2023, with further help expected afterwards for the most vulnerable sectors. The scheme is open to all on a non-domestic contract including: businesses, voluntary sector organisations such as charities, and public sector organisations such as schools, hospitals and care homes who are: ● on existing fixed price contracts agreed on or after 1 April 2022 ● signing new fixed price contracts ● on deemed out of contract or variable tariffs ● on flexible purchase or similar contracts.

The support will be applied to all bills by suppliers and you will not need to apply for it to take effect. For full information: www.almshouses.org/news/government-announces-support-for-non-domestic-energy-bills/

Response to Tenant Satisfaction Consultation published

The Regulator of Social Housing has published its response to the consultation on the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) for Registered Providers of Social Housing.

The TSMs are a set of measures which aim to reflect the performance of housing providers, including registered providers who are almshouses. Some of the TSMs have been amended but there will still be 22 data points covering measures gathered from residents and housing providers based on levels of satisfaction, complaints, health and safety checks etc.

For most almshouse charities with fewer than 1,000 homes, there are provisions to collect this data every year or every two years. For those with over 1,000 homes, it will be an annual requirement. The TSMs are due to come into effect on 1 April 2023.

Guidance for members operating heat networks

The Government has outlined how members operating heat networks must 'pass-through' the savings made through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. Savings should have been passed on by 30 November 2022, or within 30 days of receiving discounted prices from your energy supplier.

Registering with the Energy Ombudsman for the redress scheme.

Information will be found on the Energy Ombudsman website. Heat suppliers can also contact heatnetworks@beis.gov.uk for information on the redress scheme. Further guidance on the Energy Bill Relief Scheme pass-through requirements for heat networks can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/pass-through-requirements-for-energy-price-support-provided-to-intermediaries/guidance-on-the-energy-bill-relief-scheme-pass-through-requirements-for-heat-networks

If you are benefitting from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme on your commercial electricity supply used for communal areas (lighting, lifts, security doors, etc.), these savings also need to be passed through to customers. In these cases where you act as an intermediary, there is guidance available. The deadline for the notification is 30 days from the benefit being provided to the intermediary.

Government confirms support for oil heating

Households that don't use mains gas, such as homes with heating oil, LPG or biomass boilers, receive an extra £100 to help with energy bills this winter, on top of the £400 from your electricity supplier. The Government has confirmed this money will be added to your energy account as a bill credit but hasn't said when. It has also said that if you don't have a direct relationship with an electricity supplier, you'll still get the payment, although it has yet to announce how this will be paid.

Support for genuinely affordable housing

Rishi Sunak was appointed Prime Minister after the resignation of Liz Truss. We hope to see the government provide greater support for genuinely affordable housing. There are seven Almshouse Association members in the PM's constituency and we hope he will be aware of the work almshouse charities do in their communities.

Department of Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities

Following Michael Gove's re-appointment as Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, we look forward to working with him, particularly in achieving recognition of almshouses as 'affordable' under the National Planning Policy Framework, to ease the process of developing new almshouses.

The Almshouse Association regularly publishes Policy and Governance updates on its website. Blue text (below) denotes a web link specific to the document or report - see: www.almshouses.org/latest-news/

Key risks facing social housing sector in 2022 and beyond

The Regulator of Social Housing has released its Sector Risk Profile, setting out key risks and challenges facing social housing. The report shows that providers face substantial financial pressures. High inflation is impacting operating costs and the cost of debt is rising at the same time as increased cost of living pressures on tenants, a proposed rent cap and a weakening housing market. To maintain financial resilience, providers need to continue responding appropriately to the changing conditions. Setting up a 'My Charity Commission Account' is a new way for trustees and charity contacts to access the Charity Commission's online services. It can also be used by other people you have authorised, such as your accountant or lawyer.

The Commission has published guidance to help trustees get set up on the new system which can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/setting-up-my-charity-commission-account

CAF opens Keystone Fund for small charities

The Keystone Fund aims to enable locally and regionally focused charities working towards social equity to become more agile in their support for communities. It provides unrestricted grants, networking and access to advice webinars and toolkits.

Grants available: Unrestricted grants, intended to enable charitable organisations in the UK to adapt ways of working, strengthen capacity or build resilience, according to identified needs. Grants will be awarded between £5,000 and £50,000. Approximately 120 grants will be awarded during 2022-23. Funds must begin to be spent within six months of payment and can be carried forward into the following financial year if required. They should be fully spent within 24 months of grant payment. Grants will not normally be restricted to specific projects but CAF will ask how you would like to use the funds. It is hoped that charitable organisations can use a grant to become more agile in their support for their communities. This might include the costs of leadership time to develop strategy or organisational capacity, or to access additional external expertise, support and advice to develop their resilience plans. Grants might also be used for staff costs, digital costs, overheads, delivery costs or equipment.

In addition, building on CAF's advisory opportunities for charities across the UK, all grant holders will gain access to webinars, toolkits, and networking opportunities to accelerate their impact. More at: www.cafonline.org/charities/grantmaking/keystone

Peer Representatives

The role of a regional peer representative is a volunteer position that has been developed to support our member charities across the UK in their respective regions. Representatives are on hand to offer a good listening ear and have a wealth of experience in the almshouse movement. Their skills and backgrounds range from:

- Running/managing an almshouse charity
- Managing social housing
- Financial, business and legal planning

Each peer representative, along with assistance from The Almshouse Association, will help plan and organise regional meetings in their area and are also available for a telephone call or, in some instances, a face-to-face visit.

Welcome to our new peer representatives

Chris Jones – East Midlands

We are pleased to welcome our new regional peer representative for the East Midlands, Chris Jones, Chief Executive Officer and Clerk to the Trustees at Wygggestons and Trinity Hospital Charities in Leicester. Chris has worked in housing and care services for over 20 years and has vast experience of local authorities, housing



associations and almshouse charities in both operational and strategic management roles. He has previously chaired a local authority Supporting People & Care Provider Groups, Safeguarding Board Committees and has been a member of the National Housing Federation Housing & Health Group. Chris is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing and currently a trustee of EROSH (Sheltered Housing UK) and chair of its Midland Network. His role at Wygggestons is to oversee the management of the charity and support the trustees to deliver their strategy.

Chris will offer support and guidance but not direct advice and will work with The Almshouse Association to support members in achieving a positive outcome to any challenges you may be facing. We are delighted to have Chris on board and look forward to working with him in 2023 and organising our first regional meeting.

Chris can be contacted on: 0116 255 9174 (option 3) or by email: ceo@wygggestons.org.uk

Jennifer Millard - Cambridgeshire

Jennifer Millard has joined as regional peer representative for Cambridgeshire. Jennifer is a qualified RICS surveyor with over 20 years of experience in rural estate management, both in the public and private sectors and is a CiLCA qualified clerk with 10 years of clerking experience for almshouses, land, and property-owning charities.



She has business, legal and planning experience and a wealth of knowledge of best practices in budgeting and setting WMC, managing vacancies, governance, and listed buildings, as well as recruitment of trustees. Jennifer, who lives in Ely, will be on hand for telephone calls and face-to-face meetings and will be helping to plan and organise regional meetings in Cambridgeshire.

She said: "I am really excited and honoured to be representing The Almshouse Association as a Regional Peer Representative and am looking forward to working with member charities to support their growth and help with any challenges they may be experiencing."

We welcome Jennifer on board and look forward to working with her. She can be contacted on: 01353 699043 or 07851 153016 or by email: jennifer@millardconsultants.com



Harry Paviour

The Association is deeply saddened to learn of the recent passing of Harry Paviour who many of our members know was a member of the Association's Panel of Consultants advising on fire safety. Over a period of years Harry has been a wonderful help to our Association and member almshouse charities on all matters relating to fire safety, a subject in which he was a highly qualified expert. Beyond Harry's great expertise gained over decades was his wonderful generosity in going to great lengths to help any one of us who needed the benefit of his advice. We know of many accounts of how he would travel from one side of the country to the other to give guidance to trustees and clerks to ensure the safety of their residents. We can fully imagine what an excellent tutor Harry must have been at the Fire Service College with which he had a long association. The articles Harry provided for publication in The Almshouses Gazette were always of the highest quality and we were proud of the fact that he was a member of our Panel of Consultants. One of his colleagues commented that Harry made the UK a safer and more pleasant place in which to live and work. He leaves a superb legacy to his many trainees in the fire safety field to whom he passed on his key messages and approach. We will all miss Harry greatly.

Residents' stories help support almshouses

We always like to hear about the moving and inspiring life stories residents share with us when we are out and about visiting almshouses and it is so important that we start to build an archive of these valuable snippets of people's voyages through life, not only for posterity but also for the present day.



Just as they have been doing for the last 1,000 years, almshouses continue to change the lives of people for the better and we need your help to document their stories and let the wider public know about the difference they make and their positive contribution to society. Residents' stories are vital to the future

of the almshouse movement, helping raise the profile and highlighting the value of this community-led affordable housing model. Some members have already started to send in these stories and we would be pleased to receive even more so we can continue to build awareness of almshouses and support their longevity.

We value the importance of privacy and fully appreciate many residents may not want to be photographed or named. We are always respectful of this and will work with you to ensure residents wishes are fully adhered to.

How the help of almshouse wardens, clerks and trustees makes a difference to the lives of residents

Here are some of the stories we have been sent which provide wonderful examples of the transformative effect almshouses make on people's lives.

"Resident 'D' has been with us for a year. He was homeless and is slowly adjusting to a more comfortable life in Trust accommodation. He had been sleeping in an old campervan for over two years and was accessing facilities at a local homeless charity.

He was referred to us by a support worker from the homeless charity, initially bringing him along to an Open Morning. 'D' was very distrustful and both the support worker and members of the Trust staff had to work hard to persuade 'D' to take up our offer of a flat."

"This gentleman joined us in December a couple of years ago.

He had lived in his mobile home on a site for over 25 years but on return from hospital, realised that it was no longer fit to live in as it had deteriorated so badly and was also unsaleable.

In his application he was completely honest about his medical condition which is serious and will shorten his life expectancy. He had a short spell in a nursing home for respite which he did not enjoy, as he felt that he was far too independent and mobile and not ready for this stage in life. The gentleman was invited for an interview where he came across as being very independent although his mobility was limited.

We felt he was in need and that we could offer him a ground floor flat with 24-hour support through the pipeline and warden. He very happily accepted and was very aware that he would have to arrange a package of care when needed. He has now lived independently in an almshouse for 18 months and, due to his terminal illness, regularly visits the local hospice. We have been able to support him to maintain his independence and dignity and to ensure the final months of his life are comfortable. He enjoys a daily warden visit."

"Resident 'M' has now been with us for three years and is a model resident and extremely proud of their flat. 'M' is a truly different person now and puts their cheffing skills to good use, often doing barbecues at our event evenings. 'M' is also now in receipt of their state pension, so financially is in a much better position and very happy!

In a recent conversation, they said that moving into their almshouse flat has been the best thing to happen, as they are now worry-free and no longer in the dark place they were once in."

"A 68-year-old man had only a fortnight to find a home when his 37-year relationship with a partner broke down. He came to the Trust for help and we managed to refurbish a flat for him in just 14-days."

"Resident 'N' believes that they would not be here today if they had not been offered an almshouse. After years of drug and alcohol abuse and many failed attempts to get 'clean', and becoming homeless, 'N' eventually found themselves in a rehabilitation unit where they finally stopped drinking and taking drugs. A staff member at the almshouse became aware of 'N' and their needs and offered them a home. 'N' has now been living there for 11 years and feels incredibly blessed. 'N' is committed to local charity work and enjoys being part of a special community and is grateful for their 'place in paradise'."

Fond farewell after 80 years joint service

Most people working or serving in the almshouse movement have a pride and passion for what they do that keeps them involved for a long time. But few, if any, can claim to have been involved for almost 80 years! This is not a world record of the oldest living working person but the number of years jointly worked by husband and wife team, Sharon and Jim Staples. They arrived at Thomas Philipot's Almshouses in Eltham, London as a young couple in their twenties. Sharon has been an amazing warden over the years, working hard to give residents a secure and happy retirement, with support, social activities and links to the community. Over half of the residents are in their 80s and 90s, most of whom are still enjoying an active and independent life. Jim has worked alongside Sharon as the almshouses' gardener. Modest, hardworking and with a touch of magic green fingers, he has transformed the

gardens from a few lawns to an oasis of colour and tranquillity in the midst of south east London, winning the London Gardens Society Large Community Garden cup in the almshouses section a number of times.



Sharon and Jim have lived their lives at Philipot's, including bringing up two children and have helped transform the almshouses into an inclusive, friendly, happy community which, in many ways, is like a big family. They will be sorely missed but everyone at Philipot's wishes them a long, happy and well-deserved retirement.

45-years long service to the Bedworth community

Bedworth Almshouse in Warwickshire held a very special place in the heart of trustee John Haynes. He joined the Nicholas Chamberlaine Trust in 1977 and served for 45 years until he passed away in September.

For nine years he was chair of the Hospital and Sermon Charity and also served on the School Foundation.

John's involvement with the almshouse began even earlier, in the 1960s, when, as leader of Bedworth Council, he facilitated a payment of £90,000 to repair the roof of the hospital wing that had collapsed.

A Bedworth boy, John signed as an apprentice footballer for Coventry City Football Club, worked in tool making and trained to be a teacher, retiring from Nicholas Chamberlaine School. He was the youngest councillor to be elected to Bedworth Urban District Council at the age of 24 and continued to serve on Warwickshire County Council and the merged Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Councils until 2018. He had been chair of the District Council, County Council and Mayor of the Borough on two occasions. He was also a school governor, a magistrate and a rotarian.

John leaves a wife Hilda, a daughter Judith and granddaughter Ella. He will be greatly missed.

Fundraising coffee morning for Macmillan



Katie at the Walker Barstow Homes, York sent us in this fabulously cheerful photo of a coffee morning held in October. They told us they were "super proud" at raising £231.10 for Macmillan cancer support. Well done to you all!

The trust was established in 1974 through amalgamation of The Walker Almshouses (founded in 1909 by the bequest of Charles Cameron Walker) and Barstow's Hospital (founded in 1702).

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The Almshouses Gazette
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Registered Charity No. 245668
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ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



Historic cottages in Burnham-On-Sea

Ellen's Cottages in Burnham's Berrow Road were built in 1868 with an endowment from philanthropist John Saunders in memory of his wife Ellen and were offered to "poor widows and spinsters of good character". Today, they are looked after by a charitable trust marking its 75th year. Almshouse Association CEO, Nick Phillips praised the local team who

oversee the building and the major repair work they had undertaken in recent years. Guests included the Mayor of Burnham, Cllr Lesley Millard who said: "The building is a wonderful community asset that will benefit local people for years to come." Full details at: www.almshouses.org/news/burnham-on-sea-almshouses-mark-historic-anniversary

Highgate homes founded in 1658

Residents and trustees held a tea party at Wollaston & Pouncefort Almshouse Charity, a sheltered housing scheme in Highgate, London to

either side of a charity school for girls. In the 1980s, these were improved by doubling the size of each, reducing the number to six and creating individual



celebrate the 300th anniversary of their homes. Originally founded by Sir John Wollaston in 1658, the almshouses were rebuilt and extended in 1722 by Edward Pouncefort. Both men were Highgate School governors at different times. The terrace consisted of 12 cottages

bathrooms. On the anniversary, residents enjoyed tea, cake and a short history quiz, won by Janet Betham. A prize for the oldest resident went to Carol Kenning, 82. **Residents celebrate 300 years at Highgate's almshouses.** photo credit: Wollaston & Pouncefort Almshouse Charity. Chairman of trustees, Richard Sage thanked residents for being "kind-hearted, generous, honest, friendly, uncomplaining and decent". He added: "That makes the trustees' task all the more fulfilling".

2023 CALENDAR

23 March	Almshouses Seminar	Sheffield
March-Dec	The Almshouse Way one-day training course	various - see website
15 June	Members Day and AGM	London

Celebrating twice at Guildford homes

When Lord Onslow joined the 400th year celebrations at Abbot's Hospital almshouses in 2019, he spoke about the value added to people's lives through almshouses and the great community built in that time. Fast forward three years and a second celebration was held to mark the unveiling of four murals dedicated to Archbishop George Abbot, who founded The Hospital of the Blessed Trinity, better known as Abbot's Hospital, as a place of refuge for older people in the town.



Abbot's Hospital residents Margot Betts and Ian Henderson unveil the 20th century legacy panel; photo credit: Martin Neal for 'In your Area'

Although the panels, situated in Jeffries Passage in Guildford, celebrate 400 years since the laying of the foundation stone for Abbot's Hospital, they were unveiled in 2022 as this marks 400 years since the first residents moved in. Each panel depicts dream-like scenes of Abbot's throughout the centuries. The first is dedicated to Archbishop Abbot - Archbishop of Canterbury from 1611-1633 - and reflects the history and impact his legacy has had on communities and residents over four centuries. They include illustrations of historic events and changes during the Grade I Listed building's lifetime, including poppies to signify war and remembrance, the battle of Dunkirk, the abolition of the slave trade and the invention of penicillin. There is also a tribute to the 1960s era and music, depicted with a Yellow Submarine Beatles tile. To read more, please visit: www.almshouses.org/news/colourful-creations-mark-400-years-of-guildford-almshouse/