

Residents' Handbook

Section 1 – Introduction

The Old Trust as trustees of the Ashbourne Almshouse Charity would like to extend a very warm welcome 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 appropriate contact in the contact list 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 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.

Once again, a very warm welcome.

Chairman: Steve Jones 07768 811150 steve.jones@theoldtrust.org.uk

Treasurer: Keith Wesley 01335 347203 keith.wesley@theoldtrust.org.uk

Clerk: Paul Cook 07831 824685 paul.cook@theoldtrust.org.uk

Chairman of Housing Maintenance: Brian Bates 01335 342583 brian.bates@theoldtrust.org.uk

Chairman of Allocations & Monitoring: John Taylor 01335 346 246 john.taylor@theoldtrust.org.uk

Section 2 – History, Governance and Management

Historical Note

From the early 17th century onwards the Governors and Assistants of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School (The Old Trust) were given the responsibility for various alms houses in Ashbourne as it was recognised by the benefactors that they were in an ideal position to administer them on an ongoing basis.

Constitution

The Old Trust is registered with the Charity Commission under Charity Number 215578 and is referred to in this handbook as the Charity.

Management

The trust is governed by a board of voluntary local trustees, a Clerk and a Treasurer.

The Almshouses

The charity currently manages 46 unfurnished dwellings which are often designed with the needs of older people in mind.

The principle behind everything that the trust 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, where appropriate, whether from the trust itself or from outside agencies, should the need arise. Above all, the trust respects residents' privacy.

Section 3 – Health and Safety

The Emergency Call System

The Tunstall Emergency Call System relies on the existence of a British Telecom or equivalent landline connection which is the responsibility of the resident. When such a landline and system are in place, it makes sense to wear the alarm pendant whenever you are in your alms house or press the red button on the lifeline box in the property in case of emergency.

Emergency Contact Details

It is important that you give details (names, addresses, and telephone numbers) of your essential contacts to the Old Trust when you move into the property and that you display such details in a prominent position in the property.

Fire Precautions

The alms houses comply with the appropriate fire regulations.

All of the almshouses are fitted with smoke detectors which, on sensing smoke, will trigger the fire alarm. Please do not tamper with the alarms under any circumstances

A trustee will explain to you the fire instructions which apply to your property.

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. It is especially important that those who smoke in their own almshouse dwelling do so responsibly and are aware of the risk of falling asleep or getting too close to curtains while smoking. Do not wedge doors open or leave chip pans unattended and use ash trays if you smoke but please avoid smoking in the property if at all possible.

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.

DO:

- Keep your front door locked at all times

DO NOT

- Allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity.
- Leave ground floor windows open so that intruders can gain access
- Keep cash or valuables in your home.

Routine Visits

Residents may be visited in their new home by representatives of the charity after you 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.

Section 4 – Terms of Occupancy

Letter of Appointment

Your Letter of Appointment, of which you have a copy, explains that you occupy the almshouses as a beneficiary of the charity. This means that you are not a tenant with the security of tenure that a tenancy offers and that 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 was 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 failed to pay weekly maintenance contributions (WMC) on a regular basis without good reason
- The resident's behaviour was deemed to be unreasonable and anti-social, either in respect of other residents or members of staff
- The resident's circumstances changed significantly to the extent that they were no longer qualified to live in the almshouses as a beneficiary.

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. However, residents should be 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 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 in advance on the first of each month and preferably every four weeks by standing order

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
- External decoration
- Garden maintenance
- Buildings insurance

Consulting Residents

You can talk to a trustee in private if you wish by asking the treasurer or clerk to the trustees to arrange this. 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 anyone enters your home
- If you raise a difficulty with them.

Absence from Home

If you go away for any period, please inform the charity of your temporary address and contact phone number. Should you return earlier than planned, please inform the charity immediately you get home as it is important in an emergency to know if any residents are away.

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. If you plan to be away from your dwelling for a period more than 28 days in any one year, please would you explain the circumstances to the charity and ask permission.

Central heating, electricity and hot water

In addition to the weekly maintenance contribution residents are responsible for paying their utility bills with the exception of water rates. Residents are not allowed to use any heating appliance that has not been supplied by the charity, such as portable gas or electric heaters, as these pose a serious safety risk. The use of paraffin oil is also strictly prohibited.

Improvements to your Home

You must not carry out any improvements, alterations or repairs to your home without first discussing your plans with the trustees. 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, or 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.

Employment

Neither the almshouse nor its garden may be used as a place of business, either from where to conduct business or to store items connected with running a business.

Visitors – Family and Friends

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

Pets

Residents are not allowed to keep pets.

Moving Out

If you wish to vacate the almshouse, you must give the trustees at least four weeks written notice. During this notice period you will be liable for your WMC payments even if you have already moved out. Residents or, in the event of death, 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 until the end of the notice period. Weekly maintenance contributions should be paid up to the departure date, 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.

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 Provided

Furniture and Fittings

Although the alms houses are offered unfurnished, the trust will normally provide a cooker

Gardens

The Trust is responsible for the maintenance of all garden areas

Repairs and Decorations

The trust is responsible for external repairs and decoration to your home and the communal parts. Please report all necessary work to the trustees who will arrange for it to be carried out. Repair requests are deemed to be a service requirement. If you are dissatisfied with the repair service provided, please see Section 7 of the handbook.

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.

Insurance

The charity insures the building, but you must insure the contents

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

You will 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 unless you live in a listed building where, at the current time, the charity takes on this responsibility.

Television licences are free to all people aged 75 and over who are in receipt of pension credit.

There are television concessions available to:

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

Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your own property clean, including cleaning the windows.

Cleaning any communal areas is the responsibility of the charity

Training

When you move into your home appropriate trustee 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 and emergency call systems

Refuse collection and recycling

Refuse is normally collected each week in line with district council guidelines

Telephones

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for installing a telephone in your property through your chosen provider. The Tunstall Emergency Call System relies on the existence of a British Telecom or equivalent landline connection.

Section 6 – General Information

Electricity Meter Mains Switch and Fuse Box

The trustees will explain the location of the above before you move in

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.

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.

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.

Social Media

Those residents using social media such as Facebook and X, 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

Complaints

If you have any concerns, please bring them to the attention of the trustees 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 or treasurer 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.

- Initial complaints can be made by telephone, face to face, email or letter, to the relevant Complaints Officer ie Housing Maintenance or Allocations & Monitoring. A record of the progress of individual complaints will be kept by the Trust.
- Complaints will be dealt with promptly, thoroughly, honestly and openly.
- Depending on the type of complaint, they will be reported in the bi-monthly Maintenance or Allocations Report and recorded in the Bi-monthly Meeting Minutes of the Trust
- Residents have the option to have a representative make a complaint on their behalf if they so wish.
- Complaints will be acknowledged either verbally or in writing and a record of the complaint made, within five working days of receipt.
- A response to the complaint in writing will be made within 10 working days of receipt, together with an outline of how the complaint will be dealt with or rejected and if the latter, the reason for the rejection.
- If the complaint is rejected, then the resident has up to 20 working days to appeal through the Clerk to the Chairman of the charity, who will acknowledge within five working days of the appeal and give their response to the appeal within 20 working days of receipt.

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.

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.