

BEXLEY UNITED CHARITIES

Handbook for residents of Styleman's Almshouses

Contents:

Section 1 - Introduction

Welcome

Section 2 - History, Governance and Management

Historical Note

Constitution

Management

The Almshouses

Section 3 - Health and Safety

Doctor and Dentist

Emergency Contact Details

Fire Precautions

Avoiding the Risk of Fire

Slips, Trips and Falls

Security

Keys

Routine Visits

Section 4 - Terms of Occupancy

Letter of Appointment

Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

Consulting Residents

Absence from Home

Legionella

Central Heating, electricity and hot water

Improvements to your home

Employment

Visitors – Family and Friends

Pets

Moving Out

Re-Housing

Gifts and Legacies

Section 5 - Services Provided

The Clerk

Gardens

Repairs and Decorations

Insurance

Television

Cleaning

Refuse collection and recycling

Telephones

Section 6 - General Information

Electrical Meter Mains Switch and Fuse Box

Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit

Housing Benefit/Local Housing

Allowance/Universal Credit

Parking

Wills

Next of Kin

Lasting Power of Attorney

Local Organisations and Services

Social Media

Section 7 - If things go wrong

Personal Problems

Complaints

Housing Ombudsman

Section 1 – Introduction

Bexley United Charities (the Charity) would like to extend a 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 Clerk to the trustees 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 significant changes will 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.

We should make clear that the trustees are responsible for the almshouse buildings, but we are not responsible for providing care or assistance for residents, nor do we have the resources to do so. That said, of course we do everything possible to make your life here as enjoyable as possible, as described in the following sections. Please also bear in mind that we have restrictions and obligations placed on us by the Charity Commission, and by the fact that the almshouses are listed buildings and situated in a conservation area.

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 Charity and the almshouses.

Once again, a very warm welcome.

Neil Sayers
Chair of the trustees

13 High Street
Bexley
Kent
DA5 1AB

Section 2 – History, Governance and Management

A. Historical Note

John Styleman of Danson made his fortune in Java, Vietnam and India, working for and with the East India Company. Between 1692 and 1695, he was Mayor of Madras on India's Coromandel coast. In 1697, while still in India, he purchased the Danson estate outside Bexley. He lived at Danson from about 1700, on his return to England.

He died in 1734, and left the income from his considerable estate to his fourth wife, Mary, for her lifetime. In his Will he specified that when she died, half the value of his Danson estate should be put in trust to build and maintain almshouses for twelve families in Bexley. The almshouses were to be built on the nearest available land to the parish church in Bexley.

Mary Styleman died in 1750, and the almshouses were built and were ready for occupation in 1755. The front aspect of the almshouses has changed very little since they were built, and they are now Grade 2 listed buildings. Over the years, the almshouses have been modernised and extended to make them more suitable for modern living.

B. Constitution

The almshouses were initially administered by trustees appointed by John Styleman in his will, who appointed their own successors. In the 1870s these trustees were replaced by the Vicar and Church-wardens of St. Mary's Church, Bexley. In 1879, the church passed the control and administration of all its charities to a new charity known as Bexley United Charities.

Bexley United Charities (the Charity) manages the almshouses to this day. It is a registered charity, now governed by a Charity Commission Scheme dated 5 March 1940, as varied by the Charity Commission on 1 April

1980 and 21 January 1998. Its registered charity number is 205964.

C. Management

The Charity is governed by a board of voluntary trustees. Day-to-day management of its affairs is delegated to the Clerk to the trustees.

As at 2025, the trustees of the Charity are:

Mr N. Sayers – Chair of trustees
Cllr. K. Christoforides
Mr. R. Diment
Mrs. S. Malt
Mr. J. Waters
Rev. C. Wood

The registered address of the Charity, and the address for all formal communication, is:

13 High Street
Bexley
Kent
DA5 1AB

The Clerk to the trustees is Ken Newman, who can be contacted by post at the above address, or in the following ways:

Email: Bexleyunitedcharities@outlook.com

Phone: 07831 838054 (within the hours of 09.00 to 17.00 weekdays or in an emergency).

D. The Almshouses

The almshouses in Bexley High Street are all of the same size and design, with a communal rear garden. The Charity provides the necessary equipment for the almshouses' kitchens and bathrooms, and decorates the almshouses, but otherwise it makes the almshouses available on an unfurnished basis, and it is for residents to provide their own furnishings.

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. The Charity

does, however, place some responsibilities on residents, and these are set out in this handbook.

Residents may expect to continue in occupation for as long as they need the accommodation, 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 a resident's health deteriorates, they must be willing to accept advice and guidance, either from their own doctor or, in exceptional circumstances, a medical consultant appointed by the trustees. The trustees will also consult with the next of kin, Social Services and other agencies if necessary.

Section 3 – Health and Safety

A. Doctor

If you do not have a General Practitioner (GP), the Clerk to the trustees will be able to give you the names of local GP practices. We do ask that you provide the name of your GP to the Clerk to the trustees.

You have every right to see your GP, nurse or other carer in confidence and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself. However, if you have a chronic health problem, it would be advisable, and you might feel safer, to make the Clerk 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.

B. Emergency Contact Details

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

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

C. Fire Precautions

The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. The trustees frequently review the fire policies.

All of the almshouses are fitted with fire alarms and smoke detectors which, on sensing smoke, will trigger an alarm. **If a resident is hard of hearing, they should ask**

for appropriate equipment to alert them in the event of an emergency.

All residents are provided with fire extinguishers and fire blankets. Please be sure to keep these readily to hand and ensure you know how to use them.

Evacuation Policy: When you hear the fire alarm, evacuate to the nominated meeting point, which is the rear of the back garden. 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 dwelling immediately.

D. Avoiding the Risk of Fire

Please be conscious of the risk of fire, for example, regularly checking at night or before going out that you have fully switched off electrical appliances. It is especially important that those who smoke in their own almshouse do so responsibly and are aware of the risk of falling asleep or getting too close to curtains while smoking. Please do not wedge doors open or leave chip pans unattended and use ash trays if you smoke. Please do not smoke in bed.

Please be considerate to others and avoid smoking in their presence as the risks associated with passive smoking are now well recognised. If you are expecting visitors, please air the room beforehand so that any smoke can dissipate.

E. Slips, Trips and Falls

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

F. Security

Please consider the following:

DO:

- Keep your front door locked at all times;
- Use the spy hole and chain to identify callers before opening the door; and
- Use the chain to open the door a few inches when identifying callers. Please do not keep the chain in permanent use, as this may prevent access in an emergency.

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; or
- Keep large amounts of cash or valuables in your home.

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

G. Keys

The Clerk holds a spare 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. Chains should only be used when you wish to identify callers before deciding whether to let them in.

The local police Crime Reduction Officer 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 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 Clerk, as this may lessen security.

H. Routine Visits

New residents will be visited in their home by the Clerk 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.

Section 4 – Terms of Occupancy

A. 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 nor 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 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 was no longer able to look after themselves safely or to live independently, even with the help of the social services or family support;
- A resident consistently failed to pay weekly maintenance contributions (WMC) on a regular basis without good reason;
- The trustees deem the resident's behaviour to be unreasonable and anti-social, either in respect of other residents or members of staff;
- A resident's circumstances have changed significantly to the extent that they are no longer qualified to live in the almshouses as a beneficiary, or did not have the required qualification when first appointed;
- A resident failed to comply with the rules and regulations made by the Charity; or
- A 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 materially 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 will only set aside – that is, terminate – 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.

B. Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

Weekly maintenance contributions are payable in advance on the first of each month. For administrative convenience, we request that this is done through standing order or direct debit. If you receive Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance from Bexley Council, arrangements can be made for your Housing Benefit to be paid directly to the Charity. If you are experiencing difficulties in claiming, please let the Clerk 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

The trustees usually review the level of WMC annually, and make changes with effect from 1 April. However, the Charity reserves the right to review this more frequently if they consider it is in the Charity's best interests to do so.

C. Consulting Residents

The trustees will hold meetings from time to time to discuss the running of the almshouses with you and your neighbours. You can also talk to a trustee in private by asking the Clerk 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 making significant changes to the gardens;
- Before anyone enters your home; or
- If you raise a difficulty with them.

D. Absence from Home

You are expected to be in full-time occupation of your almshouse and frequent and extended periods of absence might lead the trustees to conclude that you have less need for almshouse accommodation than others.

Residents should 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 of more than three days, please inform the Clerk of your temporary address and contact phone number. Should you return earlier than planned, please inform the Clerk when you arrive home, as it is important in an emergency for the Charity to know which residents are away.

E. 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 procedures:

- Ensure the thermostat on your hot water system is set to a minimum of 65°C 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 almshouse during the winter months, please discuss with the Clerk how much heating is required to minimise the risk of burst pipes, etc.

F. Central heating, electricity and hot water

In addition to the WMC, residents are responsible for paying their own utility bills. Meters will be read prior to occupation.

Residents should not use any heating appliance that has not either been supplied by the Charity, such as portable gas or electric heaters, or approved by the Clerk, as these pose a safety risk. The use of paraffin oil is strictly prohibited.

G. Improvements to your Home

You should not make any alterations to the internal or external fabric of your almshouse, or undertake any plumbing or electrical installations, without the prior permission of the trustees. No shelves, cupboards, locks or fittings shall be fixed or removed without prior consent.

Where a resident wants changes or repairs to an almshouse, please discuss the matter with the Clerk. If the Charity agrees that the work is necessary and that it is liable for the cost of the work, then the Clerk will commission that work. For any work that the Charity approves but where it is agreed that the cost falls to the resident, then the resident must use a contractor approved by the Charity (please also see page 11).

As the trustees have responsibility for the long-term maintenance of the almshouses, they have to consider individual residents' 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, trustees will not approve it. As you live in a listed building, some alterations will need local authority consent before any work can be carried out.

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 such improvements is the responsibility of the Charity.

Whilst the Charity will always respect the privacy of residents, it is a condition of residence 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.

H. Employment

Residents are not allowed to use their almshouses as a place of business.

I. Visitors – Family and Friends

Visitors are not permitted to stay overnight in an almshouse, except with the prior consent of the Clerk. It is important that the Clerk is aware of any overnight visitors for safety and security reasons.

Where permission is granted, normally only occasional short stays will be permitted, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

J. Pets

The trustees will have explained their policy on pets to you at interview and before you moved in. Due to the size and situation of the almshouses, residents are not allowed to keep ambulatory pets in their almshouses overnight.

Pets are allowed to visit almshouses during the day, but if this is to be a regular occurrence we ask that the resident makes the Clerk aware of the arrangement. Visiting pets must be supervised at all times.

K. Guide Dogs

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

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

If a resident were to leave their almshouse 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 1 month. 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.

M. Moving almshouses

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 such a move be necessary.

N. 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 Chair of the trustees. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Section 5 – Services Provided

A. The Clerk

The trustees emphasise that there is no warden patrol of the almshouses and that the Clerk is responsible only for administration, maintenance and collection of the WMC. Any assistance required by you in respect of your personal well-being must be met by either a relative, friend or Social Services. The Clerk is not on call and should only be contacted in the event of problems relating to the structure or internal workings of the building.

The Clerk is a part-time officer of the Charity, and neither works set hours in a week nor is resident on site. While he will visit the almshouses regularly, he may also be contacted on 07831 838054 during the hours of 09.00 to 17.00 during weekdays. Please do not call him outside these hours to attend to routine matters which could be left until the next working day.

The trustees employ contractors as required. This covers all building, mechanical, electrical and remedial works. Any maintenance works that a resident may require within their property should be discussed with the Clerk. Should any works requested be over and above those deemed necessary by the Clerk, the resident must use a contractor approved by the charity and the resident would be responsible for those costs.

As already noted, residents should not commission or undertake any maintenance works without first seeking permission from the Clerk.

B. Gardens

The maintenance of the front and rear gardens is the responsibility of the Charity. The Charity employs a gardener, who carries out all gardening and associated works within the confines of the almshouses. He will normally attend on a weekly basis, but may

attend less frequently during the winter months.

For more major work on the trees in the garden, the charity employs a specialist tree surgeon.

If a resident has any specific requests or concerns about the garden or the trees within it, they should discuss them with the Clerk.

The garden shed is the property of the Charity, and is there for the purposes of supporting the maintenance of the gardens. Residents can use it to store small items and tools related to the maintenance of the garden, but must not use it to store large items or items unrelated to garden maintenance.

The summerhouse is for the use of the residents, but should not be used for storage purposes, other than small items relevant to the enjoyment of the building.

C. Repairs and Decorations

The Charity is responsible for both external and internal repairs and decoration to your home. The Charity has a programme of redecoration and refurbishment, but if you consider there is any specific work that should be completed to your dwelling, please report it to the Clerk, who will discuss it with the trustees.

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.

D. Insurance

The Charity insures the almshouse building, but you are required to insure your own property and 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 (the Clerk is not allowed to take responsibility for your money).

E. 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.

The Clerk arranges television licences for each almshouse.

F. Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your own almshouse 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. There is likely to be an additional charge if this becomes necessary.

Storing excess items in your home presents a safety hazard and in extreme cases of hoarding, trustees may have to consider setting aside the resident's appointment.

G. Refuse collection and recycling

Refuse is normally collected each week on Tuesday morning from 6.45 am. The Council has provided one special low-level waste bin for every two almshouses, and these are situated behind the front wall. The almshouses do not use specific recycling bins, and all rubbish should be deposited in the waste bins provided or in the bags that the Council will leave on the grass area in front of your almshouse.

Refuse collection is the responsibility of Bexley Council, and complaints about the service should be addressed directly to the Council's Waste and Recycling Team.

The Council asks that residents do not routinely dispose of household rubbish in the public bins along the High Street.

H. Telephones and internet

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for installing a telephone or internet connection in your dwelling through your chosen provider.

Section 6 – General Information

A. Electricity Meter Mains Switch and Fuse Box

Gas and electricity meters, as well as the fuse box and isolation switch, are located in the Living Room cupboard next to the window in each almshouse.

The water meter is housed in the downstairs toilet next to the Kitchen.

B. Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit

You are responsible for paying your own Council Tax and will receive an annual Council Tax Notice from Bexley Council in March each year. People living alone are currently 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.

C. 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 seek advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or Age UK, whose details are below:

Bexley CAB – Tel: 0808 250 5709
Email: bexleycab.org.uk

Bexley Age UK – Tel: 0208 300 0883
Email: ageuk.org.uk

D. Parking

The Charity does not provide any car parking spaces.

E. 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', the charity's policy is 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 Chair of trustees. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

F. 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 will only be contacted should the trustees have pressing concerns.

G. Lasting Power of Attorney

We strongly recommend 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 incapacity. Again, you should seek legal advice on this from a solicitor.

H. Local Organisations and Services

Many of the Charity's residents take advantage of a rich variety of organisations and services for the elderly in the borough. These include:

- Age UK (Tel: 0208 300 0883)
- Bexley CAB (Tel: 0808 250 5709)

- Bexley Accessible Transport Scheme (Tel: 01322 311333 or Email: enquiries@bexleyct.co.uk)

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

A. 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 any of the trustees and your concerns will be treated in the utmost confidence.

B. Complaints

If you have any concerns, please bring them to the attention of the Clerk, who will do his 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 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 Chair of trustees, asking the trustees to consider the matter. You may, if you wish,

attend any meeting at which your complaint is being discussed, accompanied by a friend or adviser. The Chair will write to you afterwards to advise you of the trustees' decision and to inform you of any action taken to resolve your complaint; and

- 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 Chair 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.

C. 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
PO Box 152
Liverpool L33 7WQ

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 Charity's own procedure for handling complaints has been exhausted.

Revised: October 2024