**Maintenance Plan**

**Almshouse Association Template**

Trustees should consider producing and regularly reviewing a maintenance plan. The plan should allow for regular inspection of the charity’s buildings and other property and ensure that a maintenance record is retained. Trustees can use an external organisation or individual to help produce the plan.

**Inspection/Testing**

**Monthly**

**Fire and security alarms** (unless connected to a central control that is responsible for maintenance).

It is recommended that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors need to have batteries checked regularly, preferably on a monthly basis. Trustees may wish to remind residents that this needs to be carried out.

**Quarterly**

**Electrical Installation**

Electrical installations require specialised knowledge and appropriate inspection. Trustees can, during visits to residents, observe the following:

* light pendant or equipment flexes that are frayed or perished
* multiple adapters on power points
* long trailing leads (likely to give rise to “hot spots” or scalds from kettles) as well as presenting a trip hazard
* a system which regularly blows a fuse or trips a circuit breaker.

Fixed wiring tests should be carried out by a certified person in all properties at intervals of no more than 5 years.

**Fire Protection**

Fire protection systems in communal areas, i.e., fire detectors, bells and sounders, must be tested at least every three months and ideally every month. The associated battery and electrical systems should be inspected annually. These tests and inspections are best carried out through a maintenance contract. Records of tests should be kept in the Fire Precautions Logbook.

If systems are connected to a central control point, the operator/contractor will have their own maintenance procedures. This should nonetheless be confirmed in the contract.

**Security**

Trustees can carry out regular quarterly checks on windows and door locks to ensure they are in good working order. Further checks may include boundary walls, fences, hedges and gates as well as communal entrances.

Trustees may also wish to join a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in association with the local police. Electronic security and surveillance systems should be the subject of a maintenance contract and operate within the current legislative code. Note: if installing CCTV, the charity must register with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) <https://ico.org.uk/>.

**Half Yearly**

**Roofs**

Inspect in September and April. Look for slipped, broken or missing roof slates or tiles, lifting or missing metal or mortar flashings and, where easily accessible, holes or splits in flat roofs. Authorise remedial work immediately to avoid damage from leaks.

**Lifts and stair lifts**

Trustees have a statutory duty to maintain lifts and stair lifts in a safe working condition. The Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) provide the regulatory framework.

Such equipment should be covered by suitable insurance and a maintenance contract. The contractor should be able to provide advice on safety, emergency procedures and [training (See Standards of Almshouse Management (SAM)) Chapter 7 -Risk Management – section 7.8)](https://www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouse-management-guidance-manual/)

**Lifting equipment**

[(See Standards of Almshouse Management (SAM) Chapter 7 – Risk Management – section 7.8)](https://www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouse-management-guidance-manual/)

**Legionella Checks**

Water temperatures need to be checked, and a dated record kept. A legionella risk assessment should have identified any areas that need further attention. Residents should be reminded to ensure that showers are flushed through before use if a dwelling is vacant for an extended period. Legionella can also be present in outside equipment that causes a spray (aerosol) particularly during warm periods or when left standing for some time. [(See Standards of Almshouse Management (SAM) Risk Management – section 7.9 -Utilities – 7.9.4 – Water.)](https://www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouse-management-guidance-manual/)

**Annually**

**Portable appliance (equipment) testing (PAT)**

Electrical equipment supplied by the charity should be PAT tested regularly. [(See Chapter 7 – Risk Management – section 7.9 – Utilities – 7.9.3 – Electricity.)](https://www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouse-management-guidance-manual/)

The charity should consider carrying out portable appliance testing on all of the residents’ personal electrical equipment and the cost of this would be a legitimate expense for the charity to bear.

**Gutters and downpipes**

Employ a recommended local contractor. Smaller firms are likely to be the most economical to do this. Make the inspection in the autumn, after leaf fall, and ensure the following work is carried out:

* **Gutters**: Clear all leaves and debris, replace missing or defective wire outlet guards, test for leaks and report on fixing and condition of gutters and effective discharge of water
* **Downpipes**: Clear rainwater heads and rod through pipes. Report on fixing and condition of pipes and heads
* **Gullies and “shoes”** (access points with sealed plates): Clear out gullies or shoes and rod adjoining drains. Report on condition of gully surrounds and drains, especially if the latter are blocked. Fit gully covers where none exist.

Authorise remedial work immediately.

**Masonry**

Inspect condition of masonry and pointing and be alert for cracking of clay soil near building and nearby large trees. Remedial work exceeding minor pointing will require professional advice, particularly for listed buildings.

**Joinery, metal windows and glazing**

Check condition of decorations and putties and carry out regular redecoration, even if only to limited areas, to maintain good condition. Employ a suitably skilled glazier to repair leaded lights and specialist glaziers for “stained glass”. The latter will usually require professional advice. Thick paint layers should be stripped and redecorated.

**Interiors**

It is recommended that the Clerk/Trustees/Scheme Manager visit residents in their dwellings at least every 6 months, having made an appointment to do so. This gives an opportunity to check that the interior is in a good state of repair and that residents are coping.

Check decorations and be alert for rising damp, especially in historic buildings. If dampness is present, trustees must request specialist professional advice. The cause must be removed following correct diagnosis. Similarly, if plaster is damaged in an historic building, request specialist advice. Appropriate porous plaster, based on lime putty, must be used so that damp can evaporate. Modern gypsum plasters are unsuitable.

Dampness caused by leaking roofs, valley or parapet gutters may simply require a tile or slate to be replaced. Where the cause is less obvious trustees should always request professional assistance. As in the case of rising damp, such problems require accurate diagnosis and care to ensure that the residual dampness will not lead to dry rot, structural weakness or affect the electrical installation.

**Gardens, boundary walls and fences**

Boundary and garden structures are important and need regular inspection and maintenance. This should include hedges and trees.

Bottoms and tops of walls are always worst affected by rising and falling damp and rain respectively. Take special note of these areas.

**Mortar pointing, brick and stone**

A limited covering of climbing plants on a wall can be attractive but take immediate action to kill ivy by cutting the main stem at ground level and allowing the remainder to die. Do not pull green ivy off walls as its aerial roots will damage mortar and soft bricks.

If retaining walls fracture or start to lean, seek immediate professional advice. Damaged fencing and boundary walls need to be addressed quickly.

Budget an annual amount for the maintenance of boundary structures.

**Paving, un-adopted paving and un-adopted roads**

Uneven paving can cause accidents and may involve trustees in litigation. Inspect at least annually and arrange for any remedial work at the earliest opportunity.

**External Lighting**

Ensure that paths and paved areas are well lit at night. Consult an electrician and an architect if mounting lights on buildings that are historically valuable or Listed. Reference will need to be made to the Conservation Officer at the local authority.

**Service Installations**

**Foul drains and septic tanks**

Arrange for a contractor to investigate inspection chambers and the drainage system and provide a report. Ensure that cesspools are emptied frequently and inspected annually to meet trustees’ responsibility to the environment. Septic tanks are small sewage treatment plants but may still leak and need to be cleared of sludge annually.

**Water supply**

Ensure that stop cock boxes are kept visible and particularly where these are fire hydrants for larger groups of almshouses.

Check WC and urinal systems for overflowing, consequent water wastage and damage to walls. Kitchen sinks, basins, baths, showers and washing machines should also be checked regularly.

**Heating**

Regular maintenance is essential. Appoint a specialist plumber or heating engineer. Arrange for gas, oil, solid fuel boilers and associated plant to be inspected annually each summer (a statutory requirement). Instruct the engineer to report any defective or worn plant so that maintenance can be planned.

**Gas safety**

Trustees have a statutory duty to ensure that all gas appliances and flues have an annual safety check by a Gas Safe Registered gas installer. A record of each safety check must be kept for 2 years and a copy of the safety check issued to all existing and new residents.

**Keep up-to-date**

Trustees should periodically consult their architect, building surveyor or engineer about new developments in building technology, statutory regulations and on the life expectancy of boilers and other plant.