



“Creating Homes and Communities”

Introduction

Founded in 1946, The Almshouse Association is the leading support organisation for almshouse charities. With over 1,600 members, it offers expert guidance, training and funding to help members manage their almshouses effectively, supporting the longevity of the movement.

As a corner of the almshouse movement, the Association also aims to protect, preserve and promote this historic housing model and raise its profile as a truly affordable form of charitable housing.

The Almshouse Association has been built on pillars of credibility, longevity, and custodianship since 1946.

What is an almshouse?

- Almshouses are a unique form of charitable housing, with a history spanning over a thousand years. They originate from the medieval Seven Works of Mercy, embodying the mission to provide shelter for the homeless.
- They are established through the generosity of philanthropists or as enduring legacies.
- Across the UK, over 8,000 volunteer trustees devote their time to managing more than 30,000 almshouses, offering homes to approximately 36,000 residents.
- Almshouses profoundly impact residents' lives, with testimonials highlighting life-changing experiences.
- Almshouses are small scale, typically with between 5-50 homes.
- In some rural areas almshouses are the only form of charitable housing available.

“Almshouses improve residents' well-being and reduce the impact of loneliness. Research shows they boost life expectancy and have a tangible economic value, contributing over £43 million annually to the state (Housing LIN). They foster community living, balancing independence with neighbourliness.”

Nick Phillips, CEO, The Almshouse Association

Modern almshouses cater for:

- Younger people
- Young families
- Young people leaving care
- Veterans
- The homeless
- Refugees
- The older generation
- People with disabilities

The almshouse movement has experienced a surge in popularity over the last 2-3 years. This momentum is fuelled by mounting evidence showcasing the tangible benefits of this unique form of charity housing. Almshouses are proving to enhance the lives of the people who reside in them and enrich the fabric of the local communities they inhabit, contributing positively to the nation.

With nearly 1.3 million people in England waiting for social housing (National Housing Federation), the demand for almshouses is clear.

The benefits of almshouses

- The architectural design of almshouses fosters a community spirit, offering safety and sanctuary, with a balance of privacy and social interaction.
- Almshouses are run entirely by local volunteers contributing nearly £9 mil from voluntary work per annum. (Housing LIN 2021).
- Because of their small scale, almshouses provide not just shelter, but also companionship and neighbourliness, combating the loneliness and isolation faced by many in housing insecurity.
- While rooted in history, modern almshouses can also serve a diverse community.
- Almshouses address the contemporary issues of isolation and community disconnection.
- They could support the government in their quest to create more affordable homes in local communities.
- Modern almshouses are built to the highest standards and support modern day regulatory requirements.

Summary

Almshouses are a form of charitable housing.

There are over 1,600 almshouse charities in the UK.

There are over 8,000 volunteer trustees who are managing over 30,000 almshouses across the UK.
Over 36,000 people live in almshouses.

Almshouses are more than just housing—they enhance residents' well-being, help alleviate loneliness and foster a deep sense of belonging.

Research has proved that almshouses support residents wellbeing and longevity reducing costs on NHS services.

New almshouses are built to exacting standards and support modern day regulatory requirements.

Almshouses contribute over £43 mil annually to the state as well as a contribution of nearly £9 mil from voluntary work.

"I was desperate, I was living on the street, then I got lucky, I won the lottery, I got a place. Since then, its changed my life and I feel as enthusiastic as a kid again."

Resident

How can almshouses benefit your constituency?

Almshouses can help you:

- **Achieve your local housing targets**
- **Save funds on health and social care**
- **Reduce levels of loneliness within your constituency**
- **Support your relationship with local authorities**
- **develop a community of safe and secure homes**
- **Reduce levels of homelessness**

Almshouses serve to complement other forms of affordable housing models. By providing essential homes in local communities across the UK, they can play a parallel role in helping more people in housing need.

Our aim

The Almshouse Association is campaigning 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 charitable housing.

- Despite their benefits, almshouses are not officially recognised as affordable housing under the NPPF, which prioritises registered housing providers. Many almshouse charities, particularly smaller ones without paid staff, struggle to navigate regulations that don't align with their structure. This hampers their ability to maintain existing homes and build new ones.
- The Almshouse Association is pushing for almshouses to be formally recognised as affordable housing in the NPPF. The Association has collaborated with the Housing Ombudsman, DLUHC, the National Housing Federation, and others to submit a detailed proposal during the NPPF consultation on September 23, 2024.
- The Association is also creating a robust code of conduct to bolster government confidence in this amendment.
- With backing from the House of Lords and key Ministers, the Association is highlighting the value of this charitable housing model. However, more action is needed to expand its reach and address local housing needs.

“Don't forget almshouses.”
Lord Best comment: Inside Housing 2021

What can the Government do to help?

Recognising almshouses as a form of affordable housing in the NPPF would unlock Section 106 funding, empowering almshouse charities to develop more homes for those in urgent need.

Almshouses provide far more than housing; they offer significant societal value by easing the burden on social care systems, particularly through their role in alleviating loneliness and isolation. In doing so, they not only improve well-being but also help reduce costs to society.

As at 31st March 2023, there were 1.29 million households on local authority waiting lists, an increase of 6% compared to 31st March 2022 and the highest it has been since 2014 (GOV.UK March 2024). These figures indicate a need for genuinely affordable charitable housing that supports the needs of local people. Almshouses can help fulfil this need and 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 several ways:

- Raising questions in Parliament
- Talking to and visiting your local almshouses
- making representations to ministers

Your voice can make such a difference.

Nick Phillips

Contact details:

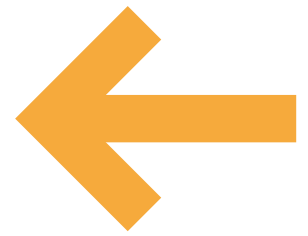
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Registered Charity No. 245668
Registered Company No. 04678214



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 1,600 almshouse charities. These almshouses provide much-needed, truly affordable charitable housing for local people.



“Currently there are 8.5 million people in the UK that cannot access the housing they need. 2 million of these are children.”

Bayes Business School 2023

Almshouses are not just buildings. They are led by a charitable spirit. These micro-communities offer more than just a roof over resident's 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”.

Bayes Business School 2023

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 1.29m for the UK – October 2024 – Gov.uk

“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 local housing provision. This model has evidenced benefits and can help support the Governments housing targets. If ever there was a time to build more almshouses, it's now.”

Nick Phillips, CEO, The Almshouse Association



The Housing Crisis Today

Some 117,450 households were living in temporary accommodation, such as B&BS and hotels, in March 2024, which is the highest number since records began in 1998. This was up 12.3 per cent on the same period last year.

The Independent Oct 2024

**In 2024, poor housing in the UK is estimated to cost the NHS over
£1 billion annually**

BRE Group

The cost to councils for providing temporary accommodation has soared, with an estimated **£1 billion** spent over the past year. This represents a significant financial burden on local authorities, highlighting the urgent need for more permanent housing solutions.

Lbc.co.uk 2024

“Tackling the UK’s housing crisis means addressing one key problem: affordability”

**Paul Anand, Professor of Economics,
The Open University – The Conversation,
October 2024**

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ALMSHOUSES AND THE HOUSING CRISIS

Almshouses offer homes for those in need while building supportive micro-communities that benefit the local area.

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

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

The housing crisis affects not just supply but also affordability and quality, leaving many in insecure homes that undermine their well-being.

This, we know, leads to an impact on mental and physical health.

So, where do almshouses fit in?

Residents contribute a weekly maintenance fee, often aligned with local housing allowance, helping reduce the burden on government finances.

Almshouse volunteer trustees independently fund the maintenance and redevelopment of their almshouses to meet high standards and regulatory requirements, further easing government costs.

Almshouses promote social interaction and independence in a safe, supportive environment, with communal spaces enhancing well-being and lessening reliance on NHS services.

“For people in housing need, almshouses can provide a life-changing experience.”

Nick Phillips, CEO, The Almshouse Association

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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 Girton Town Charity, Cambridge
- Accommodation for older ladies at the Brixton Friendly Almshouses, Brixton
- Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association

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, charitable 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 charitable 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 form of genuinely affordable charitable housing.

Supported by a team of committed and knowledgeable staff and volunteers, Nick is driving an agenda to ensure almshouses are properly recognised for their significant value in society.

Appointed as CEO of The Almshouse Association in 2018, Nick has worked in the Charity Sector for the last 25 years, leading a charity support organisation before 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 and supporting charities and rural businesses.

Nick joined The Almshouse Association to oversee a strategy to:

- Raise awareness of the great work of almshouse charities and their value to communities around the country
- Help member charities achieve their potential to thrive and build more almshouses
- See additional almshouse charities started by encouraging more philanthropic giving
- Support almshouse charities in their work to provide 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 profound responsibility to support our members in nurturing, improving, and passing on the thousand-year legacy of almshouses, leaving it in a stronger position for future generations.”



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, 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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