



the almshouses Gazette

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HRH The Duke of Gloucester visits first Passivhaus certified almshouses

Residents, trustees and staff of Girton Town Charity in Cambridgeshire were delighted to welcome Royal Vice Patron of The Almshouse Association, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, to view their recently completed development of 15 new homes at Dovehouse Court.

They are the first almshouses in the country to be built to Passivhaus certified sustainability standards. They replace six bungalows built in the 1930s and 1960s which no longer offered an appropriate standard of accommodation. *Full story on page 5.*



Community grant for netball team

The Melksham Almshouses Charities in Wiltshire offer local charities and organisations the opportunity to apply for grants. Following a recent approach by the Melksham Walking Netball Team, the charity was happy to offer a grant for new team shirts. Club member Sue Mortimer said: "We would like to give Melksham Almshouses Charities a big thank you. The new tops are a real hit!"

Joining the team (photo: Melksham Independent News) are Melksham Almshouses Chair Pat Aves, trustees Caroline Andrewes and John Doel, and clerk Zoe Pace.

More almshouses in the community news on pages 8/9.

Members enthusiastic response to the Great Almshouse Census

The Association received an enthusiastic and supportive response to what is believed to be the first-ever comprehensive survey of its kind which aimed to build a better understanding of almshouse operations and how to safeguard them for the future. 50% of the membership responded to the questionnaire, a level of support which gives added weight to the survey's results and helps to give a broad picture of the movement. *Full details on pages 4/5.*

CPD accredited trustee recruitment course under development

Members have been telling us about the challenges they face recruiting new trustees and from these conversations we understand many trustees are found through word-of-mouth. If you know a diverse group of people with a wide variety of skills and connections this approach can work but most of us are not in this position.

It may be time to consider a more targeted recruitment plan to find those elusive trustees with a range of skills, knowledge and life experience that will help strengthen your charity and ensure it is both compliant and financially strong. As we go to print, a new CPD (Continuing Professional Development) accredited



Trustee Recruitment Workshop is being tested. It will guide members through a robust recruitment process and include vital information, templates, connections and places to consider advertising.

We will also explore how charity boards can truly represent the communities they support.

The workshop will help you answer questions such as: Does your Board have the skills needed to run a successful almshouse charity? Does it represent the community it supports? Is succession planning on the agenda of your board meetings? More information will soon be available on our website and in our e-bulletins.



Members Day 2025 - 'Creating Homes and Communities' - Thursday 19 June 2025, London

CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S COMMENT

I was drafting an item called ‘in the Founders’ Shoes’ for this Gazette. It was about the wishes of those generous people who had left gifts of almshouses in their Wills, leaving legacies that helped those in need then and continue to provide help for people in need today.

In reviewing the past, however, I was forced to think about the future. From recent issues the team here at the Association has come across, it is clear that the vital work of trustees is falling on too few shoulders.

There are no successful charities by chance, only successful, dedicated and courageous trustees. Year after year, decade after decade, century after century, almshouse trustees have been nurturing their charity founders’ legacies – always making it work, albeit some years more successfully than others.

Dealing with changing legislation, resident issues, juggling the finances – you name it, the trustees have seen it all. The Almshouse Association is immensely proud of all your hard work and achievements and hopes to have played a small part

in making the life of a trustee a bit easier. If, by some miracle, those founders were to return to look at their legacies in your hands, I have no doubt they would be pretty pleased and, in some cases, overwhelmed with admiration and pride for the great strides you have made.

But – should they ask how the next 50 years look, some may turn a whiter shade of pale. Succession planning, by which we mean recruiting the next generation of trustees, is often too late and, in some cases, completely lacking. At a time when the future of the almshouse model is looking so promising, we must help you to line up your successors; good trustees who will continue the legacies for the future and then hand on, with the charity in an even stronger position, to the next set of dedicated trustees.

We have such important work to do and it is falling on too few trustees. This poses a threat to the historic thread connecting founder to resident and the precious longevity of a charity. To help

you with the pressing task of recruiting more of the right trustees, we will shortly be launching a workshop where you can come and find out how to attract and recruit new trustees using the most effective techniques based on researched experience. The workshop is currently going through CPD (Continuing Professional Development) accreditation. Having been through a dry run, I can confirm it is impactful.

We are also working with national organisations, seeking links to their internal communications to encourage trustee recruitment in almshouses. We have already been supported by the Retired Accountants’ Association and others will follow. We would also like to enable an IT-based system to help with this, although this is just in the planning phase at present.

The second most pressing issue is Weekly Maintenance Contributions (WMCs) and income. We were surprised to see from the recent census (full details of which can be found on pages 4-5) that some charities are falling out of step with recommended WMC levels and finding themselves in need of

financial support as funds run short. Funds do not usually disappear overnight. Financial crisis in an almshouse charity is usually a slow, foreseeable, process.

If you are struggling with WMCs or recruiting trustees, let us help you get back on track and also help you to have your share of the great enjoyment, pride and wellbeing that comes from being part of the almshouse network and, of course, help with some of the heavy lifting, process, policies and data collection that are also part of a trustee’s lot!

The Almshouse Association, your founders and our successors take our hats off to all trustees for your dedication, hard work and innovation.

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive

A new era of philanthropy

Report from the Almshouse Association’s exclusive event at The Charterhouse, London, 3 July 2024

The almshouse movement is experiencing a long overdue renaissance with heightened media attention and, as we look ahead to the next 50 years, we are eager to use this growing awareness to inspire philanthropists to support and expand this very relevant housing model.

In July 2024, The Almshouse Association welcomed a full house of almshouse enthusiasts to The Charterhouse in London. As well as tours of the stunning buildings and gardens

led by the ‘Brothers’, our guests listened to talks from a fascinating group of speakers on philanthropic giving. They included George Courtauld, architect and generational philanthropist; Peter Aiers OBE, CEO and Master of The Charterhouse; Simon and Juliet Dumas, landowners and community benefactors; Martin Smith, CEO of The Poland Trust; Christopher Ray, Chairman of The Frederick Ray Trust and Willie Hartley Russell, Chairman of The Almshouse Association and The Hartley Trust.

There were also exceptional resident speakers who wowed the audience with heart-warming stories.

Following the event, Association CEO, Nick Phillips, has been continuing engagements with guests to establish new almshouse charities and secure funding for redevelopment. We will keep you informed about our progress and future developments.

A philanthropist’s story

One of the speakers was George Courtauld, architect and generational philanthropist.

The Courtauld family has a long history of philanthropic endeavours and their legacies, rooted in centuries past, continue to thrive today. They include Braintree Town Hall, The Courtauld Institute of Art, Braintree & Bocking Public Gardens and Halstead Homes of Rest almshouses.

George (photo above) shared his thoughts on the almshouse movement and its invaluable contribution to society. Visit www.almshouses.org/news/inspiring-the-next-philanthropists where you will find a selection of the speeches from the day.



photos left: The Norfolk Garden at The Charterhouse (which dates back to 1348) was first landscaped and planted after World War II and today is a haven for almshouse residents. It features a fine old cherry tree and is laid out with secret corners and arbours, planted in the English Garden style, with flowering highpoints throughout the year.

The Census showed ‘set aside’ levels to be about 5 per 1,000 almshouse residents. This is far lower than the 8.3 per 1,000 households in the social housing sector and 13 per 1,000 in the private sector. According to our data, almshouse residents are the least likely type of resident to be removed and 70% of set asides related to the inability to live independently. The Census also revealed that almshouse trustees plan 1,100 new units over the next five years!

Nick Phillips

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Responsibility for almshouse renovations

The Association receives member enquiries from time to time about the responsibility for carrying out renovations to their almshouses. The answer is clear in that the Weekly Maintenance Contributions residents pay go towards the cost of maintenance of the properties. In our model template Letter of Appointment, which we encourage members to use as far as possible, there is a clause to the effect that trustees undertake to carry out all repairs, including internal and external decoration. It also states that residents are not permitted to make any structural alterations to the dwellings, nor alter the plumbing

or electrical installations. These facts are confirmed in the Association’s model template Residents’ Handbook, which also states that payment for improvements (from the charity’s funds) is the responsibility of trustees. In circumstances where residents are allowed to undertake repairs and refurbishments themselves it could be argued that residents gain a legal interest in the property as a result, which, of course, is something that charities very much need to avoid. For this reason alone, the Association strongly discourages trustees from permitting residents to undertake repairs and renovations to the almshouses they live in. There is also a



safety issue. A resident could have an accident whilst undertaking the work themselves, or the contractors they choose may not be reputable or have insurance. Trustees would have no control over the standard of work carried out which could lead to safety issues, not only in relation to the specific almshouse dwelling, but possibly for the almshouse properties as a whole.

A special visitor for Girton Town Charity’s latest development

Ann Bonnett, CEO of Girton Town Charity, Cambridgeshire and Lesley Crosland, PR Consultant, had a secret to keep this summer! For six months, they diligently planned and organised a special event for a distinguished guest. After many meticulous meetings and discussions, the much-anticipated visit of HRH The Duke of Gloucester, Royal Vice Patron of The Almshouse Association, was finally announced. Residents of Dovehouse Court in Girton were thrilled to hear the news. On the day, HRH The Duke of Gloucester was greeted by His Majesty’s Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Julie Spence, Willie Hartley-Russell, Chairman of The Almshouse Association, Nick Phillips, CEO of The Almshouse Association, and Ann Bonnett, Chair of Girton Town Charity.



After being introduced to charity trustees and staff, The Duke was given a tour of one of the new almshouses by Ian Bramwell, Director of Mole Architects, who designed the development, before visiting resident Diana Henderson in her home. He then joined residents and trustees in the adjacent marquee where they were

photo (from left): Ann Bonnett, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, Willie Hartley-Russell and Nick Phillips.

enjoying morning refreshments and chatted with them about what it was like to live at Dovehouse Court. The almshouses are the first in the UK to receive full Passivhaus accreditation.

Residents were thrilled to hear news of the Royal visit ...

‘On 16 June 2024, The Almshouse Association’s Royal Vice Patron, His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, will be making a special visit to view the new Passivhaus Certified almshouses and enjoy tea and cake with the residents.’

A plaque was unveiled to commemorate the day and Ann Bonnett thanked The Duke of Gloucester, saying: “It has been a great pleasure to show you around our new almshouses so you could see first-hand these homes for the future”. He was presented with a signed copy of local photographer Martin Bond’s new book entitled ‘Cambridge: Town & Gown’. Before leaving, The Duke said: “I am delighted to have been able to come to Dovehouse Court today to see and hear about your ground-breaking development. It is very impressive that your charity, which has a 500-year history, is now looking to the

future with these inspiring homes which have preserved the principles of traditional almshouse design with shared gardens and a community courtyard.” Nick Phillips, CEO of The Almshouse Association commented: “We were very honoured to receive His Royal Highness at Dovehouse Court - the first example of a new Passivhaus certified almshouse development. The Duke showed great interest in how the charity blended historic design with cutting-edge environmental engineering around a welcoming community



During his visit, HRH The Duke of Gloucester discussed the new almshouses with residents and trustees.

courtyard. It was an inspirational day for everyone.” Recently, the almshouses received a ‘Highly Commended’ accolade in the 2024 Greater Cambridge Design and Construction Awards and The Almshouse Association Innovation for Living Award.

The Great Almshouse Census - your responses analysed

Towards the end of 2023 we launched the Great Almshouse Census and we would like to thank members for taking the time to support this by completing the survey. We were enormously pleased to receive a response from 50% of the membership.

This has placed us in a position where we can speak with confidence about the almshouse movement to MPs, Peers, Councillors, Planners and others in pivotal positions of authority – individuals and organisations whose decisions impact almshouse charities, their trustees, their staff, their buildings and their residents.

Note: all figures and percentages are based on the responses of the 804 charities that responded to the survey (approx. 50% of the membership).

Charity set-up

- 1. Almshouse charities were predominantly formed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries although 77 pre-date 1600.
- 2. 87 respondents did not know the status of their charity. The overwhelming majority are not CIOs (Charitable Incorporated Organisations) or CLG (Company Limited by Guarantee).
- 3. 205 almshouse charities are Registered Providers.

Trustees

- 4. The average number of trustees per almshouse charity is seven. At least one charity had only one trustee and another had 70.

CEO comment: Neither of the two latter situations are ideal. 8-12 seems to work best in most cases. The Association can provide guidance on good practice with regards to trustee boards.

- 5. 5,745 trustees in total which could equate to approx. 10,000 trustees across the membership.

- 6. 595 trustee vacancies reported at the time of census completion
- 7. Very few trustees are under 30 years old (24 reported). Vast majority of trustees are in the 60-80 age bracket (ie. the active retired). 546 trustees are over 80 (about 10% of respondents).

CEO comment: This could raise issues with trustee numbers in the future. Succession planning is vital.

- 8. Whilst there was representation from all but one ethnic group in trustee boards, the make up of trustees is currently mostly white or British.

CEO comment: We imagine this will change slowly over time reflecting changing demographics. Diversity awareness training may provide some ideas on achieving a more diverse board. That being said, we understand that getting any new trustees can be a challenge - we hope our new training course can help.

- 9. More male (3,214) than female (2,361) trustees.

Management and staff

- 10. 104 trusts use a managing agent (c.13%).
- 11. 398 almshouse charities employ some staff.
- 12. The number of staff employed varies from 0 to 250 but typically the number employed (if at all) is one. Average number for larger almshouse charities is three.
- 13. Clerk is the role for which most almshouse charities employ (345). Second is Warden (169).

Beneficiaries

- 14. As per the stipulations made in their charities’ governing documents, the most common beneficiary conditions were geographical (645) and financial need (639). Good character was a condition in 406 responses and age over 60 in 302. 79 almshouse charities have a criteria relating to religion.
- Note:** This was not an either/or question. Most charities ticked a number of criteria boxes.

- 15. Whilst there are residents from all ethnic groups living in almshouses, most residents are white (89%) or British (79%).

unlocking the secrets of one of the oldest forms of community housing

Almshouses

- 17. Resident capacity (of the 804 respondents) totalled 27,152. 50% have capacity for 12 or fewer residents. The most common size is four residents.
- 18. 19,004 dwellings. 50% of almshouse charities have eight or fewer dwellings. The most common number of dwellings is four.
- 19. 596 vacant units (at time of census) (approx. 3%). Most almshouse charities had no vacancies.
- 20. The most common unit is a 1-bedroom unit (12,917), followed by a 2-bedroom unit (4,028). 906 units are bedsit/studios.
- 21. 208 almshouse charities have a communal heating system (approx. 25%).

Note: According to Government data about the UK’s different ethnic groups, 82% of people in England and Wales identify as white. Data provided by the Office of National Statistics states 72.1% of people selected either an “English” only or “British” only identity, 29 Nov 2022.

- 16. Next of kin – most almshouse charities held next of kin information for all or most of their residents, however 14% did not hold this information at all.

- 22. Age of buildings – 150 pre-1700 and 97 post-2000. The majority fall into the 1800-2000 category.
- 23. A significant number of properties are listed (49 x Grade I, 287 x Grade II, 43 Grade II*). 259 are in a conservation area.
- 24. The majority of known EPC ratings were C, D or E. 470 almshouse charities reported their EPC rating as unknown.

NOTE: It may be that the respondent was not sure rather than no-one in the charity knowing. Information on EPCs is available on our website at: www.almshouses.org/faqs-2/

- 25. The minimum Weekly Maintenance Contributions (WMCs) reported were £1, £3 and £8 for bedsits, 1 beds and 2 beds. (Comment: It is possible that these are peppercorn amounts for some reason). The average bedsit WMC is £130-£138, 1-bedroom unit £124-£143 and 2-bedroom unit £167-£176.

CEO comment: Some variations can be attributed to geography and inclusion of facilities such as heating. It is also possible that some charities are not keeping up with the times.



- 26. Facilities included in some WMCs were the use of communal gardens (525), water charges (441), other communal areas (262), heating (226) and the services of a warden (182). It is rare (29) to include council tax in the WMC.
- 27. There had been approximately 100 set asides each year (520 in five years). The majority of these cited ‘unable to live independently’ as the reason, however, 147 over the five-year period were due to arrears or anti-social behaviour.

Future

- 28. Approx. 1,100 additional units are planned to be built in the next five years.
- 29. 187 almshouse charities are planning a major refurbishment in the next five years.
- 30. Trustee chairs of 54 almshouse charities predict that in the next ten years their charity will either have merged (47) or closed (7). The majority of chairs are predicting their charity will be thriving.

STOP PRESS – S106 opportunities

Members will already be aware that The Almshouse Association is working with the Government to amend the National Policy Planning Framework in favour of almshouses (not registered with The Regulator of Social Housing), however, we wanted to share some recent conversations we have been having with organisations outside Government.

CEO, Nick Phillips recently met the Director of Vistry Group, the largest building company in the country, which owns companies including Linden Homes, Bovis Homes and Countryside Homes. They have agreed, in principle, that if there is a small Section 106 opportunity on a site being developed by any of these companies and your charity would like to adopt the S106 Affordable Housing aspect of the site, they would be happy to consider this. Those charities interested should contact Nick Phillips who will put you in touch with the appropriate local Director.

NOTE: If your charity is not registered with the Social Housing Regulator, we may need to persuade the local council to accept almshouses. In some council areas the planners will accept non-registered charities as providers of affordable housing but most require a more detailed conversation. Vistry Group, while essentially a commercial organisation, has an interest in almshouses and how they can support almshouse development as part of their 106 obligations.

New housing management qualification

(applicable to Registered Providers only)

Registered Providers are no doubt aware of the consultation that ran from 6 February to 5 April 2024, regarding the requirement for managers in the housing world to be qualified. The Association has worked hard to influence policy and has, we hope, encouraged a sensible exemption for trustees. However, the provision of the Act may still require a clerk to hold a qualification. If this is the case, the Association has proposed that our members have four years from April 2024 to start the qualification and four years to complete the course.

Please visit: www.almshouses.org/news/regulated-housing-providers-qualification-requirement for details. The consultation remains open (at the time of writing) but members may be interested to read the experience of a clerk of a registered almshouse charity with 16 properties who is nearing the completion of her Level 4 Housing Course with the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).

A Clerk's personal experience

It has been hard to complete the course whilst still working and at times the charity's work has suffered. My trustees have been extremely supportive, increasing my hours to cover the extra work. Whilst I have cursed a lot at the volume of reports and housing law to read, the course has been interesting and I feel more confident about my responsibilities and can see where the charity needs to make changes for the future.

About the course:

- The basic year-long Level 4 Housing Course with the CIH comprises six modules on various aspects of housing management and is delivered through 'Moodle' (an online training package).
- Around eight/nine weeks is allowed to complete each module with no breaks in study unless modules are completed before the due dates.
- There is limited online contact with the other course attendees via online forum-based activities.



- Completion of each module comprises a written assignment of around 2-3,000 words, plus quick online activities to submit via Moodle.
- Provisional pass/fail results (not grades) are released around a month after each assignment's closing date, with three attempts allowed to complete each stage.
- Course guidance suggests eight hours a week study is needed to get through each of the modules that comprise the course, but this may not be enough.

Costs

Qualification fees vary depending on where, how and which centre you choose to study. For further information on fees, please contact your CIH approved study centre directly.

Below is a guide only

- Basic package – £2,410 includes limited contact with a tutor via Moodle messaging.
- Deluxe package – £2,930 includes six online study days with a tutor.

The Almshouse Association loans and grants programme

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 refurbishment or repairs to your almshouses, or if you are looking to build new almshouses, you can apply to the Association for a loan or a grant. During 2023, loans to the value of £804,624 were approved, along with grants of £78,590.

Loans of between £25,001 and £100,000 can be applied for. All 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 (which is paid as part of the loan instalment repayments), there are no other costs. Grants of up to £25,000 are also offered and are reserved for charities in urgent need of financial support who would be unable to afford to repay a loan. We have a limited budget for grants every year and it is important to us that our grant money makes a real difference to those charities most in need. Recent projects include:

Viscountess Barrington's Homes for ex-service personnel, Wiltshire



Viscountess Barrington's Homes for Disadvantaged Ex-Service Personnel benefited from a £100,000

loan to support the refurbishment of a pair of semi-detached almshouses in Wiltshire. Once the project is fully complete, the properties will be insulated, damp-proofed and sound-proofed, the kitchen/diners and bathrooms will have been modernised and the central heating upgraded. For one of the homes there will be the addition of an upstairs bathroom. Guttering and roof trim is also being renewed, redundant chimneys dropped and capped and the properties re-rendered.

Jesus Hospital, Canterbury

At the beginning of the year, a grant of £2,000 was made towards the refurbishment of one of the charity's flats. A new kitchen and bathroom were fitted and it was redecorated throughout. Once the contractors had finished, a working party of residents and the warden enjoyed a happy day cleaning windows and revarnishing the window frames, which provided both an enjoyable social event for the community and a considerable cost saving. In March 2024, it was good to hear that a new resident was very happy to have joined the community of Jesus Hospital.



The James Charities, Birmingham

In July 2004, The James Charities in Birmingham benefitted from a £71,000 loan which helped to secure a development project, primarily funded by Homes England and a long-term mortgage, to provide ten new high quality almshouses. Work started on site in mid-July and The James Charities will be keeping us updated as the project progresses.



Lawrence Sheriff Almshouses, Rugby

During 2024, The Almshouse Association has supported Lawrence Sheriff Almshouses in Rugby with a grant of £25,000. The charity is remodelling 11 almshouses and planning to build a further four new homes. Remodelling of the first four bungalows was



Mediation services to help improve community relationships

Community is at the heart of the almshouse model and good relationships between trustees, clerks and residents are the bedrock. Almshouse charities take great care to ensure that the well-being of residents is considered and that they are able to develop a sense of belonging in their locality. However, we all know that sometimes things do not go to plan. The Almshouse Association wishes to support its member almshouse charities when this is the case, helping them to find a successful way forward when disputes arise. When it comes to enjoying your property, disagreements may arise over a range of issues such as anti-social behaviour, non-payment of the weekly maintenance contributions, parking, noise, litter, or general disorderliness. Residents, on

occasion, may also raise complaints about disrepair issues or there might be a general breakdown in communications between the resident and the charity. Sometimes little things fester and over time become bigger and cause more consternation than necessary. What if there was a better way to address and resolve these issues? The Almshouse Association has been in discussion with a national mediation provider whose mission is to help people have conversations that count and hopefully find a solution or a compromise in difficult situations. Mediation is a voluntary, confidential and flexible process that aims to reach a mutually agreeable solution to those involved on the same day. The process is run by a neutral facilitator whose role is to help people to

Article contributed by Leah Brown FRSA MSoM, Founder and CEO, Broadstairs Consulting Ltd. (M) 07473 623146

have an effective conversation when challenges arise, so they can move forwards. Broadstairs Consulting's unique, people-first approach to mediation enables them to be fully present, without judgement, for challenging conversations and help people achieve consensus. Using mediation techniques to build bridges between disparate points of view and establish common ground, they help participants find creative solutions that work. Mediation honours participants by spending time considering the issues and giving each person an opportunity to be heard and understood. Mediation has a great track



record with an extremely high success rate of 86% of all cases being settled (Civil Mediation Council). The process also ensures that each participant has an influence on the outcome. So, when disagreements arise for residents, help is at hand. Through this mediation programme, residents will be able to have a sense of control in resolving any issues that arise within the process of mediation as they bring their concerns to the table. Mediations can be conducted virtually online or in person, at the request of the resident. Long term, the hope is that all

resident-related matters that need to be escalated will benefit from a neutral facilitator and can be swiftly resolved through mediation. If you have any questions about this programme or would like to inquire further about the engagement of a mediator, please contact Leah Brown at leah@broadstairsconsulting.com or telephone 07473 623146. The Almshouse Association hopes that the availability of this mediation service will potentially have a vibrant and lasting impact on almshouse communities when the involvement of an external, independent third party can prove invaluable. Other mediation consultants are also available. Visit www.almshouses.org/mediation-scheme

completed in July 2024 with a further five due to be finished in January 2025. Financial support has come from several sources, including Charity Bank, Homes England, Rugby School, Rugby Borough Council and Baron Davenport's Charity - a truly collaborative approach. The Association has monthly calls with Lawrence Sheriff to see how the project is progressing.

Supporting community housing

These projects exemplify the great work of trustees up and down the country who work tirelessly to support the Association's vision for the almshouse model to be recognised as the exemplar form of community housing. If you are interested in how the Association might be able to support your project, please contact our Loans and Grants Administrator, Fenella Hall at: fenellahall@almshouses.org Applications for loans and grants are considered quarterly with deadlines of February 28, May 31, August 31 and November 30.

Almshouses in the community

Garden party 'first' for Jesus Hospital, Canterbury

Jesus Hospital, Canterbury held its first ever garden party in July, attended by around 100 visitors from the local community. They enjoyed jazz and cakes on a rare dry and warm day, helping to raise over £700 towards the restoration of the residents' sunroom. Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, Colonel Jane Carey-Harris and the Lord Mayor of Canterbury, Cllr Jean Butcher were among the guests.

Jesus Hospital was founded in 1595 and has an original Elizabethan building alongside the 'new' homes built in 1933. Both front onto a busy road connecting the city to the coastal towns of Broadstairs and Ramsgate. Hidden behind is a calm walled garden, largely unknown by the majority of passers-by, which provided a wonderful location for the garden party.



Commemorative gate opened by benefactor's descendant at Birlingham Almshouses

Residents and trustees from the Almshouse Charity Birlingham, Worcestershire, met in July to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the original buildings, built on land donated by landowner and farmer, Thomas Chinnell Porter, to provide housing for farmhands retiring from his workforce.

The almshouses, also known as The Row, consist of six terraced heritage cottages and, at a relaxed gathering, a new entrance gate commissioned to commemorate this milestone achievement was officially opened by long-standing resident, Mrs Pat Lightbody. Among the residents and trustees, past and present, and other supporters of the almshouses, was Michael Porter, a direct descendant of the original benefactor, Thomas Chinnell Porter. photo (from left): Lady Julia Luff (trustee), Belinda Scott, David Scott, Neil Lightbody, Patricia Lightbody, Bruce Hayward (Chairman), Valerie Gilmore and Chris Reynard (trustee).



Research reveals fascinating history of Bournville's iconic almshouses

Archive photographs and stories of what life was like in Bournville Almshouses, Birmingham have been released to mark the Trust's 125th anniversary. Founded by George Cadbury and opened in 1899, Bournville's almshouses were built as an alternative to the notoriously harsh workhouses. Early residents included husband and wife Mark and Martha Glasser, who arrived in 1916. They later lost all their modest savings in the collapse of Farrow's Bank, a notorious



fraud that affected thousands who had invested small but significant savings. The almshouses became a lifeline for them. Other residents included

Emma Tutin, who moved to the almshouses between 1901 and 1911. Her father had been a coachman for King George V's father King Edward VII. She is pictured above (in black dress and frilled collar) when King George visited Bournville in 1919.

Bournville Village Trust worked with Dr Jacob Fredrickson, Department of History, School of History and Cultures at the University of Birmingham, to uncover and explore the history of Bournville's almshouses, known as The Quadrangle. Find out more at www.almshouses.org/news/new-research-reveals-story-of-bournvilles-almshouses-as-they-turn-125

High Sheriff plants tree at Bristol and Anchor almshouses

Bristol and Anchor Almshouse Charity held a party in June for residents, trustees, staff and guests, to mark the 25th anniversary of building 14 two-bed flats and to celebrate the charity and the community centre. The Almshouse Association was represented by Association trustee, Quentin Elston. The day included a tour of the homes and Beehive Community Centre, a concert in St Ambrose Church performed



by the Dovetail Orchestra, tree planting by the Rev Richard Pendlebury MBE DL, High Sheriff of the City of Bristol (photo left) and a picnic in the garden.

The almshouses also include eight one-bed cottages in the original listed building, together with the vicarage. photo: Evoke Pictures

Special invitation to a Royal Garden Party

Rain failed to dampen the smiles of Association Board member John Broughton and his wife, Anne when they attended a Royal Garden Party on 21 May 2024, during which he was presented to our Royal Vice Patron, HRH The Duke of Gloucester. John's invitation was in recognition of his considerable work for Hull United Charities and The Almshouse Association.



A look back in time over 150 years at Mrs de Lannoy and Haven Homes Almshouse Charity, East Sussex

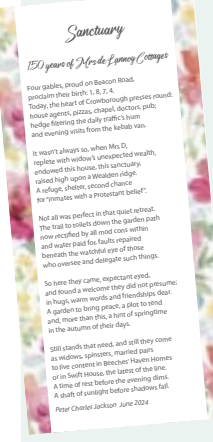
Residents, trustees, staff and guests gathered in June for the 150th year of the Mrs de Lannoy and Haven Homes Almshouse Charity, Crowborough, East Sussex. The almshouse charity was set up in 1874 for local elderly people and those from further afield.



It's aim was to help those who had fallen on hard times to find shelter in a safe, secure place and to live independently. The celebration was held at All Saints Church, Crowborough

with a service of thanksgiving conducted by Rev Steve Rees and supported by Father Edward Dowler, Archdeacon of Hastings and Priest in Charge of St John the Evangelist.

It was followed by afternoon tea. The Chairman of the Trustees, Bob Bailey spoke of the enormous benefit of almshouses giving many elderly residents independent living and the comfort of their own home, while the Head of Member Services at The Almshouse Association, Julian Marczak talked about the work of the Association and the recent positive research on almshouse living. One of the highlights of the day was the reading of a poem especially written by Peter Jackson and read by one of the residents, Mary Corny (photo above). She was dressed in late nineteenth century style which helped to bring to life the history of the almshouses endowed by Mrs de Lannoy.



Opening of award-winning Appleby Blue almshouses



Almshouse Association CEO, Nick Phillips with resident Fran, at the opening in May of the award-winning Appleby Blue almshouse development by United St Saviour's Charity in Southwark. The ceremony was led by The Rt Hon Lord Best OBE DL, a member of the House of Lords with a special interest in housing. Guests were welcomed by United St Saviour's Chief Executive, Martyn Craddock. The entire building (which was compared to a Scandinavian spa by The Guardian newspaper) is constructed from oak and designed around a courtyard with water features and a roof garden terrace. It is home to 63 residents living in a mix of 57, mostly one-bedroom, flats. The courtyard design and large windows framing the property are designed to encourage a community spirit where no-one ever feels alone.

Founded 400 years ago in Gravesend

The 400th Anniversary of the Foundation of The Henry Pinnock and Victoria and Albert Memorial Charity in Gravesend was marked in August by the attendance of local MP Dr Lauren Sullivan; the Mayor of Gravesend, Cllr. Daniel Adewale King and the Chairman of The Almshouse Association, Willie Hartley Russell. Guests were welcomed by the Chairman of Trustees, Philip Painter.



The event presented an opportunity to find out more about the history of the charity and to celebrate its founding in 1624 by Henry Pinnock. The charity is proud of its long service to the community and continues to work to increase the number of almshouses available to those in need, upholding Henry Pinnock's vision. In recognition of the founder's generosity, a plaque was unveiled by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Lady Colgrain.

New administrative office for The Liversage Trust



The Liversage Trust in Derby has opened a new office in Alice Street, in the Nottingham Road Conservation Area. The relocation is a significant development for the charity, enhancing its administrative functions while continuing to serve the community. Chairman of The Almshouse Association, Willie Hartley Russell (above left) officiated, alongside the Chair of the Board, Malcolm Allsop (right), a trustee since 2000, and Andy Mellors, General Manager. The Liversage Trust is Derby's oldest charity and was founded in 1529 by Robert Liversage, a master dyer and tradesman who donated his land and possessions to benefit poor residents of St Peter's Parish.

In 1836, the Trust expanded its services with the construction of 21 almshouses in London Road, designed by local architect John Mason. These almshouses, along with a chapel and hospital, served as a crucial support system for the community. While the chapel and hospital were eventually repurposed for administrative use, current plans are in motion to restore these spaces to their original function as almshouses.

Experiencing an Almshouse Way Training Day

Have you ever wondered what to expect when attending The Almshouse Way training day? Well, wonder no longer, as Virginia Dean, a trustee at the Guildhall Feoffment Trust, Bury St Edmunds writes about her experience of the course:

A group of 18 delegates met 1,000 years of history under the enthusiastic and knowledgeable guidance of Harriet Lemon, The Almshouse Association Training and Development Manager. We came together from across East Anglia, representing almshouse charities providing between three and 40 dwellings.

Our group included newly appointed clerks and trustees looking for further insight and understanding, and a few old timers who greatly valued a chance to network and learn by exchanging experience. The day covered four important topics. We began by exploring the concept of 'The Almshouse Way',

considering what makes us such a distinctive movement and contrasting it with other forms of accommodation to appreciate our unique qualities. We were introduced to The Almshouse Association and its many services and benefits for members.

After coffee, we began to understand the regulatory framework which provides the context for our work – the Charity Commission has a remit for guiding, supporting and regulating charitable organisations. It was helpful to understand the rules set out in our governing document and, in particular, whether a charity is constituted as an Unincorporated body, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) or a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG). This topic gave much food for thought. Time had been incorporated into the day for us to get to know one another and enjoy lunch in the garden with our fellow



course members was one of the highlights. We soon started appreciating the experiences and challenges that are common to us all. Conversation never lagged! We hope that some of us might maintain contact and explore the possibility of a local support group. In the afternoon we looked in detail at the role

of the trustee and the way in which trustees and clerks relate to residents. Much of this was done by discussion using sample cases. By this stage, previously shy delegates were eager to have their say in the enthusiastic discussions as we began to apply theoretical knowledge to common everyday situations. At the close of the day each delegate proudly received a CPD accredited certificate of achievement, marking the knowledge and confidence gained, which we will take

back to our own charities together with an enhanced feeling of being part of a unique and inspiring movement.

To find out more about the course and download a booking form, please go to www.almshouses.org/the-almshouse-way-1-day-course/



Charities and social media - part 2

Guidance from the Charity Commission

Social media can be a powerful communication tool for charities to raise awareness and funds and to better engage beneficiaries. It can also help charities reach a wider audience, more quickly than traditional methods of communication. But it is important to be aware of the risks, as well as the benefits, and how they can be managed.

Managing potential risks in posting or sharing social media content

People can behave on social media in ways they would not when speaking or writing to the public.

Your social media policy, along with appropriate communications and training for trustees, staff and volunteers responsible for managing the charity's social media channels, should make clear that your charity should not post or share content which is:

- harmful – the UK Safer Internet Centre defines harmful content in simple terms as anything online which causes a person distress or harm
- inconsistent with your charity's purpose
- not in your charity's best interests
- in breach of the law.

You should ensure that your social media use complies with any relevant laws, ie., data protection, privacy, copyright law, defamation law, whistleblower protection, equality and human rights. You should also be aware of the rules or any codes of conduct of the platforms you are using and the risks associated with spreading false information, particularly if this is shared with intent to mislead. Publishing certain content can result in a criminal offence, which is a police matter. Examples of criminal offences include communications which constitute hate crime or are malicious, threatening, indecent or grossly offensive.

Content posted or shared by your charity on social media

As well as setting out who is responsible for managing your social media accounts and posting content, the charity should also have procedures to deal with what happens if there is a breach of the policy or if the content your charity posts or shares risks significantly damaging your charity's reputation. For example:

- where there has been an apparent breach of the law, the charity should act immediately including by deleting or removing the content if that is possible and reporting the matter to the police or other relevant body, if required. You should be clear about how the breach took place and respond in line with your internal policies
- think about whether you need to take corrective action including making public statements. It may be reasonable not to make such statements, but you should balance that against any risks of not doing so
- consider whether to report an incident to the Charity Commission if it has caused significant harm or loss to your charity or the people it helps.

Content posted or shared by trustees, employees or volunteers on their personal social media accounts

Everyone has the right to exercise their freedom of expression within the law in their communications, including when using social media. This includes personally supporting a



particular political party or (during an election) a particular candidate, something a charity cannot do. However, trustees should be aware of the potential for content posted by individuals in their personal capacity being associated with the charity. There is no expectation that trustees monitor personal social media accounts, however, if they become aware of content posted or shared by an individual being associated with and having a negative effect on the charity, they should consider what action to take to protect the charity. The likelihood of content posted or shared by an individual being associated with and having a negative effect on the charity may depend on who is involved. For example, there may be a greater risk if a chief executive of a charity posts or shares on a personal social media account which clearly states their role at the charity or where they blend personal and professional content. In contrast, staff or volunteers with less of a profile online or in their community may represent a much lower risk that any content they post or share will be associated with the charity.

To help manage the risks and any impact on the charity, trustees should share guidelines with their trustees, staff and volunteers, for example through their social media policy. The guidelines should be appropriate for your charity and how it uses social media, such as:

- the potential for an individual's personal use of social media to impact on the charity
- that individuals in positions of influence should take particular care as personal views may be misunderstood as being the charity's view
- making it clear on their personal social media accounts that their views are their own and not the charity's
- reference to the charity's Human Resources policies in this area
- who they apply to and the consequences of any breach of such guidelines.

If issues do occur, having appropriate guidelines that meet your charity's needs will help trustees show that they have considered potential risks and have appropriate procedures in place to help manage those risks. Whether posted on personal or work accounts, when dealing with any issue concerning a trustee, or a person or organisation connected to them, you must manage any conflict of interest. For example, by asking the trustee who posted or shared the content to leave the meeting where you decide your response.

Part 3 of this article will be published in a future Gazette. This will cover engaging with the public, campaigning and political activity, emotive topics and fundraising. Part 1 was published in the Gazette, issue 275 summer 2024.

LETTERS Introducing a service charge helped to secure almshouses' survival

Almshouse trustees often face a dilemma: "How can we increase the weekly maintenance contributions residents pay without causing financial hardship to them?"

I would argue, however, that this is the wrong question. Trustees should instead be asking: "What income do we need now, and in the future, to maintain our almshouses over the next 100 years?"

When I arrived at Municipal Charities, Stratford-upon-Avon four years ago it became clear that three of our almshouse charities would become insolvent within three to five years and, as unincorporated organisations, the trustees would have to find the money. We are a Registered Housing Provider, meaning the Weekly Maintenance Contributions (WMC) can only be increased by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) + 1%, so we set about instituting some changes to ensure insolvency did not happen. Firstly, we obtained an Equivalent Fair Rent for the properties from the Valuation Office Agency. New residents were charged the Equivalent Fair Rent figure as their WMC.

We were charging residents a 'Support Cost' of around £6.90 a week. This cost, however, was not eligible for Housing Benefit so all of our residents had to pay it. We moved to a service charge which is eligible for Housing Benefit. If your almshouse charity does not currently have a service charge, implementing one means that the charity's income can be increased with little or no effect (if residents are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit). We worked with the eligible residents

to help them claim Housing Benefit and, for residents who are not eligible, we offered a bursary scheme to subsidise the additional payments, with the money coming from other funding. This bursary started at over £15,000 a year and has now dropped to under £5,000.

As a result of implementing these changes we have increased our income by £118,000 a year for our 47 properties. This money has been used to improve our properties and we are now well on the way to completing all of the items mentioned in our Quinquennial inspections. Historically, we only managed the 'immediate' and some of the 'high' items.

What items can be included in the service charge?

Page 126 of the Standards of Almshouse Management has a list of eligible items which Municipal Charities of Stratford-upon-Avon have expanded on. Visit: www.municipal-charities.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/service-change-inclusions.pdf Remember, charities should not make a profit on the service charge. In the second year of operation, it is important to calculate the actual costs of the services provided. If less than budgeted, reduce the following year's service charge accordingly; if you ran at a loss you can increase the level of service charge by that amount.

Contributed by William Clemmey, Chief Officer Municipal Charities, Stratford-upon-Avon

Rural almshouses provide a vital community role

A good article should begin with some gripping statistics, shouldn't it? '1 in 4' or '£xx million pounds', etc. But the more we see rural communities struggling to provide housing for those in need, the more we are drawn, instead, to the personal stories of both the young and the old. Today, many young people who have been brought up in small rural communities and work locally, cannot afford to rent in the area to stay near friends and family. There are so few houses to rent in rural areas,



Hayes Almshouses, Cheltenham

particularly in the south of England, and those that are available are way beyond local affordability. In Cheltenham, the average house price is 18 times the annual income! Unless you are lucky enough to receive a windfall, purchasing a house is often out of the question, particularly for the young. The result - young people move away to less expensive areas, to cities and large towns, the village loses local businesses and services and young families must drive miles to visit friends and

relatives. When it comes to 'local housing needs surveys', you've guessed it - there are very few people left in the area who need housing because they have already moved away! Older people in rented accommodation are also likely to be priced out of housing. The National Housing Federation (NHF) reports that almost half (48%) of older private renters worry about getting into debt due to their housing and other living costs being too high. The impact on older people having to

rehouse away from their communities is even greater than it is for the young. Along with losing vital connections with friends and services, they lose the community they have been a part of for many years, sometimes their whole lives, and building new friendships in later life is hard. Older people, forced to seek cheaper rents away from their former rural communities, often become isolated and the impact on health is well documented. According to the

Independent Age organisation, 28% of renters aged 65-74 and 33% of renters aged over 75 live in 'non-decent' homes. It is clear that the role of almshouses in rural areas is crucial. Almshouses add so much more to a rural setting than just an affordable roof. The community is led by local volunteers and residents are likely to be from the area or connected area. They share history and common ground and are, therefore, less likely to suffer the loneliness that can be associated with rural

living. Almshouses are the best model for rural communities and The Almshouse Association is starting a national, local government engagement campaign to encourage parish and town councils to support building almshouses when land becomes available. Shortage of affordable housing in rural areas is not just impacting young families and older people. Key workers such as teachers, carers and agricultural workers, people who are essential for rural communities to thrive, are also being priced out of rural areas. The Almshouse Association is asking Government to make use of the Rural Exemption Scheme.

For those who like statistics:

- New National Housing Federation analysis identified that in England, between 2019 and 2022 social housing waiting lists in rural areas grew by 31%, compared with a 3% increase in urban areas. This means 46,318 more households in our countryside were waiting for social housing in 2022, compared with 2019. And those figures will be even higher today.
- Private rents have increased (while there are fewer properties available for private rent) and prices in some rural and coastal areas have risen at three times the national rate.
- Only 5,953 new homes for social rent were completed across England's rural communities over the same period (2019 to 2022), meaning local people are running out of housing options.

Policy and Engagement Update

National Planning Policy Framework:

In our mission to see almshouses recognised as the exemplar form of community housing, we firstly need almshouses to be recognised as proper affordable housing under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This would allow almshouse charities (those not Registered Social Housing providers) who are restricted by charity legislation to provide housing for those in need, to access Section 106 (S106) funds and cease to be charged a S106 levy for developing affordable homes.

Strategy: There is strong local and national support from all parties to see almshouses recognised as affordable housing in the NPPF guidance, however as charities we may need to provide greater assurance to Government that almshouses provide warm, safe, secure homes. This may require an accreditation in the form of a Charity Health Check.

Having undertaken a survey where members voted with an overwhelming majority (98%) to support our proposal, we have responded to a consultation from the Government and put forward our proposal for:

- almshouse charities to operate under a Code of Practice (based on The Almshouse Association Standards of Almshouse Management) that is appropriate and practical
- almshouse charities to operate under a Complaints Ombudsman Scheme that is proportionate to the charity model.

All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)

APPGs are currently restarting after standing down during the election. Although our own Almshouse APPG is a viable option, we have been asked to join other APPGs to help influence charity and older people's housing based on the success of the almshouse model. We are currently exploring all options.

Meetings

In the last few months Association CEO, Nick Phillips met with:

- The senior planning and housing team from The Welsh Assembly to discuss access to support for new build and refurbishment of our Welsh member charities and to confirm that almshouse charities operating under an almshouse Letter of Appointment and registered as almshouses DO NOT fall within the scope of the Rent Smart Wales programme.
- The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) to request lower fees for those members who are Registered Providers, that better fits with the scale of almshouse charities (this was subsequently rejected); ask for guidance on 'proportionality for returns' for small scale almshouse charities and to seek guidance on what form of accreditation would be supported for almshouse charities to be recognised by Government as proper affordable housing.
- The National Housing Federation (NHF) to discuss our approach to Government. The NHF supported our approach and made their own supportive request to ministers.

New website page for Registered Providers

Almshouse charities that are Registered Providers are required to adhere to more regulations and reporting than non-registered charities. The Almshouse Association has set up



a dedicated area on our website, to keep information applicable to Registered Providers only, all in one place. If you have not visited it yet, you will find the page in the [Guidance drop-down menu in the Members Area](#). If there is a particular topic you would like to see, please do get in touch with Member Services at AlmshouseSupport@almshouses.org

- The CEO of The Housing Ombudsman Scheme to seek support for almshouses to be recognised as affordable housing and discuss how the new complaints policy could work with the almshouse charity model. CEO, Richard Blakeway was very supportive and helpful in both matters.

The Almshouse Association has requested meetings with the newly named Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Matthew Pennycook MP, who was appointed Minister of State for the MHCLG in July.

Support for Almshouses Campaign Members sent over 100 letters to MPs asking for their support for the almshouse model, inviting them to visit almshouses and seeking proper recognition under S106. The Association will shortly be launching our direct approach to local government seeking support for almshouse charities in the community. **Registered Providers**

- The consultation on the Housing qualifications applicable to Registered Providers is still outstanding. We have made strong representation that almshouse trustees should be exempt and that smaller almshouses should be completely exempt.
- July 2024, the RSH published the annual review of its consumer regulation work for the year 1st April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- Aug 2024, the RSH rejected our request to lower the Registered Providers fees, confirming that the flat fee of £650 stands for all Registered Providers.

Please contact CEO, Nick Phillips on any Policy or Political matters via: nickphillips@almshouses.org

Checklist for trustees to ensure legal compliance as 'landlords'

All trustees of almshouses are considered 'landlords' in the eyes of the law. There are both legal requirements and best practice guidance that landlords should be following to comply with all relevant legislation and reporting to regulatory bodies. The list below is not exhaustive and should be used as general guidance only.

1-Gas Safety: All properties must have a gas safety check on each gas appliance/flue every 12 months or within 12 months of a new appliance being fitted. A copy of this certificate must be issued to existing tenants/residents within 28 days of the checks being completed and when new tenants/residents move in. All rooms containing a gas appliance must have a functioning carbon monoxide alarm.

2-Electrical Safety: An Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)

should be completed at least every five years and available to tenants/residents on request. All F1/C1/C2 codes should be rectified on-site, or within reasonable time frames. PAT testing should be carried out on any portable appliances in communal areas and on any appliances given to residents.

3-Asbestos Surveys: All properties that may contain asbestos within a communal area must be surveyed and managed. Where required, asbestos surveys should be carried out on properties before any works are carried out. An Asbestos Register should be compiled alongside a management plan.

4-Lift Safety: All lifts designed to carry people require a regular thorough inspection at least every six months, alongside periodic maintenance inspections, with remedial works monitored and repaired in a suitable timescale.

5-Water Hygiene: It is a legal requirement for landlords to carry out risk assessments on their properties to assess the potential risk of exposure to Legionella. This risk assessment must consider the domestic hot and cold-water systems, water tanks, water heaters and the water temperature. Domestic properties are generally considered 'low risk'.

6-Fire Safety: Fire Risk Assessments must be carried out on all communal areas and buildings containing sets of two or more dwellings. Fire compartmentation surveys and regular fire door inspections should be carried out. Fire alarm inspections and servicing must be carried out, alongside emergency lighting tests. Both systems should be tested for correct function on a weekly/monthly basis. All domestic dwellings must have a functioning smoke alarm.

... and advice on best practice

7-Energy Performance: Landlords must ensure all dwellings meet the minimum energy efficiency standard (E or above). Government targets are aiming for all rented properties to achieve an EPC of C or above by 2035. **NOTE:** In the case of almshouses, it has not yet been tested in court whether they are intended to be a part of this legislation and it could be argued that almshouses fall outside the scope of EPCs. However, in discussing almshouses with the Government, it would not be helpful to exclude ourselves from environmental responsibility.

8-Decent Homes Standard*: The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) has introduced new Consumer Standards with a focus on homes meeting the current Decent Homes Standards and

requires landlords that are Registered Providers to report compliance with this standard. All homes must also be free from serious hazards as defined under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. **9-Damp and Mould*:** Government targets have put in measures to ensure landlords are actively addressing damp and mould reports, with timescales in place for initial surveys, works raised and return visits to ensure the damp and mould has been remedied. The RSH will require Registered Providers to report on their reports and timescales.



* While these requirements have been specifically designed for Registered Providers by the RSH, The Almshouse Association believes it is good practice for all charities to implement processes and procedures that align with the intent of these requirements.

Wi-Fi project supports daily wellbeing

Throughout the Covid crisis and lockdown, the 47 residents of Municipal Charities, Stratford-upon-Avon, whose ages range from 60 to 99, were separated from family and friends and unable to take part in communal activities, resulting in social isolation and some mental health challenges.

Lockdown demonstrated just how important IT is for shopping, banking, prescriptions, etc., as well as staying in touch with family and friends. "We supported residents in setting up email addresses as well as offering training in using IT, social media and online health and fitness classes. Our two scheme managers were in telephone contact with residents throughout lockdown and the need for better internet access was highlighted. There were also requests for one-to-one IT tuition.

We consulted with a Social Telecoms Digital expert who put forward a proposal to introduce Wi-Fi into each resident's flat and our 'Wi-Fi for All' project was born. This covered 46 individual almshouse properties, a

communal room and our 'Warm Hub', as well as our office. Each resident would have their own Wi-Fi router and, once installed, free Wi-Fi would be available to current and future residents and visitors. We currently pay for residents' basic phone bills since we provide a free Lifeline service.

Providing Wi-Fi free has saved residents the cost of having their own broadband packages (between £240 and £360 a year each), in total approximately £10,000 a year. The overall project costs involved the supply and installation of Wi-Fi access points to ensure connectivity in each of the 46 homes, our office, communal room in Guild Cottages, as well as our Warm Hub in Guild Street. Now, not only can residents and families enjoy free access to the internet, when we hold our committee meetings, those not able to attend in person can 'zoom in'."

contributed by William Clemmey, CEO

To find out more about this project, please visit: www.municipal-charities.org.uk

Janet Till, Liversage Trust, Derby

Trustees and residents of Liversage Trust, Derby were deeply saddened by the passing of their former long-standing Chair, Janet Till earlier this year. She became trustee in 1990 and made history in 1993 by being the first female Chair of the Liversage Trust in its nearly 500-year existence. Janet held this significant position for 30 years, only stepping down in January 2023 due to ongoing health issues. Reflecting on her long tenure, she said it had been "a great honour, privilege, and a pleasure to have been the Chair of Derby's oldest charity." She expressed her gratitude to trustees for the "confidence that had been placed in her over this time". Although she was no longer Chair, Janet remained an active board member, attending meetings and supporting the Trust to ensure the continued provision of exemplary services to residents.

Throughout her service, Janet's achievements were numerous and her colleagues unanimously agreed that the Trust was in a much better position than when she first became involved. One of her most cherished accomplishments was the establishment of the Chair's Crisis Fund. This

initiative, part of the Trust's charitable giving, provides immediate emergency support to vulnerable individuals in times of crisis. Starting with a relatively small amount, the fund has grown to an annual budget of £20,000. In recognition of all Janet's achievements and as a fitting tribute to her legacy, the Trust announced that the fund would be renamed the Janet Till Crisis Fund in her honour. Andy Mellors, General Manager of the Trust, said: "Janet made an enormous contribution to the Trust and the communities we serve and we all owe her a huge debt of gratitude. We can't think of a more fitting way to honour her impact than by renaming the fund she set up in her name." The renaming of the Chair's Crisis Fund stands as a testament to Janet's unwavering commitment to helping those in need and ensures that her compassionate spirit and dedication to service will continue to inspire and support the community for years to come.



Digital touch screen combats residents' social isolation

A digital touch screen service that provides round-the-clock connectivity is being installed throughout Pickering and Ferens homes in the East Riding of Yorkshire. All residents will be able to take advantage of the many bene-



fits provided by PFH Connects' services, including tenancy information, reporting repairs, keeping up-to-date with local community events and enrichment activities to support a fulfilled and happy life.

Among the features is the option for residents to confirm their daily wellbeing through 'OKEachDay' which promotes human contact, reduces social isolation and can ultimately save lives. Residents' engagement has been the catalyst for bringing the project to life, with opportunities for everyone, predominantly over 60 years of age, to try out the digital device earlier this year and share their feedback. An estimated one in four older adults experience social isolation, which can have a serious impact on health and wellbeing. By offering human contact to even the hardest to reach customers, Pickering and Ferens can keep customer independence at the heart of their digital transformation ambitions.

Richard Walker, Home Services Director at Pickering and Ferens Homes (pictured above with a digital touch screen), said: "All residents deserve the chance to have a happy, healthy life and their wellbeing is the focal point to our services. We are delighted to partner with AlertaCall and provide greater connectivity across all our properties to ensure no one is left behind." Ongoing support to use the digital device, which is equipped with a SIM card and does not require broadband to function, has been made available to help residents achieve a seamless transition into their daily routine.

OBE for services to charity in East Yorks



Andrew Barber, Chief Executive Officer of Beverley Housing Trust, North Humberside, has been awarded an OBE (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in recognition of his contribution across the charitable sector in East Yorkshire.

Over the past 18 months, Andrew has driven significant advancements and created a culture of success and inclusivity at Beverley Housing Charity. Under his leadership, the charity has achieved notable milestones as it strives to provide exceptional services to

residents. This includes bringing forward the 'resident's voice', securing new offices with accessibility, and community space for residents. Before this, Andrew was CEO at HEY Smile Foundation for 14 years, where he led the development of the organisation which helps charities through connecting with and unlocking community assets. His dedication to the voluntary sector has not only strengthened the individual charities but also benefitted the wider community. This honour is for his work in the charitable sector of Hull and East Yorkshire, specifically during the Covid pandemic where he united the sector to help keep people safe and support a quicker recovery.

Retirement of Master and trustee at The Hospital of King James at Gateshead, Tyne and Wear

Residents, trustees and staff at The Hospital of King James, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, said farewell to their Master, the Reverend Margaret Mackay and a fellow trustee, Kevin Brown, at the end of June. They marked the occasion during one of the regular coffee mornings organised by the warden, Pippa Murray.



Rev Margaret Mackay with trustees and staff at The Hospital of King James.

A career in teaching

Margaret was ordained in 1914 after a career as a primary school teacher and in 1918 she was licensed as the Priest in charge of St James and St Bede Church and of St Edmund's in Gateshead. Chairing the Board of Trustees, she headed the charity's policy and administrative decision-making on the Hospital's accommodation and residential matters, where her hands-on and practical approach was much appreciated.

Kevin Brown, a successful property developer, joined the charity as a trustee in 2019 and has used his negotiating skills and knowledge of property and contacts in the building business for the benefit of the Hospital. He spear-headed the proposed new development with great enthusiasm. Fellow trustee and retired accountant, Alan James, said: "Kevin's expertise has been invaluable in navigating the charity through this large project to gain a Community Housing Fund grant for pre-planning costs with a view to redeveloping on a separate piece of land belonging to the Hospital".

The Almshouse Way

The Almshouse Way 1-day training course is being held at venues throughout the year throughout the country. Visit our website for latest details at:

www.almshouses.org/the-almshouse-way-1-day-course

THE
ALMSHOUSE
ASSOCIATION

PATRON
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The Almshouse Association
Billingbear Lodge
Maidenhead Road
Wokingham
Berks RG40 5RU
Tel: 01344 452922

email: almshousesupport@almshouses.org
web: www.almshouses.org
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D-Day 80 - 6 June 2024

"We are so proud to have Phil Sweet, who commanded a landing craft on D-Day, as one of our residents. He attended the Royal British Legion Service of Remembrance to mark D-Day 80 at the National Memorial Arboretum, on Thursday 6 June 2024, meeting Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, as well as being interviewed by Sky News."

William Clemmey, Chief Officer of Municipal Charities, Stratford-upon-Avon

Phil Sweet recalled some of his D-Day experiences in The Gazette, autumn 2023 issue no. 272, on page 14.



Remembrance Sunday focus

We are honoured to have member charities whose almshouses serve as memorials to various conflicts and even to specific war heroes.

One such is the Duke Of Cornwall's Light Infantry Association (DCLI). Men of the 2nd Battalion DCLI served in the Boer War in South Africa from



above: Duke of Cornwall's almshouses at Bodmin, Cornwall and (right) John Cornwell Almshouses in Hornchurch, Essex.

November 1899 until June 1903, during which time a total 13 officers and 143 soldiers were killed or died of disease. Money was raised by the people of Bodmin, Cornwall to build a war memorial to the DCLI soldiers lost. They decided to build two almshouses and both were dedicated as War Memorials.

The DCLI Regimental Homes are a pair of Cornish stone cottages built on a plot of land that had been part of a large garden, not far from the DCLI Barracks. Lady Rashleigh opened the homes in 1905 and the first of the many DCLI veterans and their families

who have occupied the cottages over the century moved in. The cottages sit in the middle of a generous plot surrounded by extensive gardens and provide accommodation for ex-service personnel to this day.

Another lasting memorial is the John Cornwell Almshouses in Hornchurch, Essex. They were established to honour the memory of a young naval hero, posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery in World War I, after his death at 16 years of age. His is a fascinating story. At just 15, John "Jack" Cornwell enlisted as a Boy



Seaman Second Class, a rank for young recruits under 18. He died in the Battle of Jutland in 1916 whilst serving aboard HMS Chester. Despite being severely wounded, he stayed at his post as sightsetter and was found, still standing on the deck, surrounded by the bodies of his fallen comrades. Cornwell's loyalty and devotion, despite his fatal injuries, represented the highest ideals of duty and bravery. His death prompted a huge upswell of patriotic feeling and donations

Almshouses stand as a lasting tribute to servicemen and women

came flooding in. Almshouses were chosen as a fitting tribute to his memory as they embody the ideals of duty, steadfast support and loyalty. In 1924, the John Cornwell VC Memorial Homes were established to house "needy disabled and/or infirm former sailors and Royal Marines up to and including the rate or rank of Warrant Officer, and their families".

The layout of the almshouse and paths are designed to commemorate the shape of the Victoria Cross, so from above the design is striking. The Homes are now managed by the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust which provides around £3m every

year for everyday items and regular charitable payments to beneficiaries who find themselves in need.

The almshouses also play a role in keeping Cornwell's memory alive, with residents and visitors alike reminded of his extraordinary story. Both these sets of homes, at Bodmin and Hornchurch, serve as a physical and enduring memorial, ensuring their legacies continue to inspire future generations.

Jo Williamson, Almshouse Association Charity Support Officer

The Almshouses Gazette

From January 2025, The Almshouses Gazette will be produced three times a year, in spring, summer and winter. Our website and e-bulletins remain essential sources for the latest and most important information related to almshouses. If you have not registered on our website, or signed up to receive e-bulletins, please visit www.almshouses.org click on 'website registration' from the Members login menu, or call us on 01344 452922.

