



Royal visit to remember

On a beautiful spring morning in April, The Richmond Charities proudly welcomed **HRH The Duke of Gloucester** to officially open their newest development – **The Elizabeth Twining Almshouses** in Mitre Mews. Designed to the highest Passivhaus standards and rooted in centuries of charitable tradition, the visit marked a special celebration of innovation, community and heritage in the heart of Richmond.

"It was a great honour to welcome HRH The Duke of Gloucester, who praised the Charity's leadership and showed real interest in the design, recognising it as the latest chapter in the Charity's 400-year tradition of providing quality homes for people in need."

Nick Phillips,
Association CEO

See full story on page 5



We are moving!

With great excitement, we begin a new chapter in the history of The Almshouse Association.

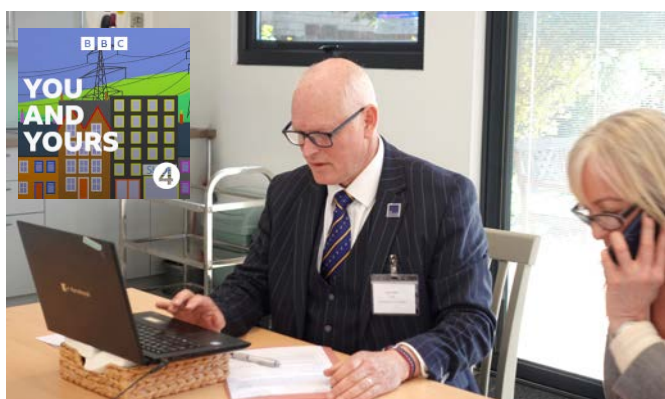
For some time now, we have been searching for a new home. We hold our long-established offices at Billingbear in such high regard, but they no longer meet the needs of our growing team and our members. The space is too small and inefficiently designed, and its remote location continues to present challenges.

Billingbear, however, has been more than just an office – it was a generous gift from the visionary almshouse champion, Leonard Hackett, and his family.

In addition to our office, they entrusted us with their family home next door, which has provided a valuable source of rental income for the Association over the years. Their generosity has been a cornerstone of our journey, making our departure from Billingbear bittersweet.

After exploring nearly 40 potential locations, we are delighted to have secured a remarkable new office in the heart of Windsor, just 200 yards from the Castle.

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Association on BBC Radio 4

The Association was delighted when CEO, Nick Phillips was invited to discuss almshouses with Winifred Robinson for 'You and Yours' on BBC Radio 4 on 2 April 2025.

Nick was joined by Catherine, a resident of the Saffron Walden almshouses, and Alison Pooley, an Associate Professor at the University of Suffolk. Together, they provided a comprehensive view of almshouses today, their crucial role in offering affordable community housing for local people in need and how vital it is for us to build more.

See more on how The Almshouse Association has been serving its members on pages 12–13



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S COMMENT

A proud tradition of service: why almshouse trustees make a difference

As I left a recent meeting with a senior MP, his words stayed with me,

"My final thought that you must hold is – don't change the character of almshouses. Don't get drawn into becoming a Housing Association. The fact that your members are charities is why residents and trustees love them. Don't change!"

These powerful words came after a lengthy discussion where I advocated for almshouses to be exempt from Selective Licensing charges and to become recognised in planning terms as Affordable Housing.

Although Housing Associations are essential in delivering millions of affordable homes to those in need, their approach to housing often differs significantly from the traditional almshouse model. We were entrusted with managing a charity that had deteriorated under the care of a Housing Association and this served as an example of the challenges that can emerge when the unique character and requirements of almshouses are not fully understood.

It is, of course, important to acknowledge that one example doesn't reflect the practices of all Housing Associations; we've had the pleasure of working with community-focused organisations that genuinely understand and uphold the ethos of good housing, fostering respectful, resident-centred relationships on behalf of the trustees. Unfortunately, these are the exceptions. More often, we find ourselves stepping in to support charities that have struggled under the oversight of more commercially-focused Housing Associations.

I recently had the privilege of speaking with a CEO who had experience leading both almshouses and Housing Associations. When I asked him about the key difference between the two, he paused thoughtfully before replying,

"Almshouses are focused on residents – their wellbeing, their comfort, their needs. Housing Associations, on the other hand, are focused on houses – their buildings."

This is the fundamental distinction. As trustees of almshouse charities, you embody this philosophy every day, placing residents at the heart of all you do.

That's why, when considering a partnership with a Housing Association for property management, I urge you to look beyond the upkeep of the buildings. Are they committed to upholding the spirit of care that defines the almshouse tradition? If they are, that's a partnership worth nurturing. If not, you should thoughtfully assess whether such a relationship truly aligns with the values of the almshouse movement, because, ultimately, trustees remain responsible.

Almshouses are far more than just a form of housing – they are living charities, rooted in the oldest tradition of charitable housing in the UK. As one MP wisely put

it, "Almshouses must remain charities, with residents at their heart." At a time when the almshouse name is gaining renewed recognition, it's more important than ever to take pride in the legacy you uphold.

The almshouse model is defined by its people-first approach. It's this unwavering commitment to residents and not just buildings that sets us apart.

If you ever find yourself facing challenges; whether it's attracting new trustees, interpreting evolving policies, or navigating complex legislation – please remember that our team at the Association is always here to help. Our role is to support you in staying true to the core values of your charity; caring for residents and preserving the long and proud tradition of almshouses.

Let's continue to champion the spirit of the almshouse movement, ensuring that residents remain at the heart of everything we do. Be proud of the charity you represent and, together, let's continue to honour this extraordinary legacy.

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive

Almshouses are far more than just a form of housing – they are living charities, rooted in the oldest tradition of charitable housing in the UK

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A new chapter for The Almshouse Association

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Our new office in Windsor comprises two 3,000 sq. ft. properties that require refurbishment, with one of the buildings being a detached office within the grounds of the main office, offering a significant future rental income. We were fortunate to acquire the site ahead of auction, allowing us the opportunity to reimagine the space and, with some remedial work, secure a tenant for the adjoining building.

Excitement – with a hint of sadness

Leaving Billingbear feels like saying goodbye to a significant part of our history, particularly our connection to Leonard Hackett. However, we are proud to honour his legacy by naming our new headquarters 'Leonard Hackett House', with the adjacent office to be known as 'The Keep'. The sale of the Billingbear site, including both the office and house, will help finance our move, ensuring a strong and sustainable future for the Association.

This transition represents an incredible opportunity. The new property will allow us to increase our rental income by 400%, helping to secure the Association's financial stability for future decades. While we cannot know for certain what Leonard Hackett would have thought, we hope he would see this as a progressive and necessary step for the Association that he helped to shape.

Renovations are now underway, with completion expected by the end of September. We will keep you updated on our progress and look forward to welcoming our members to Leonard Hackett House in the near future.

Over and underinsurance explained – and why it matters

Article contributed by Brown & Brown Insurance Services (previously Higos). almshouses.portfolio@BBrown.com, tel: 01458 675525.

Underinsurance is on the rise. Unfortunately, it often only becomes apparent when a claim is made – by then, it's too late to avoid the costly consequences.

What is overinsurance and underinsurance?

- **Overinsurance:** You're paying for more cover than you need.
- **Underinsurance:** Your cover is insufficient and won't fully cover a claim.

Data from the Rebuild Cost Assessment Survey shows that over 80%* of properties are underinsured, while 13% are overinsured. Both scenarios can result in reduced payouts after property damage, exposing you to the financial shortfall known as the dreaded 'Average Clause'.

What is the 'Average Clause'?

If you're underinsured, your insurer may reduce the claim payout in proportion to the level of

underinsurance. This could result in a reduction of thousands – or even millions – of pounds from your expected settlement.

EXAMPLE: THE AVERAGE CLAUSE IN ACTION

If an almshouse is insured for **£500,000**, but the actual rebuild cost is **£1,000,000**, you're only covered for **50%** of what's needed. In the event of a fire or major damage, the insurer may only pay **50% of the total cost**, leaving your charity to cover the rest.

Why are almshouses often underinsured?

- **Market value vs rebuild cost:** Insuring for sale value instead of actual rebuild cost.
- **Index linking limitations:** Doesn't cover site clearance, surveys, fees, or regional trends.
- **Automatic renewals:** Annual policy renewals without reassessment

In Memory of Richard Knipe "A great friend and much loved champion of the almshouse movement"

We are deeply saddened to share the passing of Richard Knipe, a dedicated champion of the almshouse movement, who died on 27 February 2025.

Richard joined The Almshouse Association in 1999, serving as Trustee, Director, and later as Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Subcommittee. He was also a valued and longstanding Clerk of The Spalding Town Husbands almshouse charity.

A solicitor in Spalding from 1973 to 2012, Richard brought extensive legal and financial expertise to the Association, offering wise counsel guided by a strong moral compass. He was highly respected and deeply committed to almshouse charities and their residents.

Beyond his professional life, Richard was a keen sportsman, enjoying hockey, cricket and later, golf. In retirement, he pursued travel, walking holidays and ballroom dancing.

Above all, Richard was a dear friend to many. He will be greatly missed. Our thoughts are with his wife, Olivia, and his children, Matthew and Stephanie.



miss critical updates.

- **Mid-term changes:** Extensions or renovations not reported to the insurer.
- **Outdated valuations:** Not using a qualified building surveyor for accurate cost estimates.
- **Business interruption:** Underestimating how long recovery can take – sometimes up to 24 months.
- **Cost-cutting pressures:** Economic challenges, including COVID-19 and inflation, may lead to reduced cover.

* Data derived from 26,861 Rebuild Cost Assessments completed between Sep '21 and Aug '22.

In conclusion, regular, thorough reviews of your almshouse charity insurance are imperative, particularly when any changes are made to the site, ensuring the correct cover is in place in the event it is needed. This approach will also give peace of mind to trustees, staff, visitors and residents.

1. Spring Statement highlights

On 26 March, Chancellor Rachel Reeves outlined economic plans with significant implications:

Welfare Reform:

- Health-related Universal Credit for new claimants will not rise with inflation until after 2030.
- Payments for existing claimants frozen at £97/week until 2030, with a top-up for severe conditions.
- Standard Universal Credit allowance to rise by £14/week (instead of £15) by 2030.
- From November 2026, Personal Independence Payments eligibility criteria will become stricter.

Social Housing:

An additional £2 billion will be invested in social and affordable housing through the Plan for Change. The Almshouse Association is working with Homes England and Almshouse Consortium Limited to maximise benefits for members.

2. Wage and National Insurance changes (from April 2025):

National Living Wage: Increased by 6.7% to £12.21/hour

National Minimum Wage:

- 18–20-year-olds: £10/hour (+16%)
- Under 18s: £7.55/hour (+18%)
- Apprenticeship rate also increased.

National Insurance for Employers:

- Rate increased from 13.8% to 15%
- Payment threshold reduced to £5,000/year (from £9,100)
- Employment Allowance raised to £10,500
- Large employers can now also claim this allowance (previous £100k NIC liability limit removed).

3. Heat Networks (Market Framework Regulations) 2025

Charities operating communal heating systems must prepare to comply. Key information is available via the Association's [website](#). Regulations come into effect next year.

4. Renters' Reform Bill

This Bill mainly concerns Assured Tenancies but some areas, like Awaab's Law and pet agreements, will also affect licence holders. We will keep members updated as the bill progresses.

5. Local Plans and almshouses

Local authorities are updating Local Plans, which guide future housing developments. Almshouses can be included in these plans. Members are encouraged to check with local councils and advocate for almshouse inclusion.

6. Engaging with your MP

New guidance and a draft letter are available on our [website](#) to help members invite their local MP for a visit. These visits are an opportunity to showcase the value of almshouse communities.

7. Affordable Homes Programme – new funding

An extra £300 million has been added to the Affordable Homes Programme to support 2,800 new homes (over half for social rent). Only Registered Providers can access the funding, which must be used on projects starting by 30 September 2025 and completing by 31 March 2026.

8. Right to Buy: Almshouse exemption confirmed

On 11 March 2025, in response to a question from Sarah Gibson MP, the Government reaffirmed that almshouses remain exempt from the Right to Buy scheme. This ensures charitable housing stock remains protected.

9. Recent consultations

The Association has submitted responses to key government consultations, including:

- Supported Housing
- EPC Ratings of Private Rented Homes
- Charities SORP (see point 10)

Updates will be shared as outcomes are published.

10. Charity Accounting changes – new SORP

In preparing charity financial statements, trustees are required to follow the methods and principles of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). This is periodically updated to reflect changes to UK Accounting Standard FRS 102. Changes include:

- **Lease Accounting:** Most leases (e.g., property, vehicles) will now appear on the balance sheet, increasing reported assets and liabilities.
- **Revenue Recognition:** New model changes how and when income is recorded.

While impact will vary, trustees should discuss potential effects with their independent accountants or auditors. The revised SORP takes effect in January 2026.

We're pleased to welcome **Alice Morrey** as our new Policy and Engagement Manager. Alice brings experience from the University of Bath, where she supported research and political engagement.

"Thank you to everyone who has made me feel so welcome in my new role. Please feel free to contact me about policy, governance, or political matters at alicemorrey@almshouses.org."



HRH The Duke of Gloucester at The Richmond Charities new almshouses

Continued from front page

The Charity's new Passivhaus almshouses are nestled in a quiet corner of Richmond, seamlessly blending into their surroundings despite their contemporary look. Their thoughtful architecture ensures both sustainability and harmony with the local landscape.

HRH The Duke of Gloucester began his visit by discussing the site's layout and design with architect Clive Chapman before stepping inside 'No.4' to meet residents and learn about their lives within the almshouse community. Stephen Twining, a descendant of the renowned Twining family, shared insights into his family's history, enriching the occasion with a sense of legacy and tradition.

The visit concluded with a warm gathering of residents, trustees and staff in a marquee set within the gardens of Church Estate Almshouses. In a fitting tribute to the occasion, His Royal Highness unveiled a beautifully crafted commemorative plaque (see front cover) and was presented with a hand-painted depiction of the almshouses by local artist Matthew Wright, who has lovingly captured all of Richmond Charities' estates in his artwork.

Everyone at the charity expressed how delighted they were to meet HRH The Duke of Gloucester. It was a memorable occasion that will be cherished for years to come.

Photos from the day can be found on our website at: www.almshouses.org/news/hrh-receives-warm-welcome-at-richmond-charities-new-almshouses



April 2025 – The Richmond Charities welcome a very distinguished guest to their newest development – The Elizabeth Twining Almshouses in Mitre Mews, Richmond.

The New 'Passivhaus' almshouses in Richmond

Officially named The Elizabeth Twining Almshouses, the new wheelchair-friendly dwellings replace an underutilised garage site owned by Richmond Charities, providing much-needed new homes in a sustainable location adjacent to other almshouse facilities.

They have been designed as net-zero carbon and certified as 'Passivhaus' with excellent airtightness, high levels of insulation and low heating needs, keeping energy use to a minimum. **The Passivhaus Designers, Clive Chapman Architects, carried out energy modelling at the end of the construction stage and estimated the running costs for heating, hot water and lighting to be £123 per year for each dwelling.**

Comfortable indoor temperatures will be maintained through underfloor heating utilising ground source heat pumps, which, together with highly efficient mechanical ventilation and heat recovery, further reduce energy demand and improve air quality. Photovoltaic solar panels on the roof provide free electricity, stored in individual batteries for each home, and large roof lights to both the open-plan living spaces and wet rooms allow for natural daylight and positive solar gain.

Set within a conservation area, the site is adjacent to late-Victorian houses, many of which are *Buildings of Townscape Merit*. The scheme responded to this historic setting with a sensitive, small-scale, single-storey terrace design, respectful to neighbouring buildings' views and character. A similar colour and texture of brick was used, together with flush-brushed pointing, to further relate to the façades of the Victorian architecture.

Juliet Ames-Lewis, Chief Executive of The Richmond Charities, said,

"We are delighted with our new wheelchair accessible almshouses which have been built to Passivhaus standards, the highest level of energy efficiency accreditation. There are many people over the age of 65 in the borough wishing to join our community, and we have prioritised those with the highest mobility need for these new almshouses. These energy-efficient homes will provide financial security and sustained wellbeing for current and future residents."





Trustee duties and incorporation

Contributed by Joanna Blackman for Wrigleys Solicitors LLP. joanna.blackman@wrigleys.co.uk

Trustees of unincorporated almshouse charities often worry about personal liability. While acting reasonably and in the charity's best interests reduces the trustees' exposure to risk, some charities choose to incorporate to provide greater protection (for example, because they own land or employ staff). But what does this change mean for trustees' legal responsibilities?

Trustee duties still apply

Joanna Blackman, a partner at Wrigleys Solicitors LLP, outlines the ongoing legal duties trustees must uphold, even when a charity becomes incorporated. Contrary to common belief, these duties continue irrespective of the new legal structure.

Six core legal duties

Charity trustees must:

1. Ensure the charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit

Trustees must know, understand, and act within their charity's stated purposes, ensuring its activities benefit the public in furtherance of those purposes (especially around eligibility criteria for almshouse accommodation).

2. Comply with the charity's governing document

Trustees must follow (and regularly review) the charity's governing

document, and stay informed about relevant laws and regulations.

3. Act in the charity's best interests

Trustees must make informed decisions on what is best for the charity, avoid conflicts of interest and loyalty, and only benefit from the charity if properly authorised.

4. Manage the charity's resources responsibly

Trustees are responsible for the charity's assets, and they must put in place proper safeguards to protect those assets and ensure they can only be used to advance the charity's purposes.

5. Act with reasonable care and skill

Trustees must apply their knowledge and experience to make well-informed decisions and seek advice when needed.

6. Ensure the charity is accountable

Trustees must meet reporting requirements, maintain transparency, and implement clear procedures for delegated authority and oversight.

Further detail is available in the Charity Commission's guide *The essential trustee (CC3)*.

Trustee Protection and Incorporation

The Charity Commission is clear that trustees are not expected to be perfect, but they are expected to do their best to comply with

their duties. Charity law generally protects trustees who have acted honestly and reasonably, although trustees can still be held personally liable irrespective of their charity's legal structure if they have acted dishonestly, negligently, or recklessly.

Whilst incorporation might typically be achieved by transferring assets and activities to a newly formed charitable company or CIO, the situation is often complicated for almshouse charities by the existence of permanently endowed property (e.g. almshouses, or investments held on trusts permitting only the income to be spent). Thanks to a recent change in charity law, incorporation by the appointment of a sole corporate trustee is now coming back into focus as a viable option for charity trustees, particularly where charity property needs to remain on its existing trusts.

Key takeaways:

- Incorporation can reduce trustee liability.
- Trustee duties remain unaffected, irrespective of the legal structure of the charity.
- It is essential to take legal advice to properly understand your incorporation options.

This article offers general guidance and is not a complete statement of the law. Legal details are correct at the time of publication.



Rethinking Permanent Endowment Funds

Contributed by Chris Hook, Partner in the Charities team at Muckle LLP. www.muckle-llp.com

As of June 2023, the Charities Act 2022 introduced greater flexibility for charities, including almshouse charities, in how they manage permanent endowment funds.

These changes include relaxed restrictions on expending permanent endowment and a new power to borrow against it, offering fresh opportunities for trustees to further their charitable purposes.

What is Permanent Endowment?

Permanent endowment refers to assets (such as land or investments) that must be held rather than spent. There are two main types:

- **Investment permanent endowment:** Capital must be preserved, but income generated can be used to further the charity's purposes.
- **Functional permanent endowment:** Assets must be used for a specific purpose, such as almshouses.

Many almshouse charities hold both types.

What's changed?

1. Spending Permanent Endowment Funds

Previously, spending capital from investment permanent endowment was possible but tightly restricted. Now:

- **Smaller funds** (under £25,000): Trustees may resolve to spend all

or part of the fund if doing so better supports the charity's purposes than retaining the capital.

- **Larger funds:** Trustees may also spend capital, subject to the Charity Commission's consent, but must submit a resolution and their reasoning to the Charity Commission. If the Commission does not object within 60 days, it is considered to have given consent.

2. Borrowing from Permanent Endowment Funds

Charities may now borrow up to 25% of the value of their investment permanent endowment without Charity Commission approval, provided:

- their governing document does not prohibit it,
- a **viable repayment plan** (within 20 years) is in place, and
- trustees are satisfied it is in the charity's best interest.

3. Social Investment

Charities using a **total return investment approach** (treating capital gains as income) may now use investment permanent endowment to make **social investments**, even if the expected financial return is low or negative.

Note: These powers apply only to investment permanent endowment. The law around functional endowment, such as selling or

mortgaging almshouse property, is more complex and usually requires specialist legal advice.

What this means for almshouse charities

The changes offer greater flexibility. Trustees might consider using these powers to:

- liquidate part of an underperforming fund to meet rising costs or fund new projects.
- borrow from endowment rather than fully spending it, maintaining long-term assets while addressing short-term needs.

However, caution is vital. Reducing endowment capital means fewer assets and less future income

Trustees must:

- follow the Charity Commission's guidance,
- obtain professional advice, and
- carefully document their decisions, especially if the charity later struggles to repay borrowed funds or meet its objectives.

A Positive Shift

These reforms provide almshouse charities with more responsive tools to manage their permanent endowment funds. When used responsibly, they can help ensure long-term sustainability while meeting the evolving needs of residents and communities.

Good practice in Safeguarding

Contributor: Leah Jones, Partner at Browne Jacobson LLP. leah.jones@brownejacobson.com

Charity law requires trustees to take reasonable steps to protect people who come into contact with their charities. For almshouses, this will, of course, include residents, employees and volunteers, but will also include a wider category of those who come into contact with the charity in other ways, e.g. visitors, private tenants of investment properties and so on. This wide interpretation of the duty to safeguard means that trustees need to take their obligations seriously and ensure their policies and processes are fit for purpose.

What is the risk?

There is a wide range of risk and harm which should be considered, ranging from sexual harassment and sexual or physical abuse to self-neglect, emotional abuse,

bullying, abuse of trust, financial mismanagement and discrimination. A poor culture within the charity, allowing for poor behaviour and a lack of accountability, can in itself be a safeguarding risk which should be addressed.

Considering your risk is the first step to putting in place appropriate, fit-for-purpose and relevant policies and processes for your charity.

What needs to be done?

Policies and procedures - You need to make sure your policies and processes are clear on how you will:

- protect people from undue harm
- make sure people can raise safeguarding concerns
- handle allegations or incidents
- respond, including reporting to relevant authorities

Importantly, policies and processes should not just be a document which is prepared and then not considered until an issue arises. Your charity needs to 'live' your policy, and all trustees and those working for the charity need to be familiar with the contents and know how to apply them in the context of their roles. Policies need to be reviewed regularly, as well as responsively and be publicly available.

Vulnerable people – Children/vulnerable adults require additional consideration. Almshouse residents are often elderly or otherwise in a vulnerable category. They may be accessing support through social services. Working together and collaborating with the relevant local authority is important for those residents with needs for care and support.

Your volunteers and employees – DBS checks may be required for certain positions. If they are not required, but

there remains contact with vulnerable adults, then a risk assessment process should be in place to ensure that risks are identified and mitigated.

Your charity needs to have a clear Code of Conduct setting out your charity's culture and values and how people in your charity should behave. Ensure staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training and regularly evaluate this to make sure it is current and relevant.

Everyone working for you must be confident in identifying signs of safeguarding concerns and know what to do, understanding when and how to share information appropriately and proportionately to make sure the individual at risk is supported.



ALMSHOUSES IN THE NEWS

Our members are doing a fantastic job of raising the profile of almshouses. Hardly a day goes by without seeing an inspiring almshouse story. Here are just a few:



Derelict stables reborn as almshouses

Four new almshouses were officially opened in Melton Mowbray at a special event, attended by Almshouse Association trustee, Tricia Scouller, thanks to the Hudson's and Storer's Charities. The homes were created from a long-derelict stable block adjacent to the historic Bedehouse almshouses, originally built in 1640.

The conversion, made possible through a generous endowment, fulfils a longstanding vision to expand housing and create a peaceful courtyard garden for residents – accessed through the original carriage arch, untouched for centuries.

Full story: www.meltontimes.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/historic-stables-converted-into-new-almshouses-for-melton-residents-4906118

Two almshouses shortlisted for RIBA Regional Design Awards

■ **Appleby Blue in Bermondsey**, designed by Witherford Watson Mann for United Saint Saviour's Charity, has been shortlisted for a RIBA London Award. The project, already a 2024 National Housing Design and HAPP! winner, reflects growing interest in inclusive, age-friendly housing.

■ In the East region, **Dovehouse Court Almshouses in Cambridge**, designed by Mole Architects for Girton Town Charity.



Derbyshire Dales District Council shortlisted for the prestigious Housing Innovation Awards 2025 for its almshouse project – the renovation of the Anthony Gell and Anthony Bunting Almshouse Charity. You can read all about their build in their case study at: www.almshouses.org/news/historic-derbyshire-almshouse-secures-section-106-funding/

What's it like growing up in the 'best place to live' in the UK?

Praised by judges for its "knockout historic looks" and "exploding foodie scene", Saffron Walden in Essex has been named the best place to live in the UK by *The Sunday Times* and includes comments from Peter Gibson, a trustee of the King Edward VI Almshouses in Saffron Walden raising awareness among young people about the housing service they offer.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3vw0w1p907o

Inside the historic almshouses in Chester and Nantwich

A great feature article in Cheshire Life magazine on two historic almshouses – in Chester, the Bluecoat almshouses, founded in the early 1600s, and Nantwich's Beam Street almshouses, dating back to the 17th century. Both sites reflect the enduring value of almshouses: historic buildings offering dignity, safety, and a true sense of belonging.

You can read the article at: www.greatbritishlife.co.uk/magazines/cheshire/24884488/inside-historic-almshouses-chester-nantwich/

Historic almshouse inspires new youth play

Ipswich's Tooley's Court, founded in 1550 to house the poor, sparked a new play by youth theatre group Red Rose Chain. "Tuppence A Week" brought the almshouse's story to life on stage.

Visit: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4ge4lp2j07o



250 Years of Walton Charity Almshouses

2024 marked a remarkable milestone for the Walton Charity – 250 years since their first recorded almshouse.

While the Surrey almshouses date back to 1774, the charity itself has an even longer history, with origins stretching back over 800 years making it older than the Magna Carta!

The origins of Mayfield

The Charity's original almshouse was built in 1774 on the site now known as Mayfield. By 1870, it was recorded that "as long as memory and tradition extend, the Mayfield site had been used as a property devoted to charitable uses."

At that time, Mayfield housed 14 residents: one widower, two married couples, six widows and three unmarried women, elected by the local vicar and able to live rent-free for life – a powerful demonstration of the Charity's long-standing commitment to community care.

Evolving through the centuries

Between 1902 and 1912, the original buildings were replaced with four new blocks of cottages, reducing the total dwellings to nine and adding a caretaker's lodge. A major transformation came in 1966, when the Edwardian cottages gave way to a new building – the first wing of the current Mayfield complex featuring 28 flats, a warden's residence, communal spaces, gardens, and charity offices.

Mayfield continued to grow with



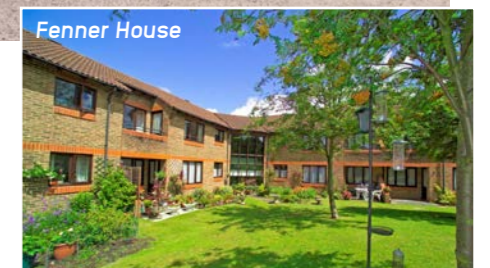
Mayfield, circa 1870

"Since I was 18, I've lived at 40 different addresses, but I am pleased to say that I now feel at home."

– Anna, Mayfield resident

"It was the best thing that had happened to me for a long, long time. I feel safe here. I feel secure."

– Ian, Fenner resident



Fenner House

arranged around a welcoming communal garden.

A community at heart

Today, Walton Charity's almshouses aim to offer more than just housing – they foster companionship, security, and a sense of belonging. A dedicated housing team organises regular social activities, from Christmas meals and BBQs to coffee mornings, gardening sessions and summer outings. To learn more about Walton Charity visit: www.waltoncharity.org.uk

Sent in by Amy Dixon, Communications and Events Officer

an extension in 1995, increasing capacity to 47 flats, and was further modernised in 2018, now offering 53 self-contained flats.

Fenner House – a modern companion

Built in 1983 on former allotment land, Fenner House is named after one of the charity's principal benefactors. It provides 52 self-contained flats

Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Winifred, Countess of Dundonald (1859–1924)

From 14 to 16 November 2024, trustees of the Winifred Bamford Hesketh Almshouses in Abergele and the Gwrych Castle Preservation Trust held a joint commemoration marking the centenary of their patroness's death.

Mark Baker, Chair of the Gwrych Castle Preservation Trust and trustee of the Almshouses, welcomed several of Winifred's descendants, including the 15th Earl and Countess of Dundonald and the Marquess and Lady Victoria Hervey, as guests of honour.

The programme

included a buffet dinner and talks by local artists and the unveiling of a

specially commissioned bust of Winifred at the almshouses by the 15th Earl

of Dundonald. There was also a tour and lunch at Bodysgallen Hall, site visits to Winifred's old school and church and a celebration of Winifred's Welsh and Scottish heritage at Gwrych Castle with harp music, a bagpiper-led procession, historical performances and traditional Welsh folk dance. The event concluded with a remembrance service at St Cynbryd's Church in Llanddulas, where Winifred and her family are buried, followed by farewells at the village hall she built.

Sent in by Tracee Winstone, Clerk to the Trustees



l-r Frederick Hervey 8th Marquess of Bristol, Lady Victoria Hervey, Lady Marina Cochrane, Lady Tanys Cochrane, Marina Countess of Dundonald, Douglas Cochrane 15th Earl of Dundonald

Subsidence: What you need to know

Contributed by Grout Insurance Brokers. info@groutinsure.co.uk, www.groutinsure.co.uk



When subsidence is suspected, it's important to seek professional advice – typically from a consulting engineer. While this guidance draws on our experience as insurance brokers, technical investigation and diagnosis should always be carried out by qualified professionals.

What is subsidence?

Subsidence is the downward movement of the ground beneath a building, often due to instability in the soil supporting the foundations. It usually presents suddenly, with diagonal cracks appearing in both internal and external walls. When reporting a claim, photographs of the damage should be submitted.

Common causes

The two main causes of subsidence are:

- **Trees and vegetation:** Tree roots extract moisture from the soil, especially during dry periods, causing the ground to shrink. If the trees are on your property, action can be

taken more swiftly. If, however, they belong to neighbours or the local authority, removal often requires strong evidence and can be delayed due to environmental concerns or sustainability arguments.

- **Water leaks:** Damaged or blocked drains, pipes, or gutters can contribute to both subsidence and heave by altering the soil's moisture content. As part of general maintenance, it's advisable to keep these systems clear. Signs of a leaking drain may include backed-up water or unpleasant odours. Fixing the issue early may prevent further damage.

Extreme weather conditions, such as prolonged dry spells, can also intensify soil movement and increase the risk of both subsidence and heave.

Investigation and repair process

Addressing subsidence can range from simple fixes to complex structural repairs. Initial monitoring is often required to confirm the cause and assess ground movement. Stabilising

the building must come before any repairs.

A specialist company may take up to three months to fully investigate. Most claims are resolved within six months to two years, though more complicated cases may take longer. Once the cause is confirmed, a detailed repair schedule will be issued for approval.

During repairs

You'll need to provide access to the property for the repair team. This may mean vacating certain rooms while work is underway. Upon completion, a Certificate of Structural Adequacy should be issued to confirm that the issue has been properly resolved.

Insurance considerations

Most buildings insurance policies include subsidence cover but carry an excess – typically around £1,000 – which is payable by the policyholder. Provided the cause is addressed and repairs completed to return the property to its pre-damage condition, your insurance cover should continue.

Repairing windows in almshouses – preserving character and enhancing energy efficiency

Contributed by Richard Gilmore of Terrace Surveyors Ltd. richard@terraceurveyors.co.uk

Often described as the 'eyes' of a historic building, windows offer insight into its architectural character, age and craftsmanship. For almshouses, particularly those listed or situated within conservation areas, preservation and repair of original windows is vital to maintaining their historic integrity. Running parallel, energy efficiency and occupant comfort are growing priorities.

How can charities approach window repairs responsibly, balancing conservation with modern needs?

The Importance of conservation

Historic windows contribute significantly to a building's character and value. Original timber or metal-framed windows often showcase traditional craftsmanship that cannot be replicated by modern replacements. Furthermore, their replacement can lead to the loss of historic fabric and potential harm to a building's 'significance'.

Repair, over replacement, is usually the preferred approach for listed buildings. Techniques such as draught-proofing or reinstating damaged putty can significantly improve thermal performance without altering the appearance or fabric of the window. For almshouses, this method aligns with both heritage preservation and cost efficiency.

Common repair strategies

Draught-proofing: This simple and affordable measure can make a substantial difference to thermal performance. It involves sealing gaps in window frames using discreet

draught strips, preserving the original joinery while enhancing comfort.

Glazing upgrades: For additional energy efficiency, secondary glazing can be installed internally without usually affecting the external appearance. It often outperforms double glazing in thermal and acoustic performance while remaining reversible. In certain circumstances, slim section double glazing may be approved, however, only following a detailed review of the building's significance. There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Timber repairs: Decayed wood can be replaced with matching timber sections or repaired using specialist consolidants. Regular maintenance, i.e. repainting, prevents further deterioration and preserves the window's longevity.

Listed Building considerations

Alterations to windows in listed almshouses will typically require listed building consent. Minor works, however, such as draught-proofing or like-for-like repairs to individual components, may not, provided the window's appearance or materials are not altered. Always consult your local conservation officer/planning authority before starting work to ensure appropriate permissions are in place.

For more substantial changes, such as installing slim-profile double glazing, careful justification will be required. Historic England recommends retaining original glazing bars and ensuring any interventions are sensitive to the window's original character.

The Almshouse Association: origins and achievements, 1940–1950

Volunteer archivist for the Association, Jenny Pannell delves into our history

During World War II, many almshouses, especially in London and other major cities, were damaged or destroyed. Amid postwar uncertainty and political reform, concerns grew about the future of the almshouse movement. This climate gave rise to the idea of a national body to represent almshouse charities.

On 14 February 1946, representatives from 26 London charities met at Southwark Cathedral, where the Clerk of Westminster United Charities proposed forming the London Association of Almshouses (LAA). Its goals were forward-looking: to support the development of new almshouses, modernise outdated charity Schemes, revise financial eligibility for residents, and seek compensation for wartime losses. For trustees who had long worked in isolation, the LAA provided a vital forum for collaboration and advice, quickly becoming a trusted expert body.

By 1950, the LAA had evolved into the National Association of Almshouses (NAA), the precursor to today's The Almshouse Association.

A key foundation for this work was laid by Jane Ellis. Before 1944,

no comprehensive data existed on London's almshouse charities. Ellis's landmark 1944 survey detailed nearly 100 such institutions, recording their contacts, locations, types of accommodation, resident demographics, staff roles, and criteria for admission. Her fascination with



Leonard Hackett with Mrs Hobbs at Billingbear

almshouse history was inspired by John Stow's Survey of London (1698), which listed 23 foundations, 12 of which still operated in the 1940s. She brought their stories to life, such as a founder who sold the contents of her china cupboard to build four houses for widows, or one who ensured shaded garden paths for elderly residents.

Ellis expanded her research across England, helping the LAA and later the NAA to grow their membership and influence with the Charity Commission, local authorities, and charitable trusts. A pivotal moment came when the Nuffield Trust granted £1,000 to the NAA, enabling the

appointment of Leonard Hackett as its first General Secretary.

The Association's archives now hold over 50 letters, photographs, and documents from Ellis's nationwide network. The earliest, from 15 January 1944, came from the York City Librarian and connected her with the Yorkshire Archaeological Society – opening doors to almshouse histories throughout the region.

By 1950, the Association was advocating for modern housing standards, promoting access to improvement grants, and encouraging charities to adjust maintenance charges in line with residents' eligibility for new welfare and housing benefits.

As the next article will explore, the 1950s marked a decade of significant progress, setting the stage for the modern almshouse movement we know today.

De-registration as a Registered Provider

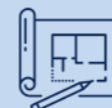
In recent years, some almshouse charities that are Registered Providers have chosen to de-register from the Regulator of Social Housing. This decision often reflects the view that many regulatory standards, while well-intentioned, are not always suitable for the unique context of almshouses. Additionally, in many cases, the original reason for registration – eligibility to receive Social Housing Grant – may no longer apply, particularly where there are no future plans for new developments or major refurbishments.

For these charities, de-registration is seen as a more appropriate and beneficial path. However, some trustees may still feel that remaining registered offers perceived advantages, such as demonstrating compliance with recognised standards or alignment with best practices in the eyes of government bodies. The purpose of this article is not to argue against registration or de-registration, but rather to offer support and guidance for those trustees who are considering de-registration.

De-registration involves a formal process. As part of this, the charity must show that robust measures remain in place to protect residents and ensure no misuse of public funds. One significant consideration is that de-registration typically triggers a requirement to repay any Social Housing Grant previously received. In most cases, Homes England may agree to defer repayment and instead secure the grant with a registered charge on the almshouses. However, should the properties ever be sold, though this is rare, repayment of the grant would then be required.

Ultimately, the decision to de-register rests with the trustees, who should assess their charity's current position and future plans carefully. For those considering this step, The Almshouse Association offers a De-Registration Toolkit, available from the Members Area of our website, to help guide you through the process.

www.almshouses.org/model-policies-and-templates/



PLANNING A NEW BUILD PROJECT? LET US KNOW!

If you are planning or currently working on a new development, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch. Contact: gerryharmon@almshouses.org

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Government gave its final response to the NPPF consultation in February. Whilst generally positive, significant challenges remain in achieving recognition of almshouses as affordable housing. These challenges can be broadly grouped into three key areas:

- Regulation
- Resident voting rights on boards
- Planning status quo

We are addressing these concerns while firmly upholding the principle that almshouses are charitable organisations. They are regulated by the Charity Commission and subject to a wide range of regulations, including fire safety, health and safety, gas and electrical safety, governance and financial compliance and our *Standards of Almshouse*

Management (SAM) guidance.

An unexpected point raised during the consultation was the proposal for almshouse residents to hold voting positions on trustee boards. This has since been discussed with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Regulator of Social Housing, and the Charity Commission. There is currently no requirement for residents to act as trustees, and the comment from the MHCLG is under review. All other bodies consulted saw no clear rationale for imposing such an obligation on residents. It has been highlighted that, while it is good practice for trustees to consider residents' views, having residents as voting trustees presents a conflict of interest and an unwelcome burden

for many residents.

It has also become clear that local planners often favour almshouses being registered as Regulated Housing Providers, as this offers a recognised 'standard' of due diligence. This, in turn, gives them the confidence to approve Section 106 funding. However, the registration requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing are frequently unsuitable for small charitable organisations.

With this in mind, we are working with members to develop SAM into a formal Code of Practice that reflects the unique way almshouses operate. Our aim is for this Code to offer a credible alternative to the Regulator of Social Housing that both national and local governments can support.

Member Visits: a valuable opportunity

The Almshouse Association offers visits to its member charities, providing a great opportunity for trustees to connect with us and discuss any challenges they may be facing. These visits are always a two-way learning experience – just as we offer guidance, we also gain valuable insight from our members. Understanding the realities trustees face first-hand helps us stay relevant, improve our support, and ensure we are addressing the most pressing issues within the sector.

Being a trustee can be rewarding but also complex, and there may be matters that are best discussed face-to-face rather than over the phone. A typical visit includes a brief tour of the almshouses – it's always a pleasure to meet any residents who are around – followed by an informal meeting with trustees and, if your charity has one, the clerk. Trustees and clerks are free to raise any topics they wish and we also review the results of the Health Check (if you haven't yet received yours, keep an eye out or download a copy from the members' area of our website at www.almshouses.org/charity-health-checks/

Common discussion points include financial sustainability, governance clarity, resident concerns,

trustee recruitment and the buildings themselves. Post-visit, we provide a short report outlining key recommendations, helping trustees prioritise actions and ease the burden on the Board or clerk.

Beyond guidance, we facilitate connections between member charities, helping arrange mentoring, trustee recruitment and even the occasional temporary trustee loan. Sometimes, a charity is running smoothly, but as we all know, a small oversight can have far-reaching implications, so a visit can serve as a valuable check-in.

Many trustees have found these visits to be a great morale booster for their boards, reinforcing the pride they take in their work. As one trustee put it, "We feel empowered!" Others have described our advice as "invaluable" and the meetings as "very beneficial," "It was lovely showing you around," and "We so appreciated your positivity about our almshouses."

Ongoing support is always available after a visit, whether it's through trustee recruitment, policy updates via our templates, or guidance on resolving both small and significant challenges.

To arrange a visit, please contact admin@almshouses.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

Almshouse Research Group

The Almshouse Association held a research workshop at Skinners' Hall in London. We brought together leading academics from institutions such as the University of Bristol, Cardiff University, the University of Suffolk, Oxford University, The Open University, and Universität Liechtenstein. The purpose of the meeting

was to identify synergies across various charitable housing models with a view to assessing their benefits on residents' well-being and demonstrating their effectiveness and cost efficiency for the state. Read more here: www.almshouses.org/news/almshouse-research-takes-centre-stage-at-skinners-london/

Advocating for almshouse exemption from Selective Licensing fees

Selective Licensing was originally introduced to help local councils manage issues associated with houses in multiple occupation. It was never intended to apply to charitable housing providers such as almshouses. However, it has become evident that many almshouse charities are being subjected to these local charges, which we believe runs counter to the original purpose of the scheme. We are, therefore calling on the Government to grant a full exemption for all almshouse charities.

Our advocacy on this issue is ongoing. In the coming weeks, further meetings are scheduled with the Regulator of Social Housing, the Housing Ombudsman, the Charity Commission, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

EPC/MEES Regulation Review – Sector representation update

The Almshouse Association recently met with key partners at the Historic England Offices in London to discuss the forthcoming review of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)/ Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) regulations, in collaboration with representatives from Historic England, the National Trust, The Crown Estate, CCLA, Church Commissioners, and others. The meeting focused on proposals under consideration by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), which include significant potential changes to the legislation.

Key elements of the proposals include raising the spend cap to £15,000, adopting a "fabric first" approach to energy efficiency and extending the regulations to cover short-term lets.

These changes could have considerable implications for member charities and we have submitted a formal response to the consultation on behalf of our members, ensuring that your voices are heard in the regulatory process.

Association meetings held with...

- **David Chalk, Sherriff of the City of London and a Liveryman for Drapers Livery Company** at the Old Bailey to discuss the different almshouse models and how they can help the young people of London.
- **Joanna Averley, Chief Planner at the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government**, to discuss the almshouse model and its potential integration into the next iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework
- **Richard Bellamy, Regional Lead at The National Lottery Heritage Fund**. He shared real enthusiasm for almshouses as vital to our national heritage and we are exploring long-term funding and ways to improve access for our members.
- **Caroline Nokes MP for Romsey and Southampton North**, a strong advocate for almshouses who spoke positively about their role and voiced her support for

Driving growth in almshouse development and age-friendly housing

In line with our strategic priorities, we are actively supporting organisations aiming to establish new almshouse charities. We are also working to enhance planning support for both the development of new almshouses and the sensitive remodelling of historic ones. In collaboration with the Church of England, we are exploring opportunities for development on several sites currently held as glebe land.

In parallel, through our involvement in the Housing and Ageing Alliance, we have co-signed a letter to the Prime Minister urging immediate action to strengthen support for age-appropriate housing. This call reinforces our ongoing requests for stronger government leadership in planning, design, and financial backing for housing tailored to older people. With over 11 million people aged 65 and over in the UK today, there is a pressing need for more and better housing to support our ageing population.

Historic England: A Guide to Managing Change

For some years now, The Almshouse Association and a number of historic almshouse charities have been working with Historic England and we are pleased to announce that Historic England has now published its eagerly awaited advice note: **Historic Almshouses: A Guide to Managing Change**.

It suggests how the heritage significance of almshouses can be conserved as proposals for upgrading are developed and can be found on our website at: www.almshouses.org/historic-england-historic-almshouses-advice-note/

Special thanks to Andrew Clague, Peter Wilkinson and others who helped with local knowledge.

historic almshouses in the Southampton Chronicle.

- **Will Forster, MP for Woking** who after his meeting with the Association felt compelled to highlight the apparent omission of charities from crucial housing discussions in *Inside Housing* magazine. See: www.insidehousing.co.uk/comment/almshouses-help-fend-off-homelessness-so-why-are-they-ignored-91169
- **SAVA Annual Conference in Kenilworth Warwickshire**, CEO Nick Phillips presented on the heritage and impact of almshouses over their one-thousand-year history.
- **Connect**, our political engagement partners to discuss our political strategy and advance efforts to inform MPs about the value of almshouses.

Read more about our next steps at: www.almshouses.org/news/associations-section-106-campaign/

President Peter Saunders retires after 47 years of service



Peter Saunders, President of Alexandra Homes almshouses, has retired this year after an incredible 47 years of dedicated service. He first joined the Alexandra Homes Management Committee in 1978 and held the roles of Committee Member, Chairman, Vice-President, and most recently, President.

Throughout his long tenure, Peter played a vital role in the ongoing development and improvement of the Charity's housing stock. He has interviewed countless prospective residents, helped recruit new trustees during times of vacancy and been a valued source of insight, particularly

in electrical matters, drawing on his experience as director of a well established electrical firm in Margate.

Founded in 1865, Alexandra Homes provides housing for up to 41 residents across 33 properties, from studio apartments to two-bedroom cottages.

In the photo, Peter Saunders (right) is seen receiving a commemorative mug from Vice-President Sam Matsubara, who has served alongside him since 1976. While Peter steps back from official duties, he has assured us that he will stay in touch. He will be greatly missed.

Sent in by Sara-Jane Locking, Clerk to the Trustees

20 years of service – thank you Debbie!

Debbie Thomas, Manager and Clerk to the Trustees of the Rev. Dr. White's Almshouses in Redcliffe, Bristol, joined the charity straight from university and marked 20 years of dedicated service this April.

At their recent AGM, trustees and colleagues celebrated the milestone by presenting Debbie with a Bristol Blue Glass 'Flame', engraved in recognition of her outstanding contribution and long-standing commitment.

Over the past year alone, Debbie has led a significant renovation programme across the site's eighteen bungalows and communal areas, including new windows, security doors, flat roof replacements and suspended ceilings, coordinating closely with contractors throughout.

The occasion was made even more special by the presence of Almshouse Association Chairman, Willie Hartley Russell MVO DL, who joined trustees in expressing heartfelt thanks to Debbie.

Sent in by Alderman Bob Lewis (Chairman of Trustees)



Chubbs Almshouses win Best Crewkerne Community Garden 2024

We're proud to announce that Chubbs Almshouses have won the Best Crewkerne Community Garden 2024 award!

Set between two historic terraces (1604 and 1890s), the shared garden space is beautifully maintained by residents, with Ken Cox as lead gardener and plenty of helping hands. Flower beds, lawns, and even a few veg plots create a vibrant, welcoming space – often admired by passers-by (and three very friendly resident dogs!).

Each almshouse also has a private plot for gardening or creative use – two residents are even practising artists. It was this mix of beauty, purpose, and community spirit that won over the judges.

Well done to all involved!

Sent in by Sheila Seymour, Trustee

In tribute: Philip Oglethorpe's 35 years of service

Philip Oglethorpe, a solicitor who devoted 35 years of service to the almshouses in Lancaster and Morecambe, has sadly passed away at the age of 86.

Until his retirement at the end of 2023, Philip served as Clerk to the Trustees of the Lancaster Charity and the Platten & Benson Almshouse Trust, which together oversee 70 almshouses, some dating back to 1720.

The photograph by Steve Pendrill captures a special moment in 2019, when Philip welcomed Princess Alexandra to Penny's Hospital Almshouses in Lancaster as part of their 300th anniversary celebrations.



Our new Board members

The Almshouse Association is thrilled to welcome five outstanding individuals to our Board of Trustees. Each brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from across the charitable, housing, financial and ecclesiastical sectors. We are excited to work alongside them and benefit from their insights, passion and innovative thinking as we continue to support and strengthen the almshouse movement.



Ed Christian



Stuart C Holland FRICS



Peter Edwards



The Rev. Canon Andrew Sage



Claire Warren

Ed Christian – Ed is a Client Investment Director at CCLA Investment Management.

Stuart C Holland FRICS – A semi-retired Chartered Surveyor with expertise in both Quantity and Building Surveying.

Peter Edwards – Peter serves as Chief Executive of a poverty alleviation charity in South London.

The Rev. Canon Andrew Sage – The Master of Archbishop Holgate Hospital, where he co-leads the administration and safeguarding responsibilities.

Claire Warren – Claire joined Pickering and Ferens Homes (PFH) in 2013 and has championed the organisation's mission to go beyond being 'just a landlord.'

To learn more about our new board members and to explore the full biographies of all our trustees, please visit: www.almshouses.org/association-board-of-trustees

Introducing Karen White – New Regional Peer Representative for Somerset



We're delighted to welcome Karen White as our new Regional Peer Representative for Somerset.

Karen was CEO of Taunton Heritage Trust for nine years, leading an almshouse charity with 66 flats and a grants programme. Since stepping down in April 2023, she has been working as a consultant for Quirk's Almshouse Charity, helping develop policies, improve health and safety, manage risks and introduce a Residents' Handbook.

She's also supported trustees in implementing a phased increase to Weekly Maintenance Contributions and continues to attend Board meetings. Karen is a long-time supporter of the almshouse movement and has actively engaged with the wider network through training and events.

"I'm passionate about the almshouse movement," she says, "and I look forward to supporting others in my new role."

Welcome to the team, Karen!

Contact Karen: takentothetop@gmail.com



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The Almshouse Association 'Life in Bloom' photo competition

We have been delighted to receive some stunning photographs following the launch of 'Life in Bloom' photo competition, which celebrates community and good neighbours, and there is still time to take part!

Simply choose a theme that inspires you and send in JPEG format to gerryharmon@almshouses.org.

- Over the Garden Fence
- Tea with Neighbours
- Friends in Alms
- Garden Days
- Community Spirit

Both members and residents are warmly invited to participate. Our winner and runner-up will be selected by a panel of judges, including a professional photographer. The competition closes on 29 August 2025, with winners announced in September.

PRIZES:

Winner – A luxury afternoon tea experience worth £150 and framed commemorative certificate.

Runner-Up – A £50 M&S voucher and framed certificate.



So grab your camera, embrace the sunshine, and get clicking! We can't wait to see your work!

Terms and Conditions apply. See our website for more details here: www.almshouses.org/news/announcing-our-new-photo-competition



New book chronicles a century of the Courtauld Homes of Rest

It's not every day that a Clerk, who also happens to be a Deputy Lord Lieutenant, pens a detailed history of their almshouse. But that's exactly what Adrian Corder-Birch, Clerk to The Courtauld Homes of Rest, has done in his new book, *A Centenary History of the Courtauld Homes of Rest*.

The book traces the evolution of the Homes from their founding by the philanthropic Courtauld family to support retired employees, through to their broader role in elderly care today. Adrian explores social, economic, and cultural shifts over the century, offering insights into the changing landscape of care, as well as personal stories of residents and staff.

This engaging and informative work is a valuable contribution to the history of almshouses and social care in the UK and a reminder of how philanthropy once stepped in to fill the gaps in society.

Make a lasting difference with a free Will

The Almshouse Association has partnered with Farewill, the UK's leading will-writing service, to offer supporters a simple, free way to write a Will online in just 15 minutes.

This service allows you to provide for your loved ones and, if you choose, leave a gift to The Almshouse Association. Your legacy can help ensure the continued support of almshouses across the UK, providing safe and affordable homes for those in need.



About Farewill

Farewill is an award-winning, top-rated will-writing provider, known for its accessible and stress-free service.

To get started, contact davidburton@almshouses.org, call us on 01344 452922 or go to www.almshouses.org/leave-a-legacy

Staindrop almshouse charity signposts its heritage

The Henry, Duke of Cleveland Charity has commissioned a bespoke Oak notice board containing a history of their 12 almshouses in Staindrop which were built in 1860-61 by Henry Vane, the 2nd Duke of Cleveland.

Kevin Allen, Clerk of the Charity said: "We thought it would be interesting for residents and visitors to know the story of the almshouses and their place in our community. The notice board will also be very useful for communicating information to almshouse residents."

What a fantastic initiative! It's inspiring to see efforts like this that celebrate almshouse heritage while also serving a practical purpose. Imagine the impact if almshouse charities across the UK followed suit - bringing history to life and strengthening community connections.

