



KENDAL ALMSHOUSE CHARITY

Resident's Handbook

Name:

Address:

Date of Residency:



THE ALMSHOUSE ASSOCIATION

KENDAL ALMSHOUSE CHARITY

FOREWORD

This handbook provides you with information about occupying your almshouse, about the Charity, its general administration and management. It supplements and explains the rules and regulations set out in the Letter of Appointment, a copy of which you signed when you accepted appointment. The Trustees hope that the information this book provides will help you to be happy here.

RESIDENT'S HANDBOOK

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CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY OF THE CHARITY, GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES

1.1 History

The Kendal Almshouse Charity is an amalgamation of six original charitable organisations; The Sleddal Victoria Jubilee Almshouses, The John Thomas Airey Trust, Sandes Hospital, Mrs John Aston Watkins Almshouses, Nobles Rest Homes, and the Kendal War Memorial Trust

Presently there are forty-one dwellings.

1.2 Constitution

The Charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The governing instrument dated 22nd March 2017 sets out the scheme for the regulation of the Kendal Almshouse Charity.

1.3 Trustee Body

The Charity is administered by voluntary Trustees. Trustees are voluntary and receive no remuneration. Day-to-day management is carried out by the Clerk to the Trustees, Colin Tomlinson, who can be contacted at H&H Land & Estates, 36 Finkle Street, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4AB.

1.4 Almshouses

Almshouses are unfurnished dwellings, usually 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.

Almshouses provide security and residents are encouraged to make friends and share a wider social life.

CHAPTER TWO

HEALTH AND SAFETY

2.1 Health and Safety Policy

The Trustees of Kendal Almshouse Charity are committed to ensuring a safe living and working environment for all those who have access to the Charity's premises.

This commitment has three 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 Charity and appropriate action taken to minimise these risks.
3. Regular Quinquennial Inspections of the properties and subsequent maintenance programmes 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.

Quinquennial Inspections are primarily concerned with maintaining buildings and fabric and arrange mandatory inspections i.e. gas, but not limited to. Access is essential in implementing recommendations or action.

When Trustees are selecting contractors, we ensure that they have sight of the contractors' health and safety policies. Trustees should also carry out regular health and safety inspections and risk assessments.

Colin Tomlinson (Clerk to the Trustees) is 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 Trustees as soon as possible via the Clerk.

KAC has a residents representative which can be contacted via the office.

Showers

If a shower is fitted in your home and is not used for a prolonged period of time (on holiday or in hospital, for instance), there is a significantly higher risk to users from inhaling spray containing legionella bacteria when it is brought into use once more. Please allow the shower to run for a minute or two, before using.

2.2 Fire Precautions

The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. Where a smoke alarm has been installed, occupiers are responsible for maintenance.

2.3 Security

Please consider the following:

DO keep your front door locked at all times.

If there is a spy hole and chain to identify callers **before** opening the door, the chain should only be used to open the door a few inches when identifying callers and **not** be kept in permanent use.

DO NOT allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity; if you are in doubt, please call the Clerk to the Trustees, a family friend.

Leave ground floor windows open so that intruders can gain access.

Keep cash or valuables in your home.

BE AWARE OF Bogus officials and workmen not instructed by the Clerk. Always ask for proof of identity.

2.4 The Master Key

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. Chains should **only be used** when you wish to identify callers before deciding whether to let them in.

The Police Crime Reduction Officer will be able to advise on making your home more secure.

Your privacy will be respected. The Clerk and his staff 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

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

CHAPTER THREE

SERVICES PROVIDED

3.1 Repairs and Decorations

The Trustees are responsible for both external and internal repairs and external decoration to your home. 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 redecoration. You will be informed when the work will start and how long it is planned to take. Workmen will not be allowed to enter whilst you are out unless you have agreed to satisfactory arrangements. An exception will have to be made if an emergency arises or access is required to rectify an urgent problem. Please do not let anyone into an almshouse unless you know who they are!

3.2 Insurance

The Charity insures the structure of the buildings and the fixtures. For details contact the Clerk to the Trustees.

The Charity does not insure your personal and household effects. This is your responsibility.

Please do not keep more cash in your home than you need for your day-to-day expenses.

3.3 Television

Those over retirement age, and below 75 years of age, may be entitled to a concessionary television licence which is administered by the Charity.

There are restrictions on the siting of aerials. Please check with the Clerk. Please be considerate to your neighbours of noise nuisance in the use of TVs, radios, stereos and musical instruments.

3.4 Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your almshouse clean.

You are responsible for cleaning the all windows.

3.5 Gardens

The garden has been laid out for the use and benefit of all residents. However, most properties have adjacent areas which residents are encouraged to maintain themselves. The major work of grass cutting is the Charity's responsibility; although, in some cases, more active residents often do this themselves. If you would like to help with gardening please ask the Clerk to the Trustees.

3.6 Induction/Guidance

When you take up the appointment and move into your almshouse the Trustees will arrange an induction, in the form of informal guidance and discussion, to cover:

- Action to be taken in the event of fire and other emergencies
- Operation of all equipment in your home including central heating
- Health and Safety issues
- Security

Further guidance will be given from time to time to update you.

- 3.7** There is a Resident's Representative who reports to the Trustees, David Mould, No.10 Nobles Rest, Tel No: 01539 721638. Should you have any matters to raise, other than those reported to the Clerk's office, please contact David.

3.8 Data Protection

The Charity has a Data Protection Policy. A copy is attached to your Licence to Occupy.

CHAPTER FOUR

TERMS OF OCCUPANCY

4.1 Letter of Appointment

You will have a copy of the Letter of Appointment, which you signed when you were appointed as a occupier. 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 do not comply with the terms of your Letter of Appointment. (see "Moving Out" paragraph 13). You have agreed to pay a Weekly Maintenance Contribution that includes an amount for the services provided.

4.2 Relatives and Visitors

The Clerk 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 elsewhere. With their help and co-operation, and if necessary support from social services, we hope you will be independent for as long as you wish.

Your home is not really suitable to accommodate extra people.

If you wish to have a relative or friend to stay for more than fourteen consecutive nights or on a regular basis please seek the Trustees' permission in advance. We need to know who is in the almshouses for the safety and security of the whole community. However, do remember that you are responsible for your visitors at all times.

4.3 Absence from Home

If you go away for any period please inform the Clerk in case of emergency. Should you decide to return home earlier than expected please also advise the Clerk. It may be advisable to take precautions against frost by turning off and draining the water system. Please tell the Clerk and get his/her agreement if you plan to be away for more than 28 days.

4.4 Consulting Residents

The Trustees will hold meetings from time to time to discuss the running of the almshouses. You can also talk to a Trustee in private by asking the Clerk to the Trustees to arrange this. Consultation and involving 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 inform 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 which you pay
- Before anyone enters your home

4.5 Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

WMC is due each month in arrears and you may pay by bank credit transfer or by cheque. Alternatively, you may find it easier to pay by standing order. The Trustees would prefer if you did not pay cash. This reduces the risk of theft and is better for your safety. You will be given a minimum of month's notice of any increase.

The amount you pay covers part of the cost of running the almshouses and includes:

- water and sewage charges
- repairs and maintenance
- administration costs
- building insurance
- concessionary TV licence
- upkeep of the communal gardens
- cleaning of communal areas

It is highly recommended you take your own contents insurance.

4.6 Housing Benefit

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

to help you with your housing costs. To claim Housing Benefit you should ask for a form at your local Benefits Office (DWP) or Housing Department. If you do have some additional income to your basic retirement pension you may still be entitled to some help with housing costs. Again, forms to claim this are available as above.

Your Clerk, Citizens Advice Bureau or Age UK will help if you are unsure of your entitlement or need help in completing the form.

4.7 Central Heating and Hot Water

Each resident is responsible for his or her own fuel bills.

4.8 Electricity Meters

Neither meters nor their locks and fittings may be altered without first asking the Trustees' permission. If the supply is disconnected for any reason, please tell the Clerk.

4.9 Businesses

You are not permitted to carry out any form of business from your almshouse.

4.10 Moving Out

If you wish to vacate the almshouse you must give the Trustees written notice of at least 4 weeks. 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.

In certain circumstances the Trustees may have no alternative than to set aside your appointment . These are:

- 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.
- 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.
- You may no longer be able to look after yourself even with all the help of your family and/or care provision. There may come a time when this is putting yourself and/or the other residents at risk.

The Trustees will only set aside the appointment 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.

4.11 Re-Housing

Residents who wish to change their accommodation within the Charities housing stock may apply to the Clerk for the matter to be considered by the Trustees.

The Trustees may require you to move to another of the Charity's almshouses when major repair work is being carried out. You will be given as much notice as possible.

4.12 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 confidentially.

4.13 Harassment

Kendal Almshouse Charity take any threat, intimidation or harassment of our staff, agents, trustees, volunteers or residents very seriously.

If it is deemed necessary in order to protect the safety of any member of staff, agent, trustees or volunteer, we will report any behaviour of this type to the appropriate authority [which may include the police].

4.14 Anti-Social Behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour or harassment may include behaviour that is or could be said to be:

- Abusive or aggressive.
- Offensive in either language or general behaviour.
- Bullying or harassing.
- Intimidating or threatening.
- Malicious – This might include, abusive or offensive language or behaviour, making threats of any kind [not simply threats of violence] seeking to bully, intimidate or frightened another person.
- Making derogatory remarks, including any inappropriate remarks in relation to another persons culture, race, faith, gender, sexual orientation or age

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL INFORMATION

5.1 Council Tax

Each resident is responsible for paying his or her Council Tax. You will be advised by the Local Authority how to pay and about available benefits.

5.2 Improvements to your Home

You must not carry out any improvements, alterations, repairs or decoration to your home without first discussing your plans with the Clerk to the Trustees. In some cases the charity will agree to, and may pay for, minor items such as interior decoration. For all other 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, would reduce the amenities for subsequent occupants, or would increase future maintenance costs clearly it would not be approved. If you live in a Listed building, some alterations will need local authority approval and may be denied.

5.3 Pets

The Trustees will have explained their policy on pets to you at interview and before you move in. If you wish to keep a pet you must first obtain the written permission of the Trustees. Small animals or caged birds may be acceptable but must not become a nuisance to other residents.

5.4 Parking of Vehicles

On some sites, spaces for cars are provided. Please do not park elsewhere, or allow your visitors to do so, as they may block the way for ambulances or fire engines in an emergency.

5.5 Emergencies and Sickness

To make it possible to assist in an emergency the Clerk or Trustees will need a note of the names and addresses of your nearest relatives or friends and of your GP practice. Please let them know about any changes of address or telephone numbers of your relatives or friends and of your GP practice.

Please make sure the Clerk is notified if you are admitted to hospital.

If you have a disability or become disabled while living in the almshouse, it may be possible to obtain equipment or to make alternations to your home to help you to live an independent lifestyle; ask Social Services. You must not make any structural alterations to your home (e.g. fitting ramps or stair lifts) without the Trustees' permission.

Home care may be necessary to assist with your well being and independent living.

5.6 Personal Problems

If you have any personal problems over money or any other matter and you have no family or friend who you feel able to consult, the Trustees will be glad to give whatever help or advice they can. Let the Clerk know if you wish to see a Trustee at any time.

5.7 Wills

You are strongly advised to make a Will and organise a Lasting Power of Attorney to a representative or friend. If you wish to leave personal property to a relative or friend a Will is essential. Please inform the Clerk where the Will is kept and who is the executor.

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

5.8 Waste Disposal and Recycling

Waste bins are provided. Please make sure that the waste storage area is kept clean and tidy. All waste food should be wrapped before putting it in the bin.

The Local Authority provides recycling bins or boxes. Please sort your waste according to the way in which it will be taken away/recycled.

5.9 Emergency Repairs

The Clerk's Office is open Mondays – Fridays between 9am – 5pm and on Saturdays 9am – 12noon. The office is closed on Bank Holidays.

5.10 Location of Stopcocks

The water stopcock is –

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The gas stopcock is –

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These should only be turned in an emergency.

5.11 Location of Electricity Mains Switch and Fuse Box

The electricity mains switch is to be found -

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and the fuse box –

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CHAPTER SIX

EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES

- 6.1 If you have a complaint, or a difficulty has arisen which cannot be readily solved by a discussion with the Clerk for example, the matter should be addressed in writing and forwarded to the trustee body
- 6.2 Many people are reluctant to complain. Your Trustees can only resolve difficulties and improve the service they offer, if you advise them when issues arise. Set out below is a procedure to be followed if a resident wishes to raise a complaint in connection with the occupation of his or her almshouse, or about services provided by the charity relating to the almshouses.
- Minor matters, such as small maintenance items, should be referred to the Clerk to the Trustees when they arise. They should be attended to straight away.
 - If the Clerk is unable to resolve the minor matter; or, if there is a persistent problem with pets, loud noise or matters affecting health and safety, the resident should refer this to the Clerk to the Trustees/the Chairman of Trustees in writing. The Trustees wish to emphasise that all communications about complaints will be treated confidentially within the charity.
 - If you have a complaint about staff employed by the charity, other residents or a serious breach of health and safety regulations, you should put your complaint in writing at the outset to the Chairman, 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 advisor.
 - It is important that you raise a difficulty or a complaint as an individual. You should not act as a spokesman or woman on behalf of a number of residents or be cajoled into supporting a particular vociferous or belligerent resident.
 - Trustees are obligated to write to the resident to advise of the action taken to resolve the complaint or difficulty.
- 6.3 Under the Housing Act 1996 all almshouse charities which are, or were, Registered Social Landlords with the Housing Corporation, have a regulatory obligation to maintain a Complaints Procedure.

- 6.4 The charity is a Registered Social Landlord and if you remain dissatisfied following consideration by, and the decision of, the Trustees, you have the right to take your complaint to The Housing Ombudsman Service whose address is: 81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN. Tel: 0300 111 300 Fax: 020 7831 1942. Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk. www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk.
- 6.5 When writing to the Ombudsman please state your full name and address, telephone number (if any) and also set out the details of the complaint. The Ombudsman will only be able to consider a complaint if he is satisfied that the charity's own Complaints Procedure, as detailed above, has been fully exhausted and that it falls within his jurisdiction.

NOTES

The following telephone numbers may be useful to you

Housing Benefit (or Local Housing Allowance) Office: 01539 717717

Age UK: 01539 728180

Citizens Advice Bureau: 01539 738772

Clerk: 01539 721375

Gas Leaks: 0800 111 999

Water Leaks: 0800 330 033

Police: 01539 722611