



**Berkswell  
Charities**

# **Residents' Handbook**

<b>Contents:</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>Section 1</b>	<b>4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction</li><li>• Welcome</li><li>• List of contacts</li></ul>	
<b>Section 2 - History, Governance and Management</b>	<b>5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Historical Note</li><li>• Constitution</li><li>• Management</li><li>• The Almshouses</li></ul>	
<b>Section 3 - Health and Safety</b>	<b>7</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doctor and Dentist</li><li>• The Emergency Call System</li><li>• Emergency Contact Details</li><li>• Fire Precautions</li><li>• Avoiding the Risk of Fire</li><li>• Slips, Trips, and Falls</li><li>• Security</li><li>• Keys</li><li>• Water stopcock</li><li>• / Electricity/ Gas</li></ul>	
<b>Section 4 - Terms of Occupancy</b>	<b>9</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter of Appointment</li><li>• Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)</li><li>• Community Alarm System and Housing Management Aids</li><li>• Consulting Residents</li><li>• Absence from Home</li><li>• Central Heating, Electricity and hot water</li><li>• Improvements to your home</li><li>• Employment</li><li>• Visitors – Family and Friends</li><li>• Pets</li><li>• Moving Out</li><li>• Re-Housing</li><li>• Gifts and Legacies</li></ul>	
<b>Section 5 - Services Provided</b>	<b>13</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Furniture and Fittings</li><li>• Gardens</li><li>• Repairs and Decorations</li><li>• Insurance</li></ul>	

- Television
- Cleaning
- Refuse collection and recycling
- Telephones
- Social Media

**Section 6 - General Information**

**17**

- Electrical Water mains switch and fuse box
- Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit
- Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance/Universal Credit
- Parking
- Wills
- Lasting Power of Attorney

**Section 7 - If things go wrong**

**19**

- Personal Problems
- Complaints
- Housing Ombudsman

## **Section 1 – Introduction**

Berkswell Charities would like to extend our help to you as a new resident. We hope that you will settle in quickly and be very happy here. This handbook sets out useful information about the charity and its general administration and management. It also explains your responsibilities as a resident. Please do not hesitate to speak to the Clerk if you need further information on any matters.

Please note that the conditions stated in this handbook form part of your contract with the charity and supplement the rules and regulations given in your Letter of Appointment which you signed when you accepted your appointment. It may be necessary to amend these rules and regulations from time to time but any changes would be discussed with residents beforehand when you would be given the opportunity to express any views or concerns.

The Almshouse is your home, and every effort will be made to help you remain independent, free to choose your own lifestyle and able to benefit from the quiet enjoyment and dignity that the almshouses provide. I am sure you will appreciate the importance of everyone in the community respecting the wishes of others, allowing them their privacy if that is what they wish and ensuring that rumours and gossip are not allowed to develop.

The trustees have tried to minimise these rules and regulations which have been designed for the benefit of all residents and to ensure the efficient management of the trust.

### **A very warm welcome.**

The Trustees of Berkswell Charities are:

Chair: Mr Christopher Powell

Brendan Connor, Rev. Dr Mark Bratton, Jane Edwards, David Bell, Paul Smith, Andrew Yates, Norman Childs, Gaynor Dye and Sue Walton.

Clerk: Louise Daintith

### **Emergency out of hours numbers 07903585770**

Pastoral Care Officer – Joy Townsend 07710011881

## **Section 2 – History, Governance and Management**

Although the earliest date, which can with certainty be ascribed to any of the Berkswell Charities, is 1592, it is known that some must be considerably older. In the year 1589 a complaint was made in the Court of Chancery that the Lord of the Manor and others were seeking to obtain possession of certain premises which had ‘from time immemorial been vested in the Churchwardens of the Parish for the use of the Church and the repair thereof, and to the finding and maintenance of a School in the said town, and the relief of the poor’.

In support of their case, the complainants produced a copy of a Court Roll of 27, Henry 6, showing a grant to the Churchwardens of Berkswell of ‘a little parcel of land of ground lying beneath the Pinfold near the Churchyard’ and other Court Rolls of 1473, 1512 and 1526. The Court found that although the inhabitants of Berkswell had no just title to the properties, they had proved ‘their long possession thereof on such good and laudable uses’. This would appear to put the date of the foundation of the Charity, known as the ‘School, Church and Poor Lands Charity’ at about 1450.

Over the centuries numerous bequests have been made to the Charity, even up to the present date. Some of the original bequests have taken on a different form, be it stocks and shares, property or land, but it is interesting to note that the income from all such investments is still applied to the causes mentioned in the Court action of Elizabeth First, namely the School, Church and the Poor.

Berkswell Charities have Almshouses situated in Church Lane Berkswell and Cromwell Lane Burton Green.

### **Constitution**

The charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) governed by a Charity Commission Scheme, registered charity number 1194243.

### **Management**

The trust is governed by a board of voluntary, trustees. Day-to-day management of its affairs is delegated to the Clerk who also undertakes scheme manager responsibilities and offers day-to-day support to the residents. The Trustees do undertake an annual property inspection and may undertake other visits during the year.

### **The Almshouses**

The charity manages unfurnished dwellings which are often designed with the needs of older people in mind. The aim is to provide convenient and comfortable accommodation in a setting that allows residents to come and go as they please. Almshouses provide security and residents are encouraged to make friends and share a wider social life through the facilities and amenities that the area has to offer.

The principle behind everything that the charity does is that residents should enjoy independence and the freedom to come and go as they please while living in comfortable and secure accommodation. Residents should feel confident in the knowledge that support will always be available, whether from the charity itself or from outside agencies, should the need arise. Above all, the Charities respects residents’ privacy.

Residents may expect to continue to reside in occupation of the Almshouses providing, they continue to qualify as a beneficiary, are able to look after themselves and their appointment as a beneficiary is not set aside. If an individual's health deteriorates, they must be willing to accept advice and guidance, either from their own doctor or a medical consultant appointed by the Clerk/Trustees. The Clerk/Trustees will also consult with the person's next of kin, Social Services and other agencies as necessary.



## **Section 3 – Health and Safety**

### **Doctor and Dentist**

If you do not have a General Practitioner (GP), the Clerk will be able to give you the names of GP practices in the neighbourhood. The name of your GP must be given to the Clerk.

You have every right to see your doctor, nurse or other carer in confidence and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself if you wish. However, if you have a chronic health problem, it would be advisable, and you might feel safer, for the Clerk to be made aware of it so that appropriate action can be taken in an emergency. Anything you tell the Clerk will be kept in confidence within the charity.

### **Emergency Contact Details**

Please contact the Clerk:

If you become ill or are in difficulties, the Clerk will make every effort to get in touch with your next of kin, your doctor, or the ambulance or social services on your behalf. Please therefore provide the trustees with authority to contact your doctor and next of kin directly in the event of emergency by signing the 'GP Authorisation Form' and 'Next of Kin Information Form' which are available from the charity.

It is important that you let the Clerk have details (names, addresses, and telephone numbers) of these essential contacts. If the details change from time to time, please remember to inform the charity.

### **Fire Precautions** (applicable only to Church Lane)

All the almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. All properties have been supplied with fire blankets (including Cromwell Lane) The fire policies are frequently reviewed and fire drills are held to ensure that every resident knows what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency.

All of the almshouses are fitted with smoke detectors which, on sensing smoke, will trigger the fire alarm. If a resident is hard of hearing, they should ask for appropriate equipment to alert them in the event of an emergency.

The Clerk will explain to you the fire instructions which apply in the event of a fire.

Upon moving in the Clerk will supply you with full set of fire instructions. Please read these carefully and ask the Clerk to clarify anything you do not understand.

**Evacuation Policy:** When you hear the fire alarm, follow the fire procedure. If it is safe to do so, please evacuate the building by the nearest route to the fire assembly point. The exit routes and fire escapes are clearly marked with green signs in the corridors. Shut the door of your Almshouse behind you and do not attempt to take any personal belongings with you. Wear warm clothing and leave your flat immediately.

### **Avoiding the Risk of Fire**

Please be conscious of the risk of fire, for example, regularly checking at night or before going out that appliances have been fully switched off. Smoking is strictly prohibited in the Almshouse properties and communal areas. Do not wedge doors open or leave chip pans unattended.

Do not remove the fire blanket from the premises.

## **Slips, Trips and Falls**

The trustees wish to draw your attention to the need to exercise care when using the footpaths in wet, snowy or icy weather. Whilst reasonable precautions will be taken to keep them hazard-free, residents are reminded to use the handrails.

## **Security**

Please consider the following:

DO:

- Keep your front door locked at all times

DO NOT:

- Allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity. If you are in doubt, please call the Clerk, a family friend, or the police.
- Leave ground floor windows open so that intruders can gain access
- Keep cash or valuables in your home.

BE AWARE OF bogus officials or doorstep salesmen. Always ask for proof of identity.

Never allow anyone claiming to be gas, electricity or water meter readers to enter the dwelling. All public service employees carry identification; ask to see it before letting them in

## **Keys**

The Clerk holds a master key which can open your front door, but it will only be used in an emergency or with your permission. You must not fit locks and chains without the trustees' consent as these may delay access for emergency services. The trustees may advise on alternative security arrangements.

The Clerk will be able to advise on making your home more secure.

Your privacy will be respected. The Clerk has strict instructions only to enter your home:

- If you ask her or him to do so, or
- If you have given permission for work to be done in your absence, or
- In an emergency.

Please do not obtain extra keys without first asking the trustees, as this may lessen security.

Make sure that you and your visitors check that the main front door to the house is securely shut after entry or exit.

The location of the Water Stopcock, Electricity Mains Switch and Fuse Box will be pointed out to you when moving in and this information will be retained by the Clerk

## **Routine Visits**

Residents will be visited in their new home by two trustees or representatives of the charity after they have settled in and thereafter from time to time. This is an opportunity to get to know you better and to address any issues and concerns.

A mutually convenient time will be arranged beforehand.



## **Section 4 – Terms of Occupancy**

### **Letter of Appointment**

Your Letter of Appointment, of which you have a copy, is personal to you and explains that you occupy the almshouses as a beneficiary of the charity. This means that neither you nor any relation or guest of yours is a tenant with the security of tenure that a tenancy offers. No other person is allowed to live at the property unless they have formally applied to the charity and have been granted beneficiary status in their own right and you have been jointly allocated the same dwelling.

In exceptional circumstances the trustees could ask you to find alternative accommodation and leave. In practice, this occurs very rarely when trustees believe that they have no alternative.

Examples of such circumstances are if:

- A resident is no longer able to look after themselves safely or to live independently, even with the help of the social services or family support
- The resident consistently fails to pay the weekly maintenance contributions (WMC) on a regular basis without good reason
- The resident's behaviour is deemed to be unreasonable and anti-social, either in respect of other residents or members of staff
- The resident's circumstances changes significantly to the extent that they were no longer qualified to live in the almshouses as a beneficiary or did not have the required qualification when first appointed.
- The resident fails to comply with the rules and regulations made by the charity.
- The resident provided untrue or misleading answers or information in his/her application to be appointed a beneficiary of the charity

It is a condition of occupancy that residents provide the charity with accurate and complete information of their financial circumstances and that residents inform the charity if their circumstances change. The charity may review residents' financial circumstances from time to time. However, residents are assured that only in the most unusual circumstances would this lead to someone being asked to leave.

The charity would only set aside an appointment as a last resort after every reasonable effort had been made to resolve the issues. If, having been asked to leave, a resident felt aggrieved, they have the right to have their case heard in the County Court. If the decision to set aside the appointment was upheld, they would be given every assistance to find alternative accommodation.

### **Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)**

Weekly maintenance contributions are payable 14 days in advance on the first of each month by cheque, direct debit/standing order. If you receive Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance from the local authority, arrangements can be made for your Housing

Benefit to be paid directly into the charity's bank account. If you are experiencing difficulties in claiming, please let the charity know.

The amount you pay is a contribution towards the cost of running the charity. Items covered by the WMC include:

- Building repairs and maintenance
- Servicing and repair of water, gas and electrical installations
- Decoration costs
- Buildings Insurance
- Garden Maintenance
- Emergency Call System (Church Lane properties)
- Fire Alarm System (Church Lane)
- Stair Lift

The level of WMC is usually reviewed annually but the charity reserves the right to review this more frequently if it is in the charity's best interests. One months' notice shall be provided in the event of an increase of the level of WMC.

### **Consulting Residents**

The trustees wish to actively involve the residents as the running of the almshouses and welcome suggestions from you and your neighbours. You can also talk to a trustee in private by asking the clerk to the trustees to arrange this. Consultation and involvement of the residents in the day-to-day running of the charity's almshouses is a form of participation which will benefit all concerned. Trustees welcome the residents' views on matters affecting their quality of life at the almshouses.

The trustees will consult you:

- Before any work is done on your Almshouse (except in an emergency)
- Before making changes to the communal facilities, including the gardens
- Before making changes to the amount of weekly maintenance contribution payable
- Before anyone enters your home
- If you raise a difficulty with them.

### **Absence from Home**

You are expected to be in full time occupation of your Almshouse and extended periods away during the year might lead the trustees to conclude that you have less need for Almshouse accommodation than others.

Residents must live in the Almshouse as their permanent home and not be absent for more than 28 consecutive days in any year without the prior consent of the charity. If you go away for any period, including overnight stays, please inform the charity of your temporary address and contact phone number. Should you return earlier than planned, please inform the charity

immediately of your arrival home as it is important in an emergency to know if any residents are away.

### **Legionella**

The risk of contracting Legionnaire's Disease from a domestic property where the water services are regularly used is very low, however the risk increases if the water services have not been used for an extended period. Residents are advised to adopt the following recommended procedures:

Ensure the thermostat on your hot water system is set to a minimum of 65c but be aware that the risk of scalding from outlets that are not fitted with a thermostatic mixer valve is greatly increased.

Any hot or cold tap that is not used within a seven-day period should be flushed through for at least 2 minutes on a weekly basis on your return to the property. Avoid splashing to minimise the release of water droplets/aerosols.

Any shower that is not used within a seven-day period should be flushed through for at least 2 minutes on a weekly basis or on your return to the property at both maximum and minimum temperatures. Avoid the release of water droplets/aerosols by either securing a plastic bag over the shower head with a corner cut off to allow water to escape or by removing the shower head and placing the shower hose over the drain outlet.

Any toilet that is not used within a seven-day period should be flushed on a weekly basis or on your return to the property. The lid should be closed to avoid contact with any water droplets/aerosol.

Shower heads should be cleaned and disinfected regularly to ensure no scale or algal build up.

Before going away, please ensure that all food has been put away, taps and appliances have been fully switched off and windows shut. If you are leaving your flat during the winter months, please discuss with the clerk how much heating is required to minimise the risk of burst pipes, etc.

### **Central heating, electricity and hot water.**

In addition to the weekly maintenance contribution residents are responsible for paying their utility bills. Meters will be read prior to occupation. The resident should notify the Clerk with the of the energy providers details in the case of an emergency. Residents are not allowed to use any heating appliance that has not been supplied by the charity. Additional heating may be provided by means of electric fires, but care must be taken with trailing leads. No Paraffin, Oil or Butane gas heaters are allowed in any of the Almshouses.

(If applicable) Each radiator is fitted with a thermostat which enables residents to adjust the temperature as required. All hot water taps are fitted with thermostatic mixing valves to avoid water scalding.

### **Light Bulbs**

Please ensure that only low energy light bulbs are used in the premises.

### **Improvements to your Home**

You must not carry out any internal or external improvements, alterations, repairs or decoration, plumbing or electrical installations to your home without the prior permission of

the trustees. No shelves, cupboards, locks or fittings shall be fixed or removed without prior consent. For all major works, the trustees will instruct an architect or surveyor to design and plan the work before placing an order with a building contractor. Payment for improvements is the responsibility of the trustees.

As the trustees have responsibility for the long-term maintenance of the almshouses, they have to consider individual resident's requests for alterations alongside their own maintenance programme. If an alteration would be structurally unsound, reduce the amenities for subsequent occupants, increase future maintenance costs, it will not be approved. If you live in a listed building, some alterations will need local authority consent before any work can be carried out.

Whilst at all times the charity will respect the privacy of residents, it is a condition that residents allow reasonable and regular access to their almshouses for repairs and decoration to be carried out. Representatives of the charity will visit from time to time by prior appointment.

### **Employment**

With the permission of the charity, residents may be allowed to work from their Almshouse, however they must guarantee that this will not be disruptive for other residents and that it will not involve delivery or storage of items and/or visitors to the buildings.

### **Visitors – Family and Friends**

Visitors are not permitted to stay in an Almshouse, except with the consent of the trustees.

Where permission is granted occasional overnight stays only will be permitted but these must not be regular occurrences. It is vital that trustees are aware of any overnight visitors for safety and security reasons.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is strictly prohibited in all of the Almshouse properties including the entrance hall and corridors. Failure to adhere to the terms of this policy can jeopardise your appointment as a beneficiary.

### **Pets**

No pets are to enter or be kept at the premises whether on a temporary or permanent basis.

### **Guide Dogs**

Where possible consideration will be given to accommodating Guide Dogs for those residents with impaired or loss of sight.

### **Mobility scooters**

Residents may apply to keep a mobility scooter at the charity's premises. All such vehicles are kept by the residents entirely and solely at the resident's risk. Proof of insurance should be provided to the trustees.

Mobility scooters must not be left unattended when charging and must not block walkways.

### **Moving Out**

If you wish to vacate the Almshouse to live elsewhere, you must give the trustees written notice of not less than one calendar month. Maintenance contributions remain payable until

the notice period expires and the dwelling is vacated. When the resident vacates for whatever reason, all items belonging to the resident should be removed by him or her forthwith. In the event of the death of a resident their personal representatives are responsible for WMC until the premises are cleared of personal possessions and the keys are returned.

If a resident were to leave their Almshouse dwelling without giving notice, they would be liable for paying their WMC for a period of one month after the date on which they vacate as well as utility bills.

Trustees have the right to start the process of setting aside the appointment in the event of non-payment of WMC.

In the unlikely event that any possessions, chattels or goods are, without the written agreement of the charity, left abandoned by the resident in the Almshouse after the resident has vacated, the charity will take reasonable care of them for a period of up to 3 months. After this period the resident agrees by signing the Letter of Appointment that the charity may sell them and, out of the proceeds, pay any outstanding amounts owing to the charity, including outstanding weekly maintenance contributions and any other expenses, including disposal and removal costs.

### **Re-Housing**

If you wish to move from one Almshouse dwelling to another, you should contact the clerk to discuss the matter. While every effort would be made to assist a resident to move if there was a good reason, the decision would depend upon availability and be entirely at the discretion of the trustees.

There may be circumstances, for example during extensive refurbishment or other unforeseen circumstances, when the charity may need to ask you to vacate the dwelling and move, either temporarily or permanently, to another dwelling. Your views would be taken into account, and you would be given at least three months' notice should a move be necessary.

### **Gifts and Legacies**

It is the trustees' policy that no one involved in the running of the charity should accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you wish to donate anything to the charity, please contact the clerk to the trustees. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

## **Section 5 – Services Provider**

### **The Clerk to Berkswell Charities**

The Clerk can, where possible, support the general wellbeing of residents without interfering in their lives or intruding on their privacy. The Clerk is not a trained carer and cannot therefore offer personal care support. They can, however, liaise on your behalf with a wide range of local health and social services to ensure that you receive the help you need to remain safe and independent in your home. External services might include help with personal care and hygiene, meal preparation and provision, cleaning or shopping or the provision of physiotherapy or occupational therapy aides for use around the home. The Clerk may also refer you to external agencies that may be able to assist.

### **Emergency Call System.** (Applicable only to Church Lane Almshouses.)

You will be shown how to use this by the Clerk when you move in.

PLEASE DO use the call system by day or night to get help for a sudden illness or accident.

PLEASE DON'T tie up the pull cords; if you need help the cord may be out of reach.

### **Furniture and Fittings**

Although the almshouses are offered unfurnished, the charity provides a cooker.

### **Gardens.**

Allotment gardens are available to Church Lane residents as and when they become available. Please contact the Clerk for details.

The gardens at Cromwell Lane have been laid out for the use and benefit of all residents.

The Trustees encourage the communal aspect but also actively encourage all residents to cultivate and maintain the small area adjacent to his/her property. We earnestly ask that all residents respect the privacy of their neighbours.

Grass cutting of the area will be undertaken by the Charity, but residents may make additional cuts of the immediate surrounding area of their property.

No planting of any trees, shrubs or bushes is to be undertaken without the prior written approval of the Trustees. All such requests must be in writing addressed to the Clerk.

No fencing, of any description, is to be erected by a resident.

### **Repairs and Decorations**

The charity is responsible for both external and internal repairs and decoration to your home and the communal parts. Please report all necessary work to the clerk who will arrange for it to be carried out.

You will be consulted in advance about arrangements for work to be carried out. Workmen will not be allowed to enter your home while you are out unless you have agreed to satisfactory arrangements. An exception will have to be made, however, if an emergency arises such as a water leak.

## **Car Parking**

There are no facilities at Church Lane, but on-street parking is available.

A car park is available at Cromwell Lane. Each resident has an allotted space(s) for his/her own personal use. Visitors are welcome to use the car park and the Clerk will explain the system upon moving in. The Charity will not be held responsible for any damage to, or theft from, any vehicle.

## **Insurance**

The charity insures the building. Residents are responsible for arranging their own contents insurance.

Please do not keep more cash in your home than is necessary to meet day-to-day expenses and keep valuables out of sight.

## **Television**

Residents need a television licence to use any television-receiving equipment including TV set, set-top box, video or DVD recorder, PC or mobile phone to watch or record programmes as they are being broadcast. This includes foreign broadcasts.

There are television concessions available to:

- o Those who are blind or severely sight impaired
- o People who are retired or disabled and live in certain types of accommodation
- o Households with a person aged 75 years or over.

The Trustees, where applicable and subject to certain qualifying conditions that apply to the Charities remaining eligible under the terms of the concessionary scheme, shall apply for concessionary licences on behalf of their residents. To qualify residents must meet certain requirements. Please refer to the trustees for further details.

Please be considerate to your neighbours of noise nuisance in the use of TV's, radios, stereos and musical instruments.

## **Cleaning**

You are responsible for keeping your own flat clean, including cleaning the windows inside. If cleaning becomes difficult or you cannot clean the windows safely, please advise the Clerk who will make alternative arrangements. Storing excess items presents a safety hazard and in extreme cases of hoarding trustees may have to consider setting aside the resident's appointment.

Cleaning the communal areas is the responsibility of the charity and the cost of this service will form part of the weekly maintenance contribution. You will be advised when contractors are coming to clean the outside of the windows of your flat.

You are responsible for keeping your Almshouse clean and tidy including any immediate external path or stairway. Residents are responsible for ensuring that any external drains are kept clean and free of rubbish. Please contact the Clerk if any of the aforementioned presents a problem for you.

## **Training**

When you move into your home the Clerk will ensure that you are familiar with:

- Action to be taken in the event of a fire
- How to operate all the equipment in your home
- Central heating, emergency call systems and front door entry system.

### **Refuse collection and recycling**

Waste bins are provided. Please make sure that the rubbish areas are kept clean and tidy. All kitchen waste should be wrapped before putting it in the bin.

The Local Authority provides recycling bins and containers, please sort your waste in the appropriate bins/containers.

Collections are currently every Thursday for the Black Bin and alternate Thursdays for the Brown Bin and Black Box.

Telephones (Cromwell Lane only)

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for installing a telephone in your flat through your chosen provider.





## **Section 6 – General Information**

### **Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit**

You are responsible for paying your own council tax and will receive the annual Council Tax Notice from the local authority in March each year. People living alone are entitled to council tax relief of 25%.

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have only modest savings, you may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit. Depending upon your precise circumstances, this could pay your council tax in whole or in part. Please speak to the Clerk if you are unsure of your entitlement or need help in completing the claim form.

### **Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance/Universal Credit**

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have little or no capital, you will almost certainly be entitled to Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance to help with your housing costs. Even if you do have income in addition to your basic retirement pension, you may still be entitled to some help with housing costs. To claim Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance you should ask for an application form at your local Benefits Office (DWP) or Housing Department. It is important that you inform your local benefits office if there are changes in your financial circumstances as they have the power to demand reimbursement in the event of an over-payment.

Eligibility for state benefits changes from time to time. If you need advice on state benefits, please ask the clerk. Other sources of information are the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK (Details of which can be provided).

### **Parking**

Please do not park in unauthorised places, or allow your visitors to do so, as their cars may block the way for ambulances or fire engines attending in an emergency.

### **Wills**

You are strongly advised to make a Will and it is best to ask a solicitor to help you with this. If you need help in finding one, the local Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to suggest names.

As stated under 'Gifts and Legacies' it is the charity's policy that no one involved in the running of the charity should accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you want to donate anything to the charity, please speak to the clerk. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

### **Next of Kin**

The name and address of your next of kin, or a nominated representative, should be supplied to the charity. He or she may be contacted should the trustees have concerns.

### **Lasting Power of Attorney**

It is strongly recommended that you arrange a Lasting Power of Attorney which allows you to appoint someone to look after your finances and to take welfare and healthcare decisions on your behalf in the event of your mental incapacity. Again, you should seek legal advice from a solicitor.

**Social Media** Those residents using social media such as Facebook and Twitter, are asked to respect the fact that no views should be expressed via social media about the charity, its trustees, other residents or staff.



## **Section 7 – If Things Go Wrong**

### **Personal Problems**

If you have any personal problems over money or any other matter and you have no family or friends whom you feel able to consult, the trustees will be pleased to help or offer advice if they can. You can ask to see the Clerk or Pastoral Care Officer or any of the trustees and your concerns will be treated in the utmost confidence.

### **Complaints**

If you have any concerns, please bring them to the attention of the clerk who will do their best to resolve them. In the majority of cases, minor issues can be dealt with informally, quickly and efficiently and to the resident's satisfaction. The trustees and the clerk can only resolve problems and improve the service if you speak up when things go wrong.

Set out below is a procedure to be followed if residents wish to raise a complaint in connection with the occupation of their Almshouse, or about services provided by the charity.

- Minor matters, such as small maintenance items, should be referred to the Clerk
- If the Clerk is unable to resolve the matter, or if there is a persistent problem with pets, loud noise or matters affecting health and safety, the resident should refer it to the Clerk in writing. All communications about complaints will be treated in confidence.
- If you are dissatisfied with the Clerk's response, you should write formally to the chairman of trustees asking the trustees to consider the matter. You may, if you wish, attend the meeting when your complaint is being discussed, accompanied by a friend or adviser. The chairman will write to you afterwards to advise you of the trustees' decision and to inform you of any action taken to resolve your complaint.
- If you have a complaint about a member of staff employed by the charity, other residents, or about a serious breach of health and safety regulations, you should put your complaint in writing to the chairman of trustees, with a formal request for it to be considered by the trustees at their next meeting. You will, if you wish to exercise that right, be entitled to attend when your complaint is being discussed, accompanied by a friend, advocate or professional adviser.

### **Housing Ombudsman**

If you remain dissatisfied with the trustees' decision, you have the right to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service whose address is:

Housing Ombudsman Service, 81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

You will need to give the Ombudsman your full name, address and telephone number and set out the details of your complaint. The Ombudsman will only be able to consider your complaint if he/she is satisfied that the trust's own procedure for handling complaints has been exhausted.