



Good afternoon, I am delighted to be here with you today, to mark 80 years of the Almshouse Association.

**80 years of supporting, connecting and championing a movement that itself stretches back nearly a millennium.**

That is worth pausing on. There are almshouses on the Charity Commission's register that pre-date the Norman invasion.

The movement has endured the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, two World Wars, the birth of the welfare state, and now a period of extraordinary technological change. And yet here we are. Still building homes, still nurturing communities, still doing exactly what was intended.

**The need for this work has never been more acute. Britain is in the grip of a serious housing crisis. Analysis from Shelter found 354,000 people experiencing homelessness in England last year.**

Over a million people are on the council house waiting list. And running alongside the housing shortage is a loneliness epidemic — the Mental Health Foundation estimates that nearly one in ten adults across Great Britain feel lonely often or always.

Almshouses cannot solve all of that alone. But they are a vital, consistent, and reliable part of the answer - providing around 36,000 people with safe, comfortable, affordable homes, and in doing so, creating genuine communities. Not just shelter but belonging. That distinction matters enormously.

**And the breadth of this movement is often underappreciated.**

Almshouses exist in every corner of England and Wales - from Winchester, home to the Hospital of St Cross, the oldest almshouse still operating from its original 12th century buildings, to Gosport, where the Thorngate Churcher Trust was recently named by the Times as one of the best places in the UK to work.

**These are not relics. They are living, thriving institutions, run by dedicated volunteer trustees, responding to the communities around them.**

It is that ability to adapt to evolve that sets almshouses apart from other housing providers, as evidenced by Appleby Blue winning the prestigious RIBA Sterling prize recently - **these are ancient charities setting the new modern standard for not just great homes but also importantly with community at their heart.**