



St. Thomas's Almshouses

RESIDENTS

HANDBOOK

IMPORTANT

**Please leave this in your
ALMSHOUSE. It belongs with
the property.**



HANDBOOK

FOREWORD & WELCOME

If you are a new Resident, the Pinnock's Charities trustees and Management Team would like to extend a very warm welcome to you. We hope that you will settle in quickly and be incredibly happy here.

Whether you are a new or an existing resident, please use the information in this handbook during your time living at the St. Thomas's Almshouses.

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 Management Team if you need further information on any matters. From time to time, sections of this handbook will be updated, and you will be asked to replace certain pages as needed.

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 changes would usually be discussed with residents beforehand, when you may be given the opportunity to express any views or concerns.

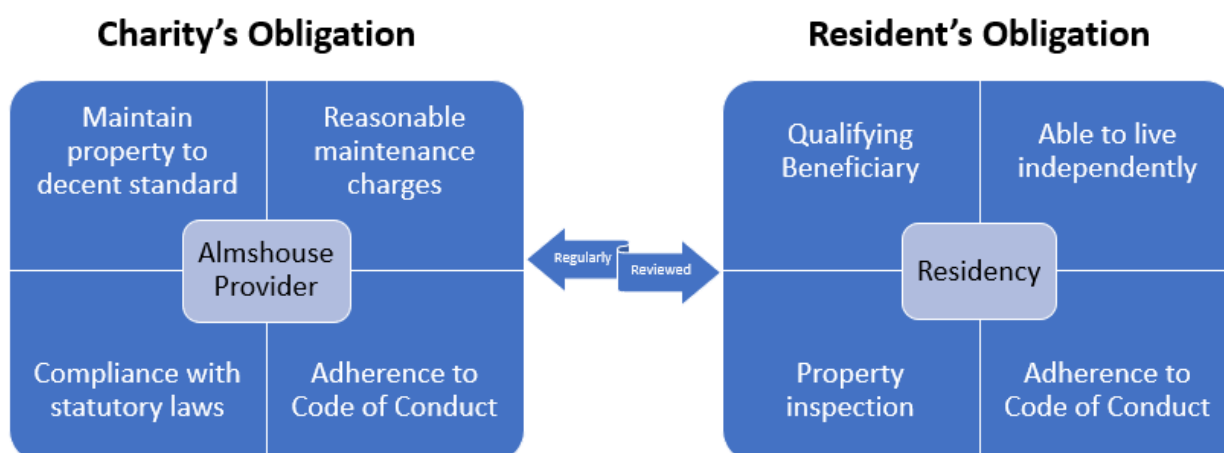
The almshouse is your home, and every effort will be made to help you remain independent, free to choose your own lifestyle and able to benefit from the quiet enjoyment and dignity that the almshouses provide. I am sure you will appreciate the importance of everyone in the community respecting the wishes of others, allowing them their

privacy if that is what they wish and ensuring that rumours and gossip are not allowed to develop.

The Management Team and 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.

Once again, a very warm welcome and we hope that you enjoy the full period of your residence.

Summary of agreement between the charity and residents



CONTACT DETAILS

The Registered address for the Charity, and some contact details you may find useful are below:

The charity's official address is:

Pinnock's Charities
The Lodge
St. Thomas's Almshouses
Old Road West
Gravesend
DA11 7LA

<http://www.pinnocks.org>

Contact details for the Management Team are as follows:

		Telephone	Email
Management Team	Steve Orme	07834 585406	steve.orme@pinnocks.org
Management Team	Emma Pannell	07745 524164	emma.pannell@pinnocks.org
Independent Living Officer	Fran Board	07935 714609	fran.board@pinnocks.org
Multi-skilled Tradesman	Lee Sewell	07745 523863	repairs@pinnocks.org
Clerk to the Trustees	Tim Packham		tim.packham@pinnocks.org

Please note that staff work on a part-time basis. Please leave a message if needed, and they will respond as soon as they can.

Email for general enquiries: enquiries@pinnocks.org

Telephone number for Emergency Repairs only. Out of hours between 6 pm and 8 am weeknights and at weekends.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS
01474 33 77 77

Or contact the telecare provider, who will call the emergency Repairs Team, as necessary. For general repairs and maintenance, please complete a repair form and hand it into the office.

Examples of an emergency repair issue may include:

- Water leaks that cannot be contained
- Total loss of power
- Total loss of mains water
- Backflow from a main drain
- A blocked toilet where it is the only one in the property (but you may be charged if this is due to mis-use – see Chapter Repairs, Decorations and Maintaining Your Property)
- Total loss of heating between 1st November and 30th April (please note that we hold some emergency plug in radiators which we can lend to you in the event of temporary heating issues in your home)
- Being locked in, or out, of your property with no other means of access

Stopcocks: -

The water stopcock is located:

The gas stopcock is located:

These should only be turned in an emergency.

Location of Electricity Mains Switch and Switch Panel: -

The electricity mains switch, and the trip switch are to be found:

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CHAPTER ONE

History of the Charity, Governance, and Policies

1.1 History

In 1624 Henry Pinnock made a will leaving certain property at the junction of Windmill Street and King Street for the “better relief and maintenance of such poor decayed people as should from time-to-time dwell in the ancient parishes of Gravesend and Milton next Gravesend: such dwellings to be forever known as St. Thomas’s Houses”. Further funds were added over the years and in particular the Victoria & Albert Memorial Endowment Funds and the generous will of Mrs Herda Minnis Shaw. The Almshouses moved to their present site in 1901 and were added to in subsequent years. In 1991 a new programme of rebuilding commenced providing good quality housing stock to improve the service the Charity has been able to provide to the community for nearly four hundred years.

1.2 Constitution

The Charity is run in accordance with its governing instrument. This is a Scheme dated 29th June 1982 issued by the Charity Commission. It refers to previous documents, dating back to when the Charity was founded.

1.3 Trustee Body

The Charity is overseen by voluntary Trustees. Day-to-day management is carried out by the Management Team.

1.4 Almshouses

Almshouses are unfurnished dwellings, specially designed with the needs of older people in mind. The aim is to provide convenient and comfortable accommodation in a setting which allows residents to come and go as they please. Residents are encouraged to make friends and share a wider social life through use of the communal lounge and other facilities where they are available.

St. Thomas's Almshouses employ a part-time Independent Living Officer, and each home is connected to a call system. In an emergency, such as sudden illness or after a fall, the resident can get help quickly.

1.5 Policies

For up-to-date policies relating to your period as a resident please contact the Management Team. (e.g., Code of Conduct or Complaints)

CHAPTER TWO

Health, Safety and Welfare

2.1 Health and Safety Policy

The trustees of Pinnock's Charities are committed to ensuring a safe living and working environment for all those who have access to the charity's premises.

This commitment has four elements:

1. Full compliance with current and future Health and Safety legislation and regulations.
2. An assessment of the risks faced by everyone (residents, staff, visitors, and agents/contractors) who has access to the Almshouses and appropriate action taken to minimise these risks
3. Provision of appropriate and suitable training and information to ensure that everyone is aware of the risks and knows how to respond. Training should be provided for all staff with a recommendation that a minimum level of health and safety training should be achieved within six weeks of starting in post. There should be a mechanism for annual refresher training, to ensure that knowledge is kept up to date.
4. Regular inspections of the properties and subsequent maintenance programs that give high priority to health and safety issues. Any defects with health and safety implications should be dealt with in an appropriate timescale. 24 hours is suggested.

When contractors are being selected, it is good practice to ensure that they have sight of the contractor's health and safety policies. Annual health and safety inspections and fire risk assessments are also carried out.

The Management Team are responsible to the trustees for health and safety matters in the charity. However, everyone has a part

to play. Anyone who is concerned about a health and safety issue must bring it to the attention of the Management Team as soon as possible. Contact details are within this Residents Handbook.

Slips, Trips and Falls – The Management Team wish to draw your attention to the need to exercise care when using the footpaths around the site in wet, snowy, or icy weather. Whilst every reasonable precaution will be taken to keep it hazard free, residents are reminded to use the handrails where provided

2.2 Legionella

The risk of contracting Legionnaire's Disease from a domestic property where the water services are often used is extremely 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.

2.3 Condensation, damp, and mould

We all produce moisture in our homes from daily activities, such as breathing, cooking, washing, and drying clothes, showering, and bathing. There are things you can do, however, to reduce the possibility of condensation, damp and mould developing.

- **Good ventilation.** Do not cover air bricks or ventilation holes and do not switch off or block extractor fans. If your extractor fan is broken or too noisy, please contact us. Do not push furniture or other items against the wall. Instead, leave a small gap to allow air flow (mould can form behind furniture or on other items left against the wall)
- **Cooking.** Using a lid helps reduce steam and condensation in your kitchen and it means you can turn down the heat, saving money and energy. Open a window or use an extractor fan and keep windows open or fans switched on for 20 minutes afterwards. Close kitchen doors to stop condensation spreading to other rooms.
- **Cleaning.** Wipe down surfaces daily where condensation forms or moisture settles, such as windowsills, to prevent mould growth. Use a squeegee wiper to wipe down any excess moisture in the bathroom after every bath or shower. If you see mould growing, clean it with an antimould cleaner as soon as possible to stop it spreading.
- **Heating your home.** Set your thermostat to 18–21°C. Always keep your heating on a low setting so your home does not get too cold. Please contact the Management Team for help with your heating controls if needed.
- **Drying clothes.** Dry clothes outside if possible; if not, dry them in a cooler room with a window open and the door closed. If you use a tumble dryer, use the condensing type,

or ensure the exhaust vent is professionally installed, do not just hang it out of a window. Try not to use radiators to dry clothes, this stops them working properly which can lead to a colder home and higher heating costs.

- **Leaks.** Other reasons for mould include leaking pipes, rain entering or damp rising from the ground in basement or ground-floor properties. Please tell us as soon as possible if you see signs of a leak or water ingress. We can organise a surveyor to check your property.

2.4 Emergency Call System

Unless a resident has explicitly opted out, each property has been equipped with an emergency call unit, and a wearable pendant (or pull cord in some cases). The call unit is connected to a call centre, who hold details of each resident, any existing medical information; emergency contact number for residents' family/friends and any key safe numbers.

In the event of a sudden illness or accident, please press the pendant (or pull the cord) to get help – and this will transfer to the call centre. Or dial 999.

2.5 Fire Precautions

The Almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. Where a fire alarm has been installed, the trustees will arrange for a fire drill from time to time and it is in everyone's interest that you should cooperate fully on these occasions.

Please make sure that you know the location of the fire points and can find them in the dark.

The fire assembly points are as follows:

Bungalows 1 – 3 and flats 4 – 18 – the car park adjoining

Flats 19 – 40 – the car park in front of the Lodge

Flats 41 – 60 and bungalows 61 – 63 – the car park backing on to the gardens in Pinnock's Avenue.

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. Do not attempt to put out the fire or to collect personal belongings. Stay calm and help other residents to leave the building if it is safe to do so.

Leave the premises immediately shutting the door behind you.

Please DO ask the Management Team for help in understanding the following should you need to:

- what to do if the alarm rings,
- what to do if you discover a fire
- how to use the fire blankets if provided

We request that you DO NOT smoke within your property and please DO dispose of smoking materials safely.

Please DO NOT

- leave pans (especially chip pans) unattended
- leave lit candles unattended or near drapes/curtains
- attempt to light any fire

2.6 Security

Please consider the following:

DO keep your front door locked at all times.

Use the spy hole and the voice entry system, if available, to identify callers before opening the door.

DO NOT allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity; if you are in doubt, please call a family friend or the emergency control centre (by using your pendant) or the police, on 999.

DO NOT leave ground floor windows open so that an intruder can gain access keep cash or valuables in your home

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

2.7 Access Keys

A spare key is held 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 consent as these may delay helpers in an emergency. The Management Team may be able to advise on alternative security arrangements.

Your privacy will be respected. The Management Team and contractors have 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.

2.8 Doctor

The name of your doctor must be given to the Management Team so that help can be obtained in an emergency.

You have every right to see your doctor, nurse, or other carer alone, and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself if you wish. However, if you do have a chronic health problem, you may feel safer if the Independent Living Officer, who is part of the Management Team, knows about it so that sensible action may be taken in an emergency. Anything you tell the Independent Living Officer will be kept confidential.

2.9 Emergencies and Sickness

If you are ill or in difficulties, the emergency contact centre, via your pendant (or pull cord), will make every effort to contact relatives, friends, the doctor, ambulance, or social services on your behalf.

To make it possible to act quickly, the Independent Living Officer or another member of the Management Team will need a note of the names and addresses of your nearest relatives or friends and of your doctor. Please let them know about any changes of address or telephone numbers of your relatives, friends, and your doctor.

Please make sure that the Independent Living Officer or another member of the Management Team is notified if you are ill. This is particularly important if you are going into hospital or returning home after admission.

If you have a disability or become disabled while living in the almshouse, it may be possible to obtain equipment or to make alterations to your home to help you live an independent life. Ask a Member of the Management Team about this. Please do not make any structural alterations to your home (e.g., fitting a stair lift) without permission.

CHAPTER THREE

Services Provided

3.1 The Management Team & the Independent Living Officer.

The Management Team including the Independent Living Officer, are employed by the Charity to provide day to day management of the site, and to help residents live as independently as possible within the communal setting of the almshouses.

3.2 Communal Facilities

The Minna Shaw room is for the use of the residents. It is for you and your neighbours, as well as your family and friends from time to time, in discussion with the Management Team to decide what sort of activities you wish to arrange. There may be a residents' committee to do this. The Management Team will give help and advice if asked and should be kept informed of future plans.

3.3 Insurance

The Charity insures the buildings but not your home contents. Please ensure you have adequate home contents insurance.

Please do not keep more cash in your home than you need for your day-to-day expenses. Please put the rest in a bank or building society. Do not ask the Management Team or any contractors to take care of money for you as they are not allowed to do so.

3.4 Television

For residents over 75 years old the television licence is (at the time of publication) free. Those retired and aged between 60 and 75 years old may be entitled to a concessionary television licence (currently £7.50). If so the £7.50 will be collected by the Management Team. For anyone else, eligibility for a concessionary

licence will be assessed according to the licencing rules in place at the time. Please ask the Management Team for more information.

There are restrictions on TV aerials. There are communal aerials on the site so that you will only need a Freeview box or Freeview ready set. Aerial sockets for connection are in each flat or bungalow. No satellite dishes are allowed.

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

3.5 Gardens

The gardens have been laid out for the benefit of all residents, and all areas are communal. The garden work is carried out by contractors employed by the trustees, but residents are also welcome to help with weeding or tidying if they wish. Residents are allowed to have potted plants in the areas immediately outside the front of the properties, but these must be kept properly maintained and must not limit access to the windows to allow for cleaning or to grassed areas for grass cutting.

Similarly, garden furniture belonging to residents may be situated within the grounds for the use of residents and their visitors, but the Management Team reserves the right to move furniture which is blocking access or restricting upkeep of grounds, and to remove furniture which is considered unsafe and liable to cause accidents. Where possible, we will consult with you about any removal of furniture.

CHAPTER FOUR

Repairs, Decorations & Maintaining Your Property

4.1 The Charity's responsibilities :

The Management Team, on behalf of the trustees have a duty to ensure that each property is maintained to a decent homes' standard.

The Management Team are responsible for keeping the structure and outside of the property in good repair, including:

- External walls, external doors, external window frames and sills;
- Drains (*but see note 1 below*), gutters and external pipes;
- Access paths and steps to individual properties;
- The roof and any chimney;
- The internal structure;
- External decoration

Note 1: Drains: Never flush wipes or sanitary products of any kind down the toilet. They can easily block the drains. If your drain or waste pipe gets blocked by such objects, or any other object which is a non-flushable item, we (the Management Team) will charge you for the cost of clearing it.

We are responsible for keeping in a good state of repair and proper working order:

- Installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity, and sanitation. The service up to and including the gas and electrical meter is the responsibility of the service provider;
- Installations for room and water heating fitted by us;
- Water supply distribution pipe work from the water company main supply pipe to the internal property supply

point/s which you connect to appliances and fittings that use water inside your home;

- Shared lighting serving the buildings or grounds.
- Glazed Units (which will usually be part of a planned maintenance programme).

4.2 What the Charity is not responsible for:

- Faults on cookers or cooker connections (please always seek our advice and find a qualified person to install such items);
- The failure of the gas company to supply gas;
- Faults on domestic electrical items such as kettles and fridges;
- The failure of the electricity companies to supply electricity or maintain their equipment;

Repairs caused by misuse or neglect of the property by residents and residents' visitors to the property.

4.3 Resident's Duties and Responsibilities:

As a resident, you are responsible for keeping your home in a reasonable condition, and you may be charged for certain minor repairs and maintenance tasks (*but see note 2 below*), which includes, but is not limited to:

- Repairs which are due to damage or neglect by you, a member of your household or a visitor (see the following section 'Rechargeable repairs');
- Lock changes where the keys or key fobs have been lost or stolen;
- Replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes;
- Replacing toilet seats, toilet roll holders and towel rails or rings.
- Replacing plugs for sinks, wash basins and baths;
- Damp and mould which are because of lifestyle/poor heating and ventilation;

- Plumbing to washing machines, dishwashers and so on, unless these have been fitted by us;
- Replacing shower hoses;
- Removing blockages to your sink, toilet, wash basin or bath;
- Repairing minor cracks to plaster;
- Decorating the inside of the property;
- Replacing glass in windows or doors which is broken by someone in your household or a visitor;
- Adapting inside doors to fit carpets or flooring that you have installed;
- Fitting extra locks;
- Fitting draught excluders;
- Fitting doorbells;
- Installing gas or electric cookers (this should be done by a competent person);
- Getting rid of unwanted household goods.

Note 2: We understand that if you are elderly or vulnerable, you may not be able to carry out repairs which are normally your responsibility, and we will consider doing these for you, although some of this may be rechargeable. If you think this may apply, please contact us.

4.4 Rechargeable Repairs:

You may be charged for the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Blockages in toilets and waste pipes caused by mis-use;
- Repairs to locks or doors due to lost or stolen keys; and
- Broken glass in windows.
- Any other damage to the property caused by mis-use

4.5 Optional Services:

In addition to some of the items listed above under Resident's Responsibilities, we may also be able to provide a quote for some of the following for you, which would then be undertaken by our member of staff, or by a contractor appointed by us.

- Decorating the interior of your property;
- Installing a key safe;
- Arranging for a cleaner;
- Installing doorbells;
- Furniture removal and installation;
- Carpet laying

Any other maintenance or repairs subject to approval

4.6 Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your almshouse clean. If this is difficult, please tell the Independent Living Officer who will help you arrange for cleaning help.

You are responsible for cleaning the inside of the windows in your almshouse, if you cannot do so safely, please contact the Independent Living Officer. The trustees may employ a window cleaner who cleans the outside of all windows.

CHAPTER FIVE

Terms of Occupancy

5.1 Letter of Appointment

You will have a copy of the Letter of Appointment, which you signed when you were appointed as a resident. As a beneficiary of an almshouse charity, you are not a tenant, but the trustees cannot ask you to leave unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as when you cease to be an eligible beneficiary of the charity, or you do not comply with the terms of your Letter of Appointment (see "Moving Out" Chapter 5.8). You have agreed to pay a weekly maintenance contribution that includes an amount for services provided.

5.2 Relatives and Visitors

The Management Team cannot take the place of your relatives or friends. We hope they will give you just the same support as they would if you were living in ordinary housing. With their help and co-operation, and support from Social Services, if necessary, we hope that you will be independent for as long as you wish.

Your home is not suitable to accommodate extra people. If you wish to have a relative or friend to stay for a night you must seek the permission of the Management Team in advance. We need to know who is in the almshouses for safety and security of the whole community. You need to remember that you are responsible for your visitors at all times.

5.3 Absence from Home

If you go away for any period, please inform the Independent Living Officer or another member of the Management Team in case an emergency arises in your absence. Should you decide to return home earlier than expected please also advise the Team. Please tell the trustees and get their agreement if you plan to be away for more than 28 days.

And if you are away from your home for more than a couple of days, please follow the legionella advice contained within this handbook.

5.4 Consulting Residents

The Management Team 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 member of the team or a trustee in private. Consultation with the residents about the day to day running of the charity's almshouses is a form of participation which will benefit all concerned. The Management Team welcome the residents' views on matters affecting their quality of life at the almshouses.

The Management Team will (unless it is an emergency and there is no time for discussion) consult you:

- Before any work is done on your almshouse
- Before making significant changes to the communal facilities, including the gardens
- Before anyone enters your home

5.5 Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

The WMC is due each Monday in advance. If you receive housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit, the full or a partial amount of the WMC may be paid directly to the charity. Please speak to a member of the team for more information.

The WMC covers part of the cost of running the almshouses and includes:

- Repairs and maintenance services within your almshouse and around the site
- Provision and costs of the communal hall and rooms
- Staff salaries
- Insurance

- Refuse and recycling collection
- Upkeep of the gardens
- Upkeep of the car parking areas
- Upkeep of any gates or fences within or on the boundary of the site
- Cleaning of the communal areas
- Provision of an emergency call system
- Security systems

5.6 Housing Benefit

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have little or no capital, or if you are below state retirement age and you have limited income, you will almost certainly be entitled to Housing Benefit or a housing element of Universal Credit to help you with your housing costs. To claim Housing Benefit, you should ask for a form from the Housing Benefit Customer Services of Gravesham Borough Council.

The Independent Living Officer will help you if you are unsure of your entitlement or need help in completing the form.

5.7 Electricity and Gas Meters

Neither the meters nor their locks and fittings may be altered without first asking the Management Team for permission from the Management Team. If the supply is disconnected for any reason, please tell the Independent Living Officer or Management Team immediately.

5.8 Moving Out

If you wish to move from the almshouses, you must give the Management Team written notice of at least 4 weeks, and the final day of the licence will always end on a Sunday. 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 the WMC until the

premises are cleared of personal possessions and the keys are returned.

In certain circumstances the trustees may ask you to find alternative accommodation. These are:

1. You do not comply with the rules set out in your Letter of Appointment or elsewhere. These rules are made for the benefit of all residents. Please comply with them.
2. You are no longer qualified to live in the almshouse. It is possible that your circumstances could change to make you no longer eligible. For example, you could win or inherit a significant sum of money.
3. You may no longer be able to look after yourself even with the help of your family and Social Services. There may come a time when this is putting yourself or the other residents at risk or putting too great a burden upon the Independent Living Officer and other staff.

The trustees will only set aside the appointment (ask you to find other accommodation) as a last resort, after a fair process of investigation and warning. They will give you as much time and help as possible to find alternative accommodation.

5.9 Re-Housing

Residents who wish to change their accommodation within the site may apply to the Independent Living Officer or contact any of the Management Team for the matter to be considered by the trustees.

The trustees via the Management Team may require you to move to another of the charity's almshouses when major repair work is being carried out. You will be given at least three months warning.

5.10 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 a member of the Management Team or a trustee. All such matters will be dealt with confidentially.

CHAPTER SIX

General Information

6.1 Charges

Each resident is responsible for paying council tax and the metered water, gas, electricity, and telephone/broadband charges for their property.

6.2 Improvements or alterations to your Home

Residents are not allowed to make any alterations to their almshouses nor to the electrical fittings. Periodic redecoration will be carried out as required but residents are permitted to re-emulsion walls if they so wish. Please, however, contact the team to inform them of the plans for redecoration. Wallpaper must not be hung. The basic carpet provided in each almshouse must be retained although a resident is permitted to lay another carpet on top of it. Safety flooring is provided by the trustees in the kitchen and bathroom. This must not be replaced or covered over.

6.3 Pets

Due to the communal nature of the site, no pets may be kept, and visitors may not bring their pets on site either.

6.4 Parking of Vehicles

Some car parking spaces are provided within the site, but none are allocated. Please do not park other than in the marked parking spaces or allow your visitors to do so, as they may block the way for ambulances or fire engines in an emergency. Non-residents cannot park their cars overnight, nor can they leave them here during the day unless they are in the process of visiting a resident.

6.5 Wills

You are strongly advised to make a will. If you wish to leave individual property to a relative or friend a will is essential. Please ensure a member of your family knows the location of your will, or, if applicable details of your solicitor if they hold your will.

A solicitor is the best person to help you make a will, and if you require assistance in finding one, we suggest you contact the local Citizens Advice Bureau.

6.6 Waste disposal and recycling

All recycling and rubbish should be put in the appropriate large bins, in the bin area. All kitchen food waste and any personal waste should be securely wrapped before being put into the correct communal bin. The Independent Living Officer or any member of the Management Team can help with any questions about disposal of rubbish. If you are not sure where rubbish or recycling should go, please ask.

The council collection of the communal bins is (at the time of publication) weekly.

There is a cost to the charity of these communal bins, and we ask everyone to play their part in using them correctly. Failure to do so could result in fines to the charity and increased costs to run the site.

No food, other than proprietary bird food, in suitable bird food containers, should be left out on the grass or any other area, as this attracts vermin and is a health hazard.

CHAPTER SEVEN

If things go wrong

7.1 Personal Problems

If you have any personal problems over money or any other matter and you have no relative or friend you feel able to consult, the trustees or Management Team will be glad to give whatever help or advice they can. Let the Independent Living Officer know if you wish to see a trustee at any time. Matters of this nature will be dealt with in confidence.

7.2 Complaints procedure

If you have any concerns, please bring them to the attention of a member of the Management Team who will do their best to resolve them. In most cases, minor issues can be dealt with informally, quickly, and efficiently and to the resident's satisfaction. The Management Team 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 a member of the Management Team.
- If the Management Team 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 (details near the beginning of this handbook). 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 the meeting when your complaint is being discussed, accompanied by a

friend or adviser. The chair of trustees 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 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.

If you remain dissatisfied following consideration by, and the decision of, the trustees, and if the charity remains a registered housing provider, you have the right to take your complaint to The Independent Housing Ombudsman whose address is: 81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN. Telephone 0300 111 3000, Fax: 020 7831 1942,

info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

When writing to the Ombudsman please state your full name and address, telephone number and set out the details of your complaint. The Ombudsman will only be able to consider a complaint if he/she is satisfied that the charity's own complaints procedure, as detailed above, has been fully exhausted and that it falls within his/her jurisdiction.