

GUIDELINES FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF ALMSHOUSE RESIDENTS



1. GENERAL

- (a) These guidelines have been prepared by the Director of the Charity to inform applicants about the process appointment of residents to its almshouses in the city of Winchester.
- (b) The Charity is registered and governed by the Charity Commission and has to adhere to the rules of its charitable scheme as directed by the Charity Commission. Additionally, provision of care and support in the almshouses is regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

2. CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION

- (a) The Charity provides independent living accommodation for people over the age of 60 who can establish a financial and social need for accommodation.

Under the terms of our scheme our priority is to provide accommodation to local people. The Charity will then consider applications from people living in the surrounding villages.

Applications will normally only be accepted from people outside of the area if they can demonstrate a significant need to be accommodated by the Charity e.g. unsuitable accommodation and then only if they have close relatives living in Winchester who will support them.

- (b) The almshouses comprise 25 flats at St John's North, The Broadway, 27 flats at St John's South, The Broadway, 24 flats at St Mary Magdalen, Colebrook Street and 5 flats at Christes Hospital in Symonds Street.
- (c) The appointment of all residents is entirely at the discretion of the Director and Trustees of the Charity. The Director decides which property to allocate to residents after consulting with Matron regarding an applicant's health needs.

In assessing application forms received, the Trustees consider financial need, housing need, immediate care needs and social need. The Trustees also take into account the Charity's vision, mission and values and the willingness of the applicant to integrate into the St John's community and actively participate in social activities; medical or health issues permitting. St John's sustain and support a vibrant community of older people enabling them to live independently for as long as possible. Some of the issues which the Trustees will consider are set out below (although this is not exhaustive):-

(i) **Financial Need**: The Charity provides a significant subsidy in respect of the accommodation for residents. Every applicant is required to disclose on their application form all their income and financial assets, e.g. Bank and/or Building Society accounts, real property (whatever the nature of their interest), financial investments, Deeds of Gifts effected in the last 10 years, Government Benefits, Work Pensions etc they are in receipt. If information given is not complete or misleading, the Charity reserves the right to revoke any appointment made.

The applicant's income should generally not exceed an amount that would qualify him/her to receive housing benefit.

In terms of capital assets, the value of the applicant's capital assets should not exceed £30,000 including the sale of any property in this country and/or abroad. The Charity will require up to date written proof of the market value of particular assets.

If an applicant has previously gifted a property of any description or money in the last 7 years prior to their almshouse application which would mean they would no longer qualify for housing benefit if such gift had not been made, then it is highly unlikely that an appointment would be made.

(ii) **Housing Need:** Consideration is given to an applicant's current circumstances such as homelessness or inappropriate housing for their medical or social needs and prioritise accordingly.

(iii) **Care Need:** Details of an applicant's current health needs are outlined in their application form. The Charity does request an up to date medical questionnaire to be completed by the applicant's GP and our Almshouse Matron evaluates the information provided to ensure that the welfare team are able to provide the care and support required.

(iv) **Social Need:** St John's prides itself on its strong sense of community living. The Trustees and staff anticipate that new applicants will attend our almshouse events and become active members of the social clubs run by existing residents.

3. **THE NATURE OF THE ACCOMMODATION AND CARE**

- (a) The Charity's almshouses comprise one bedroom flats. There are a few flats which are only suitable for single occupancy. Each flat comprises of a living room, bedroom, shower room and small kitchen.
- (b) On the North Side and South Side of St John's there are a few number of small houses which have a staircase which cannot accommodate a stair lift. All other accommodation is self-contained on one level, although stairs/steps have to be negotiated to gain access to some first floor flats on all of the sites.

This means ground floor flats are very much sought after by applicants. Preference for such a flat when they become available is given to our existing residents living on the first floor who health requirements necessitate a move to ground floor accommodation.

- (c) There is a Community Room at St Mary Magdalen where regular social groups, community events and lunch clubs are held. A visiting hairdresser also provides a weekly hairdressing service.
- (d) Although the Charity began as an Anglican foundation and has its own Chapel in the Broadway with regular services taken by our Chaplain, there is **no** requirement for any resident to worship in the Chapel or indeed have any religious beliefs. No distinctions will be made by the Charity in the applications process on the grounds of race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.
- (e) The Charity employs a welfare team and although support offered by the almshouse welfare team is exceptional, and not generally found in other local housing providers for the older person, we do **not** provide regular and constant nursing. New residents have to be in sufficiently good health when they enter the almshouses to be able to lead independent lives and must remain capable of independent living to maintain their appointment as beneficiary. *A copy of our Care Policy is available from the office upon request.*
- (f) Relatives of our almshouse residents are expected to take an active role in the care of their family member. They will be contacted by our almshouse welfare staff to become involved in decision making should a resident's care needs become more acute and they require

nursing home care. Relatives may be contacted by the administrative team if a resident requires new white goods or other equipment for their almshouse and the resident is unable to make a purchase without support or cannot afford to make a purchase.

- (h) All St John's almshouses are linked to an emergency call system, and there is 24 hour emergency only cover provided by our almshouse welfare staff.
- (i) All the almshouses are centrally heated and the majority are also supplied with hot water from a central boiler (the exception being a few of the almshouses on the North Side where water is heated by individual immersion heaters). The residents pay a weekly maintenance contribution (WMC) towards their accommodation and repairs and a contribution towards the cost of heating. These costs are reviewed annually by Trustees and rise accordingly. St John's is not currently a registered provider of social housing. In recent years the WMC has risen significantly to take account of the increased costs of maintenance and repair of listed buildings. Most of our residents are in receipt of housing benefit to assist in the payment of their accommodation.
- (j) Given the communal nature of the accommodation residents may not own a pet.

4. **THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

- (a) All applications for almshouse accommodation must be made on the Charity's application form, a copy of which can be obtained from the address at the end of these guidelines or from the website (www.stjohnswinchester.co.uk) or through the Head Office (01962-854226).
- (b) It is a Charity Commission requirement to investigate the personal circumstances of applicants for almshouses. The personal data supplied on an applicant's application form will be held on file, subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. Some details may need to be checked with you, but none will be disclosed for any inappropriate purpose.
- (c) All almshouse applications received are considered carefully by the Trustees Almshouse Panel.
- (d) The Trustees do not maintain a rotational waiting list as such because they are obliged to assess who is most in need of accommodation when a vacancy occurs. They do on occasions maintain a shortlist of eligible applicants whom they might be able to offer accommodation in the event of a vacancy. Placement on this list does not guarantee that the Trustees will be able to offer an applicant an almshouse. The Charity reserves the right to remove an applicant from any shortlist at any time in absolute discretion.
- (e) Applicants are asked to give the name of two people who know the applicant well and could supply the Trustees with a reference. With the applicant's permission an approach is made to their GP to provide a medical report for assessment by our Head of the Welfare Team.
- (f) No appointment to an almshouse will be made without the Director and the Trustees having had the opportunity of meeting the applicant personally. It should be emphasised that an invitation to attend for a discussion does not automatically mean that accommodation will be offered.
- (g) The Director makes the decision as to which flat will be allocated to a prospective resident based on an applicant's needs. He or she will be invited to inspect the accommodation. If the applicant refuses the flat the applicant's name is removed from the waiting list.
- (h) The Charity does not offer a flat transfer once a resident is insitu unless the welfare team can confirm there are medical needs to support the move.

- (i) The Charity operates an equal opportunities policy and all applications will be considered equally regardless of marital status, race, religion or sexual orientation.
- (j) The Trustees will communicate their decision regarding accommodation to applicants as swiftly as possible. In the event that an applicant has a formal complaint about the handling of his or her application, this should be lodged with the Director who will see that this is considered by a panel of Trustees convened by the Chairman of the Trustees. If the applicant remains unsatisfied with the adjudication of that Committee, then he or she has the right to refer unresolved complaints to the Housing Association Ombudsman, details of whose service can be supplied by the Charity's Director.
- (k) These guidelines seek to be as comprehensive as possible but if you have any queries arising you should contact the Office Manager at 32 St John's South, The Broadway, Winchester, Hampshire (Tel: 01962-854226).

[Reviewed Jan 2020]