



the almshouses Gazette

issue 270 spring 2023 price: £2.75

New edition of Standards of Almshouse Management

We are pleased to announce that The Almshouse Association 2023 (7th edition) Standards of Almshouse Management is now live on our website!



With the support of the team at The Almshouse Association, Stone King LLP, The Charity Commission, National Housing Federation, member feedback and review workshops, this edition of the fondly named 'SAM' is designed in an easy to access format that explains the steps needed to run an almshouse

well, offering context, flowcharts and templates. This being said, as you all know, almshouses are as much about residents as they are buildings and SAM will not be able to address every

situation, which is why we have a dedicated team at The Almshouse Association on hand to help.

We are just a telephone call or email away to help with the more individual queries that trustees and clerks may face.

We hope this latest edition makes your life as a trustee, clerk or warden easier and leaves you more freedom to enjoy

the best parts of running an almshouse, such as spending time with residents and colleagues. Thank you again for everyone who has given up their time to help shape this really valuable guide.

www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouse-management-2023

A message from The Charity Commission

Almshouses are some of our oldest charities, with a long and proud history of providing housing to their beneficiaries. But this important and enduring place in society doesn't happen without the time, skill, and energy of the trustees of these charities. It is the trustees whose commitment and hard work helps ensure that almshouses continue to provide the support envisioned by their original founders and in a way that reflects modern standards, requirements and expectations around governance and management. The Charity Commission has long supported The Almshouse Association's Standards of Almshouse Management and we encourage trustees to use this updated edition as an essential guide to their role.

*Dr Helen Stephenson CBE,
Chief Executive, Charity Commission
for England and Wales*

If there is anything you think is missing or incorrect in the new SAM, please do let us know by emailing admin@almshouses.org

Experts gather for Members Day event

We are all looking forward to The Almshouse Association Members Day 2023 taking place on Thursday 15 June at One Great George Street, Westminster, London. We are honoured to be able to welcome Terry Waite CBE as our key guest speaker, together with leading figures in the charity world - see inside on page 3 for further details. These events are always a valuable source of information and guidance. There are still a few places available and we hope to see you there.

Community support services launched

Two community support services have been developed by St John's Winchester which aim to broaden the outreach of the charity and help older people who live in the community outside of the almshouses.

The new services are St John's Dementia Support, in partnership with Dementia UK, and St John's Homeshare, which matches older householders with a younger lodger. The launch was celebrated at Winchester Cathedral and attended by Winchester MP, Steve Brine who said the new services "fit the times perfectly". St John's Chief Executive, Clive Cook said: "It's a great step forward". For more details, turn to page 7.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S COMMENT

What is our research telling us about almshouses?

Over the last few years we have commissioned, often with sponsorship, research into the almshouse model, trying to better understand what is it about almshouses that makes the difference, what we can share as best practice and what we need to be alert to.

I have recently been asked to summarise what we have learned from our research so far.

So ... drum roll please ... our independent research, carried out by a series of well-respected research organisations ... (pause for effect) ... shows that almshouses are a good thing! Good for residents, good for the state (saving the state a minimum of £43m every year from reduced calls on services), good for the wider community and even good for trustees! That is what you pay a consultant for - to tell you what you already know! But in this case the reports also told us a lot we didn't know.

Certainly, the huge positive impact almshouses have on the state through reduced calls on services and the significant benefit that living in an almshouse community provides towards preventing social isolation.

But why does it work?

It appears that the main reason almshouses are good places to live is the people - neighbours, friends and a sense of belonging to a community. Nothing shocking there but it is the impact of this long suspected aspect of almshouses that is quite surprising. One research report identified that having friends and feeling part of a

community reduced the need for GP visits by a multiple of up to seven times compared with other people of the same age and socio economic background (they did say that this was a limited sample but, even so, food for thought!).

www.almshouses.org/almshouse-research-and-publications

The Smith Institute research on the impact of the pandemic on almshouses, noted that residents feared isolation more than they feared catching Covid - and that was when Covid was expected to lead to death.

Thanks to this and other research, including research by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), we know that the architecture of an almshouse building plays its part in creating community spaces, places where residents feel safe to share a bench and table and pot of tea. But, what was also apparent from the most recent research was the impact that trustees have on this sense of community and friendship. Their ability to gently encourage opportunities for meeting, seeing when a resident is being isolated, keeping in touch with phone calls, planned visits, events and really effective two-way communication about what is going on locally. So, if you are a trustee of an almshouse, having completed a hard week at work in your current job and wonder, when

Special thanks to all the organisations who sponsor research into almshouses, such as The Mercers' Company, Dunhill Medical Trust, CAF Bank and others.

you tot up the week, if you have made a difference anywhere - yes, you have! Your role as a trustee is making a difference to many people and enriching lives in ways you haven't realised.

You can find the full reports on our website and we have more research under way. One study is investigating real data across the movement, going back decades and even centuries, to calculate how long residents live in almshouses compared to other forms of accommodation. Also, the ARC project research which is examining how resilience can be fostered in almshouse communities will contribute to a wider research programme on suitable living environments for an older population.

We will ensure we keep our website up-to-date with all our findings so keep logging in. Hopefully, you have already clicked into the newest edition of our 'bible', the 2023 (7th edition) of Standards of Almshouse Management. We have had some great people working on this over the past year and trust that it will continue to be a reliable tool to help you govern and run your almshouses.

www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouse-management-2023

I hope to see many of you at our Members Day and AGM on Thursday 15 June. We are all really looking forward to it.

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive



A licence to live well

Almshouse Association CEO, Nick Phillips, was asked to comment on why the almshouse world still uses Letters of Appointment and licences rather than a lease.

He explained: "I am sure others have a better knowledge of medieval history than me but it is generally accepted that the city walls of ancient England provided a safe haven for all, or as safe as medieval England could be; and outside those walls often congregated the sick, the isolated, the poor and vulnerable. Almshouses, then often called Hospitals, provided a safe haven - a bed and food for those where there was no other option. Alms were given, often in association with the Church and philanthropy. Residents, or 'alms-people', stayed for as long as they needed to find their feet as recipients of charitable philanthropy. They then moved on and the room became vacant for the next person in need of sanctuary, security and warmth. Even though the residents were not tenants, it was appropriate to have rules regulating their occupancy and making clear the behavioural expectations. In recognition of this, details of what the charity would provide and the terms of residency to be followed by residents were developed. These became known as a 'letter of appointment', because it set out the basis on which the individual was appointed as a beneficiary of the charitable trust and the expectations of their behaviour. The appointment does not create a tenancy and is sometimes referred to as a 'licence to occupy'. Many residents live in their almshouses until they die, hopefully after a long and happy residency. From a limited data sample collated in 2018 and reviewed by Benchmark, in comparison with other forms of social housing, residents of almshouses were proved to be far more secure in their occupation than other tenants. The licence is based on the need of the person. It does not bestow a right of temporary private ownership. If the person is in need and meets the beneficiary criteria of the charity, they are eligible to become a resident. It is this unique status of almshouse trustees and clerks being active in overseeing the provision of the accommodation, sharing common spaces, visiting residents by prior agreement and checking the building is safe and in good order that helps make the almshouse model wonderfully different".

The appointment or licence is an essential aspect to the legal status of an almshouse and should never be exchanged for any other form of occupancy. The granting of a tenancy or other form of secured occupation would be a breach of the trusts on which the almshouses are held. For detailed guidance on 'Letters of Appointment', please refer to Section 10.15 of the latest Standards of Almshouse Management manual at

www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouse-management-2023



Members Day and Annual General Meeting

One Great George Street, Westminster, London SW1
Thursday 15 June 2023

It's not long now until Members Day 2023 - the biggest day in The Almshouse Association calendar! Following a welcome from Chief Executive, Nick Phillips and after the Association's AGM, we will introduce our new Chair, who will give their thoughts about the future for the Association and the wider almshouse movement. The day will be focused on the special characteristics for which

almshouses have become renowned - compassion, community and companionship, with presentations structured accordingly. We are especially delighted that renowned humanitarian and author, Terry Waite CBE will be our key speaker. Terry will be joined by Sir Stephen Bubb JP FRSA, who is a leading figure within the charity world and is Executive Director of the Gradel Institute of Charity at New College, Oxford University. And we are pleased to also announce speakers, Paul Latham and Dr Alison Pooley. Paul is Director of Communications and Policy at the Charity Comm-



Terry Waite CBE



Sir Stephen Bubb JP FRSA



Paul Latham



Dr Alison Pooley

who will be exhibiting their services. The event promises to be of great value and interest to our member almshouse charities and those who are associated with us in one form or another and we therefore hope to welcome as many of you as possible on the day.

Spaces are limited, so don't delay. Book your place by either email or post. Tickets cost £95 per person and include lunch and refreshments throughout the day.

A reservation form is available to download on our website at: www.almshouses.org/news/members-day-2023-thurs-15-june-2023

Attending and voting at The Almshouse Association's AGM

The Almshouse Association 2023 Annual General Meeting will take place on 15 June 2023 at One Great George Street, Westminster, London SW1 (before Members Day begins) between 9.30am and 9.45am.

The AGM is open to all members and Associate Members. The agenda and associated papers can be downloaded from our website at www.almshouses.org/news/aggm-2023/ On the day, one person from each voting member charity will receive paper copies and voting cards. Please note that only one representative per charity is permitted to vote.

If you are not attending Members Day but wish to attend the AGM, please email admin@almshouses.org or if you are not able to attend but wish to make a proxy vote, please request a proxy voting paper by email at admin@almshouses.org

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The products/services and claims made in the Almshouses Gazette have not been evaluated by The Almshouse Association. Articles that recommend products/services are for information purposes only and are not endorsed by the Association. At the time of publication, the content of this newsletter is correct to the best knowledge of The Almshouse Association's officers. Information is provided for the general guidance of trustees and clerks, who should take their own professional advice where necessary.

Sources of help to reduce the rising cost of living

As the cost of living crisis continues to impact us all, it is important that we are aware of the assistance and benefits that are available to those in need of help.

We asked Mary Cobbett, an Almshouse Association Volunteer Advocate if she could collate a list for our members, which we hope you will find useful:

Pension Age Residents

Pension Credit

- 40% of pensioners are eligible for Pension Credit but do not claim it.
- It is extra money to help with living costs if someone is over State Pension age and on a low income.
- A resident maybe eligible even if they have savings or have a small occupational pension or other income.
- Pension Credit may lead to a Council Tax Reduction or exemption.

Housing Benefit

- Even if a resident is not entitled to Pension Credit they may still be eligible for Housing Benefit.

Attendance Allowance

- The ageing process usually sees the gradual reduction in ability to carry out daily activities such as getting in and out of a bath, forgetfulness, unsteadiness leading to falls, etc. These are all issues that may result not only in being awarded Attendance Allowance but can also lead to a discount in Council Tax or, if a diagnosis of dementia has been given by the GP, no Council Tax to pay at all.

Working Age Residents

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

- Residents under pension age struggling with daily living activities may be entitled to PIP, which is not means tested and may increase Universal Credit awards.

Council Tax support

- Most people know that if living alone they can claim 25% Council Tax reduction but if on low income and not on Pension Credit they may also be entitled to Council Tax Support in addition to the single person discount.
- Claim before the end of the financial year and the local authority may refund all of this year and apply the support to the next financial year.

Council Tax property banding reduced for disability

- If an alteration is needed on a property for someone with disability, such as building a downstairs shower/toilet, make sure you inform the local authority and apply to reduce the property's Council Tax banding.

Universal Credit (UC)

- If a resident is working full time but on minimum wage and paying rent they may be entitled to Universal Credit.
- The entitlement may only be £1 a week and not seem worth claiming but UC is the passport for cost-of-living payments over the next year which will be a total of £900.



The [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website has several benefit calculators that the public can use to check possible entitlements. However, Local Authority Council Tax schemes are set locally and the calculators sometimes cannot be relied upon to be accurate for Council Tax Support - contact your local authority direct for help with this.

Local Authorities

- Local authorities also have access to local grant and support packages for residents such as Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments. Check the local authority websites for information.

Discretionary Housing Payments

- Discretionary Housing Payments are not a benefit payment. They are awarded on a case-by-case basis for help with housing costs.
- Awards are usually made for a short-term period to help through a specific financial crisis, such as rent arrears after a loss of a job, or funeral expenses, etc.

Household Support Fund

- County Councils have access to the Household Support Fund to support households in the most need with food, energy, water bills and other essential items.

Going digital - changes coming

What is going to happen and why?

The UK's existing telephone infrastructure is old and becoming unable to manage the increase in use due to people accessing the internet and using electronic devices in their homes. As a result, telephone line providers (eg.BT) are modernising the system.

The new network is digital and uses the internet to make and receive phone calls, which means everyone will need to plug their phones into a broadband hub, rather than into a socket on the wall. Currently, telephone line providers are not charging an extra fee for the broadband hub in addition to your telephone service but you should confirm this with your telephone line provider.

When will it happen?

The changes are already being made and the whole network is planned to be fully digital by the end of 2025.

What will it mean for my phone and telecare service?

Once your phone line is digital, you shouldn't notice any change in the way you make and receive telephone calls and your phone number should remain the same. Telephone line providers have advised that most telephone handsets will continue to work but a few may need to be replaced. You should contact your telephone line provider if you have any questions. Some Lifeline units may also need to be plugged into a new broadband hub. In some cases,

Bid to achieve 'affordability' recognition for almshouses

If you have the opportunity to meet your local MP, you may want to tell them about our key challenge in Westminster:

Achieving recognition of 'affordability' under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

We know that a number of members continue to develop new almshouses, which is something to be celebrated and encouraged. However, many face obstacles through this process and in a number of cases this focuses on questions around almshouses being 'affordable'.

Currently, most local authorities will rely on the definition of affordability from the National Planning Policy Framework which states that to be classed as 'affordable', an almshouse charity must also be a Registered Provider of Social Housing. However, as all almshouses offer an affordable Weekly Maintenance Contribution which is lower than market rents, we believe that the definition should be altered to reflect this.

We have raised this issue so often with ministers and we finally received a letter in December from the (then) Minister of State of Levelling Up Housing and Communities, The Rt Hon Lucy

Frazer telling us they were reviewing the NPPF under a wider review of the Social Housing and Regeneration Bill and encouraging us to respond to the consultation. This is a once in a decade opportunity to do so and we have been consulting with members, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and friends and partners of the Association in our response on your behalf.

Amending the definition would help to remove a barrier to development for almshouse charities, as well as increasing their ability to access additional funding to support growth. If a meeting is held and your MP is sympathetic in their response, please consider making them aware of the

APPG on Almshouses, details of which can be found at: www.almshouses.org/appg-on-almshouses

If you would like to make contact with your local MP or invite them to visit your charity, template letters can be found on The Almshouse Association website at: www.almshouses.org/model-policies-and-templates

Current position: The Almshouse Association has worked to develop an amendment to the NPPF definition, and we would encourage MPs to get in touch to find out more.



Special guest at Haven of Rest gardens



Trustees and residents of the Haven of Rest Almshouses in Maidenhead welcomed former Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, to their almshouses last November. Trustee Jane Cottrell writes: "The Haven has 12 bungalows and two flats so is comparatively small but it is a wonderful friendly and supportive community."

"We had invited Theresa May to open our newly refurbished garden in the summer but she was unable to do so and we were very pleased when her office contacted us to arrange a visit. She spent an hour talking to some of the residents, trustees and to Jo Thomas, Chair of the Trustees."

"Mrs May was very interested in the history of the Haven of Rest and impressed with the quality and high standard of the dwellings, buildings and gardens."

Earlier in the summer, residents had enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea on the day of the official opening of the newly redesigned and landscaped garden, which was performed by Ron Edgington, a resident for 22 years, who cut the ribbon.

Taking pride of place in the redesigned garden are two benches dedicated to two much missed former long-term residents.

Full details at: www.almshouses.org/news/charity-welcomes-former-pm/

photo (from left): residents Bob, Mary, Eileen; Chair, Jo Thomas; residents Richard and Ron (who opened the garden when Mrs May was unable to attend); Teresa May MP; trustee, Cath Rowley; resident, Penny; and trustee, Jane Cottrell.
credit: Ian Longthorne, Maidenhead Advertiser.

to the telephone network

you may need a new unit which your telecare provider can supply if this is the case.

How will I know when it happens?

Your telephone line provider should contact you to arrange a time for your telephone line to move from the old network to a digital connection. They should also provide any instructions you need to follow at the time.

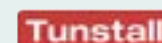
What will I need to do?

When your telephone line provider makes contact to arrange the switchover to digital, tell them that you have telecare equipment. You should also contact your telecare provider to tell them your line is becoming digital. Once your line has been switched, follow the instructions sent by your telephone provider; for example plugging your phone into a new broadband hub. You can also contact your telecare provider if you have any questions. It's a good idea to make a test call to the monitoring centre using your telecare equipment before and after your line is switched over to make sure everything is in working order.

How can I find out more?

Your telephone line provider should be in touch before your line switches to digital but, in the meantime, if you have concerns, make contact with them.

Thanks to Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Ltd for this information.



Help is available to improve your almshouses

One of the many benefits of being a member of The Almshouse Association is that if you need some financial help with the cost of repairs to your almshouses, building new almshouses, or refurbishment projects designed to improve the living standards of your residents, you can apply to The Almshouse Association for a loan or a grant.

In October 2021 The Almshouse Association provided The Edward Mayes Trust in Manchester with a £25,000 loan towards the cost of building two one-bedroomed apartments on a small unloved plot of land at its Mayes Gardens estate. The trustees employed Triangle Architects to advise them on their options. Following site investigations and discussions with the local authority, a planning application was submitted which was granted in 2018. Paul Harrison, Secretary to the Trustees has recently provided an update on the project:

"After receiving planning approval in 2018, fast forward to early 2022 and with the effects of the Covid pandemic largely behind us, the Trust decided to move forward with the development. Following discussion with the architect and project manager it was decided to look at using a modern method of construction in which steel framed accommodation units are manufactured off site and craned into position. This suited the development of a small plot of land and would minimise disruption to the residents on the estate.

The search for funding

The Trust began to explore how funding could be obtained to supplement its reserves. An application was made to the Almshouse Consortium Ltd for Homes England funding which resulted in a £130,000 grant. The Trust had previously applied for an Almshouse Association 10-year interest free loan and received £25,000 to assist with the project. A new source of grant funding was also secured through the Ministry of Housing's Community Housing Fund which awarded the Trust £22,000, this money to be used for developing the project and paying for enabling works before signing the building contract.

With all the additional funding secured, the development became financially viable and after tendering, allowed the Trust to begin construction of two affordable homes in May 2022. To provide surety in delivering a successful project it is key to engage a professional project team and the charity is happy to recommend the following consultants which the Trust has used many times: Triangle Architects based in Manchester, Saffer Cooper Consultancy - project managers, and Poole Dick Associates -



employers agent/quantity surveyors. The construction phase hasn't been without its problems, ranging from labour and material shortages to issues with connecting the utilities. However, the project team has closely managed the contract with completion scheduled for early 2023.

Two applicants have accepted offers of the new apartments and are busily



making plans to move in. It is advisable to select beneficiaries as early as you can and keep them informed throughout the process, so they are ready to move when the keys are available. Throughout the planning and construction phase we have kept local councilors updated as it is beneficial to have them fully supporting you throughout the process. Through its many successful development projects, the Trust has learned the importance of staying focused, persevering, and taking sound advice from a professional project team."

The Almshouse Association asks all members that are awarded a loan or a grant to prepare a short case study of their project. It is very useful to be able to share these with other members, as well as with potential funders to see how the money is spent. If any of our members are considering building new almshouses, could steel framed accommodation units that are manufactured off site be an option



that you have not considered? Each project will have learning points that can benefit our members. Paul's case study illustrates the importance of:

- Looking at all available funding options and ensuring that funds are secured before embarking on your project.
- Teamwork - engaging a professional and trusted project team to support you throughout your project.
- Being prepared for the unexpected and building some contingency plans/funding into your project.
- Keeping residents, interested local parties and neighbours informed as the works progress.

If you would like to know more about the loans and grants offered by the Association, visit the members area of The Almshouse Association website at: www.almshouses.org/loans-grants-funding/ or email Fenella Hall, our Loans and Grants Administrator, at FenellaHall@almshouses.org Loans of between £25,001 and £100,000 can be applied for. All loans are repayable over a 10-year period and are offered on an interest free basis. Apart from a one-off administration fee calculated at 5% of the amount loaned, there are no other costs attached. Grants of up to £25,000 are also available for those charities that would be unable to afford loan repayments. Loan and grant applications are considered on a quarterly basis with the next application deadline being 31 May 2023. We look forward to hearing from you.

Support for new dementia service and homeshare

Supporters of St John's Winchester attended Winchester Cathedral in September last year to celebrate the launch of two new community support services, St John's Dementia Support and St John's Homeshare. The expansion aims to broaden the outreach of the charity and help older people outside of St John's Almshouses.

Practical advice and solutions

The dementia service, in partnership with Dementia UK, will support people living with dementia aged over 55 as well as their families and carers. Two specialist Admiral nurses and two dementia advisors will be on hand for one-to-one advice and practical solutions. Meanwhile, St John's Homeshare aims to match an older householder who has a spare room with a younger lodger who can dedicate 10 hours a week to helping around the house. In exchange, the younger sharer receives affordable accommodation

Where there is no next of kin

Almshouse charities provide accommodation for those who are able to live independently but, unfortunately, on occasions circumstances arise whereby a resident's state of health deteriorates to the point that they are no longer capable of living in their almshouse.

The need for a resident to move to more suitable accommodation can be stressful for the resident as well as the charity. In cases where the individual has diminished mental capacity and there is neither a Power of Attorney in place nor a next of kin to assist, the situation can be especially challenging. At www.gov.uk it is possible to apply to become a deputy for a person with dementia, which involves submitting an application to the Court of Protection. The relevant forms can be downloaded at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/court-of-protection-forms We strongly recommend that, in the first instance, charities finding themselves in this situation speak to their local social services, as well as to the Alzheimer's Society on 0333 150 3456.

For The Almshouse Association Guidance Note on this topic, please visit our website at: www.almshouses.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Where-there-is-no-next-of-kin-v1-3.1.23.docx

for a mutually beneficial living arrangement. Chief Executive Clive Cook said: "It's a great step forward. Historically, we've done a lot within the almshouses but every organisation has to innovate outside its four walls. We're pleased to be increasing the number of people we can impact in a positive way and hopefully be able to show that impact. Going forward we want people to understand what we can do to help." Winchester MP, Steve Brine attended and spoke at the launch event.

He said: "St John's is an ancient organisation but it keeps on updating its work with new services that fit the times, and Winchester, perfectly. I love the new initiatives, especially the dementia support in people's own homes which makes sense on every level and takes all the good things about Moorside out into the community. I wish them every success with what is an even stronger offer now for local people."

by Adele Bouchard for the Hampshire Chronicle
(see launch photo on front page)



The Almshouse Way

CPD accredited 1-day course for new trustees, clerks and CEOs, as well as members wishing to consolidate their knowledge.

Book your place

We are running this course across 12 venues around the country. There is no maximum number of delegates that can attend from any one charity. Some of you are booking in small groups so you can travel and attend together, which is great. Places fill on a first come first served basis.

The cost is £95 per delegate, which includes refreshments and a light lunch.

Visit: www.almshouses.org/news/new-the-almshouse-way-1-day-course

During the course we cover

Almshouse history, what makes almshouses unique, The Almshouse Association and how we can support you, charity structures, the charity regulators, roles of trustees and clerks/CEOs, personal liability, your residents. Throughout the day we will be discussing almshouse scenarios and case studies.

Delegate pack

Delegates will receive a comprehensive pack on the day which covers all details of the course. To complement this a post course email with all the relevant links is sent out. We cover a lot of information during the day and appreciate that there is only so much anyone can retain, so having a pack covering the contents of the day, where delegates can also add their own notes, plus a post-course email, will help you to have the key topics to hand to reference easily when you get back to your charities.

'Almshouses can be HAPPI places'

It's 10 years since the first 'Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)' report was published. The Panel, chaired by Lord Best, set out 10 key HAPPI principles. Many are recognisable from good age-friendly design generally but they have particular relevance to the spectrum of older people's housing, which needs to offer both an attractive alternative to the family home and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs. These principles reflect:

- space and flexibility
- daylight in the home and in shared spaces
- balconies and outdoor space
- adaptability and

'care ready' design ● positive use of circulation space ● shared facilities and 'hubs' ● plants, trees, and the natural environment ● energy efficiency and sustainable design ● storage for belongings and bicycles ● external shared surfaces and 'home zones'. Since then, four further HAPPI reports have been commissioned by Lord Best's All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Housing and Care for Older People. Each has considered progress towards the adoption of the recommendations, building on the original HAPPI design

written by **Jeremy Porteus and Sally Taylor-Ridgway, Housing LIN**

criteria to showcase best and innovative practice. The reports have also explored different service options and advocated for improvement in standards and practice in the management of retirement properties, as well as for policy makers to "recognise the growing housing needs of older people". Several of the reports have specifically drawn attention to how almshouses have contributed to and successfully embraced the HAPPI design principles.



photos (from top): **Thrale Almshouses, Christopher Boone's Almshouse, Blackfriars Almshouses.**

spacious almshouse flats designed to HAPPI and London Design Guide standards. Almshouses have also attracted high praise from the Judges in the HAPPI Category of the Housing Design Awards, sponsored by the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN).

For example, HAPPI 4 (2018) considered the ageing rural population, recommending that every local plan should contain specific sites for new housing for older people, including housing solutions developed by rural landowners, local councils, housing associations, Community Land Trusts and almshouses.

Since 2011, several have either won or been shortlisted for the HAPPI award in recognition of their design quality, including Colby Lodge, operated by Walthamstow & Chingford Almshouse Charity London, a HAPPI winner in 2019. The others include: Blackfriars Almshouses, Southwark Charities, shortlisted, 2022; Thrale Almshouses and Relief in Need of Charity, Streatham, shortlisted, 2019; and Christopher Boone's Almshouse, Lewisham shortlisted, 2011. January 2023 saw the launch of the APPG Inquiry report at the House of Lords which highlights and evaluates the key issues concerning the development of the market for shared ownership for older people.

This draws on evidence sessions and written submissions to the year-long inquiry from shared owners, housing providers, housing organisations, academics, lenders, regulators, advisers and housing experts. The resultant Inquiry report, co-chaired by Lord Best and Peter Aldous MP, sets out the key issues, including stronger consumer protection, better product awareness and understanding, resales and 'staircasing', links to health and social care, planning and design, and comments on the current situation, making 24 recommendations for improving the offer and supporting the growth of the shared ownership sector.

To read Housing LIN studies on almshouses, please visit: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/Almshouses/ For information on the HAPPI design principles, visit: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/



Almshouses have a distinct and valuable contribution to housing older people to inform built environment and housing professionals, including architects and surveyors, funders, local



authority housing and planning officers, prospective partner organisations, Homes England and the UK government, as outlined in a report published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). This report details St Clement's Heights, a new almshouse building on the site of St Clement Danes churchyards in Holborn, first built on in the mid-17th century, that provides 50

YOUR LETTERS

We hope to make our letters page a regular feature of your Almshouses Gazette, so please keep them coming; your feedback helps determine our future features, articles, communications, meetings, seminars and training.

New trustees from post on social media

Dear Nick,
I am very much a Luddite when it comes to IT. However, I am active on Facebook and decided, on the spur of the moment, to place an advert on a local community page. I explained a bit about our charity and the voluntary role of trustees, not expecting to get much of a response. Was I wrong!
I was delighted by the response and, after a due process of attending a meeting on an informal basis and interviews, THREE new trustees have been appointed. This new generation very much secures the future of our tiny Trust and I would urge any almshouse organisations who are struggling to recruit to try it.
Kind regards - and thank you for all the support The Almshouse Association provides.

Francesca Cullen, Clerk to the Joseph Kaye's Almshouse Trust

'Men's Shed' spaces to combat isolation

Dear Julian,
Further to our chat, here is the information about 'Men's Shed' (women attend too!). They are community spaces for men to connect, converse and create. The activities are often similar to those of garden sheds but are for groups of men to enjoy together. They help reduce loneliness and isolation and, most importantly, they're fun!
There is a video (with me in it) which probably best describes what we do when we are left alone without adult supervision!
<https://www.facebook.com/100084898269639/videos/6123661520977436>
Also visit: ● haverhill-shed.co.uk ● <https://menssheds.org.uk/find-a-shed/> ● <https://menssheds.org.uk/> ● <https://ukmenssheds.co.uk/> ● <https://www.facebook.com/UKMensSheds/>

The modern Men's Shed is an updated version of the shed in the garden that has long been a part of European culture and are now found all over the UK. Inside you might find a number of men drinking tea and coffee and chatting in a comfortable area, restoring bicycles for a local school, making bird and bat boxes, fixing lawn mowers or playing cards or a game of pool. Many men have 'learned' from our culture that they don't talk about their feelings and emotions and many do not take an interest in their own health or wellbeing and don't ask for help. The Men's Shed movement aims to address health and wellbeing issues, helping men to once again become valued and productive members of the community. Members come from all walks of life, united by the bond of having time on their hands and wanting something meaningful to do.

Antony Cullup, Cambridge Pringle Group

Praise for informative and educational wardens meeting at Bond's Lodge

Dear Gerry,
A very quick email to say a huge 'thank you' for organising yesterday's meeting at Bond's Lodge. I found the meeting to be incredibly useful with lots of very relevant information being spread amongst the delegates. It was extremely informative and well put together.
I enjoyed meeting other wardens and listening to their concerns - many of which we have here - and it was good to hear that so many of us are facing the same problems and not doing it all alone!
I thought Bond's Lodge was very impressive.

Please pass on my thanks to Matthew for hosting and also for showing me around the other sites that he looks after.
Please also pass on my thanks to your CEO, Nick. I enjoyed his presentation and was very happy to hear about some of the issues that The Almshouse Association is dealing with behind the scenes. And also thanks to the ladies who looked after us so well with a delicious lunch and yummy cakes for tea. It was a hugely worthwhile day and much appreciated. Many thanks indeed.

Richard Codrington, Warden to the Beauchamp Community



Historic England

The Almshouse Association is working with Historic England to provide guidance notes for trustees, clerks and local Historic Building Officers.

Almshouse buildings are recognised as some of the most valuable historic buildings in our ancient streetscapes. They tell a story, not of great wealth and opulence but of philanthropy and community - and occasionally a bit of philanthropic self interest in gaining a foothold through the pearly gates!

Reasonable improvements

But almshouses are not museums. Many charities are facing the pressure of managing listed buildings, not to mention frail residents and increased energy costs. They have found that some Historic Building Officers are challenging reasonable improvements that will help maintain these beautiful buildings and keep their residents safe and warm within.

It is this challenge that led the Association to engage with Historic England in a discussion some years ago and to express our concern that we will lose these ancient and wonderful buildings if they are unable to function. Recognising the challenge, Historic England has been working with The Almshouse Association to develop a guidance note for trustees, clerks and local Historic Building Officers to view almshouses in the right context.

Consultation imminent

There has only been one other guidance note written on specific building types by Historic England, so this cooperative project is a great recognition of the wonderful character of almshouse buildings. The guidance note is expected to be sent out for consultation in the next couple of months and I hope many of you will have the opportunity to comment. It is already clear from the draft that Historic England recognise the value of an almshouse building operating as its intended historic use and also acknowledge that to operate as a home for sometimes frail residents, some aspects may need to change.

When is the right time to refurbish almshouses?

Alas, there is no golden rule but there are telltale signs which indicate this is becoming a priority:

- resident feedback
- unsatisfactory stock condition report
- increased length of void period with properties standing empty for longer
- residents choosing to move out
- WMC Review - sometimes WMC can only be increased once improvements have been made.

And there are times when opportunities are presented that make the decision a little easier:

- properties are vacant so gaining access is easier
- availability of grant funding
- existing loans repaid.

Homes England has recognised that many almshouses have limited funds to carry out works to improve their homes and make them more sustainable, accessible and attractive places to live, and almshouses have obtained an exemption in the current Homes England funding programme to continue to receive grants for remodelling/refurbishment. Any almshouse that undertakes work that is classed as remodelling will not require registration as a Registered Provider to access grant funding from Homes England.

The contract the Almshouse Consortium Ltd (ACL) has in place with Homes England will allow charities to obtain a grant as a non-registered provider for remodelling works. Funding is available until 2026 or until the grant is fully allocated.

Homes England

The amount of grant Homes England will allocate depends on a number of factors:

- the scale of works being undertaken to the existing homes - the works must constitute remodelling not just investment or repair/maintenance
- ideally, you may be increasing the overall useability of the home, adding additional occupancy, or installing a wetroom in place of a bathroom, etc.
- Homes England will want to see what funds you are able to contribute to pay for the works and what the total scheme costs will be
- extra costs such as temporarily moving existing residents or having to carry out the work in phases are also eligible for grant funding
- what extra borrowing you can secure through increased WMC/fewer voids/potential less monies needed for repairs in the next few years.

Once the works are completed the properties must have a life expectancy of at least 30 years.

First steps

There are a number of decisions trustees may wish to consider which, at this stage, do not commit you to anything but allow you to formalise ideas and plans:

1. Make a 'wish list'

- replacing poorly insulated 'offshoot' type extensions that may be the kitchen or bathroom

- level access showers and other adaptations for older people, ie. provision of a downstairs WC
- improved and economical heating/hot water system
- increasing the occupancy to widen the scope
- improved storage/utility area
- improved accessibility
- upgrading electrics and insulation
- roof/window replacements
- improved energy efficiency.

2. **Contact an architect** who is familiar with working with almshouses and ideally Homes England requirements for older persons remodelling projects. See www.almshouses.org/panel-of-consultants/

3. Do you wish to pursue a grant through Homes England?

For refurbishment schemes you do not have to be registered if no new accommodation is being provided. You can usually receive upwards of £35,000 - £40,000 grant per home depending on the works being proposed. Speak to existing residents, consult with them and their families on the works and if there is scope to move out on a temporary basis to reduce the number of phases of work and therefore cost and time.

4. **Speak to local Housing Associations or the Local Authority** to see if there is a potential to use any empty properties to house residents whilst the works are being undertaken.

The Almshouse Association and ACL can provide more information on grants and costs. Other funding options are available.

New flats and grants given in Worcester

Worcester Municipal Charities has created another four flats for single homeless people in the city centre, taking their total to 68, which together with 32 homes for older people makes a grand total of 100. The 'affordable' flats for homeless people have all been created since 2012 with the money raised by selling some commercial properties. Homes England also offered a generous grant of £200,000 which made the whole project viable. At its annual meeting, the trustees have also agreed to make £453,170 in grants to "charities doing the most for those in greatest financial need in Worcester". For details on these projects and grants www.almshouses.org/news/worcester-municipal-charity-awards-435170-62-in-grants

Helping vulnerable older people into secure housing

by Noah Keate for SW Londoner

The Richmond Charities provides accommodation for economically insecure people aged 65 or over, with 140 properties across ten estates in Richmond and Twickenham. Last year, Age UK found two million pensioners lived in poverty, a 31% increase from 2013/14, and in 2018 the charity found 2,500 people aged 60 or over were officially homeless.



Juliet Ames-Lewis, the chief executive of The Richmond Charities, said: "When people come to need housing with us, they're often very vulnerable, they've often fallen on hard times. It can be very difficult when you find yourself without a roof over your head. We've opened two new estates in the last three years and all the new housing is level access, so no stairs. We're doing what we call future-proofing so that these will hopefully be homes that older people can continue to live in for the rest of their lives even if they have mobility issues."

Hickey's Almshouses in Richmond contains The Chapel of St Francis of Assisi. photo: Chantal Richards, The Richmond Charities.

Raising the profile of almshouses in the press

Early last year we were fortunate to be involved in a Royal visit to St John's Hospital in Heytesbury, Wiltshire. It was a beautiful late spring day and the gardens of this wonderful Grade II listed building were bursting with life. The residents were delighted to be part of this special visit to celebrate their 550th anniversary.



have to worry about the upkeep or maintenance of a home and there are people close by should they be needed." Winifred, resident.

As with most Royal visits, the local press were invited to attend and take photos. Wiltshire Life magazine was asked to participate but had other commitments on the day. However, it was suggested a series of articles be written by one of their journalists, Gary Lawrence, about almshouses in Wiltshire.

This was a real opportunity to build awareness of the almshouse movement. We spoke to a selection of larger and smaller almshouses and organised a series of interviews with

Gerry Harmon, The Almshouse Association PR and Engagement Manager talks about her recent work with the press.

trustees, clerks, CEOs and residents. The charities were briefed on the questions Gary would ask and only residents who felt comfortable being interviewed were selected. The Association attended on the day to give support. The first article included The College of Matrons, and Salisbury City Almshouse and Welfare Charities.

We began in the sitting room of Winifred Alford, an 88-year-old former hospital almoner who has lived at the College of Matrons almshouses for 18 years,

"I feel very fortunate to live here, it is a beautiful building and it has so much history. I feel secure, I don't



"The lovely thing about living here is you feel safe...there are nice people all around and wonderful staff." Jill, resident.



"There are people close by and my family isn't far away. The trustees are really kind and are happy to help with anything." Jenny, resident.

having moved from Donhead St Andrew, where she felt no longer able to live on her own somewhere so remote.

In the second of his features, Gary and I visited the county's largest almshouse organisation, Salisbury City Almshouse and Welfare Charities, which oversees 13 separate groups of almshouses dotted around the city. We were taken on a wonderful tour where we met a variety of residents, from young families, nurses from India, people in their 40s and 50s, and retired men and women.

The final series involved two rural almshouses, St John's Hospital in Heytesbury and Chafyn Grove Cottages in Zeals. Both are idyllically placed, yet vital in serving their local communities.

Opportunities for local press interest

As we are starting to build on our relationship with Life Magazines and local and regional press throughout the country, we would encourage charities to get involved if an opportunity arises in your area.

Having PR experience isn't essential as we will be on hand to offer support every step of the way and can provide an in-depth brief to ensure you are comfortable with all aspects of being interviewed. Every article raises more awareness for the almshouse movement and although the magazines cannot include every almshouse charity, as we would like, we anticipate we will be able to include many more as time goes by.



The impact of the cost of living crisis on the charity has been stark. Juliet Ames-Lewis explained: "The cost of energy is the biggest issue for us, which is why we've spent the last two years putting as much insulation into properties as we could. We gave a grant of £250 to every single resident earlier in 2022 which cost about £40,000."

Church Estate Almshouses in Richmond, which includes the charity's Garden Room, providing a communal space for residents. photo: Chantal Richards, The Richmond Charities.



Quick and easy ‘no cost’ guide to energy saving

Free, quick fix actions that you can take to immediately reduce the amount of energy you use.

1. Switch off lights and electrical appliances when not using them

● To save the most energy, switch off the power point rather than leave appliances on standby. Almost all electrical appliances in your home, such as computers, televisions, smart devices and video game consoles, draw power continuously unless unplugged. Turn off the power switch at the socket or unplug appliances from the socket when they are not in use.

● Turn off your heater, cooling units and appliances when you go to bed or leave the house.

2. Switch to efficient energy-saving LED light bulbs

Energy-efficient light bulbs could save up to 80% off your lighting costs. This is because LED bulbs use less power

and last longer. That means you spend less money and time replacing them.

3. Shut doors and close curtains

● Shut doors to areas you're not using and only cool or heat the rooms where you spend the most time. In cooler months, make sure curtains or blinds seal your windows properly.

● Stop cool air leaking out by blocking draughts around doors and windows.

● In warmer months, keep your curtains closed during the day.

● External blinds or canvas awnings will also help keep your house cooler.

4. Save energy in how you wash and dry clothes

● Wait until your machine is full before starting a washing cycle.

● Modern washing machines can clean clothes effectively at lower temperatures. Changing from 40°C to 30°C means you could get three cycles instead of two using the same

amount of energy, depending on your washing machine.

● You can also save by selecting the shortest appropriate washing cycle.

● Using your tumble dryer less could save you £70 a year. Tumble dryers are one of the most energy-intensive devices in the home. Use your tumble dryer less frequently by ensuring you have a full load, around three-quarters of the drum, or use a clothes airer to dry clothes outside, or inside with a window open for ventilation. You should also avoid overfilling your dryer as this could lengthen the drying time.

5. Save energy in the kitchen fridge

Your fridge runs 24/7 and is one of your most expensive appliances.

● The ideal fridge temperature is 4 or 5 degrees Celsius. For your freezer it is -15 to -18 degrees Celsius.



● Ensure the fridge door seal is tight and no gaps or cracks let cold air escape.

● If you have a second fridge or freezer, only turn it on when needed.

Cooking

● Put frozen food in your fridge in the morning to thaw out and reduce cooking time in the evening.

● Use the microwave when you can. Microwaves use much less energy than an electric oven.

● Keep lids on pots to reduce cooking time.

● Plan to cook more and have leftover meals for the next day or the whole week. Keep leftovers in the freezer.

Dishwasher

● Use the economy cycle on your dishwasher and only run it when full.

6. Turning your combi boiler flow temperature down to 60°C could save you up to £100 a year

Flow temperature is the temperature of the water that your boiler sends to radiators. Reducing flow temperature isn't the same as lowering your thermostat and won't noticeably reduce the temperature of your home but may increase the time it takes to reach the target temperature on your thermostat. If you are over 65, or have pre-existing health conditions, you may want to set a slightly higher flow temperature of 65°C to ensure your home warms more quickly.

7. Turning down radiators in rooms you aren't using or use less could save you up to £70 a year

When you're not using rooms, turn radiator valves down to between 2.5 and 3 (roughly 18°C). While you are using a room, increase the temperature to a comfortable level by turning the valve up. Turning off radiators completely in rooms you are not using is less energy efficient as this means your boiler has to work harder to increase the temperature again than if kept at a low setting. People over 65, children under five and those with pre-existing health conditions are more vulnerable to cold temperatures. Make sure you are warm enough and have a minimum indoor temperature of 18°C to ensure you protect your health while maintaining comfort.

8. Track your energy usage using an app

If you have a smart meter, there are apps which are free and allow you to track your hourly energy use over days, weeks, months or years. This can help you find the best ways to reduce usage and save on your energy bills in a safe and manageable way.

Does your charity have a heat network?

A charity is classed as a heat network if it supplies heat/hot water to some or all residents via a communal boiler or some other type of communal heating source. If the charity falls under this category it must be registered with the Heat Network.

Are there any exemptions for almshouse charities?

The Almshouse Association was successful in campaigning for



almshouse charities to be included in the Exempt class of the Heat Network (Metering and Billing) Regulations 2014 due to the fact it would not be cost effective to install metering devices and send bills to end users based on consumption.

This means almshouses are not required to install metering devices for customers/residents. However, if an almshouse charity is building new almshouses it will fall into the Open Class, where buildings must have meters or heat cost allocators installed unless it is not technically feasible or cost-effective.

What information do charities need to submit?

Even though almshouse charities are exempt from installing metering devices and sending bills based on actual consumption, all other aspects of the regulations still apply. A charity needs to notify Heat Networks under Regulation 3. A heat supplier must also submit an updated notification within four years of the date of the first notification and within every four-year period afterwards.

When completing the form, the sections on cost effectiveness do not need to be completed but the remaining notification requirements still apply.

How do we register?

If the charity is not currently registered as a heat network but you think it should be, email heatnotifications@beis.gov.uk who can offer further guidance. You will need to submit a heat network notification template, which can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/heat-networks

Who can we contact for help?

If you have any further questions, additional information can be found at www.heattrust.org which is an advisory group setup to help organisations running a heat network and also see heatnotifications@beis.gov.uk

NATIONAL NEWS INSIGHT

Charity Commission: Trustee Guides

The Charity Commission has launched a new push on trustee guides with 'Here to help' 5-minute guides, raising awareness of core trustee duties.

The core suite covers advice on Delivering purpose, Managing finances, Conflicts of interest, Making decisions, Reporting information, Safeguarding, Political activity and campaigning. They can be found at www.gov.uk/government/news/here-to-help-commission-launches-new-push-on-trustee-guides-as-sector-faces-challenging-year

Housing Ombudsman

On 2 February 2023, The Housing Ombudsman issued an evaluation of responses to damp and mould reports. They proposed 10 key tests for landlords producing action plans, as the sector reflects on the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak and the continued influx of damp and mould cases.

The 10 tests are as follows: ● Find your silence ● Proactive communications strategy ● Treat residents fairly ● Improve record keeping ● Know your residents ● Check net zero plans ● Know your homes ● Dedicated damp and mould strategy ● Empower staff ● Use the complaints system to learn

Descriptors for the ten key tests can be found in the full report at: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Damp-and-mould-follow-up-report-final-2.2.23.pdf

Registered Providers: Policy Statement update

The government has published its Policy Statement on rents for Social Housing dated 14 December 2022. The following points are applicable to almshouses that are also registered providers: The Regulator for Social Housing has confirmed a Rent Cap of 7% with the exception of supported housing. The government's definition of supported housing is detailed on our website at: www.almshouses.org/news/registered-providers-policy-statement-update/

Those providing supported housing remain subject to the rent increase cap of CPI + 1%. The table at paragraph 8 of Appendix A of the Policy Statement confirms the uprate for 2023-24 as: CPI + 1% (10.1%+1%) = 11.1%

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/

Planning Policy examined by Levelling Up Committee NPPF

The Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee announced on 3 February 2023 that it will be examining the government's current consultation on reforms to national planning policy, looking at the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the government's wider approach to planning reform.

Reforms are being introduced to the National Planning Policy Framework as part of the Social Housing and Regeneration Bill. As many of you will have found, the NPPF guidance includes a definition of affordable housing that excludes the almshouse model. The Almshouse Association will be responding clearly and robustly on your behalf seeking amendments to the affordable housing definition to include almshouses.

The Energy Bills Support Scheme

We have been asked to remind members of the important government update with regards to guidance on the Energy Bill Relief Scheme and the requirement to pass on support to residents. Go to: www.gov.uk and search for:

- Guidance on the Energy Bill Relief Scheme pass-through requirements for heat networks in the UK.
- Guidance on the pass-through requirements for energy price support provided to intermediaries.

Regulator of Social Housing

We are continuing our dialogue with The Regulator of Social Housing, LUHC and the Charity Commission with regards to our concerns about the Social Housing and Regeneration Bill, the requirement for almshouses seeking funding from Homes England to become Regulated (RSL) and the increasing processes around regulation.

Preserving the past and making homes for the future

Almshouses are the original 'social housing', offering affordable housing in often beautiful, quirky buildings. At Nottingham Community Almshouse Charity (NCAC) we have a

passion for preserving this legacy, whilst acknowledging our responsibility to provide safe, comfortable homes for future generations. NCAC was formed in 2008 by combining seven charities into one and now has a portfolio of 29 almshouses, offering 143 homes, as well as management arrangements with a number of independent almshouse trusts.

In 2017, NCAC was contacted by Cllr David Challinor, on behalf of Haworth Miners Bungalows, regarding concerns about an ageing board and the future prospects of the homes. Following consultation with the residents and local community, the bungalows were transferred to NCAC in 2019 whilst maintaining the same conditions as the original contract.

Cllr Challinor said: "Working with NCAC means we have the security that the almshouses will continue, they cannot be sold and the priority remains to support people employed at the Harworth Colliery. It was the most responsible decision for our organisation and the professionalism, level of contact and whole transfer process was excellent."

NCAC offer: As part of a management contract or by taking on sole corporate trusteeship of a charity: ● Housing management, maintenance and development ● Advice on the modernisation of trusts ● Maintenance planning and budgetary control ● Negotiation with the Charity Commission on the approval of revised schemes ● Design and architectural services ● Procuring funding. Contact gemma.debito@ncha.org.uk or HWBusinessDevelopment@ncha.org.uk



Hull Charterhouse welcomes Archbishop



A large congregation of residents, staff, trustees and friends of The Charterhouse in Hull, were delighted to welcome His Grace, The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell and Mrs Cottrell, to preside and preach at their Sunday Service. The fifth anniversary of the Installation of Canon Paul Greenwell was also celebrated. He is pictured above with The Archbishop.

Sue Whittaker, Charterhouse, Hull

Oadby Framework Knitters' twin celebration

The Worshipful Company of Framework Knitters, one of London's 110 Livery Companies, recently invited their Honorary Liveryman, Alderman Vincent Keaveny, Lord Mayor of London in 2021-22, to their almshouses in Oadby to unveil a plaque to celebrate the planting of a cherry tree (photo opposite) as part of the late HM Queen Elizabeth II Green Canopy. The Framework Knitters have had cottages in Oadby since they were relocated from London in 1906 and at that time the Lord Mayor of London travelled by train to Leicester and then in his horse-drawn mayoral carriage to perform the opening ceremony. In 1927 the then Prince of Wales visited to plant what is now a magnificent oak tree. The cottages, originally built to accommodate former employees of the framework knitting trade, are still available and provide independent living to anyone who has worked in the textile trade and meets the criteria.



The 100th birthday of the almshouse's oldest resident, Hazel Littlewood was celebrated at a morning party in January. Hazel has lived at the Cottage Homes for 40 years and is still very much a regular participant in social events, both at the Homes and the various trips organised by the Worshipful Company of Framework Knitters. In the past she has organised line dancing and coach trips for residents and has been a great contributor to the Christmas celebrations, making the decorations and the crib which comes out every year and takes pride of place in the Hall. Hazel was presented with a bouquet of flowers, a M&S voucher and a cake. Residents also gave her a beautiful camellia shrub and planter and they all toasted Hazel with a glass of champagne!

Retiring after 65 years of service in Norfolk

"Rosemary Crisp retired in 2022 having served on the board of trustees for the Norman Almshouses charity, the Northwold Combined Charities and the Edmund Atmere (Northwold) Charity for a total of 65 years.

Back in 1957, her father-in-law suggested that the way to meet more people in the village she had just moved into was by becoming a trustee of some of the charities. She recalled that meetings took place in the church vestry as the Rector was the chairperson and it was very cold! When the Rector resigned from the board, she 'reluctantly' took over as chair and (very sensibly!) "moved the meetings to my house".

The Combined Charities of Northwold and Whittington, a small neighbouring village which has long been part of the parish of Northwold, is a combination of about six smaller charities that in the earliest days gave a loaf of bread or a bolt of cloth to pensioners of the parish on or around St Thomas's Day, (December 15). This still takes place today but at the back of the church, where at least there is some heating! For many years, the 'Dole' has been given in the form of cash.

Rosemary recounts that having the meetings at her house was never a problem until one day the clerk came



with a package, saying that she couldn't be responsible for all of the Dole cash in her house. Fortunately, Rosemary's husband had a lockable gun cabinet so the money was carefully stored until it could be given out. In later years, money was handed out by cheque which

was safer but far more work for Rosemary as she had to sign them all and be careful not to make a mistake or the clerk would have to rewrite it. Today, at least a third of recipients receive their Dole via bank transfer. During her time, Rosemary was very pleased to be in the chair to oversee two major alterations to the almshouses in Northwold. The four Hall Lane almshouses were converted into three one-storey dwellings, with new bathrooms and kitchens, and a similar project was completed at the end of 2018 for the former five bedsits in School Lane, turning them into four single-bedroom properties. Rosemary needed to retire due to her health but says she was very glad to have served the people of Northwold and Whittington."

Helaine Wyett, Clerk to the Trustees, Northwold Charities

The Association is in no doubt about how greatly she will be missed by her fellow trustees, staff and residents.



Food box gift at Xmas

"One of our residents, Sharon Baker, works at the One Stop shop in Hockley Heath, Warwickshire. Customers had been donating food and Sharon asked for ideas as to where this could be distributed. I suggested Rowington Almshouse residents and Roger Shepherd, Chairman of Trustees and Sharon gave a box of items to Harold Lippett. The remainder were given to other residents on Christmas Eve and were received with grateful thanks. The trustees of Rowington Almshouse Charity are extremely appreciative of such kind gestures, particularly as some residents struggle to meet financial demands."

Nicola Everall, Secretary to the Trustees



Long service lunch

The dedicated long service and retirement of Paul Caldwell as Clerk to the Trustees of the Philip Metcalfe Almshouses in Suffolk, was celebrated at lunch hosted by the Chair of Trustees, Anthony Holliday.

Residents and trustees were served lunch by Anthony, daughter Fiona and son-in-law James, and Paul was presented with a framed photograph of the almshouses.

photo centre: Paul Caldwell (centre) with trustees (left to right) Steven Scott, Anthony Holliday, Rosemary Harrison and Alan Brown.

photo right: Paul with residents.



Cherry tree planted to honour Royal service

Pilton United Charity was joined by members of Barnstaple Town Council and special guest, Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Devon, Grania Phillips to plant a cherry tree in their garden "in memoriam to our late Majesty's extraordinary service to her country and people".

They were welcomed by Janet Coates, Chair of Trustees of Pilton United Charities and a Barnstaple town councillor, who also made a presentation to



David Woolley recognising his long service to the parish of Pilton and many years as chair of the Pilton United Charities. photo: Devon Live.



THE
ALMSHOUSE
ASSOCIATION

PATRON
HRH The former Prince of Wales,
KG KT GC

VICE PATRON
HRH The Duke of Gloucester,
KG GCVO

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FRCPi

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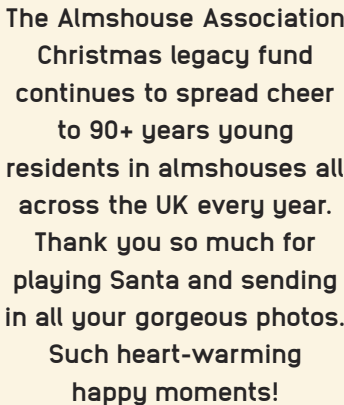
The Almshouses Gazette
is published by:
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Wokingham
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Registered Charity No. 245668
Company No. 04678214

2023 CALENDAR

March - December	CPD accredited The Almshouse Way: 1-day training course - various venues - see website	
May 11	Trustees and Clerks Seminar	Gloucester
June 13	West Midland Regional Meeting	Solihull
June 15	2023 Members Day and AGM	London
July 13	Wessex Regional Meeting	Salisbury
September 20	West Midland Regional Meeting	Sutton Coldfield
November 16	Wessex Regional Meeting	Salisbury
December 13	West Midland Regional Meeting	Solihull



The Almshouse Association
Christmas legacy fund
continues to spread cheer
to 90+ years young
residents in almshouses all
across the UK every year.
Thank you so much for
playing Santa and sending
in all your gorgeous photos.
Such heart-warming
happy moments!

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