



Supporting and representing independent almshouse charities across the UK since 1946

Whilst many of us may be aware of the traditional almshouse buildings dotted all over the United Kingdom, few perhaps realise how vibrant and relevant the Almshouse Movement is today. There are over 30,000 almshouse dwellings housing over 36,000 residents, in local communities, all over the UK. They not only provide truly affordable homes for people in need, many are also beautiful, historical buildings that are a great sense of pride for local people and a heritage attraction for visitors to the town. These homes continue to provide a strong sense of community, offering safety and security and making it possible for those in housing need to continue to live independently, in their local area.

“Self-sufficient low cost housing held in trust by local people for local people is an impressive model.”

Elizabeth Fathi, Trustee Board Member

It is a model that has survived over a 1000 years and can show a maturity and foundation to younger models that depend upon Government funding and the political incentives and projects of the day.

Unique in their legal and charity status, almshouses have been shown to improve residents' wellbeing and sense of belonging and community. The small scale intimacy of their distinctive built form may not single-handedly be able to solve the nation's housing crisis, but, in a similar way that a hospice complements the NHS, the almshouse movement complements the Governments' social housing programme.

We see the strength in the future of the movement not just in new 21st century builds, but also in new benefactors. The creation of brand new almshouse charities will do much to spread the word, to help local communities house local people in need and to sustain the model.

Even though the merits of almshouses speak for themselves and a clear definition of an almshouse is approved by the Charity Commission, there is still a knowledge gap in terms of what an almshouse really is and the tangible benefits this type of genuinely affordable living offers to local communities.

Our aim is to rectify this knowledge gap by raising the profile of almshouses and their valuable place in society today.

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

You will see The Almshouse Association campaigning more in Government to gain support and recognition for the almshouse movement and the very real social and financial advantages that are derived from this type of affordable, community living.

Almshouses can provide 21st century living, either through building new, contemporary, purpose built flats and bungalows, or by refurbishment of historic buildings. Standards of accommodation are continually rising, with technology playing an increasing part in making life easier. Disabled access, internet connection and sophisticated personal alarms all contribute towards enabling residents to remain independent in their homes for as long as possible.

Almshouses often follow a unique architectural design, a three-sided form with separate living units surrounding a central communal space, a garden or seating area. This model enables independent living with the benefit of neighbourly support when required, alleviating the isolation that is so prevalent today.

We will be raising awareness of our member almshouse charities whose hard work and dedication supporting almshouses and their residents often goes unnoticed. Alongside, we will celebrate the almshouse movement as a whole and how this unique model is still relevant and valuable today.

With local authority waiting lists standing at **over 1.15m in England in 2018/2019 (Shelter)**, there is a huge need for affordable, community housing that supports the needs of local people. Almshouses help fulfill this need.

Whilst highlighting the value of the almshouse model, another key aim will be to showcase the historic value and conservation of our national heritage. Many almshouses are unique, beautiful traditional buildings with fascinating architectural features such as clock towers and elegant spires. Modern features now mingle with the historic to create contemporary, stunning, comfortable homes.

We would warmly welcome your support in Parliament. We are looking for members across the House to become passionate supporters of our work and that of our members. This support can be given in a number of ways, such as joining the APPG for almshouses, raising questions in Parliament, talking to and visiting your local almshouses and making representations to ministers.

Your voice can make such a difference.

Nick Phillips

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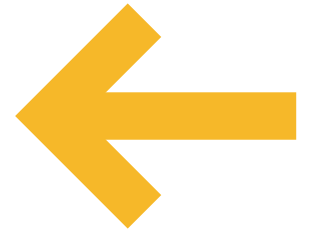
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HOUSING:

What role is there for almshouses in the 21st century?



There are over 30,000 almshouses throughout the UK supported and run by more than 1600 almshouse charities. These almshouses provide much needed, truly affordable community-led homes for local people in housing need.

We are facing an affordable housing crisis and there looks to be harsher times ahead for both young families and older tenants.

Currently, 8.4 million people are living in unaffordable, insecure and unsuitable housing.

Heriot-Watt University, Scotland, on behalf of the National Housing Federation 2019

The Local Government Association (LGA), which represents more than 370 councils in England and Wales, warned that based on existing trends, the scale of elderly homelessness is set to double by 2025.

The Independent 2017 and Age UK Policy Position Paper – Older Homelessness 2019

Almshouses are not just buildings. They are led by a charitable spirit. These micro-communities offer more than just a roof over residents heads. The evidence from a recent almshouse study recorded that, **“on average our residents live up to five years longer than they’d be expected to elsewhere.”**

Cass Business School

Almshouses are a part of the housing crisis solution, the case couldn’t be stronger.

Matter Architecture Ltd stated in their recent research that, “Almshouses are a unique form of social, affordable housing that predates modern forms by many centuries. Whilst unlikely to solve the housing crisis on their own, their unusual histories and constitutions mean they are not subject to the same land pressures as many housing providers, and they demonstrate means by which the planning system could better support innovation and the supply of affordable housing.”

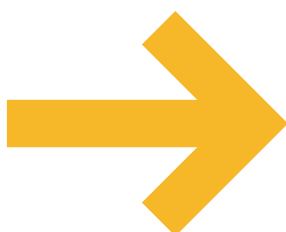
Roland Karthaus, Director, Matter Architecture Ltd – Architects Journal

We know that housing affordability is a significant cause of anxiety, stress and other social problems. It is the lack of affordable housing that so often lies behind the problems of poverty, homelessness, debt, family breakdown and mental and physical poor health.

Council House waiting lists stood at 1.15m for England in 2018/2019 – Shelter

“Many almshouse trustees are ready to build. Although almshouses will never be the total solution to the housing crisis, they represent a great opportunity to expand very local affordable housing provision. The model is based on genuine affordability, independent living and residents’ wellbeing. Over the last 1000 years, almshouses, led by local trustees have offered truly affordable homes to the community and if ever there was a time to build more almshouses, it’s now.”

Nick Phillips, CEO, The Almshouse Association



The Housing Crisis Today

"The number of families in highly unsatisfactory temporary accommodation has risen, at a cost of over £1 billion a year – because those families (in work as well as with no earnings) cannot afford anywhere to live."

Shelter

"The quarterly statistics for September 2019 mark the thirty-second time that the number of households in temporary accommodation is higher than in the same quarter of the previous year. **The 87,410 households include 127,890 children.**"

House of Commons Library

The cost of poor housing to the NHS is estimated to be £1.4 billion per annum; of which nearly half (£624 million), is attributed to poor housing among older adults

Age UK's Later in Life in the UK 2019 Report

"Loneliness is deadlier than obesity and should be considered as a major public health hazard. American researchers looked at 218 studies into the health effects of social isolation and loneliness, involving just under four million people. **They found that lonely people had a 50% increased risk of early death**, compared to those with good social connections. Obesity, in contrast, raises the chance of dying before the age of 70 by around 30%."

Lifeline 24

The 2017 UK Housing Review Briefing Paper (September 2017) argued that while supply is of critical importance, "so is the rather more neglected issue of affordability, in both the private and social housing sectors."

**House of Commons Library Briefing Paper
Tackling the under-supply of housing in England**

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ALMSHOUSES AND THE HOUSING CRISIS

Almshouses: unique and significant to the affordable housing crisis

Almshouses were the first form of affordable, local community housing for people in housing need.

For over a 1000 years almshouse charities have been providing unique, secure, affordable community homes for local people and, instead of becoming outdated or inappropriate, this housing model continues to be relevant today.

We are all well aware of the ongoing housing crisis throughout the United Kingdom. This crisis is not just about supply, its also about affordability and quality. Many people find themselves living in insecure accommodation which fails to support their general wellbeing. This, we know, leads to an impact on mental and physical health.

So, where do almshouses fit in?

Almshouses offer independent living in a safe, welcoming community-led environment that supports wellbeing. They often are designed so that residents feel part of a 'micro-community'.

The spirit of almshouses can be found in the traditional layout of their homes, that encompass neighbourliness and social interaction without impacting on individuals privacy. They are built with compassion, kindness and shared values in mind. Some almshouses have communal areas and gardens for residents to come together. These special communities often alleviate isolation yet offer independent living too.

For people who are in true housing need, almshouses can provide a life changing opportunity.

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THE BENEFITS OF ALMSHOUSES

AFFORDABILITY

Realistic Financial Contributions

A weekly maintenance contribution which is less than the standard market rent, offering security of low cost accommodation.

Independent Age – advice and support website for older age

COMMUNITY SPIRITED

Helping to alleviate isolation

Almshouses are often built in a traditional three-sided square layout, with homes surrounding a communal garden or seating area, supporting social interaction and wellbeing.

According to medical doctor and social commentator on medicine, science and technology, Tomasz Pierscionek, social isolation can be as detrimental to physical health as smoking.

Loneliness increases the likelihood of mortality by 26%.

Campaign To End Loneliness – Independent Age

OVERSEEN BY LOCAL TRUSTEES WHO ARE KNOWN IN THE COMMUNITY

Provides more accountability and peace of mind.

DIVERSITY

A broad range of beneficiaries are supported, depending on local needs:

- Young couples and families at Girtons Town Charity, Cambridge
- Accommodation for older ladies at the Brixton Friendly Almshouses, Brixton
- Aged Miners, Durham, Yorkshire

We are looking to encourage more diversity in almshouses, inspiring new charities to be established, reflecting today's local housing needs.

A GREATER BENEFIT TO SOCIETY

Almshouse charities are started and funded by philanthropists - charity minded activists, throughout the ages.

PROVEN CREDIBILITY

A housing model that is over 1000 years old and has proven effective with many positive outcomes for local people, the community and society as a whole, offers both integrity and reliability.

FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Almshouses are supported by private benefactors, alleviating some of the funding burden that community housing usually involves.

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

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Our Future Plans

1. Raise the awareness and the profile of almshouses and their benefits.

Improve the understanding and recognition of almshouses and the Almshouse Movement.



2. See the growth of almshouses through the removal of barriers.

We want to release the potential of almshouses across the UK and see the removal of any barriers which will help lead to the development of existing almshouses and the building of new almshouses.



3. We want to get involved!

Become a key contributor to debates, planning and considerations within the housing sector.



4. We want to lead on specific campaigns.

Spearhead campaigns for greater levels of affordable, community-led housing.



‘Almshouses – the exemplar form of community housing.’



What can you do to help The Almshouse Association and wider almshouse movement?

1. Join the APPG for almshouses

We are looking for passionate supporters who care about individuals in real housing need.



2. Promote almshouses to your local authority

Inform your local council that you would like to see more almshouses in your constituency. Or....

Help us promote the great work almshouse charities carry out in your community. If you would like a template letter for ease of use, please get in touch.



3. Raise questions in Parliament

We invite you to raise questions in Parliament to help increase the knowledge and understanding of almshouses and for the ongoing support of the trustees who run them.



4. Make Representations on behalf of almshouses

We encourage you to write to ministers, when necessary, to ensure the voices of The Almshouse Association members are heard.



**We welcome your questions and comments.
Please contact us for any further information you may require.**

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Nick Phillips

As Chief Executive of The Almshouse Association Nick is determined to see almshouses recognised as the exemplar community housing model.

Supported by a team of committed and knowledgeable staff and volunteers, Nick is driving an agenda to ensure the Almshouse Movement is properly recognised for its value to the community and society.

Appointed as CEO of The Almshouse Association in 2018, Nick has worked in the Charity Sector for the last 20 years, leading a charity support organisation prior to joining the association. A chartered surveyor, his past career also includes many years with the National Trust as a Property Manager, leading and evaluating European grant programmes for DEFRA, supporting charities and rural businesses.

Nick joined The Almshouse Association to oversee a strategy to:

- Raise awareness of the great work of almshouses and their value to communities around the country
- Help free up the potential of member almshouse charities to thrive
- See more almshouses built and new charities started
- Support almshouse charities in their work, providing safe, friendly, secure homes for their residents.

"Our role is to deliver the best service for our members and to raise the profile of the almshouse model. I will raise the profile of almshouses, almshouse charities and The Almshouse Association, both politically and publicly, ensuring the almshouse model is recognised for its great beneficial impact on the lives of residents, and building on its great history and traditions. I feel a strong sense of responsibility to support our members develop the thousand year legacy of almshouses and expand, improve and hand on better than we found it."



Nick works with his team to encourage a better understanding of almshouses and promote this centuries old enduring model that is still so relevant today. Nick holds a principal role in Governance – working closely with government representatives, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Almshouses and other interested parties, to ensure that almshouse charities do not suffer from the unintended consequences of existing and emerging government legislation.

Nick is also developing partnerships with other national bodies that share the values of The Almshouse Association.

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Charles Fifield

Charles Fifield joined the Association in 2023 as Policy and Engagement Officer.

He graduated from the Royal Agricultural College (now University) in 1995, working at Fifield Glyn Chartered Surveyors, qualified as a Chartered Surveyor since 1998, Fellow since 2009.



Charles was heavily involved with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors from 1997 – 2009 including as National Chairman of RICS Matrics (young surveyors) 2007-08. Currently an Executive Member of Ability: RE which looks at disability and inclusivity issues within the real estate and build environment sectors. Charles has FSH muscular dystrophy so has lived experience with disability issues.

Charles served as a Borough Councillor in Cheshire West & Chester 2011-23, service included Planning Committee and Chaired several other committees including: Scrutiny, Ageing Well, Disability Access Forum, Town & City Centre working group, Appeals Committee. He is Vice Chairman of his village Parish Council and an Executive Board Member of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils.

"Almshouses are a centuries old concept that has a continuing role in the modern world, as the exemplar form of community housing. The Almshouse Association represents over 1,600 independent almshouse charities that provide homes for around 35,000 residents across the United Kingdom. Through my experience both as Borough Councillor for 12 years and as a Chartered Surveyor for 25 years, I have come to recognise the vital role almshouses play in their communities and the opportunity their greater adoption elsewhere could provide to other communities."

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